

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS OF BLACK
STUDENTS: CASE STUDIES FROM SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

By

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This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my best friend, my hero, my father—
his humility, his thirst for knowledge, and his lifelong commitment to education and his
community continue to motivate and inspire me.

Rutherford Hamlet Adkins, Ph.D. (1924-1998)

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Many new teachers will need to take positions in predominantly Black, urban schools without having the opportunity to work with effective teachers of African American students prior to taking these positions. With little exposure to successful secondary teachers of Black students, either as student teachers or through an examination of current research which rarely focuses on a single secondary content area, prospective teachers will find it difficult to learn how to elicit academic growth effectively among African American high school students. This collective case study, therefore, documented the beliefs and practices of two successful secondary English teachers in predominantly Black schools in order to examine their beliefs and practices. Qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and the collection of documents, were used to address the following research questions: 1. What are the beliefs and practices of two English teachers considered to be effective in their predominantly Black

high schools? 2. What are the connections between their beliefs and practices? 3. How are beliefs and practices similar and different across the two teachers?

Each case study described the daily classroom practices and beliefs of the two teachers and how they fit within the *How People Learn* Framework in order to understand how they facilitated academic gains in their classrooms. The final findings chapter looked more closely at the classroom management strategies the teachers used to create structured learning environments based in high expectations and an ethic of care. Five areas of further study emerged through the analysis of the teachers' beliefs and practices.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Pedagogic problems in our cities are not chiefly matters of injustice, inequality, or segregation, but of insufficient information about teaching strategies. If we could simply learn “what works” in [the classroom of an exemplary teacher], we’d then be in a position to repeat this ... in every other system. (Kozol, 1991, p. 128)

While researchers maintain that effective teaching cannot eliminate outside forces that hinder academic success, they have found that effective teaching plays a major role in academic achievement and is the primary factor over which schools have control (Kozol, 1991, p. 128; Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 5). Widely discussed in current research on effective teaching of students of color is pedagogy that uses students’ cultural backgrounds to facilitate academic achievement by empowering them in their academic lives and in their personal lives (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Also called equity pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy consists of teaching methods and strategies that provide students with the opportunity to build new knowledge by applying and extending their own constructed knowledge. Gay (2000) explained that culturally responsive teaching is “validating,” “comprehensive,” “multidimensional,” “empowering,” “transformative,” and “emanicipatory” (pp. 29-36).

Affirming culturally relevant pedagogy, Hilliard (2002) emphasized the importance of teachers doing more than simply acknowledging that students’ language and culture should be considered in instruction. This understanding of the importance of language and culture in curriculum and instruction must be accompanied by effective practice. According to Hilliard and others (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry & Delpit, 1998), it is

teachers' inability to integrate students' language into the learning process, not students' language, that creates the problem. Consequently, the literature has begun to explore the practices of teachers who teach students of color effectively. To this end, researchers (Athanases, 1998; Cone, 1994; Cooper, 2003; Foster, 1991; Howard, 2001; Key, 1999; Knoeller, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002) have stepped into the classrooms of effective teachers of Black students to see if and how these teachers facilitate culturally relevant pedagogy. Although they do not always term it "culturally relevant pedagogy," many researchers (Athanases, 1998; Cooper, 2003; Foster, 1991; Howard, 2001; Key, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002) have described practices that fall in line with culturally relevant pedagogy in these classrooms. This kind of research provides more depth into what we know about how effective teachers understand effective practice and academic achievement among Black students and how their understanding translates into practice.

Statement of the Problem

Some researchers have blamed factors beyond the school's control for student failure. For example, Ogbu (2003) asserted that "low-effort syndrome" (p. 17) inhibited Black students from reaching high academic achievement. He stated that the majority of Black participants in his study demonstrated the lack of desire to work hard and believed working hard would make them less popular. Consequently, these students exerted little academic effort, hence the term "low-effort syndrome." Based on his conversations with Black students in the Shaker Heights community of Ohio, Ogbu suggested that low-effort syndrome developed from minimum effort typically exerted by these students. According to Ogbu, low-effort syndrome also stemmed from poor study habits, the inability to focus, and choosing other priorities that took time away from academics. He also noted

that Black students blamed teachers for their poor performance instead of taking responsibility for their inaction (Ogbu, 2003, p. 31).

