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Self-Efficacy: A First-Generation American Educator Teaching in a Culturally Diverse Montessori Classroom

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Self-Efficacy: A First-Generation American Educator Teaching in a Culturally Diverse
Montessori Classroom

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Abstract

This action research project investigated my teacher efficacy in a multicultural classroom with children ages 3 to 6. This was a self-study that I started during my first year of teaching in a private school in downtown Chicago. As a first generation American, I was the only participant. Throughout the four-week study, I responded to journal prompts where I reflected on daily readings of anti-bias literature and my past schooling experiences. I measured my teacher efficacy and confidence levels through weekly attitude scales and pre and post self-assessments. My emotions were tracked with tally sheets. The data showed an increase in positive emotions vs. negative emotions, higher confidence levels in teaching, and growth in confronting bias and engaging in discussions about anti-bias education. This study recommends further engagement in anti-bias media and taking the time to reflect before making decisions in my work as a teacher.

Keywords: anti-bias, self-efficacy, multicultural

My first memory of school was on my first day of kindergarten when I immediately burst into tears after the teacher greeted me in English. I did not understand what she was saying, as I only spoke Spanish at home. I was often reminded of this experience I had as a child when I became a teacher. During my first year as a teacher, I became aware that I should establish tools that would aid my efficacy in working with a diverse group of children. My first teaching experience was at a private Montessori school in downtown Chicago. Most of the families I worked with had just moved to the United States from foreign countries and many of the children did not speak English at home. There were several families from China, and others from India, Japan, Korea, and Lithuania. They all spoke their respective languages at home and most children were speaking English for the first time when they entered the classroom.

Initially, the tools I was developing were to help show that I value the children's cultural values. While developing my data tools I saw the importance of both being aware of biases I hold, and of guiding children to recognize and stand against injustice they may encounter in their future. As I collected data throughout this self-study, I realized an important purpose I had as a teacher to inspire and guide my culturally diverse classroom to recognize inequity and make social change.

I was able to empathize with the children's feelings of frustration, fear, or apprehension when I reflected on my own schooling experiences. As a child, I remember having those feelings of fear and frustration when I could not express myself in English to my teacher or fellow classmates. I often did not understand what was expected of me and would observe the other children to see what the appropriate behavior in the classroom was. At the time, I was realizing that we not only had differences in language but also actions. When I reflect on these moments

as an adult, I see that I needed a closer relationship to my teacher and patience and understanding of how different the school environment was to my home life.

Now that I am able to distinguish and label the emotions I felt as a child, I can recognize what is needed from me as a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom. With this self-study, I wanted to investigate how I could gain higher efficacy as a teacher. For myself, this would involve feeling confident in my identity as a teacher, confronting my biases, and understanding the cultural values of the children I work with.

Building a confident identity as a teacher was an important step for me in my first year of teaching. I was still adjusting to a new position in a new school and integrating myself into the community. The role and responsibilities of a lead teacher weighed heavily on me and I needed to find ways to manage the stress I was feeling and gain a more positive outlook on my readiness to work with culturally diverse children. Being aware of the biases I held would aid me in my decision making and judgements I made in the classroom. By understanding my own identity and cultural beliefs, I am better able to provide a culturally responsive classroom. With self-reflection I could become conscious of how I interact with different cultural groups and gain insight on how I could improve my teacher efficacy in a diverse classroom.

My four-week intervention required much self-reflection as I studied my teacher efficacy. I developed data collection tools that facilitated reflection on my own past schooling experiences. I read anti-bias literature to see what insights I might gain that could aid me in my work. Through journal prompts that I responded to daily, I reflected on the readings from my selection of anti-bias literature. The journal prompts also encouraged me to express my thoughts on how the literature related to any of my past schooling experiences. To further study my teacher efficacy, I developed data collection tools that measured my positive outlook on my role

as a teacher. I thought it was important to realize my bias so that I could make fair judgements and better guide the child in a culturally diverse classroom. To do this, I constructed an attitude scale that measured my confidence in my abilities as a teacher in a multicultural classroom. I then designed a self-assessment that I took before and after the study. The self-assessment measured my perceptions of my strengths and weakness in the areas of confronting bias, positive outlook, and self-efficacy. By utilizing these different data tools, I studied how daily anti-bias readings and reflections on my past schooling experiences effected my efficacy as a teacher.

Theoretical Framework

I am basing my research on the critical pedagogy theory pioneered by Paulo Freire. Freire believed educators could guide the child to develop the abilities to think critically about their educational situation, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and realize how to take action that leads to social transformation (Freire, 2005). When one gains consciousness of social, political, and economic contradictions, Freire describes that as having the ability to practice freedom. When an individual practices freedom, one becomes critical rather than pessimistic about any oppression experienced (Freire, 2005). With a pessimistic view, people begin to see obstacles as limitations to their freedom. Instead, one should respond to challenging situations with the thought of overcoming rather than passively accepting. (Freire, 2005). Freire also stresses that freedom should be balanced with authority as there should be a limit to freedom (Shih, 2018). Balance between freedom and authority exists when teachers and students have equal dialogue. When teachers have complete authority of dialogue, they could oppress students. The relationship between teachers and students should be interactive and communicative. Separation between freedom and authority fails to respect either the teacher or the student (Shih, 2018). Practicing freedom is a process that requires unlearning, relearning, reflection, and evaluation.

During my first year as a teacher, I led a new classroom with children from culturally diverse backgrounds. Some children had recently moved to the United States from countries like China, India, Japan, Korea, and Lithuania. As they transitioned into the classroom, I was reminded of my own experiences as a student and the feelings of not relating to my teacher who spoke a different language than I did. I felt fear and apprehension to interact with others and the classroom material. As part of my research I reflected on my past schooling experiences as well as anti-bias literature. In the data analysis process, I looked for any changes in perceived levels of self-efficacy as a teacher in a multicultural classroom. Critical pedagogy is a theory that questions social practices and calls students to think critically about how to take action against oppression. As an educator in a culturally diverse classroom I should become conscious of my bias and reflect before I can guide the child to think critically about the needs of humanity and hope for a more just society (Shih, 2018). The children in my classroom held cultural values that I was not familiar with and through the critical pedagogy lens, I could prepare myself to help guide the child in practicing freedom.

