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Ethnographic Narrative Project (A Journey to Fulfillment)

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....p. 3

Preface.....p. 4

Part A: Journey to Teaching.....p. 5

Part B: My Students.....p. 16

    a. Introduction.....p. 16

    b. Case Study 1: Ashley Gomez.....p. 16

    c. Case Study 2: Michelle White.....p. 33

    d. Case Study 3: Paul Collins.....p. 49

    e. Concluding Thoughts on Case Studies.....p. 64

Part C: Community.....p. 65

Part D: Reflection of a Critical Social Justice Educator.....p. 88

References.....p. 100

### **Abstract**

In this narrative you will see my journey in becoming a Critical Social Justice Educator. In addition to this, you will see how I made my decision to become a teacher along with the continued development in learning the craft. As this narrative continues, you will be introduced to my three focus students in a detailed manner as well as learn about the community in which I served during the 2019 - 2020 school year. The purpose of this narrative is to track both my and my students' documented growth throughout the year, make connections to different elements that effect a student's education, and to stress the importance of being a Critical Social Justice Educator. Once you have completed this narrative, you will come to see my stance in the importance of preparing our students academically as well as socially so they are able to thrive in the world in which we live and be successful in all that they do.

### **Preface**

For this body of work each section excluding Part A was done through data collection and research. Through this process I sat down with families, individual family members, and received responses to questionnaires from school staff and faculty with the hopes of gaining insight on their child in hopes of taking the information to improve my practices in the classroom as well as gain insight on the community in which the school I was serving during my residency was located in. Once the information was gathered through records, I went back to listen and took what I felt were the most important pieces of content to add to what you are about to read.

Challenges I faced along the way included scheduling conflicts, making sure no boundaries were crossed, and gaining consent from parents to partake in interviews. My main takeaway from partaking in this project include gained confidence in the process of a teacher parent partnership, the value relationship building in the classroom, and the positive effects that come with sticking to developed action plans.

### **Part A: Journey to Teaching**

My journey in aspiring to become a teacher is not typical. When it comes to the regular stories that I have been told I felt mine was a bit different compared to my peers. My background when speaking on my interest and school experiences would tell you that once I finished school I would have wanted to stay as far from it. My interest involved sports. As a kid and even now I loved to play basketball. That was where all my extra curricular and free time went. As in part to this, I have been effected by great coaches and mentors that have affected the way I view teaching and pouring into people. My school experiences during my entire academic career until recently had not been admirable enough to want to come back. Although I did not go to a school that lacked in funds, I did go to schools that made me feel uncomfortable. I went to schools where I felt I could not connect with my teachers. I went to schools where in order to do well and be looked upon as a good student, I had to conform to what each school perceived as a good student. In order to do so I became the quiet kid at school. I never knew as to why I became so quiet at school until I was a sophomore in college. Even when I had some sort of realization I still could never speak on it because I did not quite know how to. However, I do remember vividly saying and feeling that the people I felt were at the school to help me and prepare me for life were not interested nor invested in doing so. Due to feeling like this at school, I developed habits that seemed to be serving me well at the time however, once I graduated, they did not serve me well at all. Once I got going and invested in school I stopped coaching basketball at my high school which was something that I really loved and enjoyed. Leaving something that I truly enjoyed was not the best decision looking back. Coaching left me feeling as if I was contributing more than just the right way to play a sport but to someone's life. I felt as if I was giving those

kids someone to look up to. I say that especially because I had just been in their shoes one to two years prior and they saw me be successful in the same program that they were in. Even though I didn't have all the answers then, I felt that I was leaving a positive example just as my favorite coaches had done for me. Once I graduated college and began a line of work that left me unhappy, unfulfilled, and often times frustrated with myself. I began to think about my line of work from a different view. I wanted to do something that made me happy. I was always told as a kid that if you do something that you love you will never work a day in your life. That was something I took to heart at a young age. Therefore, when thinking in those terms, it allowed me to look back on my time coaching and realize how happy I was. I think about life constantly and have a sense of urgency on wanting to leave a positive imprint on others. I ultimately chose teaching as a profession because it would allow me to do so. By the time I started my Masters and Credential program, I began to learn about aspects of teaching such as creating a healthy classroom ecology. I naturally identified with this theory because it spoke on aspects such as creating relationships with your students. This ideology says that creating relationships with your students was better than setting rules because you are then creating positive norms in the classroom that students feel both comfortable with and confident in. This is one of my core beliefs about teaching that I am very passionate about because I did not have that environment in my classroom. Another core belief that I am passionate about and would want to bring in my classroom is being able to bring a social justice approach to my classroom. I want to welcome conversations about race, religion, different cultures and so on. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) state that "The ultimate goal of social justice education is to enable us to recognize structural inequalities in ways that prepare us to change them" (p. 2). This quote promotes the idea that we

must shape a society that can talk about issues such as racism, classism, religion and so on in a positive manner. We must promote that it does not mean you are racist for bringing up these topics and that there is still something communicated when the conversation is dismissed or ignored. As an individual who believes in this, I agree that this principle must be both taught and demonstrated to people at a young age. This is why I want to teach third grade in elementary school. It is when we are young when we are influenced the most by the people we look up to or identify with. It is when we are young when we are most susceptible to media influence. Therefore, in giving kids an environment where this takes place while showing them while they are young that they can talk about these topics will lead them to either create change or provoke it.

### **My Positionality**

I would not say that I am someone who grew up poor. I grew up in a family who was considered working middle class. Both of my parents had educational backgrounds and though they both have had their own struggles in their careers, for the most part, they have had access to a path of life that has served them well. As a family we have lived and continue to live a great life. We have lived in safe neighborhoods, schools were and are properly funded, and for the most part as I was growing up I was sheltered from explicit racism. I say sheltered because when growing up I never had to deal with it until I got to college. With that being said, I was raised in a way that taught me to be on guard about certain things about both myself and other people. Most of those things being centered around me being a black male in a society that ultimately does not care for my development amongst other things. Due to being raised this way I bought into certain biases such as since I'm black most white people will judge me based on appearance. However



on the other hand I was raised to understand that even though I am an African American male, because my complexion is lighter, I would be treated differently than others who are darker. I began to see why I would lose or gain opportunity because of it. Ultimately, I began to see everything from a racial point of view and reasoned with it by way of stereotypes. As a student my view towards school was the same way. When going through school I always felt that I could not identify with my teachers because they did not look like me or they did not see the world how I saw it. I personally never had an African American teacher until I chose to attain a Masters Degree however, when I spoke to certain friends who did have the experience they would tell me that he or she was their favorite teacher. The reasoning behind it did not have anything to do with the fact that the course material was better than usual or they were using techniques that no other teacher was doing. It was just because of the mere fact that their teacher was black. With that being said, one of the challenges that I now face is being able to both identify my own prejudices as well as change my thinking. Sensory and DiAngelo (2017) define prejudice as a “learned prejudging moment about members of social groups to which we don’t belong. Prejudice is based on limited knowledge or experience with the group. Simplistic judgements and assumptions are made and projected onto everyone from that group” (p. 51). As someone who is aspiring to be a third grade elementary teacher, I cannot go into the classroom with these prejudices and expect to have a great classroom ecology or even effectively teach my students. There is a quote by Rita Pierson on the first page of chapter 6 in Hammond’s book “Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain” (2015) that says “ Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can be” (p. 88). This quote ties in perfectly because those teachers who

take their prejudices with them into the classroom are more than likely to give up on students that they have prejudices about.

### **MY DECISION TO BECOME A TEACHER**

As previously stated, in the beginning of my journey my decision to become a teacher was solely focused on being a positive example for people, doing something that I felt would contribute to the betterment of people, and allowing myself to do something that made me feel complete as a human being. My decision has been reinforced in many ways. One way in which my decision has been reinforced is by learning about how SEL (Standard English Learners) are treated and ultimately lost in the system. It is both concern and appalling to me to learn about a system that is keeping all the kids who do not label themselves as EO's (English Only) in a system that they may never get out of. As an aspiring educator I feel a great responsibility to somehow do my part in helping improve this system. Another reason that my decision had been reinforced because of hidden curriculum. This is a force in the school system that really drives me to be my best because the students do not have a clue about any of this. They have no idea that the school system is essentially telling them to conform to what they think is right and to leave everything that makes them unique at the door. This is something that I plan to teach against by way of my classroom ecology as well as lessons. The idea that the school system is willing to leave out lessons about history due to testing is not something that I can accept. I essentially feel this way because a lot of these districts house kids who are labeled as minorities and are most likely going in and out of classes without knowing where they come from.

Thinking about these things and feeling passionate about them after learning about this shows me I am headed in the right direction as far as being able to reach students in positive and healthy

ways. Although I may not be able to change the system, I will be able to help students navigate it and present parents with factual evidence that will inform them with what they need to be aware of.

### **What and Who Do I Want to Teach**

I ultimately want to teach 3rd grade at an elementary school however I would be very open to teach any grade at the elementary school level. I decided to make the decision to work with younger kids due to the effect I had coaching the older kids. When I was assistant coaching the junior varsity team at my high school, I saw both an impact and improvement amongst people that I never thought possible. An example of this was when I chose to stay after practice with one of my players. This specific person who's name was Ryan had one of his hardest practices to date due to the fact that he was not making the shots that he normally makes. As I was watching from the side lines I could easily tell that the main reason for that was he was rushing his mechanics when it came to his shooting form. It was his first year on the junior varsity team so I believed that he was just trying to go fast because he was trying to leave a good impression amongst his new coaching staff. After practice as everyone was leaving I saw that he and a few others chose to stay after practice. What was interesting to me was that he was on the other end of the court putting up shots alone. Seeing he was by himself I went over there and shot with him. As we began to talk and shoot I was telling him to be mindful of his form. Once I told him I showed him in both a slow and fast motion. Once I showed him what to be mindful of he kept practicing it over and over to the point where he became our best shooter. In just a short amount of time he improved on the court and it improved our relationship due to the fact that he saw that I was willing to do whatever it took for him to get his confidence back. With all that

being said, I feel that if myself and other educators show the younger kids that same attention and that same drive, we would be able to reach them at a much younger age. Seeing that I would be a multiple subject teacher, I would be teaching a lot of English Language Arts. I feel that is a great subject to reach a student as long as we are going over text that challenges them because kids at this age are naturally curious and will ask questions that will lead into interesting comments and conversations.

### **The Role of Critical Social Justice**

I would like critical social justice to play a monumental role in my classroom. A major reason as to why I want critical social just to play an important role in my classroom is because when I was in school it did not play a part in school at all. I believe this is a vital part in an elementary kids development because they should have a space that allows them to exercise critical thinking and critical theory when speaking on the challenges they are facing outside school. Being able to equip students with these skills and promoting the ongoing practice is very important. Another way critical social justice will play a role in my class is by the use of differentiation. I agree with the stance that not all students are the same as far as ability and that they are entitled to an equitable experience. With knowing this, some students are stronger in different ways when it comes regurgitating information. Tomlinson (2015) said that “it will not take long to notice that some students have great stores of knowledge or broad background experiences or sophisticated vocabularies or an ability to make connections that surprise you” (p. 20). On the other hand, he also states that “Some students are clearly advanced when we see them in the context of the very limited experiences life has offered them, but do not stand out as remarkable if we compare them only to their more privileged peers” (p. 20). With knowing this it

is important to give them options when it comes to the aspects of giving examples, grading so there is no comparison, and ways of showing knowledge. There was a time in college that I experienced this in my astronomy class. For our final we had to do a project on specific concepts that we learned in the class. My professor used differentiation in a way that gave us options to show if we learned the information or not. Though I do not remember every option I do remember that instead of a traditional poster and paper final I was able to design something, animate it and show it to the class as my final. This is something that will surely be a big part of my class.

### **Assets and Needs**

Part of being a great teacher is understanding that we are learning in the classroom as much as the students are. Just as the students have areas to improve as educators we do too. One strength that I feel I can bring to the table that will greatly benefit the students is I can creatively implement differentiation when applying set and proven strategies. Coming from a coaching background, I have learned how to use different strategies for different people to attain the same goal. I realized I had this specific skill previously when I read that it was an actual strategy. In the article “Principles of Instruction by” Barak Rosenshine (2012), there is a specific strategy that states “Therefore, the more effective teachers do not overwhelm their students by presenting too much new material at once. Rather, these teachers only present small amounts of new material at any time, and then assist the students as they practice this material” (Rosenshine p. 13). I remember explicitly doing this when I was helping Ryan with his jump shot. I did not bombard him by changing everything at once but put him through drills to show and then reinforce why the adjustment was necessary. Another strength that I have is that I do understand

most socio-cultural misconceptions that plague minorities today therefore I will be able to identify with them. The last strength I feel I have that will benefit my students well is that I understand how to start a new lesson with the review of a previous lesson. This is a practice I saw the head coach do a lot when I was the assistant coach. At the time I did not know this was an actual practice until I read it in "Teach Like a Champion by Doug Lemov (2015). In the book it stated "To be sure of Mastery, great Begin with the End teachers often begin lessons by circling back to anything they're not sure the class mastered the day before" (Lemov p. 59). With that being said, I feel that one weakness that I can improve upon is creating better ways to implement fun hands on activities. It has been noted that students tend to be more invested in school when they are involved in some type of hands on activity, however I want to be able to do so in a way that will be both creative and help connect them with the content. When speaking on communication I need to make sure that I speak clearly and audibly. Naturally I'm a very soft spoken individual but in order for my message to get across I need to be mindful in amplifying my voice more than usual. To continue, I also need to focus on my ability to give clear explanations. For example, a lot of times when I am talking or trying to explain something, I tend to stutter as I try to find the words to help drive my point home. I also need to make sure my socio-cultural biases do not get in the way of others so there is no miscommunication that may result in disciplinary action. Some explicit biases that may hinder my ability to be an effective teacher is mistaking certain kinds of body language for a student not listening. I personally can identify with this due to the fact that I know that I lean in my chair or sometimes look into space while listening. It is perceived that when black men do this that they are disinterested in the content that is being presented or being disrespectful towards the teacher. I believe being able to

know and build relationships with my students will serve me well with this. I feel as if my strength of being able to creatively implement differentiation when applying set and proven strategies will mitigate any negative impact because in giving them multiple options to express what they've learned, it will show them that I ultimately want them to continue to be individuals and continue to hold on to what makes them unique. Reinforcing this principle will create and maintain a positive learning environment for all of us as a whole. I also feel that being able to identify with students will serve as another tool to help mitigate any negative impact because the principles that I will be trying to teach as well as exemplify will be drawn from aspects of life that they experience every day in addition to what I experience every day .

### **Goals**

Given what I know now, I have a lot of goals for my first year of teaching. First and foremost, I want to create a classroom ecology that provides a safe space to learn. I want to set classroom norms that provoke positive reinforcement and community instead of creating rules that tell students what not to do or even how to specifically do something and ultimately take away their freedom. If I can create this kind of environment during my first year that would be amazing. Another goal I have for myself that goes hand in hand with my first goal is be as transparent as possible. I want to be to use my own experience as a guide as well as talking points of a lesson. I also want to be able to implement text into the curriculum that with stimulate my classroom on a social cultural level. I want to be able to present and implement ideas that make them question why the school system reinforces systemic oppression. I want to show them as well as their parents that there is hidden curriculum and I want to be able to express to parents what that means for their child and how they can still be successful in this system. I want to

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

expose them to coded language and show them how to decipher what is really being said. I want them to be able to identify messages about what is valued in this society and show them how to develop habits that will give them the best shot at being successful. I want to teach them to focus on their strengths but also have them realize that it is possible to improve areas that require improvement. In addition to sending this message, I want to make it clear that I am invested in their education and want to see them do well. Lastly, I want to keep a conscious effort on challenging my biases when it comes to cultural differences in behavior.