New (1996), however, emphasized that research does not support the idea that Black students do not want to learn or that they do not want to exert academic effort. Leroy Lovelace, in *Black Teachers on Teaching* (Foster, 1997), therefore, urged teachers not to misinterpret students' resistance to learning as a lack of desire for learning. In fact, he stated that, when students did not feel like they were being pushed by their teachers, they often believed their teachers did not care (Foster, 1997, p. 48). Wilson and Corbett (2001) further elaborated this idea with evidence from their study on the pedagogical needs and wants of middle-school students. Interviewing over 150 students over three years, they found that students from a variety of levels of academic achievement and motivation repeatedly asserted that they wanted teachers who made sure they completed all assignments, helped them until they fully understood a given concept, and controlled behavior so all students could learn.

Researchers (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; New, 1996; Perry & Delpit, 1998; Rios, 1996) have argued that students' intrinsic motivation or lack thereof is only part of a more complex problem. They have found that many factors contribute to the low academic achievement of Black students in public schools. Some researchers (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ogbu, 2003; Perry & Delpit, 1998; Rios, 1996) have pointed to institutional and societal factors to provide an explanation for low academic performance among Black students. Within the school, teachers tend to interact less with students of color and reprimand them more. They also often give less attention to students of color during classroom discussion (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perry & Delpit,

1998; Rios, 1996). Many researchers (Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ogbu, 2003; Perry & Delpit, 1998) also have found that teachers often hold lower expectations for Black students in the classroom. Hilliard (2002) suggested that teachers' behaviors toward the language and culture of Black students could hinder academic success, even if it were embedded within effective teaching strategies (p. 101).

Other researchers (Kozol, 1991, p. 128; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003) have argued that the structure of classrooms and schools foster (or fail to foster) effort in students and therefore have focused on what teachers could do to reverse the cycle. For example, Nieto (2000) concluded that school environment and teaching practices had much more to do with student success or failure than student background. Similarly, Crawford and Aagaard (1991) found the major factors that contributed to high achievement growth in urban schools primarily fell within the school's control. The factors included "principal as an instructional leader, positive climate, high expectations, instructional focus, parental and community involvement, and use of measurement" (p. 78). While teachers may have little control over creating a positive school climate, they do have the power to create a positive climate within their classrooms, to hold high expectations for their students, to maintain an instructional focus, to involve parents and the community, and to use formal and informal measures to meet the academic needs of their students.

Some teachers, however, fail to create a positive environment for students because they believe their own behaviors and the behaviors of those from similar racial and cultural backgrounds constitute what is normal and interpret the behaviors of others as abnormal or deviant (Banks & Banks, 1997; Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1997; Kutz &

Roskelly, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This cultural conflict, or mismatch, often leads teachers to misinterpret language and social behaviors of students who represented different cultures or ethnic groups and to reprimand the behaviors in an effort to change them instead of using them as a resource (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). Such misunderstanding creates obstacles for Black students in the pursuit of academic success, such as over-referral to special education and higher rates of suspension. Gay (2000) and others (Banks & Banks, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994) have called for culturally responsive teaching as an approach to reducing the problems caused by a cultural mismatch between students and teachers. With specific knowledge of how effective teachers integrate culturally responsive pedagogy into their classrooms, even when differences in race and/or culture exist, teachers and teacher educators will have a better understanding of how to facilitate academic gains among Black students.

Statement of the Question

The following questions guided this investigation:

- What are the beliefs and practices of two English teachers who are considered to be effective in their predominantly Black high schools?
- What are the connections between their beliefs and practices?
- What are the similarities and differences between the two teachers?

Statement of Significance

The achievement gap between White students and Black and Hispanic students is long-standing and tenacious, and the gap is larger for African American students than for any other minority group (Ogbu, 2003; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). In their review of current statistics, Thernstrom and Thernstrom (2003) found that a high percentage (42% to 78% depending on the subject area) of Black students performed “below basic” on five of the seven subject tests of the National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) assessment between 1998 and 2000. Specifically, in 1998, Black students scored, on average, 30 points below White students in reading regardless of educational attainment of their parents. On both the NAEP science and math assessments in 2000, for students whose parents did not finish high school, Black students scored, on average, 18 points below White students and, for students whose parents graduated from college, Black students scored 34 points below White students. Further, the NAEP scores of Black students peaked in 1988 and have not increased over time (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003, p. 49; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 17).