Preparing to teach in multicultural classrooms is a growing field of research in the United States as the population becomes more diverse. Traditionally, education is seen as a method of upward mobility (Bolin, 2017). Guiding children in the classroom toward practicing freedom and becoming conscious of oppressions in education is way to create social change. Many approaches have been explored in teacher efficacy in a multicultural classroom and they will be highlighted in the following section.

Literature Review

The purpose of this action research project is to examine my own teacher efficacy in a multicultural classroom. This section reviews the scholarly work that has been done in self-

efficacy and tools that have been used to prepare teachers for work in a culturally diverse classroom. Albert Bandura pioneered the study of self-efficacy and it is described as a theory based on the beliefs of one's own capabilities (Bandura, 2012). Self-efficacy beliefs influence how one affects change and motivates themselves to persevere. I will discuss teacher efficacy and organize this literature review under the following headings: reflection on cultural perspectives, cultural awareness, and positive attitudes or perceptions.

Reflection on Cultural Perspectives

Critical self-reflection is an approach that could aid an educator in revealing their thoughts about their own character, actions, and motives. D. Chen, Nimmo, and Frasier (2009) identified self-study as a strategy for beginning early childhood educators to gain self-awareness and self-evaluate their strengths and weaknesses as well as develop plans for needed improvement. They discussed how becoming a culturally responsive teacher required undergoing the process of understanding one's own biases, identity, and cultural beliefs. D. Chen et al. (2009) described self-reflection as a point of departure for a teacher to provide a culturally responsive environment. The tool they created had the goal of inviting introspective reflection and encouraging changes in practice over time. Their tool was a worksheet with questions that addressed levels of awareness in self-identity, the physical and pedagogical environment, and relationships with families and communities. The self-study tool provided new teachers with a structure for reflection that can lead to changes in practice by acknowledging that change is a gradual journey (D. Chen et al., 2009).

Ambler (2012) explained that when a teacher embarks on a self-study, they are merging their roles as teacher, researcher, and participant and these roles may not always present themselves equally. Ambler used autobiographical writing as a starting point for reflection and

self-knowledge, which is similar to an approach done by Lee (2012) for a study in preservice teacher education. Lee's (2012) study examined the cultural values and beliefs of five preservice teachers as they each wrote an autobiography focusing on their multicultural experiences throughout their lives. Their autobiographies gave insight to understanding themselves and others in a cultural context (Lee, 2012). Lee (2012) conducted in person interviews with each of the five preservice teachers to gain a sense of how their multicultural experiences shaped their sense of self and cultural group. Throughout the study, Lee (2012) also collected personal journal writings from the five participants. At the end of the study, the participants considered it important to not pre-judge until knowing the students' cultural backgrounds and past experiences. They also recognized the importance of balancing the students' home culture and experiences with other cultures to motivate familiarity of other cultures. They recognized that realizing their own cultures and beliefs helped them create more culturally relevant teaching and learning practices. They felt that being prepared to teach in a culturally diverse classroom involved understanding themselves as well as others (Lee, 2012).

Hyatt and Kang (2010) explored the use of multicultural narratives in preservice teacher education. These multicultural narratives were short case studies with multicultural themes used as a method to describe and reflect on multicultural experiences. The narratives were meant to support preservice teachers in developing practical reasoning skills to make ethical judgements about how to respond to different situations. In their study, they had 22 preservice teachers read and then reflected on ten narratives that were based on real school incidents from the book *Voices of Diversity* (Ramirez, 2006). The preservice teachers responded to five of the narratives in writing and discussed all ten of them in class. The participants were to critique the actions taken in the incidents and provide alternative solutions (Hyatt & Kang, 2010). Through the

preservice teacher's written responses, Hyatt and Kang (2010) found that the participants developed deeper understandings of equality and fairness in the context of multiculturalism. Some preservice teachers were also able to relate the narratives to larger societal implications. Of the 115 total written responses, 85.7% provided solutions to create a classroom environment that respects individual differences. Only 40% of the responses mentioned including critical dialogue between all participants involved. Hyatt and Kang's (2010) study provided preservice teachers with many insights on how to respond to situations that involve multicultural issues or conflicts. However, the participants' response lacked in providing solutions using an inclusive approach (Hyatt & Kang, 2010).

Mitchel (2009) conducted a study where seven teachers began the process of identifying their cultural identity and perspectives. This process entailed naming ways that the teachers used their cultural identity in the classroom and learning about culturally responsive teaching pedagogies. Mitchel held a 6-hour workshop where the participants expressed their thoughts on teaching in a culturally diverse classroom. The participants then wrote journal entries after each workshop about what was discussed. They were to write a minimum of ten entries throughout three months. Mitchel (2009) also completed open-ended follow-up interviews three months after the workshop about how their teaching practices might have changed. Through Mitchel's (2009) intervention, the participants said they had gained a sense of what it meant to be a culturally responsive teacher. Additionally, they were able to label their values and beliefs. All of the participants reported being more conscious of their own culture and other people's culture after attending the workshops. The participants were able to identify their biases and stereotypes and identify the differences between them and their students. Two of the participants integrated English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies into their teaching practice and found that it was

effective with students who spoke English as a first or second language (Mitchel, 2009). The participants felt they had become more culturally competent and wanted to a deeper understanding of their differences with others. Recommendations for practice that emerged from Mitchel's (2009) study included engaging in cultural conversations with time for reflection afterwards (Mitchel, 2009). Mitchel's (2009) study concluded that practicing self-reflection can offer insight on beliefs and personal identity within cultures. Reflection is a practice that can increase realization of bias and cultural awareness while offering improvement in multicultural teaching practices.

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness means being conscious of similarities and differences among cultural groups. A culturally aware individual is aware of others' cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions (Ponterotto, et al., 1998). Being culturally aware is also being open to growth and knowledge beyond one culture (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984). Gudykunst and Kim (1984) describe a culturally aware person as someone who possesses a commitment to the unity of all humans and accepts and appreciates the difference between cultures. Banks (1988) believed that a teacher who is culturally aware can improve teaching abilities and attitudes toward teaching. Scholars have observed that cultural competence levels in teachers correlates with expectations of students (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). If a teacher has low cultural competence, then expectation for student achievement will be low. If cultural competence is high, there will be high expectations for achievement (Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Johnbull (2012) suggests that there is a relationship that exists between cultural awareness and teacher efficacy since both concern attitudes and beliefs toward personal characteristics.