One challenge that I feel will prevent me from reaching my goals is not being clear enough with my classroom norms. In order to have a positive classroom ecology I need to be explicitly clear what these norms look like. Another Challenge that can affect my goal to use my own experiences as a guide as well as talking points in our lessons is making sure I can connect it well enough to tie it in with standards and objectives for the lesson. To continue, another challenge that will prevent me from expressing to students and parents what hidden curriculum is and how it is keeping an unjust system in place is simply trying to do so without feeling like I am overstepping a boundary. This challenge seems to be more of an internal hurdle however it seems as if I would be out of place as a first year teacher coming in and already critiquing the system. I'd like to learn how to do so in a more informative or even strategic way. A challenge that could present itself when I am trying to provide positive reinforcement would be students not believing they can reach their full potential. Lastly, I feel the challenge in keeping up the conscious effort of working on my cultural biases may come from feeling like I am being too passive. I understand that it is important to first analyze before acting in a disciplinary manner however, I



do not feel I have mastered the idea due to not finding alternative measures that keep my students in class as a result.

In conclusion, something that I like to keep in mind when being mindful of goals and daily challenges is that I am a work in progress. We all as educators and future educators have the goal of being the best we can be but we must understand that it is a process. It is not fair to be hard on ourselves every time we don't meet our own standards. Instead we must learn from challenges and mistakes. It is something that is easier said than done however, it makes the process and the journey easier and lot more enjoyable.

### **Ethnographic Narrative Part B: *My Students***

#### **Introduction**

In this following section, you will learn about three students that I had the opportunity to teach this past year. In reading about them you will learn about their demographic information, academic standing, socio-emotional development, social identity, funds of knowledge, experiences, interests, developmental considerations, and action plans that were made for each student.

#### **Case Study 1: Ashley Gomez**

In this section you will come to know one of my students Ashley Gomez. As we progress, you will be able to see what kind of person and student Ashley is. I will be going over topics such as demographic information, her academic standing, her socio-emotional development, funds of knowledge, assets and needs, as well as creating an action to promote more progression both inside and outside the classroom. My goal at the end of this section is for you to see that I

have taken all that I have learned about Ashley and will ultimately use it to better serve her as her teacher.

### **Demographic Information**

During this past school year, I have had the chance to student teach at an Elementary School in Los Angeles County. During my time here I have had the chance to meet a multitude of great people from the staff to the students. Early on I struggled to get adjust simply because it was a new place and I had to foster new relationships. However, once I got acclimated to the school and its culture I was able to thrive. Specifically, one way I was able to thrive was connecting with my students. In fact, that is what I will be elaborating on for the remainder of this case study. Although I was able to foster great relationships with all my students, I was tasked to create a case study on three students. During this case study I will be talking about my students Ashley Gomez, Michelle White, and Paul Collins. For the remainder of this section we will focus on Ashley Gomez.

My class this year was very different compared to my colleagues in the sense that while most of their classrooms had English learners, mine did not have any. In fact, there was only one in the entire third grade body. Even though my classroom did not have any English Learners, it did, however, have three students in the beginning of the year who received Response to Intervention assistance. RTI is a multi-tiered approach to early identification and support for students with learning and behavioral needs. I chose Ashley because she was one of the students in the class that received this intervention. Every morning a RTI professional would come into our classroom as we were executing our morning routine and would pull her to the side and read with her. Another reason that I chose Ashley instead of the other two students who received the

same intervention support was because she was in a special position. To begin, prior to Ashley going to the third grade, she had already been receiving intervention support for two years. This year she was only being monitored. When speaking to one of the RTI professionals, she made it clear to me that when tested, Ashley attained a passing score, however, it was not high enough to assure the RTI professionals that she would not regress to where she previously was. As a result of this, they chose to monitor her third grade year.

Ashley is a Mexican American female. During the time of my case study she was eight years old. She currently attends school in a city that neighbors where she lives. Her immediate family includes her mother, father, and her two year old sister. Ashley's parents are a young couple. Her mother is twenty-six years old. She used to work as a police officer, however, now she stays at home to take care of her and her younger sister. According to Ashley, her father works as a detective for the city where she resides and prior to that was a police officer. When talking to Ashley, I came to the conclusion that she has a good family life at home for the most part. She mentioned that she sees different people in her family on weekends and they do different activities together such as hiking. In addition to this, her mother and father keep her in extra curricular activities such as dance. The only aspect about her family that I have seen Ashley get upset and cry about is the fact that she does not get to see her father much. During our interview she stated that due to his job he works a lot of nights and is usually working by the time her day ends.

When speaking on Ashley's academic strengths, she has shown that her strongest subject is English Language Arts. This is where her highest test scores are recorded. In her Wonders ELA Program of Vocabulary and Comprehension she has scored a 42% and a 100% on a test. Her

ability to take in information about topics such as constructing responses by restating the question as a sentence and supporting your answer with textual evidence has grown tremendously. This is something that as instructors we have modeled a few times for the class and continue to model for the class. We have seen this growth by allowing the students to move around the classroom and share their responses with one another while we as instructors listen to what it is they are writing. In terms of Accelerated Reader, which is a program that promotes reading and reading comprehension, she reads at an average book level of 2.6. This means that she is reading at the sixth month of instruction at a second grade level. Our goal for Ashley is to bring her up to an average of 3.6 which is a third grade level. We have also set a goal for her and everyone else in the class to achieve a certain amount of Accelerated Reader points before Winter Break. Ashley's goal is to earn 15 points. In continuation to this, when taking Accelerated Reader tests, we have set a goal for her to achieve an eighty-five percent passing rate on each test.. Her current standing in passing rates is eighty-one percent.

Outside the classroom, her strengths include an amazing work ethic and always being willing to help. An area in which Ashley has room to improve is in math. In the program i-ready, each student took a diagnostic test that would place them into groups that would help us as instructors differentiate. It also put them into individualized programs that worked with them to get them up to grade level. When we got Ashley's diagnostic back, her results showed us that she was at a second grade level in all areas of math. This included Numbers and Operations, Algebra and Algebraic Thinking, Measurement and Data, and Geometry. There is also room for improvement in other areas in math based on results that my mentor teacher and I have accumulated over these past few months. After teaching chapter one in our math book we gave

the entire class a test to give them the chance to show us what they have learned. This also gave us a chance to see if our tactics and practices were effective. Chapter one covered topics such as addition with regrouping, subtraction with regrouping, and rounding numbers. The percentages on Ashley's test showed that she did not have a full grasp on these topics. She got fifty-six percent correct in rounding, sixty-three percent correct when adding using regrouping, and received zero correct when subtracting with regrouping. Once we received these results we pulled Ashley as well as other students who struggled on this test and were able to work with them individually. With this in mind, Ashley is very aware that she struggles in math and brings an excellent work ethic to this subject especially. Therefore, her improvement is bound to make itself evident.

#### **Assets and Needs: Academic Standing**

As previously stated, Ashley reads from an average book level of 2.6, meaning she reads at a second grade level. The goal that we have set for her is to get her to a level of 3.6 which is better understood as a third grade level. Ashley does have a learning challenge and it shows up in the form of her fluency when she is reading. The support that she receives comes from RTI professionals who have been working with her during the past two years and now come to track her progress. Due to her academic standing, there have been no requests or recommendations for her to have greater instructional challenges through GATE. GATE stands for Gifted and Talented Education. Ashley has progressed at a steady rate in regular classroom settings.

Although Ashley understands Spanish vernacular, she is classified as an English Only. During my home visit with Ashley, everyone in the household spoke English. When speaking on the results of the tests she has taken in class, Ashley has shown to be on the lower end of our

data. This holds especially true when speaking on summative and standardized tests. During our math block, Chapter two introduced our class to different kinds of graphs such as bar graphs picture graphs and also showed them how to create and read them. When given a formative assessment during a multiplication lesson in chapter three, she preformed well and showed us she was able to take in the new information. During this lesson I gave a formative assessment by way of an exit ticket. I proposed a question and them answering this question and handing me their sticky note was their ticket to go to recess. The question I proposed was if they thought multiplication and repeated addition was the same or different. Once they chose I had them explain why. Ashley as well as the entire class showed the understanding that these two concepts were the same but were not sure as to why this was the same. These answers that I was given were ok due to the fact that this particular lesson did not explain as to why they were the same. Therefore, I knew this was something that I had to show and explain during the next math lesson. When speaking on standardized test there is none as of now because this year is the first year Ashley will be taking the standardized test.

When speaking on Ashley's ability to work she does a phenomenal job. She has shown to be able to work independently as well as in groups. An example of her being able to work independently is when I give the class directions to work on their individualized lessons in I-ready. Every time I give the class this directive she does so with out hesitation. Once she gets started she stays focused and only speaks if she has a question and needs clarification. An example of her working well in groups is when we are working on our dinosaur reports. When doing their dinosaur reports, my mentor teacher and I allow the kids to work anywhere they want to in the classroom to create a collaborative environment. In doing so, they can work with their

friends and help one another. When watching Ashley in this collaborative environment I have seen her thrive. I have seen her give other students a helping hand in working with the World of Dinosaurs App, I have seen her repeat instructions to another student who had completed a section and was now on the same section she was on, and I have seen her share work with different students in the classroom. In addition to this, there are moments that I have seen Ashley choose to sit by herself to work even when we set up a collaborative environment however it does not happen on a regular basis. Whenever this does happen, it is usually because she is sad or upset about something.

Ashley's completion and quality of work is not bad at all. When turning in homework in areas such as math, all the problems are done and for the most part are usually correct. There have been a few instances when the homework would come with a note saying she still does not fully understand even though the answers would be right. When I talked with her about it she stated that her mom helps her with her homework. Her completion of classwork is also done well and turned in on time in most cases. When speaking on her classwork, a lot of what we do is either modeled and done together or done electronically. Therefore, the only time some assignments are left undone is when we have to adjust blocks of time or if she simply runs out of time. An example of this is when we work in a program called Think Central during our math block. A lot of the time either my mentor teacher or myself is taking a considerable amount of time to help her through problems and she does not get enough time to complete the entire process of what comes with Think Central. As a result of this, we give them a folder to put incomplete work in and electronic work is saved in a program queue. When time permits, we give all of our students to catch up on work that need to finish up from prior lessons. With that

being said, she typically completes all of her homework, is very good at completing work during our Language Arts block due to a lot of it being molded, but takes more time to finish work during our math block. While working on assignments whether it is in class or outside of class she always does what is expected of her. If there is ever a time of confusion it is always followed with a question. If it is about homework, she will ask the next day.

When speaking on her creativity I don't see her as being too creative mainly because she stays confined to what is asked of her. This is evident when she does creative assignments such as assignments they do in the computer lab. When doing assignments that are a bit open, such as creating a background for her dinosaur, she is one to stay confined to the example that is given. I do believe that she has an opportunity to develop creatively due to the fact that her mother and father have her in extra curricular activities such as dance. With dance, depending on what style it is, there is a lot of opportunity for creativity in terms of the creation of choreography. Her critical thinking is an aspect of her development that is improving. I say it is improving because these skills are developing when we do lessons that have her look for textual evidence and apply it to whatever the question is. It is also being developed when we have students tell us why they think that certain piece of textual evidence supports their answer. In math, it is continuing to improve when we do math lessons where they are forced to multiply to find answers. In doing so, we are making sure she understands why she is executing certain processes to find specific answers.

When speaking on her communication skills they are very typical for her age. This means that she has shown a great ability to listen, speak, and write. She has also shown to positively progress in her reading. In addition to this, she has made it evident that she understands how to



take turns with other students, help her friends, and help other students alike. She also knows how to cooperate and play with others in a socially appropriate manner. In addition to this, she can properly communicate and recognize her own feelings as well as the feelings of others.

In terms of third grade academic standards in math that she struggles with, I would say that right now she struggles the most with math standard 3.OAA.1 which is representing and solving problems involving multiplication and division. I think she struggles with this standard because she has not yet mastered multiplication in its entirety. From working with her in the math program Think Central, it is clear that she understands the concept of counting by equal groups however her mathematical ability has not develop enough yet where she is not counting individual items. In knowing that multiplication is one of the more important standards that they must have down by the end of the year, working with her will be an ongoing process that myself and my mentor teacher will be continuing to execute. In terms of this, the data suggests that she will require more help and more monitoring because Ashley has not scored well on summative assessments in chapters one and two. An academic standard that Ashley is showing great amounts of growth in is in ELA standard RL.3.1. This standard states that students must be able to ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answer. I believe she is showing this considerable amount of growth in this standard is because she is now able to draw from the text when she is demonstrating that she understands what we are reading. This process is modeled by either my mentor teacher or myself. In continuing to do this for Ashley as well as for the rest of the class, I believe she will continue to thrive and excel.

**Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity**

Ashley's current strengths behaviorally is that she is very cooperative when it comes to following through with directions. This has been very evident in the past few months that I have been in the classroom with her. There was only one time when getting her to participate was a challenge and it was during a language arts lesson. At the end of this specific lesson, the students were tasked to walk around the classroom when the music started and to stop and share their constructed responses with the closest person next to them when the music stops. When I saw her not moving during the music I took it as an opportunity to briefly ask what was wrong. When she told me what it was I was able to get her to participate by telling her that we would talk more about it when the rest of the class went to recess. Ashley does not have any explicit areas of improvement behaviorally due to the fact that she is not very disruptive in class. However, if I were to point out something, I would say that she could improve in her ability to take in directions initially when students around her become a distraction. Though this is typical behavior for a student at this age, there are times when the class's attention is being held by something or someone else for any reason. This then makes it challenging to maintain focus on what is being taught in the classroom. As this deals with self-regulation, I believe this is something that can improve over time. According to Smith, Fisher, and Frey (2017), "self-regulation is the product of trial and errors [and] missteps are essential to its refinement" (p.54). Socially, I have seen Ashley thrive. She works extremely well with people. This was evident to me when I saw her working with another student who was teaching her how to make a video for her dinosaur report that she was trying to complete. She also thrives outside of academics socially. I have seen instances where she took the time to help other students in the class look for something that they've lost, I have seen her try to help others in the computer lab when other

students did not know what to do once they had completed an assignment, and I have also seen her help students clean their desks at the end of the day when we are packing up. Some room for improvement that I have seen could be beneficial for Ashley is to try to develop a mindset of trying not to let outside factors and family factors effect her ability to be social with her friends. I say this because when I have seen her contributing to a social and collaborative setting, it is easy to see how she positively adds to the environment. However, just like in the example that I previously gave, I have seen her shut down due to thinking about family situations and other external factors. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, this is a typical response for anyone at any age when something may not being going right in their personal lives. However, she does a lot for a social and collaborative environment therefore, I believe if she learned this skill and improved upon it that it will help her immensely.

Ways in which I can provide opportunities for Ashley to learn about socio-emotional development aspects such as self-awareness, self-management, growth mindset, social awareness, and relationship skills is by taking advantage of learning moments as well as implementing some of these concepts in my lesson when I see fit. I see Ashley learning from teaching moments because she looks for opportunities to speak with adults she looks up to in one on one settings. This became obvious to me when I started conducting interviews. These interviews were conducted to help me get a better understanding of what kind of person and student Ashley was so I could serve her better in the classroom. These interviews were executed in our classroom after school with my mentor teacher who was also present in the classroom. As a whole, we conducted three interviews. During these interviews, I was able to learn things about Ashley that I may have not been aware of if they did not take place. I was able to learn about

things such as her favorite subjects, what she wants to be when she grows up, her family life and so on. With that being said, I believe that conducting those individual interviews acted as a catalysts for helping her and myself develop an even better teacher student relationship. I am now able to give Ashley advice and insight to some of my real life experiences because of the fact that she seeks that kind of guidance. It doesn't stop with me either. There have been many of times when I have seen her go up to my mentor teacher with questions unrelated to school. I have even seen her go to a specific area in the classroom expecting her to come over and help her. With that being said, I can also implement the topic of social emotional development in content areas such as English Language Arts by making these connects with some of the characters in the stories we read.