The College Entrance Examination Board also found that, in 2001, only 11 percent of Black students took the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The scores (verbal and quantitative) of those who took the test were, on average, only seven points higher than the scores of Black students who took the SAT in 1991. This contrasts with the much higher percentage (66%) of White students who took the SAT in 2001. The combined scores of White students taking the test in 2001 were 18 points higher than those of White students who took the SAT in 1991 (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003, p. 64). On the 2001 American College Test (ACT), which is designed to measure college readiness, the average composite score for Black students was below minimal readiness for college and lower than the average composite score for any other racial group (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003, p. 65).

While the racial gap in academic achievement is widely documented and generally undisputed, some researchers have suggested that it is primarily a consequence of the larger issue of low academic achievement among Black students across socioeconomic levels (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). In fact, Thernstrom and Thernstrom suggested

that, while Black students from higher income families outperformed Black students from low-income families, they still demonstrated lower academic achievement than White students of comparable socioeconomic status. Other researchers, however, have focused not on low achievement across socioeconomic status, but on the inadequate preparation of teachers who enter urban schools that serve low-income families. Foster (1991), for example, found little agreement in the literature on teacher education about how to prepare teachers to facilitate academic achievement among students of color from low-income families. Ladson-Billings (1991) underscored the need to focus on teacher preparation by emphasizing that developing effective teachers of students of color depended on what we learned from successful teachers of Black students.

Many new teachers will need to take positions in predominantly Black urban schools and the majority of student teachers will not have the opportunity to work with effective teachers of African American students prior to taking these positions (Foster, 1991). Consequently, teacher educators often turn to current research on successful teachers on Black students in order to provide prospective teachers with some idea of the beliefs and practices of effective teachers. Although some research has documented beliefs and practices that facilitate academic growth among Black students, there have been only a few studies particularly focused on a single “gate-keeping” subject like English (Athanasos, 1998; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Key, 1999; Ostrowski, 2002). While this research has provided valuable insight into the classroom and, at times, does include extended classroom observations, it typically does not include detailed descriptions of classroom observations or a discussion of the connection between beliefs and practices. In the current research both within and across content areas and grade

levels (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Boykin et al., 2005; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett, Wilson, & Williams, 2002; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Ostrowski, 2002; Thompson, 2004), the beliefs and practices of effective teachers of Black students generally fall within the following five categories:

- Hold high expectations for all students and provide support for students to meet these expectations.
- Focus on academics and encourage students to inquire, problem-solve, and construct knowledge collaboratively about big concepts instead of isolated facts.
- Care about students and incorporate students' lives and cultural backgrounds into classroom instruction, building on students' prior knowledge and connecting it to the world outside the classroom.
- Know and stay involved in the communities in which students live, integrate this understanding into the curriculum, and involve parents.
- Hold high expectations for themselves and possess a deep knowledge of their students and their subject matter.

Hold High Expectations for All Students and Provide Support

Effective teachers that have been described in the literature expect students to meet firm, behavioral expectations that include completing every assignment and doing high quality work (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991). They also treat each student as capable and create an environment in which students can see their strengths and, in collaboration with the teacher, establish their own academic and behavioral goals and participate in decision-making and assessment (Bowers, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Further, effective teachers constantly monitor students' understanding as they push them to reach their full intellectual potential and empower them to become critical thinkers who challenge the status quo (Corbett et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers lead students to become academically successful and confident, concerned members of society (Gay, 2000). At the same time, these

teachers emphasize that making mistakes is part of the learning process and approach academic and behavioral errors not punitively, but with an ethos of care (Noddings, 1992).

Focus on Academics and Encourage Students to Inquire, Problem-Solve, and Construct Knowledge Collaboratively

Effective teachers maintain an academic purpose in a classroom setting that encourages students to inquire, problem-solve, and construct knowledge collaboratively about big concepts instead of isolated facts (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). With continuous support from the teacher and each other, students engage in active learning and challenge themselves to move beyond minimum competencies to mastery of challenging curriculum as demonstrated through multiple formats (Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Thompson, 2004). Effective teachers demonstrate an excitement for learning and an understanding of their role in helping students to develop cognitively, emotionally, and socially (Ayers & Shubert, 1994). They also recognize the need to integrate both teacher-centered and student-centered pedagogy in innovative ways that stress collaboration over competition (Boykin et al., 2005; Brown, 2003; Foster, 1991).