Moore (2019) examined the relationship between pre-service teacher preparation and efficacy in culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching means using cultural knowledge and personal experiences to make learning more relevant and effective to a culturally diverse group of students (Moore, 2019). This concept is not only concerned with teaching but also an attempt to create equitable learning. A culturally responsive teaching practice assists students in seeing themselves as agents for social change (Moore, 2019).

The participants in Moore's (2019) study were 32 early career teachers from nine different schools. The participants responded to surveys where they measured their perceived efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching. A second survey asked them to measure how effectively they could implement culturally responsive teaching as a result of their teacher training (Moore, 2019). Moore (2019) found that there was a significant relationship between teachers' perceived levels of preparedness and efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching. The participants reported they perceived themselves to have high teacher efficacy. The teachers were also confident in their ability to make learning relevant to the students' different cultural backgrounds (Moore, 2019). The majority of the participants also felt that their teacher training programs prepared them to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching. Moore's (2019) study supports the idea that pre-service teacher preparation effects efficacy in implementing culturally responsive teaching. Becoming more culturally aware is a journey that should begin in preservice teacher education programs.

To effectively educate a growing population of culturally diverse students, teachers should gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds before their teaching practice begins (Moore, 2019). Levels of cultural awareness in

a teacher can affect the academic outcome of culturally diverse students. Moore (2019) concluded a teacher should recognize their bias and become culturally aware to reduce achievement gap.

D. Chen et al. (2009) described that early childhood education should be based on the understanding of how children learn during their early years. Young children are beginning to make sense of the world and learn through observing adult interactions and from that they construct an understanding of human differences and similarities (D. Chen et al., 2009). The teacher in the classroom should first understand herself in the context of other cultural groups to be able to guide the child to do so. D. Chen et al. (2009) concluded that engaging in self-reflection could help construct a confident identity of oneself within multiple cultural groups, which is how one could define cultural awareness. Becoming culturally aware can help shift focus from viewing diversity as something that exists in others, to viewing diversity as an element in the relationship that exists between oneself and others we encounter (D. Chen et al., 2009).

Positive Attitudes or Perceptions

A study done by Freese (2006) suggests that through reflective practices, teachers are able to reframe their experiences from a different outlook. In Freese's study, he examined a preservice teacher's professional growth through the participant's self-reflection and construction of identity as a teacher. Over a period of two years, Freese (2006) collected observation notes, journal reflections, conversations, and the participant's action research paper. Freese (2006) found that during the first semester the preservice teacher was engaged with his coursework, interacted with his cohort, and built comfortable relationships with his mentors, and he gained a more enthusiastic attitude about teaching. During the participant's second semester, feelings of anxiety began to emerge within the preservice teacher; he felt frustrated about

teaching, and lacked confidence in becoming a teacher (Freese, 2006). Although the preservice teacher's mentor made positive comments about his performance, the participant's self-evaluation was negative. It was during this time that the participant refused to self-reflect because he was overwhelmed with lesson planning and grading (Freese, 2006). The study found that certain attitudes served as obstacles to the preservice teacher's professional growth including fear and close-mindedness (Freese, 2006). Negative feelings toward the profession impacted the participant's attitude and behavior. Freese (2006) found that a change to a more positive disposition allowed the preservice teacher to see different viewpoints other than his own. The study also concluded that reflection practices like journaling effected the participant's disposition. When the participant was willing to reflect in his journal, he was engaged in coursework and enthusiastic about teaching (Freese, 2006). His reflections provided him the opportunity to gain insight about his perceptions (Freese, 2006). Freese's (2006) study highlights the impact that reflective practices have on a teacher's perception and attitude toward the teaching profession.

J. Chen's (2019) study looked at teachers' efficacy and emotions and how they related to their performance. She sampled 963 preservice teachers of which 67% percent were female and 31% were male. The participants took *The Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES) and *Teacher Emotion Inventory* (TEI) along with questionnaires. Their practicum performance scores were also collected from their respective universities. The data showed that preservice teachers emotions predicted their efficacy (J. Chen, 2019). Positive emotions predicted a higher level of efficacy measured through TSES and TEI. Lower levels of confidence showed lower performance (J. Chen, 2019). The study confirmed that emotions are predicted by teacher efficacy. Positive emotions can improve self-efficacy, while negative emotions can impair

efficacy. These findings support Bandura's (2012) theory of how one's own beliefs of their capabilities influence motivation.

Czubal (1996) found that teachers who believed they could impact students' learning had higher expectations of the students' academic achievement. Teachers who have a positive belief of self-efficacy have a positive effect on student achievement. There is a correlation between high teacher efficacy and student achievement (Czubal, 1996). Furthermore, if a teacher believes they can impact student learning, the teacher has high efficacy (Mitchel, 2009). Czubal (1996) used a 12-step stress reduction program to help alleviate teacher stress. The study found that stress should be kept at a minimum to maintain motivation (Czubal, 1996). Additionally, teachers should have a positive response to failures in order to maintain motivation in their profession (Czubal, 1996). Shifting to positive perceptions about one's own capabilities in the teaching profession will impact self-efficacy beliefs.

Conclusion

Reflection strategies have proven to be effective in teacher efficacy studies as self-reflection can lead to an awareness of attitudes, identity, and biases. (D. Chen et al., 2009; Freese, 2006; Hyatt & Kang, 2010; Lee, 2012; Mitchel, 2009). Reflecting on anti-bias literature and past schooling experiences is a method I will use for gathering data. In my data, I will look for change in my attitude toward my profession and realization of my bias. My self-study will contribute to a growing field of research that has been done in teacher efficacy in diverse classrooms in response to the changing population in our country.