When speaking on Ashley's self concept I believe this is something that she struggles with in school. I say this because during our interview I asked her about this. In doing so I explained what self-concept was and she proceeded to tell me that she did not think that she was smart. She said this because she understands that school does not come as naturally to her as it may to some of the other students in the classroom. Therefore, I am creating an inclusive environment that affirms her self concept by continually saying things and extending positive gestures that promote confidence in herself. Whenever there are times that Ashley tells me a score that she got I am either extending a good job and a high five or I am encouraging her to not give up on the process of learning.

#### **Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge**

Ashley comes from a bilingual household. Throughout the year, she has shown great passion when it has come to her culture and traditions that fall in line with it. There have been

many times in our classroom where she has taught me different Spanish words as well as pictures of different celebrations. I was able to find the source of this passion by visiting her at home.

During the home visit, her mother stated that it was very important to her that her children understood and knew how to speak in Spanish. From my own observations, it has been clear to me that Ashley understands Spanish, however, it has not been communicated to me by her or her parents in any way that she knows how to speak the language aside from a few words. However, when we do a lesson and she recognizes something from her culture she does not hesitate to talk about it. I personally enjoy this because it reinforces that we have a student centered classroom.

According to Milner, Cunningham, o'Connor, & Gold Kestenber (2019), "a student-centered approach builds on students' assets and transfers power from the teacher to students, positioning teachers as facilitators and learners as well" (Pg. 99). As a family they celebrate all the holidays that we see noted on the calendar. This includes Thanksgiving, Christmas, Halloween, and so on.

In their household, education is something that is taken seriously. While conducting my home interview, Ashley's parents explained to me how they felt it was important for their daughter to do well in school because when they were in school they did not do well. Ashley's parents education ended after high school although they do have aspirations to go back and complete college. In doing so they feel it will set a great example for both of their daughters. While continuing our conversation about school, I began to ask them what they felt my role should be for her outside of academics. Her father began to tell me that he would like me to be a voice of reason for the children. He said that he hopes that I would be understanding of some of the realities that some of these kids face outside of school and can give them a sense of hope and

direction. He also stated that he is confident that I could do this because I am in a school that has a lot of practices set in place that allows me to do so.

**Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interests, and Developmental Considerations**

Ashley is very specific about her dreams and aspirations. When conducting my interview with her, one of the questions that I asked her was what she wanted to be when she grows up. Without any hesitation she told me that she wanted to be a lawyer. When considering her parent's background it is not surprising that the field of law interests her. Previously, her mother worked as a police officer before making the decision to stay home to take care of her as well as her two year old sister. Her father similarly also has a background in Law Enforcement. He previously worked as a police officer and is currently a detective. Her biggest interest during this part of her life is dance. Dance is an extra curricular activity that her parents have her in during the majority of the time she is not in school. During our interview she told me that she wants to become a really good dancer.

When asking about some major events that may have impacted her she began to tell me about a memory of her sister being born. She stated that she remembered this because she wanted to have a sister. Another memory she mentioned was when she got her first tooth pulled. Though these are good memories for her I do feel as if there are moments developing today that could be viewed as negative in the future. During a conversation with Ashley, she was mentioning that there are times when she gets sad because she does not get to see her dad as often as she would like to. She mentioned that her dad worked a lot of nights and is usually gone when she gets home from school and when she gets ready for school the next day. This is something that I have not seen manifest itself in a negative way but brings some concern to my

mind when I think about her. In the same breath, when I asked her about who she looked up to the most she said her mom and dad. She says she looks up to her mother because she takes care of her and her sister at home. She also said that she looks up to her dad because “he has powers to help people.” In continuation with my interview, I proceeded to ask Ashley how she felt about school. She told me that she likes coming to school because it gives her a chance to learn. I connected this response to the tremendous work ethic that I had seen from her throughout the semester. Her background has shaped her view of school in a positive way. Culturally, in her family, education is valued greatly. Her parents both agree that education is something that is valued and this has been taught to her from her parents. Economically, a lot of her basic needs are taken care of for her. Therefore a lot of the materials she needs for school are provided for her and she doesn’t have to figure out how to deal with school without having things such as notebooks and pencils. Linguistically, she does not view school as a place that undervalues her knowledge of Spanish vernacular. This is mainly because our classroom ecology is one that welcomes and celebrates all kinds of ethnicities and cultures.

Ashley stated that she feels the most comfortable inside our classroom because she “likes when we teach and likes that we help her.” When asking her where she felt the least comfortable she did not have a specific area. This shows she is comfortable at school as a whole. Those that are in her support network are her mother, her father, aunt, grandparents, myself, and my mentor teacher. She displays typical social-emotional and child development. Socially, she has shown to have positive relationships with adults around campus as well as her peers in the classroom. She has a proven ability to take turns, help others when she can, cooperate with others during group work, and play with other kids in a positive manner. Emotionally, she has the ability to recognize

and understand her own feelings and actions as well as recognize those of other people. She has also shown how her own feelings can affect herself as well as others. In her ability to self-regulate, she has shown to be able to express thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in socially appropriate ways. She also has the ability to calm herself down when she gets excited. Lastly, she has shown an ability to persist when working on difficult tasks. Data sources include observations in the classrooms, conversations with Ashley, and conversations with her parents.

### **Action Plan**

Given all the data that I have gathered on Ashley, I have many things in mind that I will do to improve her proficiency. I will begin to increase her proficiency in math by developing more opportunity for assistance. As of now, after we teach during our math block we have students practice on a program called Think Central. When working in Think Central, either myself or my mentor teacher work with her in a one on one setting to make sure that she is taking in the new concept. In addition to this we have them use a program called i-ready which is an adaptive learning program. To take all of this a step further, I will consult my mentor teacher about creating new opportunities for her as well as all of the rest of our students a chance to get more instruction. Another thing I plan on doing is implementing use of manipulatives for her. My reasoning for this is because with her background in dance, her mind is trained to the visual aspect of learning due to learning the choreography to the dance steps. Therefore, allowing her to see these concepts visually may help her. When describing this approach to her parents, they seemed to think this would be a great idea due to the fact that she does a great job in learning her dance choreography. They agreed that implementing a visual component in math just as there is in her dance could benefit her a lot.



To improve her efficiency in Language Arts I plan on implementing more practices on top of what is already happening for her. For example, Ashley is currently getting RTI assistance and our current goal for her is for her to read at a third grade level. In addition to this, as a requirement for their homework every night, we have them read their Accelerated Reader books for twenty minutes a night. To improve her comprehension proficiency, I am going to have her give me a daily summary of what she read the night before. This will also be done orally. In doing so, I believe it will help increase her fluency, improve her reading comprehension, and improve her ability to find main ideas and key details. When I explained this to her parents they both agreed that implementing this into her nightly reading would be a great strategy especially because it would help reflect positively her RTI monitoring. Other instructional strategies include.

Her socio-emotional development currently is at a great place. I believe as of now what she needs in positive reinforcement to maintain and support all that she has shown. When thinking about Ashley, I think what needs to be supported and built up is her self concept. Due to the fact that she struggles in school she believes that she is not smart. This is not the case. School does not come easy to a lot a students for a plethora of reasons. I believe that I can help improve this by telling her to allow herself time to grow and learn. I want her to understand that the concepts that we are teaching them are sometimes complicated and that it is ok if she does not understand them as soon as we teach it. According to Milner, Cunningham, O'Connor, & Gold Kestenberg (2019) "warm demanders expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential" (Pg. 111). To further assess her progress from this moment forward, I will continue to look at formative, summative, and standardized

testing results. In addition to this, I will inquire about her to the RTI professionals who are monitoring her to make sure that she continues to improve and not digress. I will convey the progress to her parents during parent teach conferences as well as give them updates via email.

### **Case Study 2: Michelle White**

In this case study you will come to know one of my students Michelle White. As this case study progresses, you will be able to see what kind of person and student Michelle is. I will be going over topics such as demographic information, her academic standing, her socio-emotional development, funds of knowledge, assets and needs, as well as creating an action to promote more progression both inside and outside the classroom. My goal at the end of this case study is for you to see that I have taken all that I have learned about Michelle and will ultimately use it to better serve her as her teacher.

#### **Demographic Information**

The next student that I chose to do in my case study is Michelle White. Michelle is a Mexican American female student who is also in my third grade class. This is currently her second year in third grade. She is ten years old and is currently living in the same city where she goes to school. Her family consists of her father, stepmother, uncle, grandmother, her four sisters and three brothers. She is a part of a blended family. She, her brother, and two sisters stayed with their biological father and their stepmother also has two sons and two daughters. All of the kids in the family understand that they are a part of blended families except for her. When she was born, the families were already blended, therefore she has grown up under the impression that her stepmother is her biological mother. I chose Michelle to be a part of my case study for several reasons. The first reason as to why I chose her is because of her IEP. Before the school

year started, I read all the paper work on Michelle's IEP and accommodations. Based on her IEP, she has a deficit in auditory and phonological processing. It significantly impacts her academics in all areas to the extent that she requires specialized supports and services. The accommodations that were made for her include being seated near the front of the classroom. With me being the instructor I must check in to clarify directions as needed, set up text-to-speech for reading passages, shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts, and shorten spelling test to focus on mastering the most functional words.

The second reason I chose Michelle to be a part of my case study was because of how fast our relationship developed from the first day. On the first day I made it a priority to get to know her due to the importance of her IEP. Therefore, after introducing myself I spent a lot of time helping her and working with her as much as I could and she was very receptive to that. She is someone who I see in the hallways every morning when I get to the school site and someone who I see hanging out after school gets out everyday. Due to this, our teacher to student relationship began to grow organically. Inside the classroom, one of her strengths include her being a hard worker. Her hard work is especially evident when she is working on math. During every lesson she is always making sure she does her Think Central assignments with either my mentor teacher or myself. Another strength of hers is that she perseveres whenever she is struggling. One way she perseveres in math is by using manipulatives or visuals of some sort. This was something that we did not have to suggest to her to try. It was a natural response to what she was going through. I saw this for the first time when we were working on addition with regrouping numbers. She did not excel in adding numbers in her head, so what she did was take

the markers out of the cylinder that we have in the middle of the table groups and start counting them.

Her strengths outside of the classroom include her ability to be empathetic towards her classmates and her desire to give a helping hand. There have been many times when I have seen her stand up for students when there were issues about the pillows in the class library, and she was able to show understanding towards students who were being mistreated. She also loves to help me throughout the day. An example of this is when the day comes to an end she always helps me pass out homework folders. She also offers to help any time I am passing out papers, cleaning the classroom library, cleaning other people's desks, and even likes to open and close the door for me so I do not have to.

With that being said, she has a lot of room for growth. One area where she can improve is in her reading ability. At the beginning of the year, we had the class take their Accelerated Reader Diagnostic Test so we could find out what grade level everyone was reading at. Michelle's results said that she was reading at a second grade level. In addition to this, her vocabulary and reading comprehension ability also has room to grow. On her Wonders ELA program that covers vocabulary and comprehension, she has shown to score an average of thirty-five percent. On her weekly spelling test, she receives an average of thirty-five percent of questions right and is therefore at an approaching level. In addition to this, her mathematic ability can also improve. Thus far, she has covered three chapters of math and currently has test scores back from two chapter tests. During chapter one, we covered addition with regrouping, subtraction with regrouping, and rounding. On the addition and subtraction sections she scored seventy-five percent. In the rounding section, she scored six percent. During chapter two, we

studied data. We looked at content such as graphs and how to read them. When tested on this content she received eight percent. Outside of the classroom, her main area for growth is the way she articulates herself. Although we do not put down the way she talks, in terms of what the world sees as proper American English, she has room to improve. In having conversations with her, it is obvious that she gets mixed up with things such as Mr. and Mrs. when addressing me specifically.

**Assets and Needs: Academic Standing.**

As previously stated, in reading she is currently at a second grade level. Our goal for her is to end the year reading at a third grade level. After reading a book, all of our students are told to take an Accelerated Reader test. This test allows them to show us that they are comprehending what they are reading. Michelle has scored an average of sixty-five percent. Our goal for her is for her to get eighty-five percent or more of these questions right. Currently, she has the goal to attain ten Accelerated Reader points, and she currently has seven point eight points. In addition to this, as previously stated, when working on her Wonders ELA Program which covers both vocabulary and comprehension, she has regularly achieved an average score of thirty-five percent. On her weekly spelling test, she has shown to get an average of fifty-five percent of these answers right which puts her at an approaching level. It is important to know that she gets a different spelling list than the rest of the class, however it covers the same spelling principles. This makes a difference because this new list is shorter. It still focuses on the same spelling principle however it gives less words. In doing this it helps her attain the principle more effectively. Being tested on these words does not look any different because she will still use her

iPad to go through the same process that the rest of the class goes through. The only aspect of her test that will look different is the fact she is given testing accommodations.

Although she is not my significant life case study, she does have significant life experience that contributes to her academic standing. As previously stated Michelle's family consists of her father, stepmother, uncle, grandmother, her four sisters and three brothers. In addition to being a blended family, their resources are limited. Since her mother and father start work in the middle of the day, when she is home she is left with her grandmother, uncle, brothers, and sisters. She has previously stated to me that she does a lot of her homework by herself. Her English classification is English Only. As of today, there is no data on formative testing due to the fact that whenever we have done it in our classroom, she has been outside of the classroom in speech. Throughout the day she is usually outside of the classroom for a little bit of our Language Arts block as well as a considerable amount of time during our Math block. As previously stated, on summative tests she has received an average of sixty-five percent; on her Accelerated Reader test, an average of thirty-five percent on her Wonders ELA vocabulary and comprehension; and an average of fifty-five percent on her weekly spelling test, which put her at an approaching level. When speaking on her results on standardized testing, there are no results due to the fact that third grade is the first year they take the standardized test.

Michelle's ability to work independently has shown to be an excellent way for her to take in new concepts. An example of this is when we work on programs such as i-Ready. When doing this, we instruct each student to do this independently at their desk. Every time we do this she has always shown a great amount of focus and does well in completing different lessons. With that being said, her ability to work independently is much better than her ability to work in

groups. I say this because there have been many times where I have seen her focus come in and out. An example of this was when I was working with Michelle as well as two other boys in my class. She had a hard time focusing on what we were doing as a group because of what other groups around us were doing. Another example of this was when we were in our math groups and I gave the class a set of options. Michelle chose to play a math game with myself and another student in the class called "Race to 100" with base ten blocks. We could not get her to focus on playing the game as she chose to focus on what others chose to play.

When speaking on the type of work she completes, she has shown to have a satisfactory effort in completing the work, however she has not meet third grade standards. The test scores previously stated show that the work is being completed. However, even though work is being completed and turned in on time, some of it is being incorrectly completed. The report card presented at her parent teacher conference shows that third grade standards are not being met in reading, writing, language, measurements and data, and number operations. With that being said, even though she is not meeting standards yet, she is showing a lot of improvement and gives maximum effort day in and day out. When speaking on her overall creativity, I would not say that her creative ability is outstanding. I say this mainly because in observing the classroom dynamic that my mentor teacher and myself have set up, it does not give our students much of an opportunity to be creative. Therefore, I have not seen what her work would look like in a creative setting. I do believe, however, that she has great creative potential based on the dinosaur drawing that she did in the computer lab. Although the basis of the dinosaur drawing was completed with confined project restrictions, her ability to find different tools in the program software that they were using helped make her drawing more appealing and stand out. Not only was it impressive

but it set apart her drawing from the rest of the class in my eyes. Her critical thinking ability is an area that will grow over time for her, however, at this very moment is not as strong as others in the classroom. Her communication skills are up to par with the other kids in the class therefore she has no problems in communicating anything to anyone.