Care about Students and Incorporate Students' Lives and Cultural Backgrounds into Classroom Instruction

Effective teachers of Black students facilitate relevant, engaging, and diverse learning experiences that affirm students' cultural backgrounds (Boykin et al., 2005; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). They create classroom environments that reflect an "Afrocultural ethos," which includes elements such as communalism, an emphasis on social connectedness, and oral tradition, an emphasis on creativity in spoken language (Boykin et al., 2005, p. 527). Further, effective teachers demonstrate

communicative competencies appropriate to the group of students with whom they work and build upon students' prior knowledge (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers include students' lives as an integral part of the curriculum, and they encourage students to maintain personal and academic involvement with school (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In the classrooms of effective teachers of Black students, teachers connect ideas and concepts to the world outside of the classroom and create a supportive classroom environment (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Ostrowski, 2002).

Know and Stay Involved in the Communities in Which Students Live

Effective teachers have a deep understanding of the communities from which their students come. They encourage parental involvement in the school and assume all families will support the academic development of their children when given the opportunity and guidance to do so (Foster, 1991). They not only invite community members to come to the school, but also they integrate projects and activities in the community into the curriculum (Bowers, 2000).

Hold High Expectations for Themselves and Possess a Deep Knowledge of Their Students and Their Subject Matter

Effective teachers possess a deep knowledge of their students and the subject matter and constantly seek resources to learn more (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Foster, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers have both personal and academic involvement with students and stay involved with the school and district. They also influence and are influenced by other effective teachers (Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Ostrowski, 2002). They maintain high quality relationships with their students inside and outside of the classroom, and their great sense of care for their students leads them to take responsibility

for student learning, motivation, and student failure (Brown, 2003; Foster, 1991; Ostrowski, 2002). They also demonstrate an ability to address difficult issues, such as race and racism, by openly discussing these issues with their students (Cooper, 2003).

The teachers described in the literature as successful may not incorporate all of these elements at all times. These broad categories, however, provide a foundation for examining effective practice and offer some insight into effective pedagogy for African American students. The research across grade levels and across disciplines that helped to generate this list often inadvertently overlooks some of the nuances unique to the secondary English classroom and what effective English teachers, in particular, do to facilitate academic gains among Black students. Current research focused specifically on secondary English teachers offers more depth into beliefs and practices particularly effective in English classrooms, but it typically omits the kind of detail necessary for teacher educators to provide prospective teachers with an accurate description of the daily practices of effective teachers and how their beliefs influence these practices. In addition, current research on effective teachers of Black students also generally fails to include students in the process of selecting teachers. Wilson and Corbett (2001) explained that research in the area of school reform often includes the voices of students (Oldfather, 1993; Poplin & Weeres, 1992; Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997; Wilson & Corbett, 2001), and this research supports the value of student voice. Students' perceptions of their educational experiences documented in research on school reform provided meaningful data, and their perceptions of good secondary English teachers also provided important insight into this study of effective teachers.

This study sought to document the beliefs and practices of effective teachers of Black students in order to examine their beliefs about teaching and how their beliefs influenced their practice. English is a “gate-keeping” subject and all of the academic content areas rely on skills developed in language arts, such as reading and writing skills, so this study focused on English classrooms. It attempted to explore the practices and beliefs of teachers who facilitated significant academic growth among African American students, recognizing the limitations of a small-scale study. This study also examined any connections, or lack thereof, between these teachers’ practices and those identified in current research as practices exhibited by effective teachers of Black students. This thick description of the practices and beliefs of two exemplary secondary English teachers, as determined by students and principals, while not broadly generalizable, adds valuable information to the current discussion of teacher preparation, effective pedagogy, and academic achievement among Black students. Documenting the “wisdom of practice” of these teachers provides depth to current literature on effective pedagogy and teacher preparation (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 154).