Methodology

For this self-study I used data collection tools that would help me assess my self-efficacy. Measuring my self-perceived levels of confidence, my positive emotions, and confronting my

biases were elements that were incorporated into my data collection. I used the following data collection methods in my intervention: a pre and post self-assessment, tally sheets, attitude scale, and journals (see Appendices A-D). I designed the self-assessment to record my own perceptions of my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher before and after the study (Appendix A). The attitude scale was intended to measure my self-efficacy levels during the study (Appendix B). I used tally sheets throughout my workday to document how often I felt either positive or negative emotions about being a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom (Appendix C). My journal prompts focused on reflecting on daily anti-bias readings and my past schooling experiences (Appendix D). Some of the children I worked with had just moved to the United States from countries like China, India, Japan, and Lithuania. Like many of them, I am also a first generation American and my family is from Mexico. The research was conducted over 4 weeks while I was a teacher for children between the ages of 3 to 6 at a private Montessori school. At 27 years old, I had recently graduated from my Montessori teacher training program and began my first year of teaching while I was collecting data for this self-study.

I began the research process after moving to a different city and starting a new position. The week I was to start conducting my research, I took my pre self-assessment (Appendix A) where I used a one to three scale to rate my abilities in the following areas: confronting bias, positive outlook, and self-efficacy. One meant that I perceived myself to need a lot of help and three meant I did not perceive myself to need help. At the end of the study I took the post self-assessment (Appendix A) and the results of each assessment were compared and analyzed. The self-assessment was designed by looking at the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Appendix E) and The Self-Efficacy Scale: Construction and Validation (Maddux & Sherer, 1982). These scales were designed to assess how much people believe they can achieve their goals despite

difficulties. The assessment I devised for myself was more focused on my beliefs of how to succeed as a teacher in a multicultural classroom. While analyzing the results of the assessments at the end of the study, I was interested in seeing what the impact was in my view of my profession and identity as a teacher. Additionally, I looked for changes in my confidence levels and ability to persevere when faced with challenging situations.

Throughout the study I also read anti-bias literature each day (Appendix F). At the end of my day, I read for at least 20 minutes each day and spent at least 20 minutes responding to the prompts. I then reflected on the readings as well as my past schooling experiences by following pre-written prompts in my journal. The prompts (Appendix D) concentrated on what insights I gained from the readings that could help me in my work and if the readings related to any of my past schooling experiences.

The anti-bias literature I selected to read daily started with a recommendation from classmates, *Start Where You Are But Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms* (Milner, 2010). As I was searching for where to purchase the book online, I came across other book titles that related to the same topic of anti-bias. This included: *How Good People Fight Bias: The Person You Mean to Be* by Dolly Chugh, and *An Inclusive, Anti-Bias Framework for Teaching and Learning About Race with Young Children* by Margaret R. Beneke, Caryn C. Park, and Jordan Taitingfong. See appendix F for complete reference list of literature sources. After reading, I spent time reflecting with the help of prompts I wrote such as, "Is there a personal schooling experience that relates to the literature I read today?", and "How can I implement my learnings from the literature into my work?"

I had tally sheets (Appendix C) available to record anytime I felt positive or negative emotions about being a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom. The tally sheets were available

only during the time that I was in the classroom working with children. I took a weekly attitude scale (Appendix B) to rate my teacher self-efficacy levels by recording a number from 0 to 100. Zero indicated that I felt I could not do what the prompt listed and 100 indicated I was highly certain I could do what the prompt listed. The prompts focused on how effectively I managed stress, recognized my bias, and motivated myself to make social change. The weekly attitude scale was based on a guide for constructing self-efficacy scales by Albert Bandura (2006). The guide states that self-efficacy scales should be tailored to a particular area of interest. Additionally, items should be phrased in “can do” rather than “will do” since self-efficacy is concerned with capabilities, not intention. The attitude scale I constructed was meant to measure my confidence teaching in a multicultural classroom.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate if reading anti-bias literature and reflecting on my past schooling experiences would affect my efficacy as a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom. While working in a culturally diverse Montessori environment with children ages 3 to 5.5, I noticed myself relating to the children’s experience as most entered the classroom not knowing English. I gathered then analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to answer my research question. I began collecting data with a pre self-assessment to gather baseline data on my own perceptions of my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. The survey was a rating scale, which listed my self-perceived abilities in the areas of confronting bias, positive outlook, and self-efficacy. For each item I rated I also listed my strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the study, I took the same self-assessment then compared the qualitative and quantitative data that was gathered from this tool to see if there was any change in my self-efficacy.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The following Figure 1 shows the score I gave each survey item (Appendix A) before and after the study. The graph shows the comparison of the scores I gave myself for each item with one being the lowest and three the highest. In 5 out of the 8 items, my score remained the same in the post-assessment. In the remaining three items I rated a higher score, indicating that I perceived improvement. The greatest improvement made was in engaging in discussion about anti-bias teaching (item b). At the end of the study I felt that I did not need help in the area of discussing anti-bias teaching practices. The data also shows that I gained a more confident identity as a teacher and felt that I was able to face difficulties confidently.