In terms of academic content that she struggles with, I would thus far suggest that Michelle struggles across the board. Although her best subject is math, she still struggles in math and language arts. I believe that there are many reasons as to why she still struggles. The first reason I believe she struggles is due to her difficulties in reading. There have been many times where I have seen her struggle in reading directions or mispronouncing key words in the directions. Another reason I believe she struggles is because she does not get a lot of help at home due to the fact that her parents begin their work days when she is getting out of school. Lastly, I believe she struggles because of her IEP. The data suggests that although she is struggling across the board, she has shown considerable improvement. Such words are also coming from her speech teacher. Therefore as the year goes on and we continue to help Michelle, I believe that she will continue to improve. A specific area that she is beginning to excel in is studying numbers in base 10. This is a concept that we focus on in our math groups that the third grade cohort made in order to differentiate instruction.

#### **Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity**

Michelle has come into the classroom with many strengths both behaviorally and socially. Behaviorally, she has been pleasure to have in class due to the fact that she gets a long with everyone. Her inviting personality is a key factor in that. She is also eager to give a helping hand and that is a positive trait that she adds to our classroom ecology. An example of this is



when it is time to pack up to go home. After I give directions on what to do she is always asking if she can pass something out or write the homework down for me. Her social strengths include always making herself available to help other students. In addition to this, she is also open to being helped by her classmates. Outside of the classroom, there has never been an issue when it came to interacting with her peers or other teachers.

One area in which I believe she can grow is behaviorally. There have been times when her attention has been misguided and becomes distracted. An example of this is happening is when there are items out such as iPads or coloring worksheets. Though these things serve a purpose in lessons, there have been times when it was time to be attentive to an instructor or even another teacher, and she would choose to not shift her focus. Though these instances do not occur often enough to the point to where it is a disciplinary issue, it is an area that I believe has potential to grow and improve. An area socially where I believe she can grow in is when it comes to her ability to communicate verbally. Michelle has no trouble in trying to communicate what she is trying to say, however, there are times where she struggles in the formulation of her words. With that being said, I also believe that this is something that she will continue to develop in as we go through our literacy blocks and introduce new words as well as sentence structure.

I can provide Michelle with opportunities to learn about socio-emotional development by looking for teaching moments. With having developed a strong relationship with her, I have learned that she is similar to Ashley in the sense that when we have one on one interviews and conversations, she is very receptive to what we are talking about. Therefore for example, if there ever is a time when something happens and she has a tough time managing her emotions or does

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

something out of impulse, using that particular situation as a learning moment would get through to her a lot better than just simply treating it as a disciplinary matter.

I can provide Michelle with opportunities to learn about self-awareness when we are talking about past assignments. With self-awareness dealing with knowing our own strengths and areas that need improvement, using past assignments could teach self-awareness by providing constructive feedback. During the parent teacher conference with her this is exactly what we did. First, we asked her what she felt that she was strong in. Then we asked her where she felt that she needed help in. Her being able to answer this question showed us that she had a strong sense of self-awareness. On our part as instructors, I believe it is important to show all students what they are strong in first because it gives them a sense of accomplishment. After you do that then I think it is important to show them where they can improve. According to Milner, Cunningham, O'Connor, & Gold Kestenber (2019) "warm demanders expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential" (Pg. 111).

Creating teaching moments is also a great way to teach her about self-management. As previously stated, she does not have a lot of moments when she is distracted however, when they do happen it hinders her learning experience. I can create teaching moments out of this by simply praising her for being on task and then explain to her what fighting distractions can do for her. Michelle already has good self-management skills however, more refining of this particular skill will show promising results as she continues her educational career.

I can teach her about the concept of a growth mindset by explaining to her why each lesson is important. Though I do not have this problem with Michelle specifically, there have been times when I have had to explain why it is important to learn multiplication facts to a few

students in our classroom. In telling them that learning this multiplication facts will help them in the following grades, it provoked more focus out of my students. Therefore, I believe that when we explicitly make it clear how what we are teaching them is going to help them, developing a growth mindset would be a natural response. Another way I can teacher her about having a growth mindset is to teacher her to be mindful of what she tells herself. There have been times when I have been helping her and she says “I can’t do it”. Every time she says this I remind her that even though she is struggling now and does not yet understand, with continued practice she will get better.

Social awareness is something that I believe I can teach to Michelle’s parents and then it can be installed into her. One thing that I have struggled with in my class this year is making hidden curriculums explicit to my students. I think that one of the reasons it has been hard is because conversations about social inequality do not come up often in my classroom. Therefore I believe that giving all parents the facts about hidden curriculum will give them an idea of what their child may face in their educational careers. This is something that I did in my home visit with Ashley.

I can teach Michelle about relationship skills by creating moments that reinforce the good relationship skills that I have already seen out of her. As previously stated, she does not have any problems when it comes to making friends and working with different people in our classroom. Therefore, I believe positive reinforcement of the way she interacts with her peers will show her that she has done a good job creating and maintaining relationships.

Michelle has a strong self concept about herself. She believes that she is smart and has the capabilities to continue to learn and develop. In addition to this, she takes great responsibility

for trying to learn new concepts. Due to this, it makes teaching her more effective. According to Hattie & Zierer “Aiming for students to have agency in their learning is indeed a major aim in learning, but this does not mean we leave them alone; rather ask them to take control over their learning, but work with them in gaining this agency” (Pg. 42) Though she is not aware that she has a disability, she is aware that she struggles. Therefore as her instructor, I appreciate how hard she works everyday. I want to make sure that she continues to look at herself in this regard. I create an inclusive environment for her by making sure that she as well as all students are heard. I do this by using equity cards and by holding as many class discussions about all topics that we cover throughout the day. In doing all of these things, it shows her and all the other kids in my class that their voices are heard and their opinions matter.

#### **Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge**

Due to external factors a home visit was not able to be scheduled outside of school. With that being said, I did get to sit down with Michelle’s stepmother and ended up learning a lot during our exchange. To begin, she is apart of a blended family. They are very in tune with their family history and celebrate holidays such as Day of The Dead as well as other holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and so on. Although they are a Mexican American Family, the only people in the household who speak Spanish are her grandmother, stepmother, and father. There did not seem to a push for the kids to learn how to speak in Spanish even though they understood it when it was spoken to them.

When asking her stepmom to describe her, she said that she was hardworking and requires a lot of attention when it came to making sure that she understood the concepts that she was being tasked to learn. I agreed with a lot of what was being said because I had seen a lot of

her handwork in the classroom and there were a lot of times when she sat next to my mentor teacher or I just so we could make sure that she could readily access us when she needed help. This confirmed to me that my mentor teacher and I did a great job in identifying with her when it came to that particular need. It also showed me that we took the right approach in helping her and it will be something that we will continue to do for her.

Her families views on education was inspiring for me to hear. Similar to Ashley's parents, Michelle's parents education did not go beyond high school. What inspired me about this part of our conversation was that her stepmother began to mention that as she continued to grow and get older she realized how important education was. She also began to say that going back to school is something she thinks about because not only is it something she wants to accomplish for herself but it will set a great example for her kids. Due this, they put a lot of emphasis on telling their kids to try their best at school. Through seeing Michelle everyday, it is clear that she is listening. Although she is not quite meeting third grade standards, she has shown a lot of improvement from the first day that I met her.

During my conversation with the stepmother, it was said that she feels that the school should focus on educating the kids as well as providing them with the skills that they need in order to be successful in taking the next steps in their lives. This is something that I completely agreed with. I connected her answer to this to the role of the teacher because this is something that I aim to do everyday when I step into the classroom with each of my students. My goal is to make sure they are prepared to leave my classroom. Where I was able to take her answer a little further was to make sure I prepared them both academically as well as socially. I think I made it

clear to hear that I held it equally important to prepare them for what they would see in life as well as what they'd experience in school.

**Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interest, and Developmental Considerations**

Michelle's dreams and aspirations as of today seem to go in many directions. To me, this is to be expected because kids at this age are dreamers. For example, when I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she said she wanted to be a runner, a dancer, and she wants to sell ice cream. What I found interesting about her mentioning dance was that she told me she had never done it before. Due to this answer, I took it as her having a deep interest in dance however she's never had the chance to partake in it. When speaking on her interest in working in ice cream she said her parents did not want her doing this because they knew someone who was kidnapped and that person sold ice cream.

A major event that has effected her life did not happen to her but is being guarded from her. As previously stated, she is a part of a blended family. She comes from her biological father with her brothers and sisters. In addition to this, her stepmother also brings kids into the family. The entire situation of what happened with her biological mom was not given to me, however, what I do know is that she has caused many dangerous situations. Due to this, her father has been given 100% custody of his kids. In addition to this, Michelle has grown up thinking that her stepmother is actually her biological mother. I was told by her stepmother that her and her father both made the decision to raise her with this understanding to protect her from what could be. With that being said, in all her unknowing, she says that the most influential people in her life are her parents because "they are always there for me."

Michelle has been on record saying that she likes and enjoys school. She told me during our interview that her favorite subjects are math and science. She refers to science as “Doug” because when we are in our science block, Doug is the speaker in some of the videos that we watch. She especially likes science because of the interactive element that comes with it and feels the most successful when doing it. In addition to this, she also told me that she feels that she struggles in Language Arts. From my observations during this block, I believe her disability and her difficulty with reading has a lot to do with why she struggles. From my experience, her background has positively influenced her attitude towards school in many ways. With her parents always reminding her to work hard and try her best, it is clear to me that she starts and finishes the day with this in mind. In addition to this, even though there are a few people in her home who are bilingual, there does not seem to be an undermining or a sense of dissatisfaction from anyone when it comes to what we do, teach, or celebrate in our classroom. I feel this is mainly because our classroom ecology is one that is accepting to different cultures and views on life.

Throughout the school day, she stated that she feels the most comfortable in our classroom. She states “I feel more comfortable in our classroom because you are in there to help us”. She also stated that there is no particular place on campus where she feels uncomfortable. I was personally glad to hear this because it confirmed to me that my mentor teacher and I have created a place where our kids feel safe and the school as a whole has created an environment and culture where students feel supported.

Michelle displays typical social-emotional and child development. Socially, she has shown to have positive relationships with adults around campus as well as her peers in the classroom. She has a proven ability to take turns, help others when she can, cooperate with

others during group work, and play with other kids in a positive manner. Emotionally, she has the ability to recognize and understand her own feelings and actions as well as recognize those of other people. She has also shown the ability to recognize how her own feelings can affect herself as well as others. In her ability to self-regulate, she has shown to be able to express thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in socially appropriate ways. There is still room for improvement in this area but this will come as she continues to develop. She has shown the ability to calm herself down when she gets excited and she has shown an ability to persist when working on difficult tasks. Data sources include observations in the classrooms, conversations with Michelle, conversations with my mentor teacher, our speech analyst, and Michelle's, stepmother.

### **Action Plan**

Thus far, it has been a pleasure taking a closer look at Michelle as both a person and a student. In doing this, our relationship has grown stronger and I have seen immense growth in her abilities. With that being said, there are a few things that we will be doing in order to support her academically. To begin, we will continue to execute the accommodations that are present on her IEP and she will continue to go to speech throughout the day as this has also been key to her improvement throughout the years.

When it comes to her proficiency in math, we will continue to have her use Think Central and I-Ready just as the rest of the class does. Where we will make the adjustment for her is implementing a lot more one on one differentiated instruction during this block. In doing this, we will make sure we are focusing on developing an understanding of the concept rather than trying to get through the classwork before the block ends. This is something that her parents agreed would help her. As a result, it may give her more homework at night due to some of the



classwork not being finished, but it will result in her having a deeper understanding of the concept.

When it comes to Language Arts, I plan to implement a lot more student directed activities. This is something that I feel will help all of my students including Michelle. Something that we have been focusing on a lot during this block is creating constructed responses. Prior to making this adjustment, I would simply model the process of how to make them. Although this was good for some of the students, it did not show to be as effective for all. Therefore, creating an activity that will allow them to direct me on how to create my response could result in better retention of how to create these constructed responses.

Her socio-emotion development is in a great place and is continuing to develop everyday. I believe one thing that I should do in order to help her articulate her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors is to have her continue to be mindful of what she is learning in speech. In doing so I believe it is important not to undermine how she currently speaks. She does not struggle in terms of word usage but more so in terms of structure. There have been times when she has spoken to me and her words begin to get mixed up. As a result of this the structure of her sentences were articulated incorrectly. Therefore, making sure that she is mindful of what she is learning in speech will help keep her accountable in keeping sentence structure in mind when she is communicating with people.

In terms of all this, evidence that I will collect to track her progress will include test scores, scores from classroom assignments, conversations from her teachers in speech, and conversations from what my mentor teacher has observed from her. We plan on convey Michelle's progress to her parents by way of our next parent teacher conference. I chose to do it

this way because this will give us enough time to accumulate enough data on her. With that being said, based on the progress that she has previously made, there is no doubt in my mind that she will continue to improve overtime. Lastly, I want to improve communication with her parents. As previously stated, we could not schedule a home visit due to external forces. With this being something that I would still love to do, I feel that our baseline communication needs to improve in order to help her. One way I plan on improving it by using Apps such as ClassDojo to stay in contact with them. In knowing her parents start work at odd hours, communicating with them through technology will allow my messages to get to them in a more feasible way. According to the blog post 9 Techniques for Building Solid Parent-Teacher Relationships “Parents and teachers both are extremely busy, so I use technology to stay in touch” Williams, K (2019).

### **Case Study 3: Paul Collins**

#### **Introduction**

In this case study you will come to know one of my students Paul Collins. As this case study progresses, you will be able to see what kind of person and student Paul is. I will be going over topics such as demographic information, his academic standing, his socio-emotional development, funds of knowledge, assets and needs, as well as creating an action to promote more progression both inside and outside the classroom. My goal at the end of this paper is for you to see that I have taken all that I have learned about Paul and will ultimately use it to better serve him as his teacher.

#### **Demographic Information**

The final student that I had the pleasure of conducting a case study with was Paul Collins. Paul is an Asian American eight year old boy who was new to our school site this year. Family

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

members that I have met thus far include his brother, who is also a new student at our school, his mother, and his father. Though I have not met them yet, he mentions his grandparents on his mother's side of the family being involved in this part of his life as well. Paul comes from a bilingual household where they speak Chinese. In addition to this, he has shown a tremendous bilingual ability and at times translates for his father who has shown to struggle when speaking English. Paul lives in the same city he goes to school in however, with his parents being divorced, he goes from his mother's house to his father's house frequently throughout the week.

The reason I chose Paul to be a part of my study was for two main reasons. The first reason was that he was new to the school. When school started he did not know anyone and he was unfamiliar with his surroundings. Therefore I was able to document how he became acclimated to his new environment. The second reason why I chose him was based on behaviors that I saw from him. When I first met Paul, he was very detached from everything and everyone. Seeing this kind of behavior immediately caught my attention because in my time around kids, I had never seen this. Therefore, with this part of my case study focusing on children with traumatic life experience, I felt he would be a good choice. However, at the time when I chose him, I did not know that his behavior was a result of what he was going through at home.

Paul has shown to be a strong student academically as well as socially. Academically, he has been on record stating that his favorite subject is science. He has shown to be proficient in science and has stated he likes when we do science because of the interactive element that it contains. This is something that he has in common with a lot of other students in our classroom including the other focus students in my case study. He also proved to be proficient in our music classes as well as our physical education classes. In addition to this, he is also a strong in

Language Arts as well as Math. Socially, he has come a long way. In the beginning of the year he was a very shy kid who did not want to be apart of the group. This was partially because of the fact that he was new to our school and did not know anyone. I remember there being times when I would direct the class to meet me on the carpet for a subject transition and there would be times when he would either not come or would take a long time to do so. There were also times where if he did join us he would get up and walk over to the classroom library. As time continued to pass, I saw him get more and more comfortable. Almost immediately he began to make friends. Not only did he make friends but his new friends began to introduce him to other people and include him in activities.