Definitions of Key Terms

The written presentation of the dissertation assumed the following definitions of key terms.

Effective Practice

Effective practice has been described as classroom behaviors of teachers that facilitate both effort and excellence among students by providing adequate support and encouragement (Corbett et al., 2002). In addition, effective practice among Black students has been defined as culturally relevant pedagogy which, “is able to promote academic achievement without sacrificing an African and African American identity”

(Cooper, 2000, p. 32). Ladson-Billings (1994) further explained that culturally relevant pedagogy is, “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 18). Without being labeled as culturally relevant pedagogy, effective practice also has been described as classroom behaviors of teachers that lead to academic growth by demonstrating high expectations of all students, strong content knowledge and content specific pedagogical skills, unconditional academic support, and personal relationships with students inside and outside of the classroom (Foster, 1991). For the purpose of this study, effective teachers were defined as those who facilitated strong academic gains among African American students.

Predominantly African American

Predominantly African American in this study refers to schools in which African American students make up more than 75% of the total student population.

Teacher Beliefs

Teachers’ beliefs can be defined as the “implicit assumptions held about students, classrooms, and the curriculum” (Rios, 1996, p. 263). These assumptions, mediated by the sociocultural contexts of the school, the students, and the teacher, determine a teacher’s classroom behaviors and interaction with students (Rios, 1996). Teachers’ beliefs also are the best indication of their future decision-making in the classroom (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992).

Organization of Study

The written presentation of the dissertation includes one chapter for the introduction, one chapter for the literature review, one chapter for methods, one chapter

for each of the two teachers, one chapter for a cross-case comparison of strategies that facilitate engagement, and one chapter for cross-case analysis and implications.

CHAPTER 2 DISCUSSION OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A survey of literature related to beliefs and practices of effective teachers of Black students must begin with an overview of current research on teacher beliefs and practices. The chapter then includes a discussion of current research on the beliefs and practices of effective teachers of Black students, including research that focuses specifically on the English classroom. Considering that much of the literature on effective teachers of Black students uses terms like “urban,” “high poverty,” “at-risk,” “diverse,” and “minority” to refer to teaching African American students, the discussion includes such studies that identify the student population by any of these or similar terms.

Teacher Beliefs and Practices

Rios (1996) and others (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gillete, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992) found that teachers’ behaviors toward their students were “in large part a product of the theories [they] hold of students generally and the theories [they] hold of each specific student” (p.133). Teachers’ theories, or negotiated interpretations, and beliefs, therefore, determined the quality and quantity of teacher-student interactions. Although researchers have found that teachers treat students of color differently, and often in negative ways, generally they rarely incorporate the idea of race and culture in current research on the beliefs of practicing teachers (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gillette, 1996; McAllister, 1999; Rios, 1996).

The literature has suggested that teachers' beliefs are the best indication of their future decision-making in the classroom (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). In fact, when teachers reach a point where nothing works, they typically turn to their beliefs to address the particular situation. Although research has shown that teachers' beliefs are difficult to change, there is research to document that change is possible under certain conditions. Pajares (1992) explained that these conditions included a conflict with existing beliefs, an awareness that the conflict should be reconciled, a desire to reconcile the conflict, and attempts to bring the conflicting information together must not have worked. Other researchers (Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000; Grisham, Berg, Jacobs, & Mathison, 2002; McAllister & Irvine, 2002) found that both preservice and inservice training that included experiences in urban schools or schools with a high minority population had a positive impact on the existing beliefs of teachers. Current research focused on the effects of preservice and inservice interventions on teachers' beliefs (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Cook & Van Cleaf, 2000; Grisham et al., 2002; McAllister & Irvine, 2002), however, generally has made no comparison to actual practice (Artiles, 1996; Dilworth, 1998; McAllister, 1999).

Grisham et al. (2002), for example, found teachers' beliefs to be malleable when they participated in preservice experiences that took place in a professional development school. In their study of the impact of a professional development school, researchers administered written surveys and conducted focus groups with 38 teachers who taught in one of three professional development schools. Based on school climate and interview data, they found that graduates of the Model Education Center (MEC), which was designed "to promote the core beliefs of collaboration, reflective thinking, risk taking,

and continuous learning” (p. 21), did have a positive effect on teachers’ beliefs and practices. All of the focal teachers not only worked in professional development schools as preservice teachers, but also they continued to work in professional development schools as practicing teachers.