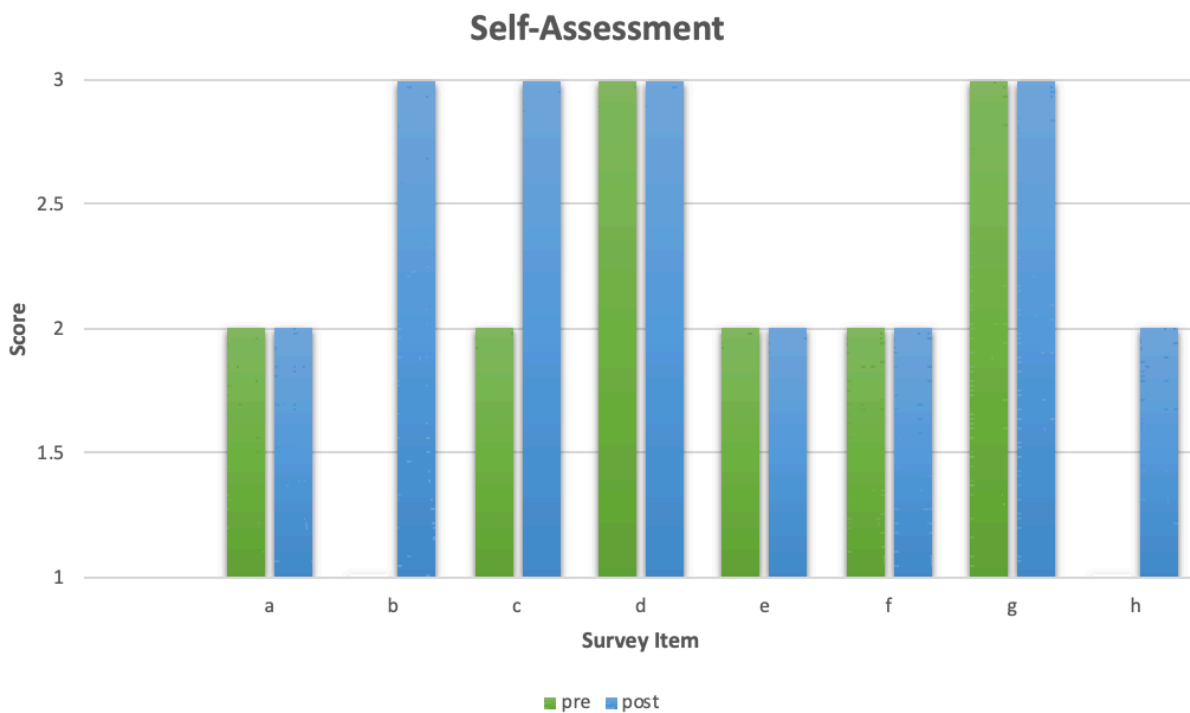


Figure 1. Pre and post self-assessment scores for each survey item.

After looking at the scores I had given each survey item and examining the differences between the pre and post self-assessment scores I began to look at the categories of the self-assessment. When designing the self-assessment, I grouped the items into three categories that I

felt were important to evaluate about myself: confronting bias (2 items), positive outlook (2 items), and self-efficacy (4 items). Figure 2 displays the average scores I rated within each category of the pre and post self-assessment.



Figure 2. Average scores of three categories in pre and post self-assessments.

The survey items from the self-assessment were grouped into three categories to measure my strengths and weaknesses in each. Figure 2 above shows that the category of positive outlook remained my strongest area after the study. The average score in positive outlook is 3, which indicates I perceived to not need help in that area. The lowest score an item could receive was 1, “I need a lot of help in this area”. A score of 2 meant, “I am making progress in this area, but I need some help”. In all three areas I improved but the most growth I experienced was in the category of confronting bias. In this category my average score increased by 66.7%. However, Figure 2 shows that at the end of the study I was in between making progress and not needing help. I had made the most growth in this area, but I was still not completely confident in confronting my bias.

Qualitative data was also gathered from my pre and post self-assessments by listing my perceived strengths and weaknesses for each survey item. To analyze the data from my pre self-assessment, I began the process of thematic analysis to find general themes within the text I wrote. For the two groups, strengths and weaknesses, I started to look for reoccurring patterns and themes in the text and coded accordingly. I looked for themes by noting what I wrote about my emotions, the ways I described myself, and my feelings of preparedness to teach in a culturally diverse classroom. I reviewed the themes I found and then made conclusions about the data. I followed this same process for my post-assessment then compared the data. Table 1 shows some of my responses to my strengths and weaknesses in the area of self-efficacy. The responses in Table 1 relate to the ways I described myself in the pre-assessment compared to the post-assessment.

Table 1

Self-Efficacy Strengths and Weaknesses in Pre Vs. Post Self-Assessment

Strengths and Weaknesses	
Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
I am naturally easygoing, but I do not have a plan in place to help relieve stress	I am easygoing, but I still need a plan for stress relief
—————	I can overcome challenges but not always successfully
I am naturally a responsible person but not always confident	I am responsible and organized
I become nervous and anxious with new situations and rely on others to help me feel better	I need more confidence. I am usually anxious when it comes to unfamiliar situations

Note. The dash represents there was no response given. Each row is a response to the same survey item.

These responses shown in Table 1 came from the category of self-efficacy in my self-assessment. Figure 2 shows that this is the area where I had the least growth. This conclusion is also supported when comparing my responses to this category in the pre and post-assessment. My responses had little change after the study was completed.

When thinking about my strengths and weaknesses in the pre and post self-assessment I listed personal traits and beliefs about my capabilities that I considered to be true. In my pre self-assessment, 25% of my comments were positive and in my post self-assessment, 62.5% of my comments were positive. My perceived optimism toward my strengths and weaknesses grew. The qualitative data from my self-assessment also showed the growth of my identity as a teacher. It is displayed in what I listed as my strengths and weakness for the item, “I have a confident identity as a teacher”. The responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Strengths and Weakness in Pre Vs. Post Self-Assessment

Pre Self-Assessment		Post Self-Assessment	
Strength	Weakness	Strength	Weakness
I have a confident identity as a Montessorian	I do not feel like a teacher or like I can relate to other teachers outside of Montessori schools	I am very confident and happy with the work I do and have no issue with telling others I am a teacher	I have little experience and there are areas I need more improvement in

Note. The strengths and weakness listed were in response to the survey item, “I have a confident identity as a teacher”.

The data in Table 2 shows that before the study began, I had a confident identity as a Montessori teacher but felt that I could not relate to the experience of other teachers. In the post

self-assessment, I stated that I was confident about my identity as a teacher and not just a Montessori teacher. Although, I still felt doubtful about my capabilities as a teacher because of my lack of experience.

Positive and Negative Emotions

During the four-week study I took a tally of my positive and negative emotions throughout the workday. I recorded the positive and negative emotions I felt toward teaching in a multicultural classroom specifically. Figure 3 below shows the difference between the positive and negative emotions I experienced over the course of the study. During the first week, I experienced more negative emotions than positive emotions, so the difference was -1. In each of the next three weeks, my positive emotions outnumbered my negative emotions. In week 1 I had a total of 4 negative emotions and 3 positive emotions. By week 2, I started to experience an increase of positive emotions and had fewer negative emotions throughout the day. Week 4 shows a greater difference between positive and negative emotions. During the last week of the study, I experienced 5 positive emotions compared to only 3 negative emotions.