With Paul being able to preform so well across the board academically and thrive socially, I would say that his main area for improvement would be his attentiveness inside the classroom. Speaking on his attentiveness can become somewhat of a complicated subject and can be tough to gage exactly what is keeping him from being inattentive at times. At times it can be hard to decipher whether it comes from a disinterest in the content or whether it comes from his thoughts about the complications that he faces at home. What my mentor teacher and I do to make sure he has an outlet to talk about what he is going through is have a lot of one on one talks. In addition to this, we also check on him throughout the day. This is especially true if we see him with his head down or see a look of detachment on his face.

#### **Assets and Needs: Academic Standing**

Although he has bilingual capabilities, he is classified as an English Only. When it comes to his ability to preform on different types of assessments he does fairly well. The types of formative assessments that we do are more times than not an exit ticket. He has shown to

perform well on these and if there is any confusion about what is being asked, he will make sure to get clarification before he tries to answer. In addition to this, he has also shown a great ability to perform well on summative assessments. When tested on his vocabulary and comprehension, he has earned an average of eighty-three percent. When being tested on his spelling words, he has earned an average of eighty-four percent. When being tested on addition with regrouping, subtraction with regrouping, and rounding in chapter one, he was able to achieve one hundred percent on the chapter test. When being tested on chapter two in our math block, he was able to score eight-one percent. In this chapter we focused on data. Therefore, we learned how to read different graphs and interpret different sets of data. In chapter three, which was their first introduction to multiplication, he was able to achieve a total score of seventy-nine percent on the chapter test.

Paul has good working habits when he is at school and they continue to improve everyday. Based on my observations, I notice that he works more efficiently independently. When working independently, he is able to keep himself free of distractions and even completes his work in a timely manner. Where he has room to improve is in his discipline when working in groups. When it comes to small groups of three he does well. He and the few people are still able to focus their energy on the task at hand in a productive manner. However, once group sizes turn into four or more, he gets distracted very easily. An example of this happening was when I had the class participate in a gallery walk during a math lesson. All groups had four people in them except for one. The group that Paul was apart of had four. While doing the gallery walk, he would often walk away from the group, go lay down in the classroom library, or go over to

another group and talk to his friend. Although this is not frequent activity, it does happen on occasion.

His work completion has improved as the year has gone on. In the beginning of the year, my mentor teacher began to notice a pattern with him. There would be a span of one or two weeks where he would be on top of all of his work and would complete everything that we do in class as well as what we send home. Then in the following week or two, he would not do any of his homework or it would come back incomplete. As we further investigated this issue we had come to find out that he spends a lot of time going back and forth between his mother's and his father's house. He gets a lot of help with his work at his mother's house because his grandparents are there to help him as his mother goes to the hospital to get treatments. When he is at his father's house he does not get much help due to the fact that his father works a lot and he is home alone. We were able to get him to improve on his homework completion by making sure that he understood the concepts that we were going over as well as have a conversation with his mother during parent teacher conferences. During this conversation we expressed that we understood what was going on at home and that we were creating a safe environment for him to talk about what was going on. His mother appreciated this and said she would make sure that he continues to improve in his ability to complete his work.

As he is continuing to improve on his work completion, he has shown a great ability to complete tasks as directed. There has been many examples of this. One example that comes to mind is when we direct our students to work on Think Central after we introduce our math lesson. Think Central is one of the programs that Paul as well as a lot of the other kids love to do throughout the day. Whenever we task him to do this, he gets to it right away. In addition to this,

because math is something that he excels in, there are many times in which I have him help other students. Another example of this includes when we are in transition. There are many times when we are ending a lesson and I give the class a set of directions for when they are finished with the last part of an assignment. Whenever I do this, he always follows through on the directions and shows that he is ready to continue.

Paul does not strike me as a student that consciously makes an effort to rely on his creative ability. I have come to this conclusion based on things that I have observed as well as things that I have learned about him. To begin, he has been on record stating that his favorite subject is science. In our science lessons, a lot of the content is based on factual evidence as well as observable data. In addition to this, during our class conversations, I have noticed that he has a great ability to back up his opinions based on the data that he has learned about or observed. In addition to this, when working on assignments that lend the option to have creative freedom, Paul more times than not will stay in the confines of clear cut directions. With the being said, one thing that I have noticed about our classroom is that a lot of our assignments do not give the opportunity to have creative freedom. This is something that I try to implement in my lessons. With knowing all of this, I believe that this is all a testament of his critical thinking ability. He is a great critical thinker because of his ability to look at facts, interpret data or things that he sees, and draw conclusions based on them. Lastly, he is continuing to develop into being a great communicator. There are times when he is trying to communicate an idea or concept however he may not fully know how to explain it or his words get mixed up. This however happens on occasions that are few and far in-between.

Thus far, I have not seen a lot of struggle from him in terms of specific standards. As previously stated, he does well across the board. In Language Arts he averages an eighty-three percent and in math he averages an eight-six percent. He has even improved when it comes to the grade level at which he reads. At the beginning of the year, his Accelerated Reader test results showed us that he was reading at a high second grade level. Specifically, he was reading at a ZPD, which stands for Zone of Proximal Development, of 2.9 - 4.2. However, by the time Thanksgiving break came around, he had made the the jump to reading at a third grade level. His new ZPD was 3.1 - 4.8. This data suggest that Paul is not having much trouble when it comes to taking on new concepts and applying them to old concepts. The data also suggest that as more time goes along he will continue to develop at a steady rate.

#### **Assets and Needs: Socio-Emotional Development and Social Identity**

Paul is a very well behaved student. When in class as well as outside of it, he has never caused any kind of problem or cause anyone any type of harm. In the classroom, he has shown to excel when we are doing independent work, he contributes positively to classroom conversation, and as previously stated does a good job staying on tasks. With that being said, when it comes to his behavior, there is no issue. Socially he has shown continued growth. He has come a long way from isolating himself at the beginning of the year. He now has many friends inside the classroom and he does a great job working with them. In addition to this, I have also seen him make more friends outside of the classroom. He has shown to have a very warm personality once he gets comfortable and I believe his classmates have began to notice. The only area for improvement that I would like to see from Paul is for him to work on his attentiveness and his ability to stay on task during group work. Specifically in groups of four or more. Although this is



not disruptive to the class, there are times when I put him in a group and he and the rest of the group become inattentive to what we are doing at the moment.

We have spent a lot of time making sure that we give him a place where he feels comfortable to talk about what he is going through given the current state of his family. With that being said, outside of academics the way that we usually get through to him in a personal regard is through private discussion. Through my own experience with him, he has always responded well to this. I feel as if I can use this avenue to teach him about socio-emotional development. With socio-emotional development being the way in which children begin to understand, experience, express, and manage their emotions I feel that speaking with him in private would be a great way to get through to him. It would even be good to be proactive in having this conversation with him because with his family going through their situation, it is important for him to understand what he is feeling. Private conversation would also be a great avenue in teaching him about self-awareness as well because in knowing how to be conscious of his feelings will develop into him learning how to ask for help if he needs it. For Paul, this is a vulnerable subject for him to talk about therefore when talking to him about this it is better to have set up a private setting so other students are not aware of his family situation.

I can provide him opportunities to learn about growth mindsets by creating teaching moments. While observing him for the amount of time that I have, there have been times when I could tell he was checked out because he was either thinking about his mother or he was simply stressed. Due to him being checked out, he would stop doing his work and simply give up. I believe talking to him about these moments and teaching him how to push through difficult moments would be a great way to teach him about having a growth mindset because it will show

him that these tough times do not last forever. When I think about having this conversation with him, a specific quote comes to mind that I learned in high school. The quote is “life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond.” I believe he would benefit a lot from this conversation.

I can provide opportunities for him to learn about self-management by creating teaching moments with him about how to be mindful of his actions. Paul is already a well behaved kid. One of his only areas of improvement involve him being less attentive when he is around others who are holding his attention. Therefore, creating these teaching moments will allow him to improve his behavior even more. In addition to this, it will also boost his attentiveness and allow him to get even more out of our lessons than he currently gets. What I need to keep in mind is what was said in chapter three of *Better Than Carrot Sticks*. According to Smith, Fisher, and Frey (2017) “self-regulation is the product of trial and error [and] missteps are essential to refinement” (Pg. 55). Therefore when talking to him about this it is important for me to mention that we are only talking about it because he has an immense potential to be an ever better person and student than he already is.

I can create opportunities to learn about social awareness through in class lessons. Later on in the year during social studies we will be talking about the Native Americans. When talking about the Native Americans, we will talk about some of the things that they went through during the colonization of the Americas. While going over these topics, I can then begin to speak on social awareness and how it pertains to people today. In addition to this I can also introduce them to some of the hidden curriculums that are intertwined in the school system.

Lastly, I can teach him about relationship skills by making his growth with his classmates explicit. In my observations of him, I have seen him go from intentionally keeping himself separate from his classmates to having conversations with just about everyone in the classroom. One thing that I want to make explicit to him is how valuable relationships are when it comes to his wellbeing in life as well as his development as a human being.

Paul's self concept is very strong. During our interview he stated that he has a great understanding of the fact that he is doing pretty well in school. He also has a great understanding of his strengths in the classroom. With knowing that he is successful in our science block, he has already made it known to me that he wants to be a scientist when he grows up. When asking him why he said he felt it would be a great fit for him and it would be something that he is good at. I am creating an inclusive environment that affirms his self-concept by making sure we are explicit in telling them how good he is doing. In doing this, we are doing what Milner, Cunningham, O'Connor, & Gold Kestenberg said on page 111 of *These Kids Are Out Of Control*. According to Milner, Cunningham, O'Connor, & Gold Kestenberg (2019) "warm demanders expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential" (Pg. 111). In addition to this, we also tell him exactly what he did that was good and how it contributed to a positive result. Also, as previously stated we make sure we are creating and maintaining a safe environment so he feels comfortable in telling us whatever he needs to concerning his family situation.

#### **Assets and Needs: Funds of Knowledge**

Due to the family's current situation, a requested home visit for Paul was turned down. Therefore, all the information I have about his funds of knowledge come from our conversations

as well as an interview with his mother and father separately at the school. Topics that were not able to be talked about due to this were his family traditions, celebrations, and beliefs.

Unfortunately, the time given to me was to speak with his parents was short lived. To begin, Paul comes from a bilingual household. Both of his parents are fluent in Chinese. His mother's ability to speak English is fairly strong while his father struggles at times. Due to this, as previously stated, he and his brother sometimes act as translators. It is unclear if Paul is involved in extra curricular activities but based on my conversation with him it does not seem like he is. During our conversation Paul was telling me that he states that "me and my brother are at home alone a lot." He also told me that there had been times when he did not tell his brother that they were home alone. What I like about their family dynamic is that both parents seem to be aware of Paul's passion for science and want to support it. During my conversation with his father, he stated that he noticed that Paul was interested in science. He stated that when they are at home, he would see him watch science videos on youtube all day long. In addition to this, he stated that in ten years he sees Paul studying to become an astronaut.

When describing him, his parents both agreed that he was very intelligent and hard working. This is something that I agreed with because I have observed his hard work and the data that we have gathered suggests that he is doing well across the board academically. One thing that both parents were worried about was his ability to make friends. When describing him, they mention that he could be very shy and timid when he is in new places. To answer this, I assured them that he was doing fine when it came to building relationships. In saying this, I did mention that in the beginning it was something that made me worried however over time it began to get better.

During our conversation, they did not make their views on school clear. With that being said, after listening to our recording I came to the conclusion that his parents feel that school is one of the most important things for Paul as well as his brother. I came to this conclusion because during our time with his mother, she stated that she is always reminding him to try his best when he is at school. In addition to this, when we mentioned his struggle in being attentive and bringing work back to school I saw a sense of shock on her face because she had no idea. In learning this she did not get upset with him but instead said that she will also continue to do her part in working with him. Since having this conversation he has done very well in those regards. His father also seemed to think education was important for him. I say this because when he was talking about his son's passion for science he connected it to his continued development in school so he can work in a field that he is passionate about one day. Due to our conversations were short lived, we were not able to discuss what they felt my role should be in his life as his educator or what the role of the school should be in regards to Paul specifically. If someone were to ask me what I felt my role was as his educator, I would say it is to both teach him but also support him emotionally any way I can. In my own personal life, I never had anyone close to me deal with what his mother is dealing with however I do know what it is like to go from one parent's home to the other. In connecting with him in this way, I feel I can provide him with some guidance when it comes to trying to do well when dealing with things you cannot control.

#### **Assets and Needs: Experiences, Interests, and Developmental Considerations**

As previously stated, when Paul grows up he wants to be a scientist. In our one on one interview, he told me that his favorite subject is science. In addition to this, when he gets free time at home he is always watching science related videos on YouTube. This is a passion that I

don't think will ever leave him because it is something that has always intrigued him. I remember a specific time going to the library with him and he would always have a hard time picking out books. There were even times when he left the library without getting books. However, once that I learned that he had a great passion for science, I advised him to try to look for books that had something to do with science. Since then he has never left the library without a book and I have never seen him take anything else out of the library that wasn't science related.

I think a major event that has effected his life thus far was learning that his mother was sick. From seeing him interact with his mom during our time together, it was clear to me that they are very close. In addition to this, when I ask him how his mother is doing I see the sadness in his eyes. In addition to him being worried about his mom, he is now beginning to see a lot of things in his life change because of this situation. During our interview, he was telling me how because of this he now spends a lot more time with his grandparents when he goes to his mother's house. He also goes back and forth between his parent's houses more frequently ever since she has gotten the diagnosis. What I took as good news was that in seeing his mother from the first time she did not look sick and she didn't seem like she was letting her situation bring her down. Therefore, I believe the doctors found her tumors before any permanent damage could be done. I hope this is true because from knowing him for as long as I have now, I believe he would have a hard time receiving anymore bad news about this situation.

Paul's mother is the most influential person in his life. He stated "before she got sick, I would spend a lot of time with her." I believe I saw the effect of this when I first met his mother and saw them interact. This was very clear to me. Prior to her getting sick he would spend just about all week with his mom at her house and would go back and forth from there and school.

During this time, he would only go to his dad's house on Tuesdays. However, now that she is sick, she spends more time at the hospital if she is not working. Therefore, he goes to his father's house more often.

He has been on record saying that he enjoys school. He says he likes school because it gives him an opportunity to learn as well as be around his friends. He also told me that he feels the most comfortable in our classroom because he has now gotten to a point where he is used to it. He is accustomed to the flow of the classroom as well as the schedule we keep. One adjustment we made with him in mind was putting our daily schedule on the board for everyone to see. After doing so he told me he appreciated it because he could see what we would be doing after we completed something. With that being said, he feels a little uncomfortable outside the classroom because he does not know everybody he sees outside of it. He has made friends outside of the classroom but those students do not exceed anyone outside of third grade. In our school, his support network consists of myself, my mentor teacher, and his Response To Intervention math teacher that he switches to throughout the week.

His development is typical due to the fact that his language skills are up to par. He does not mispronounce words that would be typical understanding at his age, his understanding of phonics and phonemic awareness is where it is expected to be, and his reading is fluent. To continue, his attention span is where it is expected to be and his focus in class is beginning to improve. My data sources include my interviews with Paul, my observations of him, my mentor teacher's observations, and discussions with his mother and father.

#### **Assets and Needs: Action Plan**

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

Thus far, I have enjoyed my time learning about Paul as well as developing a relationship with him. The only thing that I regret about our process is that I was not able to see who he is when he's at home. I feel that if I was able to see that it would have strengthened our relationship, shown the parents that I want to support him as much as they do, and give me more insight on how to do so. However, with the information that I do have, I feel the action plan that I have in place will serve him well. A lot of the planned support has to do with his socio-emotional development due to the fact that his family situation has the potential to negatively impact him. I am choosing to focus on this for him because he is already academically strong across the board. This is supported by the data previously stated. To make sure he does not regress, we will continue to monitor his work closely.