In a study on preservice and novice teachers’ perceptions of cultural diversity, Cook and Van Cleaf (2000) also examined the effects of preservice experiences. Specifically, they studied how student-teaching experiences in Comer schools, which tend to have a high minority population from low-income families, affected the first year of teaching. The researchers sent questionnaires to 79 first-year elementary school teachers in order to determine to what degree urban Comer schools contributed to their preparation. After they received responses from 59 practicing teachers, they found that students who completed their student-teaching in urban, Comer and non-Comer, schools felt a greater understanding of the sociocultural needs of students. There was no significant difference between those students placed in Comer and non-Comer schools. The survey relied solely on self-report from the first-year teachers.

Byrnes et al. (1997) found that experience, coupled with appropriate academic resources and training like those offered in graduate programs, led to positive attitudes about language. In their study of teachers’ attitudes about language diversity, researchers administered the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) to 191 teachers from Arizona, Utah, and Virginia who were taking courses in teacher education. According to their findings, specific training in teaching students with limited English proficiency provided teachers with the tools to teach effectively and led to more positive beliefs about

language diversity. They also found that going beyond isolated training and actually attaining a graduate degree was associated with more positive beliefs among teachers.

McAllister and Irvine (2002) also concluded that formal training had a positive impact on teachers' beliefs. In their study of the role of empathy in teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds, they examined several documents submitted by 34 practicing teachers who were enrolled in the CULTURES program, a professional development program designed to encourage culturally relevant pedagogy. The sources of data included each teacher's application to the program, each teacher's final project, exit interviews, and the CULTURES report. Researchers used QSR NUDIST software to organize the data, and they noted that the teachers who participated in the program showed an increased level of empathy as demonstrated in the data, which was primarily self-reported by the teachers. The researchers acknowledged that, while the teachers did find the professional development useful in facilitating more positive beliefs about cultural diversity, the teachers in the study may have previously held "a predisposition to cross-cultural empathy" (p. 442). Further, the study did not include data about teachers' beliefs prior to the intervention.

Like research on preservice and inservice training designed to facilitate positive beliefs about diversity, research that documents existing beliefs of preservice and practicing teachers generally has made minimal connections to actual practice. Freeman, Brookhart, and Loadman (1999) discovered that novice teachers felt it was more difficult to establish relationships with students in schools characterized by diversity. The teachers who worked in high diversity schools also reported lower levels of job satisfaction. Relying on questionnaires to determine teachers' perceptions, researchers surveyed

between 1,400 and 1,700 teacher education graduates from 10 different teacher preparation programs using the National Follow-Up Survey of Teacher Education Program Graduates. While providing useful information about the beliefs of beginning teachers, the study did not provide insight into how these beliefs developed, what they looked like in the classroom, or at what grade level these teachers taught. In a similar study, Marshall (1996) surveyed 206 preservice and practicing teachers across grade levels and content areas to understand their concerns about teaching students who were culturally different. Based on the results of the survey, both preservice and practicing teachers expressed greater concerns about teaching students who were culturally different than about teaching White students, but no data were provided about their teaching practices.

Four qualitative studies focused on teacher beliefs and practices across grade levels and content areas, paying particular attention to issues of diversity. In one study, for example, Hulsebosch and Koerner (1993) compiled case studies of six self-proclaimed, culturally-aware teachers who identified themselves as Hispanic, Italian, Filipino-Irish-Dutch-German-Cherokee-American, Euro-American, Black, and Chicano. The focal teachers met for two years to discuss the implications of their past lives, their connections to each other as culturally-aware teachers, and their connections with other teachers. The teachers, then, provided autobiographical sketches that served as the data for the study. These teachers believed in the importance of maintaining and expressing their own cultural identities in their classrooms in order to create an environment in which students felt comfortable to express their own cultural identities. Although the researchers stated

that they collected some classroom data, none were presented in the study that described the classroom behaviors and practices of the focal teachers.