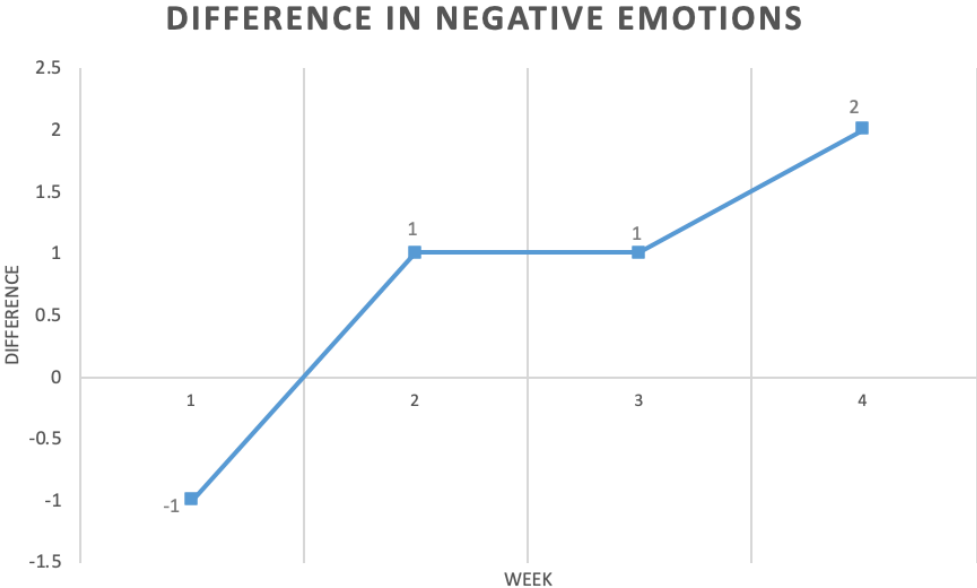


Figure 3. Difference between negative and positive emotions compared weekly.

Throughout the study my positive emotions increased by 66.7% and my negative emotions decreased by 25%. My intervention methods helped me feel better about teaching in a multicultural classroom. I had a more positive outlook on my work and felt prepared to teach culturally diverse children and provide a culturally responsive physical and psychological environment.

Figure 4 below shows the total percentage of positive and negative emotions that I experienced over the four weeks of the study. This further shows the overall I had more positive than negative experiences throughout the study. I experienced positive emotions 20% more times than I experienced negative emotions.

Total Positive and Negative Emotions

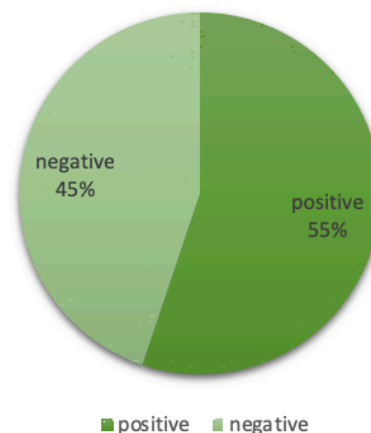


Figure 4. Total percentage of positive and negative emotions over four weeks.

Self-Efficacy Levels

I completed an attitude scale at least once a week to measure my teacher efficacy levels in a culturally diverse classroom. The total number of attitude scales that I completed were five. In the attitude scale I measured how certain I was that I could do certain things like, recognize my bias or motivate myself to make social change. I rated my degree of confidence by recording a number from zero to 100. Recording a zero meant that I felt I could not do what the item listed

and recording 100 meant that I felt highly certain I could do what the item listed. The attitude scale listed six survey items that I labeled as a-f in Figure 5 and are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

Attitude Scale Survey Items

Reference Letter	Item
a	Have conversations with others on multicultural and anti-bias education
b	Speak confidently about what it means to have efficacy in a multicultural classroom
c	Motivate myself to make social change
d	Recognize my biases
e	Reflect on my schooling experiences
f	Express my views freely about injustice in education

Figure 5 below shows the score I rated each item in all five attitude scales. The quantitative data that I gathered and displayed in Figure 5 shows that item d had the highest average scores. Item d is listed as “recognize my bias” in the attitude scale. The average score for item d was 75.8, which on the scale would read in between “moderately can do” and “highly certain can do”. Figure 5 demonstrates that I was most confident in recognizing my bias, which is a conclusion that was also made by looking at the data in Figure 2. Figure 2 shows that confronting my bias was a category in my self-assessment where I had experienced growth. The least average scoring item was c, “motivate myself to make social change”. The average score I rated for item c was 54.8. The data shows I was least confident in motivating myself to make social change although my scores for this item increased over time with the exception of the last attitude scale I completed.

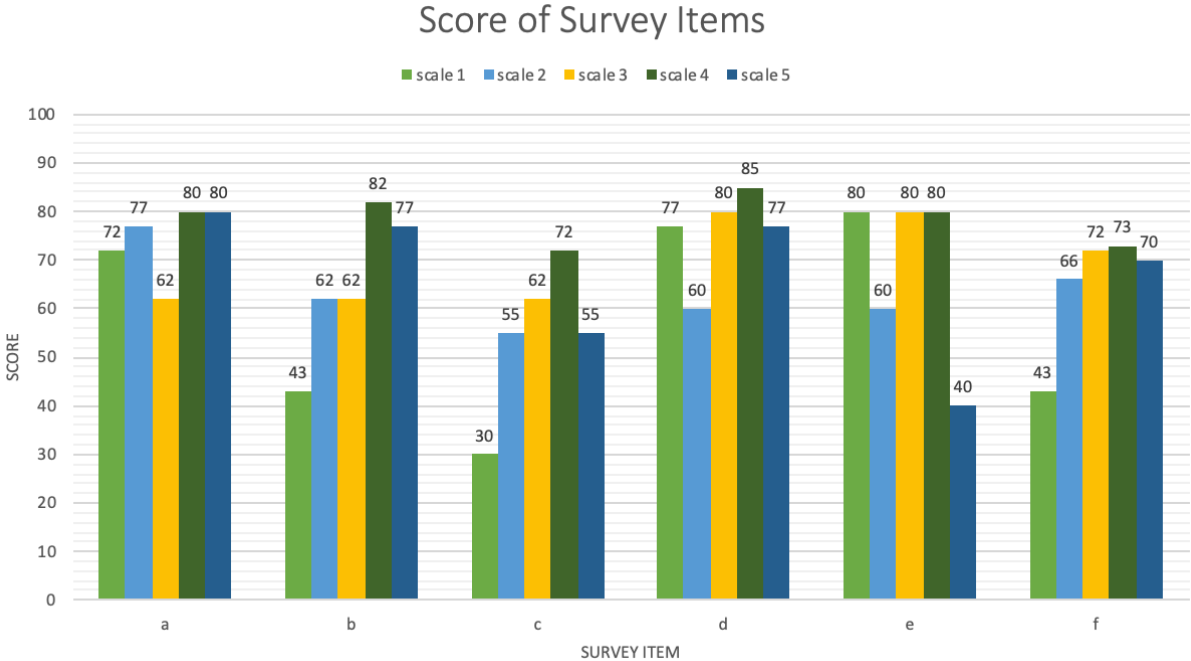


Figure 5. Scores of survey items for five attitude scales taken during the four-week study.