Focusing on his socio-emotional development is a great strategy for Paul because if his personal life gets out of control it may affect his performance at school. To help support and develop his socio-emotional development we will continue to do our check ins with him and we will continue to provide a space where he feels safe enough to do so. However, one strategy that I will take further to help him develop is to give him a bit more insight of the more vulnerable parts of my life. Although I have never had someone close to me go through what his mother is going through, where me and Paul connect is that we both come from having to deal with outside forces that we could not control and were still expected to succeed in what we do. In giving him this kind of insight about myself, he'll learn about my development with aspects of socio-emotional factors such as self-management, self-awareness, and social-awareness. Another strategy that I plan on doing is giving him another outlet so he can let out his frustrations. The outlet that I have in mind is a writing journal. I feel in doing this, he would feel even more



comfortable to communicate his emotions. In doing this, I will also make it known to him that whatever he writes in his journal is his private information and that I will only read it if he wants me to.

Lastly, in regard to us not being able to schedule a home visit I am also making sure that I stay in contact with his parents in regards to his development. This is something that I am choosing to do because it is an important part of his development to have all parties on the same page whether we are celebrating his successes or trying to figure out how we can better serve him. One way I plan on opening the door to doing so is by giving them constant reminders of my Open Door Policy. It was said in the article 9 Techniques For Building Solid Parent-Teacher Relationships that the author had an open door policy for an array of reasons. She states that “In order to stay in touch with parents, I look for other ways to get them to stop by. For example, they are welcome to come in and observe me teaching”. In doing this, I would hope someone in the family would be receptive to it.

### **Concluding Thoughts on Case Studies**

In reading all three of these case studies there are a few things that I noticed. The first thing is that all three of these students come from different walks of life. The second thing is that they all bring different experiences and lifestyles into the classroom. Lastly, they all need different levels of attention as well as different kinds of action plans. What this tells me is that as a social justice educator our jobs may not be easy but they are well worth it when we see the effects of sticking to our action plans and continue to try to do good work.

## **Part C: *Community***

### **Introduction**

In this next section, you will see me critique my own classroom, explore my school campus, and explore the surrounding community. Specifically, you will gain community context, insight on community events and community members, gain insight on school site research, learn about the schools mission and demographics, as well as hear my reflection of my class.

### **Demographics**

The location of the city in which the school is located is in southeast California. More specifically, it is part of Los Angeles County. According to [USA.com](#), the city has 13.35 square miles of land area and 0.14 miles of water area. In addition to this, growth of population in this city has shown to lower than California's state average as well as the national average. [USA.com](#) continues to state that the average household income in this city is \$89,648 annually. This data is from 2010 through 2014. In addition to this, it is noted that the average household income in the city has grown 36.02% since 2000. The average household income in this city alone is higher than the state average, which is 29.47%, and is also higher than the national average, which is 27.36%. House value in the city from 2010 through 2014 was around \$539,800 and has shown to grow 115.06% since 2000. This has shown to be a lot higher than the state's average rate for a home which is 75.60%. It has also shown to be much higher than the national average rate which is 46.91%. The population of the city currently stands at 35,569 people. This information was gathered between 2010 through 2014 and ranks 229 out of 1,488 cities in the United States. Population has grown 4.62% since 2000 and gives them a ranking of 586 out of 1,513 on a growth scale. Out of this population, 71% of the people speak English while 13% of people speak Spanish. This city's school district currently holds a four and a half star rating out of five

and currently ranks 349 out of 1,841 on a school performance scale. Accommodations that this city offers comes from the Hotels in the city.

This city is one that has its history entrenched in its architecture. For example, one piece of architecture that you will see consistently throughout the city are what residents call elephant toes. Elephant toes are found on the sidewalk where they put rocks in the sidewalk. As a result, the sidewalks resemble elephant toes. In addition to this, rocks are a key building block to many buildings in the city. To keep consistency in the city, there are even buildings that are made with fake rocks to hide things such as power lines. While going around the city, you will also see murals that pay tribute to the city's history as well as many citrus trees. This city played a great part in the Citrus Industry in its beginnings.

The city in which the school is located in would be described as suburban. It is filled with different apartment complexes, homes, schools, grocery stores, plazas, and so on. In fact, a lot of the schools are built right next to these homes and apartments. Speaking on my school specifically, there are one story homes around the perimeter of the school divided by either a fence or a wall of some sort. Many of the students, whether they are in my class or not, tell me that they live in some of these houses that are right next to the school. With all of this going on in the city, it does not feel crowded and no one is given the feeling that they are on top of one another day in and day out. People in this city are generally friendly to one another. In my experience, when I had been walking near the school or even around food places in the city, people will more times than not acknowledge you if you first acknowledge them. I have done so by giving a gentle wave, saying good morning to people that I recognize and have built strong relationships with, and even holding doors open for people. When it comes to being in groups of

likeminded people in this city, you can feel a sense that people are willing to help one another as well as come together to tackle a common goal. I have seen this kind of behavior in some of the parents in my students. An example of this was during the COVID-19 crisis, a lot of the parents had been communicating about efficient ways to make sure their children were getting their school work done.

One major industry that influenced the growth of this city is education. Before being known as the name it has currently been given, this city was known as Mud Springs. In Mud Springs, the industry that thrived was the citrus industry. However this changed due to the land boom. Due to the land boom, which was more than 100 years ago, a lot of the citrus trees had to be taken and moved to different locations to make room for housing. As time passed, the land boom collapsed and as a result, the city became a ghost town. It wasn't until the colleges came about that this city was able to revamp itself and thrive. The way education saved this city was by allowing colleges to access its buildings that it had. As a result of this, people started coming back to the city. Therefore, today this city is known to be "the city of trees and masters degrees". This same industry has also influenced the students in my class due to the consistency that has been shown throughout the different levels of education. For example, in the class that I teach in, which is a third grade class, we utilize the learning platform Canvas. This is also something that the high school as well as the colleges utilize. Students are being primed to pursue higher degrees due to the fact that many people in this city have shown to have attained these degrees. According to [towncharts.com](https://www.towncharts.com), more than 50% of people have attained a Bachelors degree or higher. This is much higher than the national average which is 33%.

In this community, as previously stated, there are apartments and houses and trailer homes. The most common type of home in this community however, are houses and apartments. The houses vary in size and pricing however, they all can be compiled into two categories. Those categories include one story houses or two story houses. All of the students in my classroom live in either one or the other. When talking about my focus students, two out of three live in homes, both one and two stories, and the other lives in an apartment. In addition to this, I am under the impression that there is also places in the city for the homeless to stay. I am under this impression because earlier in the year, I had a student who was briefly in my class and after she ended up leaving due to family reasons, we found out that she was being ubered to school from a homeless shelter. Our school was aware of this and this is not a common occurrence for the rest of our students.

In the city, there are different resources such for the youth and families and senior citizens. Types of resources that are available for the youth and families include food, clothing, shelter and housing, health care, dental, mental health, employment, victim abuse, public utility, disability, education, and social services. Types of resources for senior citizens include dental, mental health, employment, legal aid, financial education and counseling, public utility, disability, social services, transportation, victim abuse, and other miscellaneous resources. Assets that come with this community include Arts and Recreation programs, Police Departments, Fire Departments, Parks, and special community events. An example of a few of these is in one specific area, there is a Cultural Arts Center where a lot of local talent is showcase. In addition to this, the city also provides seasonal recreational activities such as soccer and dancing.

### **Community Events and Community Members**

One key community event that takes place at our school is called the Fall Festival. On our campus, this is a big deal because this is something the kids, parents, and even community members get behind to try and support. At this event, there are carnival style games that are held by parents, different kinds of food trucks, concession stands, and at this past Fall Festival, there were even costumes being sold for Halloween. In addition to this, the school even had the multipurpose room open to people who wanted to play bingo. For my first time being apart of a school event like this as an educator, it was amazing to see all the kids excited and having fun playing all the different games. In addition to this, going to this event early on in my residency also helped me begin to feel comfortable with my new placement.

Another community event that I went to was a New Teacher Lunch In. At this event, a few people from the district office and board went out to eat with some of the new teachers. This was their way of formally welcoming them to the district. Although at the time I was a resident student, I was invited to go because my mentor teacher was going. At this event, I was able to meet a lot of people and I also got to know other people who I saw everyday at the school on a deeper level. At this event, I spoke to teachers, technological workers at the district, and was introduced to someone on the board. Coming to this event was a defining moment for me because this is when I started to get comfortable with all the new faces that I had been seeing up to that moment.

One partnership that I felt was both exciting and beneficial to the school and kids was a partnership with a program called One Hundred Mile Club. Learning about this partnership was exciting for me because it focused on fitness and exercise. Both are something that I feel is not stressed enough in schools. What the program does is track how many miles each individual

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

student runs during P.E. or our designated slot to do One Hundred Mile Club. Once a student reaches a milestone, they are given a prize such as a shirt. While watching this program unfold throughout the year, I was able to recognize that this is something that a lot of students take seriously. There were a lot of students in my class that aimed to hit their One Hundred mile goal every year. In addition to this, there are a few students in my class who normally do.

Unfortunately, I was not able to see this unfold due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Another partnership that they have is with a fundraising company named Apex. This partnership is also amazing because it goes hand in hand with what they preach at our school. That is that everyone is a rock star and everyone there is kind and respectful to one another and the school. The goal of this fundraiser was very similar to most in its goal to raise money. However, what stood out to me about Apex that I had never seen before was that they would have individuals from the company come into each classroom and speak life into the kids and encourage them. For example, the speaker would tell the kids simple but yet impactful things like they could do it and if they work together they can accomplish anything. Seeing this was heartwarming because I do my best to send this message as well.

Types of community services that are available include after school day care at the school, after school tutoring in the multipurpose room, and after school music classes during a designated time of the year. Many of my students were in these programs due to the fact that their parents worked long hours on some days. In the general community there is a clinic, a boys and girls club in a near by city, and a community center. With that being said, I think a program that is missing from this community is a program that promotes diversity. Although, I do believe that our school did a great job in creating an environment where everyone felt included and

important, I did see instances where some students, specifically students of color were on the receiving end of disciplinary actions repeatedly. Even though these disciplinary actions could be deemed fair based on the action that was taken, I feel that some of the students of color at our school acted out because they wanted to be heard. I think about one student specifically when I say this because he was known to give teachers a hard time and act out against his peers. Since there was no program outside of disciplinary actions and one on one sessions with the district psychologist, I tried to step in and let him know that he did not have to do certain things for us as teachers to see his intelligence and importance. We began to do check ins and check outs. In doing this, I would go see him in the morning and talk about the social goals that we were trying to hit everyday. In doing so, I would also remind him of the resource he had in me. When checking out, we would talk about the day and whether or not he was successful in reaching his social goals. While doing this I saw great results. My only fear in that regard is that he loses sight on what it was that we were working on since the COVID-19 epidemic took us out of school and I lost access to him.

The COVID-19 situation has taken all my access from my students outside of being available for them via email and Seesaw. However, with everything that went on prior to our dismissal, I feel that our school responded to the crisis in a professional manner. Leading up to the dismissal, it was clear that all the teachers and the principal was as informed as they could be due to constant updates to the news. Our principle is a great leader in telling us that whatever the district decides to do is what we would follow. In talking to my mentor teacher, she felt that our district would follow any precautionary measures a neighboring district took. Once the school did get dismissed, teachers were required to come back the following Monday as grade level



groups were directed to put curriculum together. While doing this, our face to face planning time was cut short because the district mandated that we stay home that Tuesday morning. Shortly after this is when I was told that the school could be shut down for the remainder of the year.

The way in which we addressed the situation to our students was by first waiting for clear cut orders and direction. Once we got those orders, we sat the whole class on the carpet, which brought the entire class close in proximity, and then we told them that due to the virus, the school would be closing momentarily. We did not know at the time that they were going to be closed for the remainder of the school year. As far as community leaders, the only ones that I knew of were the superintendents. In regard to student teachers like myself, they just told us via email that they were here to support us in any way that they could. Due to everything happening so fast and me personally feeling left in the dark at times because we were waiting on information, I was satisfied with how we handled the situation and the district resources that were given to us throughout the crisis.

The way in which this crisis has impacted me on a personal level is that it has mainly allowed me to refocus. What I mean by that is that it has given me time to think about how I can improve as a son, brother, grandson, cousin, uncle, and so on. With first making sure that everything at home with my mother is the way it should be, I was then allowed to focus on other relationships that were not being nurtured due to me not feeling like I had the luxury of time. In addition to this, I was also able to make sure I stayed busy but also left enough time for self-care. This was something that I ignored. I was able to revisit my five year plan, work on passions that were put on pause due to limited time, and began to take care of myself again.

Professionally as an educator, there was a lot more conversations for me via email. Early on in the dismissal I did not hear from any of my students. This did not sit right with me because we were technically still in the regular school year and I did not think that the job was done. As a result of this I sent a message through my mentor teacher's Remind account and gave the entire class access to my personal email address. In addition to this, I just made sure I was still nurturing relationships and allowing people that I worked with insight on what the my next steps would be in regard to how my student teaching would likely finish.

### **School Site Research**

The school that I was at this year is located in Los Angeles County. This school was built into the community. On my first day on this school site, the first thing that I noticed was that there were houses built around it. It is much like the elementary school that I went to as a kid. The school is big as far as lot size. In fact, there are some portables that were once being used as classrooms that are now vacant. This invites more room to build upon for them. In addition to this, throughout the work day, with everyone being on campus at one time, there was never a feeling of people being on top of one another. Classrooms are spacious on the inside as well as areas such as the teachers lounge, front office, and multipurpose room. With that being said, aspects of the land such as parking is tight. With this being the case, the school is given access to other means that help this situation. For example, although I did not park where other teachers were parking, I was able to park across the street at a church. In addition to this, I was also given access to park along the sidewalks in front of homes and sometimes parks.

The school has a positive reputation amongst the community. I know this to be true because through the student council at our school, they do different things throughout the year

for the community to help make it a better place to live in as well as contribute to that positive reputation. According to Mrs. Hilary, our school secretary, “they do community service within the city and on campus”. She then went on to say that “they collect blankets, food, beds and supplies for the local human society. They [also] do a can drive for the needy at Christmas time [and we] invite the whole community to participate”. This was intriguing for me to learn about because this was something about our student council that I did not know about. Prior to learning this, I was under the impression that our school council only took on school site events.

The morale at the school amongst students is positive. During my experience, I have seen students positively effect and influence one another. I have seen them work in unison amongst people they have previously known as well as help kids who were new to the school get acclimated and adjust to their new environment. In a lot of ways, I have seen instances where kids understand how to self govern themselves. For example, there had a few instances where I had seen kids mediate a situation when there was a disagreement. In addition to this, there had also been times when I had seen students go out of their way to help a student who was struggling on something for feeling bad about something. This held especially true in my classroom. Although this was evident, this was not the case everyday. However, when it did happen, it showed me that students around campus have embraced the acts of building and maintaining a positive community.

The morale at the school amongst teachers is also positive. According to Mrs. Hillary, “the culture here is like a family” and in a lot of ways I agree. When talking about the staff in particular, they show in many ways how supportive of one another they are. For example, in my third grade cohort, the teachers were always trying to work in collaboration with one another.

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

This was evident when we did our Native American Unit. With there being four topics to cover in the entire unit, they created classroom rotations. Therefore, each teacher taught the same lesson and activity four times until each class saw each teacher. While we were doing this, they allowed me to watch the different lessons. Teachers also supported one another off campus as well. An example of this was when one of the Kindergarten teachers retired, all the staff members set up a surprise party. Ways in which the staff showed that they supported me was by being willing to answer any questions that I had, allowing me to build relationships and check on students who weren't in my class, giving me a multitude of resources for my current situation as well as future classroom, and even buying me food for my birthday. Throughout the year, with spending time with my cohort and getting to know all of the other teachers around campus, you can tell that they all have adopted and welcome that family environment. I was and continue to be thankful to have been apart of that environment.