Through the use of extensive interviews, Ayers and Schubert (1994) documented the art and wisdom of teachers considered by colleagues, students, or supervisors to be outstanding. While no attempt was made to define the term “outstanding,” the researchers developed a list of emerging themes about effective teachers from questions that asked about assumptions, beliefs, approaches, strategies, experience, and wisdom. The list included the following themes:

- Effective teachers exhibit a deep sense of responsibility for student learning and motivation.
- Effective teachers demonstrate high expectations for students and themselves.
- Effective teachers blame self if students fail or are unmotivated.
- Effective teachers maintain an academic task orientation.
- Effective teachers demonstrate a desire to create a warm, supportive environment.
- Effective teachers exhibit excitement that spurs student excitement about learning.
- Effective teachers show an eagerness to learn from any resource available.
- Effective teachers demonstrate wariness of the value of theory.
- Effective teachers feel dissatisfied with teacher education courses.
- Effective teachers believe in the importance of student interest as a basis for teaching and learning. (pp. 109-110)

Sleeter (1992) conducted an ethnographic study of 30 teachers enrolled in multicultural education training over the course of two years. This study focused on a much longer in-service training with practicing teachers. In the study, she looked at the impact of the training on teachers’ beliefs and practices. At the end of two years, Sleeter found that, although the teachers reported the training was beneficial and provided good

information, they included multicultural education in their teaching on only a limited basis.

Unlike Sleeter, Dyson (1995) did not focus on an intervention tied to a structured program. Instead, she invited 12 elementary school teachers, chosen by the school district's director of staff development, to participate in weekly "teas" to discuss issues related to diversity, literacy, and teaching in an urban environment. Dyson supplemented the data gathered during these sessions with periodic classroom observations of the focal teachers. From her conversations with the teachers, Dyson found that the teachers were able to meet the needs of children more effectively when collegial relationships existed. She also discovered that the success of using cultural differences as a resource in a school depended on all staff members knowing what others were doing. These teachers, Dyson noted, thought of their classrooms as "homes" and "families" and believed teacher agency was linked to child agency. They, therefore, sought students' feedback when there were difficulties in the classroom.

Beliefs and Practices of Effective Teachers of Black Students

Boykin et al. (2005) suggested that, in order for instruction to be most effective for Black students, it needed to reflect students' culture in the way concepts were defined and presented, in the way knowledge was gained and demonstrated, and in the environment in which learning occurred. Thompson (2004) further noted that effective instruction of students of color demonstrated a belief that all students can and want to learn, that students bring a wealth of cultural capital to the classroom, and that teachers must do whatever it takes to facilitate academic growth. Researchers (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994) also have found that successful teachers use students' cultural backgrounds to empower them in their academic lives and in their personal lives. They

also gave them the opportunity to build new knowledge by applying and extending their own constructed knowledge.

Culturally relevant pedagogy in particular seeks to bring together what research has learned about effective instruction for Black students and specifically attempts to foster an environment where language and cultural differences serve as strengths to which students can link new knowledge (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Not a set of prescribed strategies, culturally relevant pedagogy deals with how teachers see themselves and their students and how they continually help students to make community, cultural, and global connections (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Whether called equity pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, or simply effective instruction for African American students, this philosophy has been observed to some degree in many classrooms of successful teachers of Black students documented in current research.

Twelve studies describing the beliefs and/or practices of exemplary teachers of Black students were found, and they all identified at least some beliefs and strategies that were consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy, whether or not they were identified as such. All 12 studies primarily employed qualitative methodology. Foster (1993), for example, conducted case studies on 18 exemplary African American teachers of African American students to understand their philosophies of education. One teacher taught at the community college level while the others taught in elementary through high school, and all teachers were selected by community nomination. With a range of 17-66 years of experience, these teachers participated in extensive life and career history interviews that addressed their backgrounds, their thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning, and

their teaching experiences. All of the teachers agreed that, while desegregation brought substantial material improvements to the education of Black students, it came with serious consequences, such as tracking and low expectations, that limited students' access to an equitable education.