After looking at my average scores for each survey item in the attitude scale, I felt it was important to show how the total sum of scores changed each week. The total sum of the scores I rated each week would show my weekly confidence level. Figure 6 below displays the total sum of scores for each week of the study. Figure 6 shows that each week the total sum of scores increased. Each week there was at least a 10% increase in the total sum of scores, meaning that my teacher efficacy levels increased by at 10% each week of the study. By the end of the study, my levels of perceived teacher efficacy had increased by 36%. I had perceived myself to gain efficacy each week of the study.

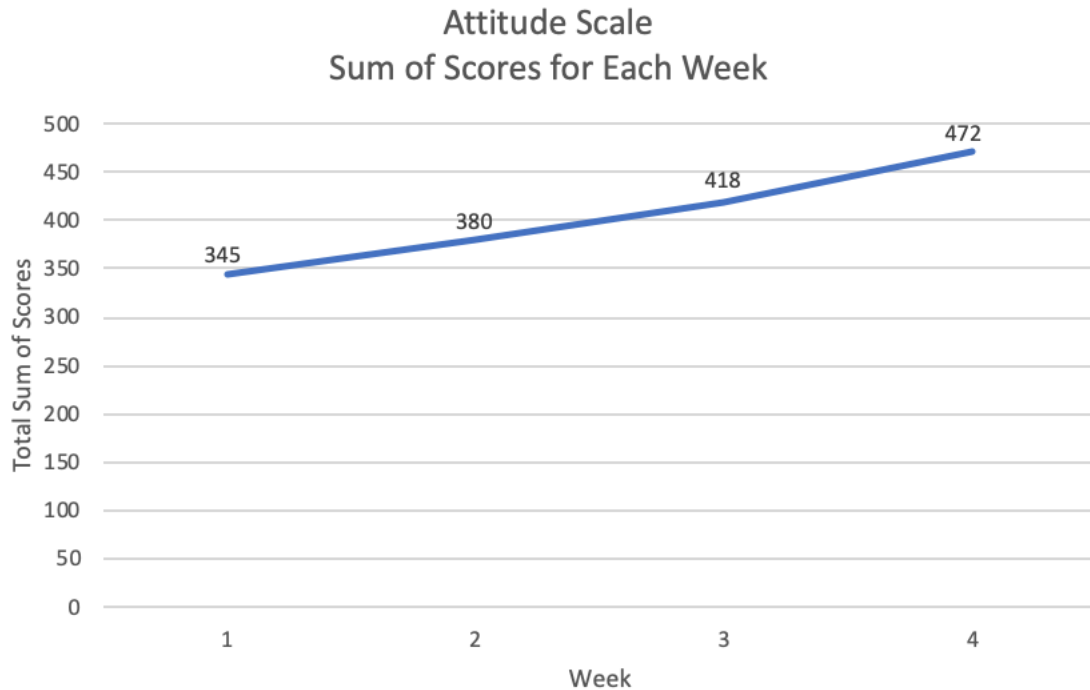


Figure 6. Total sum of attitude scale scores over four weeks.

Journal Reflections

During the four weeks of my self-study I read daily anti-bias literature. Each day I would reflect on the readings and how they might relate to my past schooling experiences. After the study, I began analyzing the qualitative data I gathered from my journal entries by compiling and sorting. I summarized each entry and noted important phrases to sort into themes. I wrote a few sentences or key phrases from each journal entry to summarize information. From this, I began to look for common themes within the summaries. I found four major themes in my journal entries: strategies to better myself in my work, making social change, adults as guides, and how past schooling experiences aid my work as a teacher now. Summaries of the entries that relate to each of these four themes are shown in Table 4.

The theme that came up most in my journal reflections was strategies to aid my work. Twenty five percent of my reflections focused on this theme. Some strategies that I listed were to

take things slow and find time to pause and reflect before making major decisions. I also wrote about the importance of being open and willing to acknowledge my biases in order to bring awareness of them. I mentioned slowing down as a strategy most frequently. During the first week of my research I did not mention any strategies to aid my work and on the fourth week it was mentioned twice in my journal reflections.

Table 4

Themes in Journal Reflections

Themes			
Strategies to aid my work	Making social change	Adults as guides	Past schooling experiences aid my work
Make an effort to slow down and reflect	Take action for others who cannot speak out	Adults at work should show diversity	I know the feeling of discomfort when I realized I look different than my classmates, I
Take things slow and reflect	I can influence other adults and help make change by	Children should see inclusion	can relate to the children who might see themselves this way
Be uncomfortable in order to grow	sharing this research journey	Adults need to interact with others of a different culture before guiding the child to do so	I have experienced judgement on my abilities based on my appearance/background, I cannot put limits on children’s academic abilities
Be open and willing	My privileges allow me to make change for others	My beliefs can be imposed on a child	
		I have influence on children	

The theme of how my past schooling experiences aid my work shows that I was able to relate to the feeling of discomfort or fear when a child enters the classroom and notices differences between themselves and others. Recalling those feelings I had as a child will aid me in empathizing with children of different cultural backgrounds. Through my journal reflections I was able to realize the limits that were put on me by teachers or school leaders. When I was a student I was not fully conscious of the judgements or limits being made on my abilities. As an educator now, I can recognize the influence I have over the children I work with and understand the importance of identifying my bias so that I do not put limits on children's abilities.