The moral between students and staff is also positive. In addition to this, I believe it is something that continues to develop as the teachers continue to learn more about their students as well as about different strategies to create and maintain positive learning environments. According to Mrs. Hillary, "our staff has learned that some students need special allowances. Such as, some need to stand instead of sit. Some need to fidget as they work". This is something that I got to watch throughout the school year. For example, As I progressed though the school year I was given multiple opportunities to substitute for many of our second grade teachers. In doing so, I remember learning about one of my second grade friend's behavior contract and all of the strategies that were set in place to help him stay productive and get as much as he could throughout the day. What they have done for my friend in second grade, they do for a lot of other

students around campus. I believe this is what attributes to that positive moral between students and teachers. It sends the message that the adults on this campus will do whatever it takes to make sure that each of their students are successful.

The non-teacher staff member that I chose to talk to was our school secretary Mrs. Hillary. In asking her questions, there were a few things that stood out to me about different aspects about our school. One question that I asked her had to do with any shifts in the culture at our school whether they were positive or negative. According to Mrs. Hillary, “The biggest and best change has been Positive Behavior Intervention and Support. We stopped giving out tickets for bad behavior and now give out Rock Stars for good behavior. This has had a huge impact on our campus. We are always finding ways to reward our students for positive behaviors and it really works”. This stood out to me because it showed that one way in which the culture changed for the better was by putting an emphasis on celebrating positive behaviors instead of highlighting what they did wrong. Something else that stood out in Mrs. Hillary’s responses was her answer when I asked about how the culture at our school was established. According to Mrs. Hillary, “Our town is a College Community. I feel we have enlisted that special part of the culture into our atmosphere. The continued culture at our Elementary School is from dedication to education. Goal setting is a key for every aspect of learning, and life, for each student, and by every staff member. There is always some new fun way to learn here by our teachers that are constantly enrolled in Professional Development”. This stood out to me because the fact that their teachers continually focus on professional development, they see value in continuing to progress and maintaining the positive culture that has been established. This also stood out to me because it showed that they are still receiving academic training as well. I am under the

impression that this is not the case for everyone's situation because according to Lisa Delpit in *Multiplication Is For White People*, "many teachers received so little training in the whole-language methodologies, however, that not only could they not figure out how to embed skills but they were also clueless about the entire process (p. 64)".

The principal at our school is one of the many people who I have a lot of respect for. In my opinion, she embodies what it means to be a leader. That is why I chose to contact her to gain more information about the school site. When inquiring about background knowledge about the school, there was one thing that she said that stood out to me. According to Dr. Marcy, "our school has long been perceived as a "high achieving" school. Some perceptions by the community is that we are militant, "rich," and very strict. I actually read some of those things online before I began as principal". This statement peaked my interest because I never heard anyone use the word militant when describing our school. I did agree that our school is high achieving and Dr. Marcy attributes that to the teachers. According to Dr. Marcy, "The staff has always maintained high standards, both academically and socially. I have seen the staff evolve over the years in regards to their understanding that there is not a "one size fits all" way of teaching our students, especially given life these days". This was something that I noticed as well fairly quickly. My experience as a student teacher was enhanced by this because it showed me what equitable teaching looks like properly executed. In addition to what I had seen it also shows that our leadership may agree with what Lisa Delpit has stated about our educational system. According to Lisa Delpit, "The reality is that all children have much greater potential than we ever imagine, but our rigid educational system assumes that some children are incapable of achieving academically and that one model of instruction fits all" (p. 103). Another aspect of our

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

conversation that stood out to me was when I asked her about our school acts as a resource to the community. Her response gave me a lot of insight into some of the outside resources that at the time I did not know that we had. According to Dr. Marcy, “Our staff and school are resources themselves to our community. Our teachers make themselves available to our families to serve as a resource both academically and social-emotionally. We partner with outside resources for the benefit of our students and their families. We host events at our sites that includes the use of our facilities”.

I was also able to gain insight from one of my teacher colleagues as well. Something that stood out in our conversation was about how seen how the community has shifted. According to Mrs. May, “Early on, the school serviced mainly the neighborhood community. Now with the policy of being able to attend any elementary school as well as transfers from out of district, the socio/economic and family stability of students has changed”. This stood out to me because when doing research on the district, in the past the ethnic demographic in the area had changed from the past up to now. I was left wondering as if this could be the reason as to why. Another aspect of our conversation that stood out to me was when we were talking about how she felt our school contributed to the community. According to Mrs. May, “our school offers parenting classes, numerous extra-curricular activities, and offers a more structured school environment”. Our school holding parenting classes was something that I did not previously know about. When I learned about this, it made it clear to me as to why there is so much parent involvement in my classroom as well as across campus.

Some school wide norms include parents and visitors wearing name badges with their faces on them when they come to visit, on a normal day there is usually a parent that comes into

the classroom in the morning to help with whatever it is we need at the time, and parents usually joining us on our field trips. As these are just a few aspects on what to see, it was easy for me to tell that parents at this school site are very involved in their children's education. This is something that I appreciated because it helped me develop essential relationships with them that resulted in me being able to help their child in ways that if I did not have that relationship could not happen. For example, in developing a great relationship with one of my focus students mom, she trusted me to stay thirty minutes after the school bell on Wednesdays to tutor her. As a result of that tutoring her math scores improved and more importantly, her confidence in herself and her ability to perform well in school began to grow.

When it came to rules at our school, it sometimes became unclear and tricky to gain a full understanding as to what was expected at times. This was mainly because during the year the school was under construction and there were changes that were made to adjust to the extra activity on campus. With that being said, there were a set rules that I deemed as normal that students were required to follow. For example, some of those rules were to walk in the halls, minimize talking in purple zones, pick up trash in the lunch area, no going back up to the classrooms during recess and lunch recess, and so on. Students abided by these rules as expected. There were many of times where students had to be reminded by in my opinion, this was to be expected and it was the result to some uncertainty. I say this because with construction going on throughout the year, some rules were subject to being changed fairly often. For example, at the end of recess, student expectations in response to the bell went from freezing to kneeling then back to freezing. In addition to this, When construction was finished, there was a bit of confusion



## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

from teachers and even students as what was deemed as a hallway now that we had gained new additions to the campus.

Technology is continuously leveraged at our school site to create an equitable experience. One way in which it was done in my classroom was to help our students with IEPs access the content. For example, one of my students has a tough time reading. Therefore, when he is doing an activity where he needs to read a set of directions he tends to struggle. With this not being the case for some of my other students, one way in which technology helps him is by us activating what is called a text-to-speech feature on his iPad. This feature allows him to press a button and have his iPad read to him. He then will come to me or my mentor teacher and ask what a certain word means if he does not know or if he needs clarification about something. Another way in which our school has created an equitable experience through utilizing technology is by using different programs that enhance the learning process. For example, when we were covering the topic of fossils in science we briefly talked about dinosaurs and had them do a dinosaur report. To enhance learning and help them gain a deeper understanding, we introduced them to the World of Dinosaurs app. This app gave insights to specific kinds of dinosaurs. In addition to this, it also utilized virtual reality so they could physically see how the dinosaur looked back then. In some cases it also showed the bones.

The way in which our school addresses the needs of ELs, students that identify as LGBTQ, gifted students, and students with special needs is on a case by case basis. With leadership from the district, leadership on campus, and even teachers knowing that there is no one size fits all way of teaching, they do their best in understanding each student's and family's situation. This way of thinking is also reiterated from our school principal. According to her, she

states that “Fortunately, the community that we are in is a diverse community, and with that, accepting of the variety of students/families we work with. Our school is no different. In the time I have been here, there has been a philosophy of reaching every student. Through differentiation and the SST process, the staff have worked to identify and help with the needs of a student/family, regardless of their background. I have seen this process evolve over the years I have been here. We have worked with students and their families in every area you asked about below. In every situation, I see the staff come together to work and try to help students and their families, both academically and social/emotionally. Communication is a big key”. This is a statement I agree with because no situation is the same. In focusing on communication and using it as one way to address the needs of various students, you end up giving all students the support that they need.

### **School Mission/Vision & Demographics**

The ethnic breakdown of our school amongst students is as followed. It is 37.32% White, 32.22% Hispanic or Latino, 14.58% Asian, 3.79% African American, 1.31% Filipino, 0.29% Pacific Islander, and 1.75% who are not reported. 51% of those students being female and 49% of them being male. Linguistically, students on this campus speak English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Tai, and Vietnamese. The age rang of the students ranges from five years of age to twelve years of age. Although there is not too much demographic information about staff and faculty on our school, in my experience, I did not think that the staff reflected as much diversity as the student body shows. With that being said, I do not think that this negatively impacts teacher to student relationships however, I do agree what author Lisa Delpit says. According to Delpit, “We must remember that children do need to see and connect to teachers who look like

themselves, who know their communities and their lives, who know how to say their names” (p. 118).

The mission of the school that I did my student teaching at states the following. Condit Elementary School's mission is to provide an engaging and rigorous curriculum that fosters critical thinking and develops skills for college and career readiness. We provide a safe, supportive environment that promotes character building, empowering students to become positive contributing members of society. This mission statement was written by our current principle. The way in which they have chosen to make this mission statement public is by putting it on their school website. The way in which this mission statement fosters a positive relationship with the community is by letting members in the community know that the curriculum being offered here is designed to help develop our students into well rounded citizens. By this I mean that they will be on a designated path that will teach them critical thinking skills as well as develop skills that will help them prepare for college. The way in which the mission statement fosters a collaborative relationship with the community is communicated through the word “we” and the phrase “members of society”. I believe that these words provoke a collaborative relationship because is using these words the mission statement brings together everyone who is involved in these students educational experience. In most cases, it does not end with the teacher and I have seen that exemplified through the culture of this school as well as the community.

I believe that the mission is indeed part of our classroom culture. I say this because in our classroom our curriculum was rigorous. We pushed our students academically everyday because we knew that they were capable of reaching new heights. However, in doing so, we also provided time for character building because at the end of the day we are all human. As humans,

we make mistakes and we learn from them. This is something that we capitalized on as instructors. With that being said, whenever we as instructors made mistakes, we also made sure we communicated to the class where our mistakes were and then learned from them. We did our best to follow what Lisa Delpit Suggests. According to Lisa Delpit, “If you put energy and expertise into your teaching, learn from those who know your students best, make strong demands, express care and concern, engage your students, and constantly ensure that your charges are capable of achieving, then you are creating for your students, as Professor Bill Trent once said about his own warm demander teachers, “a future we could not imagine for ourselves” (p. 88). I believe we empowered students by allowing them to explore both academics and a more social way of being. In both cases, they learned through exploration as well as mistakes. In our classroom we had a motto. Our motto was “mistakes help me learn”. I believe this held to be true day in and day out as well as continued to improve. In addition to this it created that family environment that Lisa Delpit was taking about in her introduction. According to Lisa Delpit, we must “Create a sense of family and caring in the classroom” (p. xix).

Data on Achievement on our school site states the following. According to [niche.com](https://www.niche.com), our school has ranked 670 out of 6,313 most diverse public schools in California. In addition to this, our school has also ranked 765 out of 5,914 best public schools in California. When it came to percent proficiencies in reading and math, we earned a 64% reading proficiency and a 56% math proficiency. This data implicates that our school is a high performing school. This was also reiterated from our principle. According to Dr. Marcy, “We have maintained steady academic progress over the years that I have been at this school. We typically increase or maintain the

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

previous year's levels of performance, even with the changing initiatives and forms of assessment (moving from paper/pencil to technology based assessments)".

As previously stated, parent involvement is a strong component to the environment at our school. In the beginning of the school year, there was a great turn out for back to school night with majority of the parents being there to meet their child's new teacher. In most school driven events there is always a great turn out in parent involvement whether it be in helping the event or joining in the fun with their child. In addition to this, there are usually three to five parents with us when we go on field trips. I think the key factors that promote so much parent involvement comes from the teachers being great resources to these families. I believe that once these families saw how available teachers were and saw to what lengths they will go to for their child, the parent involvement came naturally. In my own experience, families wanted to be part of an environment like this.

With that being said, I have seen a lot of students and teachers, including our principle thrive on this campus. Based on my experiences, I think there were a handful of kids who struggled socially for reasons I could not get to the bottom of due to being removed because of COVID-19. The actions that I observed due to what I believed to be a social struggle were kids screaming at each other as well as getting physical. Although, that was rare. In addition to this, I saw a lot of kids crying because they reacted negatively due to someone getting on their nerves. All these social struggles I saw from African American males on campus.

### **Classroom Reflection**

My mentor teacher and I established an ecology that was welcoming to students. For example, when establishing things such as the daily routine and classroom expectations, they

weren't lead by "do not" statements. Instead, they were "be" statements. Examples were be respectful to classroom materials and classmates. In addition to this, we also made certain efforts to make sure everyone felt welcomed. For instance, one thing that I made sure that I did was learn their names and one interesting fact about them. Something as simple as this showed to go a long way because I ended up learning something really interesting about one of my students later on in the year. What I learned was what I and others were calling him was not his name but a nickname that he earned in kindergarten. In response to this, he taught me his name and we made the agreement that when grading his papers I would put his actual name down. To make sure that they felt safe was by making it clear that we were available when they needed. This idea was reiterated many times throughout the year to the class as a whole as well as students who were dealing with family struggles. Another way in which we made sure they felt safe was by explaining why some rules were in place. I remember having a long conversation with one student specifically. In my opinion, he responded well to this because his engagement in his studies began to grow tremendously as the year went along.

Our classroom looked and felt welcoming. When speaking on our new classroom that we received towards the end of February, there was a lot that contributed to a positive environment. For example, our room was extremely student centered. There was student work all around the classroom making it student centered, there were bright colors around the classroom, there was enough space for students to move around and work out away from their seats, and a lot of sunlight that came in towards the end of the day. From being in there for the short amount of time that we were, you could tell that everyone was benefitting from the new environment.

Classroom norms were something that was always being reinforced and readjusted throughout the year. Even though they were being readjusted at times, our students responded very well. One norm that stayed consistent throughout the year was that our student had to make a straight line in the morning, after all recesses, and lunches before we could go back into the classroom. In addition to this, in the morning they are tasked to take out their homework folder, take out their iPads to practice their cursive, and then transition to their morning work. Upon completion of their morning work, they are tasked to show one of us that they have completed it. Once they do that then they are allowed to read independently anywhere in the classroom. Another norm that we had was centering ourselves. In doing so, we would form a circle in the classroom and do breathing exercises.

Ways in which we highlighted our students assets and funds of knowledge was connecting them to lessons. One example that I remember specifically was when we were talking about traditions. With our class having students who are from various backgrounds and nationalities it contributed to a great conversation. Many of the kids were talking about the holidays that they celebrate with their families and the different places they had been. In addition to this, we connected lessons to aspects of their lives such as pets they may have, sports they play, interests and so on.

Ways in which we use restorative justice efforts to support socio-emotional growth was by doing restorative justice circles. In doing so it indirectly taught them aspects of socio-emotional growth such as learning how to manage feelings of stress and anxiety. Ways in which we supported individual responsibility other than what was previously stated is by giving people jobs and implementing systems. For example, I would have students pass out as well as collect

papers and folders. In addition to this, I created a list that would dictate who would stamp the homework folders the next day. Ways in which we used positive supports to promote positive childhood/adolescent development was reinforcing Rockstars. In doing this, the positive things that students do around campus are highlighted. In doing this, it shows them what it looks like to do the right thing and reduces the number of reflections given out. Although reflections are not bad, they have a bad connotation around campus because they are given when students do something wrong.

Our class had a plethora of different ethnicities. These differences was something that was accepted on the very first day. This is something that Lisa Delpit preaches. According to Lisa Delpit, “We must learn who our children are — their lived cultures; their interests; and their intellectual, political, and historical legacies” (p. 49). They included White, Mexican, Korean, Native American, and so on. In addition to this, I only had two students with IEPs and had no ELs. The accommodations that were made for our students with IEPs included sitting them in the front of the class, implementing text to speech on their iPads, and shortening their spelling word list to focus on the skill that needed to be attained.

Resources in our classroom included a projector, whiteboards, a tv, pencils, paper, poster paper, a classroom library, whiteboard markers, parent volunteers, dual educators, and so on. The curriculum we used in English Language Arts came from wonders while the curriculum we used in math came from Go Math. Having a lot of resources was something that I greatly appreciated in my student teaching experience. Everything and everyone in our classroom played a tremendous part in my experience as well as our students experience.



In conclusion, what I have come to believe is important in terms of community is that it plays an enormous role in student development, a teachers experience, and a parents peace of mind. I believe our school did a phenomenal job in developing a culture that welcomed the community. The students benefitted from this because it build a safe environment to learn in. Teachers benefit from this because it helps them perfect their craft and also gives them a multitude of resources that they can use. Parents benefit because they know that their children are safe and even have an opportunity to get involved. What I will take from this experience and apply it to my next one is the importance of building and maintaining a safe and positive community. In seeing how this affects everyone, I believe it is important that all of our students everywhere have access to this type of community.

#### ***Part D: Reflection of a Critical Social Justice Educator***

##### **Introduction**

In this section you will see me reflect on my first year as a Critical Social Justice Educator. Specifically, you will see me analyze my strengths, areas that need continued development, my plans to meet my needs, and connections to my students who were apart of my case study. In reading this section, my goal is to show how far I have come since my initial decision to become a teacher as well as the optimism that I have in my continued development.

##### **Classroom Ecology and Teacher Presence**

What an amazing and challenging journey this has been. I have come a long way. In thinking about this journey, there are aspects about my skills as an educator that I feel I do well and there are areas where I know I will continue to develop in. To begin, I believe something that

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

I have done well is establishing a baseline of respect for my students in their learning. I believe I have done this well because it was something that I wanted to explicitly communicate from the first day and prove throughout the year. There were different ways in which I made sure my students understood that I respected them as people. The first way was to make sure I learned their names as quickly as possible. This was important to me because in wanting to earn someone's respect, it is vital to get their name right. This includes verbalizing specific pronunciations correctly or calling them by another name if that is what they choose. Even when I made mistakes in the beginning of the year, I made sure to apologize and let them know that I will continue to make an honest effort in making sure I learn it. One specific example I have of doing this is on the first day of class. I had a female student whose name I could not learn as fast because it was spelled and pronounced much differently than what I was used to. To learn and make sure I was pronouncing her name correctly, I walked over to where she was sitting, made sure I was eye level with her, introduced myself, and asked her to tell me her name. In doing so, this began to establish a positive relationship and showed her that I was making an effort to pronounce her name right. In addition to this, I believe that it is important to note that as that level of respect grows and relationships continue to develop, educators will learn different things about their students that will shock them. Previously in my ethnography, I mentioned that I had one student tell me that what he told me his name was at the beginning of the year was not his actual name. Having moments like this with students is a byproduct of developing that respect. Once there is an understanding of mutual respect, teachers are then able to teach them because they understand that their instructor has their best interest in mind.

## Running head: ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE PROJECT/BOND

I also feel I am strong in setting and demonstrating expectations. Although at my last school site, it seemed our students came into the classroom with the current school expectations in mind, I believe I can set expectations through casual conversation while writing them on a poster that we can hang in a visible spot in the classroom. For example, on the first day of school this upcoming school year I plan on welcoming my class, introducing myself and where I come from, and then explicitly telling them that I hand picked them all to be in my classroom. Although that may not be true, it sets the foundation of a positive classroom ecology and sets the stage for the conversation of what we should expect from one another in our classroom. Although I will be leading the conversation, I will make sure that student voice is heard by allowing them to help create these expectations. In giving them a voice in setting up their expectations, they will be creating a classroom culture that they would be willing to agree to abide by.

Ways in which I plan to support productive learning with culturally sustaining practices is by setting routines for the classroom. In thinking about routines, there are two in mind that I would like to establish. One is something that I felt had a positive impact on me and the other is something that I want to try. In one of our previous classes with Professor Bennett and Sam they would have us do a quick write. This quick write was not a graded activity but a chance for us to write down anything that was on our mind whether it was good or bad. I feel this had a positive impact on me because it allowed me to speak on things outside of school or pertaining to school that made me uneasy. In addition to this, it also made me feel like I was writing to someone who would genuinely listen. The second routine come from something that I read. In this reading, every morning the teacher would have colored rubber bands ready for her students as they

walked in. Each color would represent how they were feeling that day. In doing this, it helped her get a gage of the room and teach aspects of socio-emotional development. It taught students how to react when something did not go their way and it also taught students how to preserver and get things done even when they did not feel their best. One way I can continue to develop is by learning how to set flexible routines. I say I want to continue to create flexible routines because in my past residency, routines changed throughout the year. Some of these changes across campus resulted in some of our routines changing in the classroom. This made it hard for students to know when they were being successful in following them. Therefore, I will be following the words of Lemov. According to Lemov, “too often teachers have not taken the time to teach their students, step by step, what successful learning behavior looks like, assuming instead that students have inferred it in previous classrooms or doubting the value of having a right way of doing things” (p. 146). With that experience in mind it is something that I want to be prepared for and continue to develop in as I continue my journey.

When going back to the topic of developing respect for our students, another byproduct of doing so is that teachers are able to learn a lot about their students. For example their interests, family life, how they interact with their friends and so on. In thinking about this, I believe I am fairly strong when it comes to using my knowledge of my students to anticipate and limit unproductive behaviors. I say this because I have done well in learning about my students and I am becoming better at connecting those interests to content. However, I feel I need to grow in how I deal with unproductive behavior. I say this because in my previous experience, though there was not a lot of unproductive behavior, when it did happen, I usually went back to our class expectations and reinforced them. In doing that, half the time it worked and half the time the

remedy was short winded. Outside of doing this, the other strategy that I would use was talking to those students for two minutes every morning. Though this worked for majority of the school year, once it became a constant routine and somewhat predictable to the students it lost some effectiveness. Therefore, I believe having more strategies to use in this regard would help my continued development in this area.

Given my specific areas that I need to improve, the actual teaching and developing my teaching style is where I saw the most growth as well as the most challenge. Harnessing instructional cohesion and intensity was both a strength as well as an area of growth for me. It was a strength for me because once I got comfortable and began to see my teaching style emerge, I was able to apply probing questions to lessons that would raise the rigor of my instruction. Sometimes ways of doing that would be as simple as asking them why or to explain their thinking process. Harnessing cohesion and intensity also stood as a challenge for me because I had to make sure it was challenging across the board. With students who preform at different levels, there were many times where differentiating became a challenge. Especially when thinking about my students with IEPs and figuring out when I would get time to reteach to them due to being pulled out of class.

### **Content Knowledge to Promote Access, Learning, and Achievement**

Throughout this past school year I have achieved a lot. Most notably, I saw myself get into a rhythm when giving lessons and became comfortable in doing so. In knowing this, I still think I have a long ways to go when it comes to learning how to promote access, learning, and achievement. In terms of promoting access, one way in which I can grow is by making sure my lessons are flexible enough so all students are able to attain the information I am giving them.

This means not just thinking about students in my class who are already English proficient.

When creating and cultivating lessons I must think about my emergent bilinguals, who I expect to have in my next class even though I did not have any previously. I must also think about my students with IEPs. During this past school year I had two students on IEPs and they both had learning disabilities. Although we did follow what was required on the IEP, during the School year I was not mindful enough of adjustments I would have to make if they did not receive the content.

I feel I did well when it came to promoting learning due to focusing on a few teaching strategies at a time. Those strategies included modeling, creating concrete representations of abstract ideas, having clear and explicit expectations and directions, and using reliable resources. I felt those were some of the few competencies and strategies that helped me convey new concepts everyday. Where I felt I could have and still can improve is creating language objectives. Having strong language objectives is important due to the fact that not understanding academic language can stand as a barrier to accessing content. According to Zwiers, “language is the main exile of learning in any discipline—especially now” (p. 4). One way in which I can do so is being more specific in stating the objective. This is something that is now in the back of my mind after being told many times throughout the year. I feel with more practice it is something I will be able to master this upcoming year.

My ability to promote achievement was something that grew throughout the school year. Part of this development was learning how to teach processes and understanding how one lesson builds on the previous one. One way in which I was able to see my students begin to achieve one of our goals in learning how to create a constructed response was constantly taking them through

the process of the steps of what is required. With going through those steps and applying it to different genres of literature, our data proved that many of our students were able to remember aspects such as restating the question in the answer, supporting their answers with textual evidence, and correctly using transitional words and phrases. I believe if I continue to focus on developing processes and make sure all of my students are able to access these process, my ability to promote achievement in my classroom will continue to rise.

I believe my ability to align curriculum and instruction with measurable goals is also something that I am continuing to develop in. When creating lessons throughout the year, the thought of making measurable goals was always the first thing that I thought about. The second thing that came to mind was how I would collect evidence that would show the attainment of these goals. My ability to align curriculum and instruction also improved throughout the year as I progressed throughout the year. Before Covid-19 hit, I saw myself starting to get creative in content areas like math because I started creating games that related to the lesson. One game I remember specifically was a game where I required students to use different colored cups to represent different fractions. I saw that in aligning curriculum in creative and fun ways provoked more engagement and reduced interruptions during the lesson. In keeping all of these goals in mind, I see that I have a long ways to go however, I am excited to build on these goals.

### **Instructional Practices to Promote Learning and Engagement**

As I look back on this previous school year and the summer of 2019, I have seen myself grow from not knowing what to do when I'm holding the floor to becoming comfortable with practicing and reflecting on specific practices that I would use when holding the floor. Many of these practices and teacher competencies served as a scaffold for me as well as my students

because in my case it helped me shape lessons and in my students' case it helped them access it.

Although I previously have mentioned a few competencies that helped me support student learning, other competencies included implementing structured group work, providing multiple ways for my students to access the content, the use of exit tickets, connecting past and future learning, and providing closure at the end of lessons with discussion.

The reason why I chose to use structured group work to help grow each of my students' content knowledge, skills, and understanding is because it provided students who vary in different levels support of their peers. In addition to this it also taught them how to work amongst a team environment, which is a baseline skill that they will need to have developed once they are old enough to contribute to society. Allowing my students multiple ways to access content also helped them gain content knowledge because of the mere fact that there were a lot of different learners in my classroom, some took longer to pick up the content, and there simply is no one size fits all way to teaching. Therefore, in doing so, it increased the chance of success for each of my students everyday. As the year progressed this became a constant in all content areas but especially math. In math I would give them a lesson or sometimes a mini lesson on whatever our objective was for the day and then I would allow them to access the same lesson on our online platform Go Math Think Central. In doing this I gave them a choice to do it independently or amongst a group.

### **Assessment to Inform Instruction and Promote Learning**

With all the competencies playing a key role in my continued development, I feel implementing assessment played a major role in the success my students experienced in the classroom. One way we implemented assessment was intertwining it in our unit. For example, in



all of our math units, I would teach on average 4 lessons out of nine before we implemented an informative assessment based on those first four lessons. Once my mentor teacher and I received those results, which in our case was immediately due to the help of technology, we would make decisions. Those decisions would include whether or not we need to group a few students together for a re-teach as we continue with the whole group or go back as a whole group and clear up any misconceptions that they may have about the content. In addition to this, giving an informative assessment would also give me the feedback that I needed and wanted about my teaching. I remember one time specifically before holiday break when I received feedback on an informative assessment that I gave. When we came back from break I made the decision to go back and re-teach the material due to the fact that as a whole the class did not do well and I did not want to continue until I felt they were ready to do so. Although it put me behind the other third grade classes for the time being, I felt it was important and resulted in higher scores the second time around.

This shows one way in which I used assessment strategically. In that case, I used assessment to gain data on my classes retention on the first half of a math unit. Other ways in which you can use assessment strategically is by using exit tickets. An exit ticket is another form of informative assessment that you can use at the end of one lesson instead of at a half way point. In doing exit tickets, it is important to remember to take in the data but also mention the data to the class the next day as well as review before you go into new content. It is also important to note the logistics about your assessment. In making your assessment, some aspects to keep in mind is making sure all of your students have access to being able to complete it. This includes your emergent bilinguals and students on IEPs. According to Calderon, the author of “Breaking

Down The Wall”, he states that “ensuring access to rigorous and intellectually rich learning opportunities is essential for raising multilingual learner achievement” (p. 47). Knowing what scaffolds you are going to give that will help your emergent bilinguals access the directions on the assessment is also important. According to Walqui, “scaffolding is closely related to the ZPD ( Zone of Proximal Development). In fact, it is only within the ZPD that scaffolding can occur” (p. 163). ZPD refers to the difference in what our students can accomplish by themselves versus what they can accomplish through guidance. One aspect that I will change in my assessments going forward is the ways in which my students will be able to show me they understand the content. For example, in the future I may have an emergent bilingual who is not confident in creating sentences or using academic vocabulary but is an excellent artist. Perhaps drawing could be a way in which I will allow my students to show what they know. It is important to differentiate this to show you are thinking about the inclusivity.

### **Social Justice Dispositions to Promote Access, Learning, Achievement and Future**

#### **Opportunity and Success**

I recently had a conversation with someone who is at a school that could potentially be my next place of work. In talking to her she stated that the one of the things missing in schools today is the welcoming of conversations around social justice. I thought this was a profound statement because I felt it was true and it is the doorway that allows us as educators to be successful at everything we are employed to do within the classroom. I am under the belief that I can not teach anyone before I have a strong understand of who I am and where I stand in the eyes of society. Therefore, growing self-awareness in myself is important. Once you accomplish how to enrich yourself in that ongoing process then you are able to teach it those in your classroom.

In doing so, you must do so with a sense of vulnerability. Doing this allows teachers to access parts of their students that help them see their students for who they are. In doing so, they are able to build trust. When students trust their teacher they are willing to learn from them.

Although I was able to build a solid foundation of trust with my students, looking back I wish I implemented that aspect more as well as allowing them to access those vulnerable parts of my life. At the beginning of this process, bringing my vulnerability into the classroom was a real challenge for me because I did not and still do not like the feeling of being vulnerable. However, it is important because showing them that vulnerability and giving them access to the stories that have shaped me would have stood as an example on how to have a continued growth of self-awareness. Having knowledge of their own self-awareness as they grow could even protect them as they continue to learn about the world.

In addition to this, I wish I would have done more to raise their consciousness. Due to Covid-19 it took away a great opportunity of being able to talk about the protest since we were outside of the classroom, but these are topics that need to be talked about. It is important for our students to know that everyone does not get an equal shot at life and this is partly due to their positionality. According to Tye, “the playing field is far from level, and complex social forces conspire to prevent meaningful equalization” (p. 31). Students of all ages need to know how their positionality could make someone deem them as dangerous or put them in harms way. They need to know that their positionality could put them in position to be racially profiled and mistreated on a number of levels. They also need to know that their positionality can determine what kind of education they are given access to. In teaching them this, educators can teach their African American students what to be aware of and how to go about life in casual and professional

settings. Educators can provide their Latino, Latina, and Latinx students with information that could help them create a prosperous life for them and their families while also telling them where all of this has stemmed from. Educators can also teach their white students how to become allies because in this race for change their support is needed to aid during these times. Thinking about being given the opportunity to speak on this specifically makes me excited to get back into the classroom because I will be able to explicitly create moments to do so.

All in all, I believe I still have a long way to go in my development to become an effective critical social justice educator. In knowing this, I get excited because of the climate of our world today. I'm being given the opportunity to give all people, including minorities a chance to access a world that looks different from when I was young and will continue to change as they grow. Though I expect it to be challenging, I also expect the best will come out of these challenges.

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