Action Plan

My research study began by asking how daily reading of anti-bias literature and reflection on my personal schooling experiences would affect my self-efficacy? The purpose of this self-study was to gain higher efficacy as a teacher in a culturally diverse Montessori classroom. During my first year of teaching, I found myself reflecting on my past schooling experiences. Many of the children entered the classroom speaking a different language and had a different cultural background than my own. I was reminded of the disconnect I felt with my teachers in the past. For my self-study I developed data tools to measure my confidence levels as a teacher, track my positive and negative emotions, and reflect on anti-bias literature and past schooling experiences. I designed a self-assessment, attitude scale, tally sheets, and journal prompts to gather data.

After four weeks of collecting data I began to analyze my findings. I took a pre self-assessment to gather baseline data before the study began. After the study, I took a post self-assessment then compared the qualitative and quantitative data I gathered from both assessments. When comparing the self-assessment data, I realized that most of my growth had

been in confronting my bias. Before the intervention, I felt that ignoring my bias was a valid way to manage those feelings or judgments I had. After the intervention began, I saw the importance of recognizing my bias and being aware of it so that I can make sure my decisions are not implicitly influenced by them. During my intervention, I found that ignoring my bias is not helpful in my work as a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom. This discovery has helped me recognize the importance of slowing down and reminding myself to not operate on automatic. I can be more effective in my work if I am present and can take the time to think about the decisions I am making.

Taking things slow and thinking carefully before making decisions was a topic that was brought up frequently in my literature selections. When reading anti-bias literature, I was reminded daily of how we all have bias and it shown through the decisions we make and the preferences we have. If we do not recognize our bias, then we are more likely to be implicitly influenced by our bias.

With a weekly attitude scale, I rated my degree of confidence as a teacher in a culturally diverse classroom with a scale from zero to 100. I compared the scores of each item I rated and discovered that two items in particular had higher average scores. Those items were, "Have conversations with others on multicultural and anti-bias education" and "Recognize my bias". My data shows that throughout the study I became more certain that I could do the items mentioned above. The attitude scale showed I became confident in recognizing my bias and this conclusion is also shown through my self-assessment data where confronting my bias was the area of most growth. The data from my attitude scale also showed that my confidence levels were consistently increasing as the study went on.

I used tally sheets to record my positive and negative emotions throughout the workday. The data showed that overall, I had more positive than negative emotions. However, I feel that this data may not be accurate. Tally sheets were my least successful data tool as it was the one I tended to neglect throughout the study. I had the tally sheets available to me throughout the workday and did not set any time intervals to pause and reflect on my emotions. Having the tally sheets available at all times was not effective for reflection or recording my emotions. It was also difficult to recognize whether the emotions I was feeling related to teaching in a culturally diverse classroom specifically. If someone were to try this intervention, I would recommend recording positive and negative emotions every half hour then taking some time to think about the context of that emotion.

Through my journal reflections and daily readings of anti-bias literature I was able to come up with strategies to aid me in my work and find ways that I can make social change. In my reflections I thought about the influence adults have on children and how we need to prepare ourselves to guide them. The strategy I mentioned most in my journal reflections was taking the time to slow down and reflect. This is also a discovery that I made in my self-assessment data analyses. It is important to slow down before making judgements to assure they are not influenced by our bias. Reflecting on decisions that were made or interactions with children throughout the day is an important practice in regard to self-efficacy. In my work as a teacher I want to make sure I am making the best judgement because I recognize the impact I have on children. In the literature I read, the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) was mentioned frequently. Taking this test as part of the research intervention is something I would recommend to others who want to reflect on their bias and interactions with people of

different cultures. The IAT would be a very useful tool in helping people recognize their implicit bias.

The experience of this action research project has helped me realize the importance of engaging in anti-bias media as a teacher. Teachers have a lot of influence over children and our preparation is key in guiding their learning and interactions with others. Young children notice human differences and similarities and are observing how adults address those difference and similarities. It is important for all educators and school leaders to dedicate time to engage in self-reflection and anti-bias media. Through my own reflections I have realized how I can make social change and one way is by sharing this experience with other educators. My research shows that recognizing our bias and slowing down are important aspects to consider as educators who are continuously making judgements and decisions about children.

Appendix A

Pre and Post Self-Assessment

Rate your abilities in the following areas using the scale:

1=I need a lot of help in this area

2=I am making progress in this area, but I need some help

3=I do not need help in this area

Also list strengths and weaknesses in each area.

Confronting Bias

1. I have awareness of cultural biases I may hold
2. I engage in discussion about anti-bias teaching

Positive Outlook

3. I have a confident identity as a teacher
4. I have an optimistic view of the work I do

Self-Efficacy

5. I am able to manage my stress well
6. I am able to successfully overcome my challenges
7. When I set important goals for myself, I often achieve them
8. I am able to face difficulties confidently

Appendix B

Attitude Scale

Done weekly to measure teacher self-efficacy levels.

Week of:

Date:

Rate how certain you are that you can do things mentioned below by writing the appropriate number.

Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 using the scale given below:

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Cannot do at all

Moderately can do

Highly certain can do

	Confidence (0-100)
Have conversations with others on multicultural and anti-bias education	
Speak confidently about what it means to have efficacy in a multicultural classroom	
Motivate myself to make social change	
Recognize my biases	
Reflect on my schooling experiences	
Express my views freely about injustice in education	

Appendix C

Tally Sheets

To be collected throughout the day, everyday

Date:

Number of times I felt positive about teaching a culturally responsive pedagogy	
Number of times I felt negative about teaching a culturally responsive pedagogy	

Appendix D

Journal Prompts

Date:

Time:

Title and Author of Literature Selected:

Spend at least 20 minutes at the end of each day responding to the following journal prompt and possible follow up prompts:

1. Briefly describe the literature I read today and reflect on it.
 - a. Is there a personal schooling experience that relates to the literature I read today?
 - b. How can I implement my learnings from the literature into my work?
 - c. Are there any new insights or questions raised based on the reading?

Appendix E

New General Self-Efficacy Scale

Answer Format: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

Instructions: Participants are told that (a) general self-efficacy relates to “one’s estimate of one’s overall ability to perform successfully in a wide variety of achievement situations, or to how confident one is that she or he can perform effectively across different tasks and situations,” and (b) self-esteem relates to “the overall affective evaluation of one’s own worth, value, or importance, or to how one feels about oneself as a person.”

Instructions: Please circle your answer below.

1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
3. In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
5. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree
8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.
Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Agree Strongly agree

Appendix F

Anti-Bias Literature Selections

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