Howard (2001) sought to understand the practices of successful teachers of Black students, focusing specifically on the extent to which these teachers used culturally relevant pedagogy. Four parents, six principals, five teachers, three district administrators, and three community leaders were asked to select elementary teachers they believed facilitated academic and social development among Black students. The four Black women chosen from the initial list of 12 teachers were selected after classroom observations suggested that they implemented at least 15 of 20 practices that Howard identified as consistent with culturally responsive pedagogy. All of the focal teachers taught in predominantly Black schools in both lower and middle class settings. Howard observed these exemplary teachers over four months and conducted three formal interviews in order to capture their daily instructional practices and understand if and how their practices related to the tenets of culturally relevant teaching as he described them. Using a grounded theory approach to analyze the data, he found their practices did in fact reflect culturally relevant pedagogy and, specifically, they centered on the following pedagogical themes: "holistic instructional strategies" which referred to a focus on both academic and social/emotional development, "culturally consistent communicative competence" which referred to the understanding and use of language patterns students used in their homes, and "skill-building strategies to promote academic

success” which referred to a focus on helping students to develop skills necessary for academic achievement, such as encouraging students to take risks and work hard (p. 179).

Cooper (2003) also looked at effective teaching of Black children, but concentrated on the practices of White teachers. Like other researchers, she used community nomination to select three White elementary school teachers who “key members of the Black community in which they teach” found to be effective (p. 413). Over 20 weeks, Cooper conducted weekly classroom observations preceded and followed by structured interviews. Based on her findings, teacher beliefs fell into two categories: “operational beliefs and practices” and “conceptual beliefs and practices” (p. 419), and these beliefs were generally consistent with the literature on effective Black teachers of Black children. A major difference, however, occurred in the area of addressing racism. The literature suggested that, even with young children, effective Black teachers dealt with issues of racism explicitly and openly, but the White teachers in this study avoided discussions of race and racism. Cooper noted that avoiding such discussions “undermined the teachers’ espoused beliefs and practices around respect for and empathy with the Black community at large, including a willingness to learn from it” (p. 425).

In their study of urban teachers’ assumptions about low-income students, Corbett, Wilson, and Williams (2002) interviewed 125 elementary and secondary teachers to understand how they defined the statement “all children can learn and succeed” (p. 7). Researchers provided a snapshot into the classrooms of four teachers who interpreted the statement as a personal call to action to do whatever it took to ensure their students learned. Calling it an “It’s my job” / “No excuses” philosophy, Corbett et al. emphasized that it was not particular instructional strategies that set these teachers apart, but it was

the belief that it was their responsibility to create conditions in which students could and would succeed academically. These “supportive actions” included the following strategies (pp. 134-144):

- Insisting that students complete every assignment
- Expecting students to do high quality work
- Checking for all students’ understanding
- Providing extra help

In her study of exemplary teachers of African American children, Ladson-Billings (1995) focused on the beliefs and practices of eight African American elementary school teachers in a low-income school district in Northern California. Using community nomination to select the teachers, Ladson-Billings conducted interviews, classroom observations, and collaborative discussions and found that all of the focal teachers held high expectations for their students and would not allow them to fail. The teachers also chose to be a part of the communities they served and maintained relationships of mutual respect with the students. In these classrooms, students learned from each other as well as the teacher and demonstrated their understanding through a variety of assessment strategies.

In an earlier study, Ladson-Billings (1994) examined the teaching practices of four teachers, three of whom practiced culturally relevant teaching and one who did not. All of the teachers who integrated culturally relevant teaching into their classroom had several years of teaching experience, and the one who did not was a student-teacher. Ladson-Billings took field notes during scheduled, weekly observations, examined student records, and interviewed teachers to understand their perspectives on teaching. After observing the teachers and discussing her findings with them, Ladson-Billings developed several overarching tenets of culturally relevant teaching (pp. 117-125):

- Teachers interact with students as if they are competent.
- Teachers integrate students' lives and experiences into the curriculum.
- Teachers maintain an instructional focus in the classroom.
- Teachers make instructional decisions based on students' mastery level.
- Teachers demonstrate a strong knowledge of students and subject matter.

Wilson and Corbett (2001) took a slightly different approach from other researchers and interviewed students to understand their classroom experiences and what they said about school. According to the authors, if comprehensive school reform actually occurred in schools, then students' descriptions of classroom activities would demonstrate substantial change. Wilson and Corbett attempted to include students who represented the diversity of the school population, which included attention to instructional experience, academic performance, behavior, motivation, gender, and race. After beginning with 247 sixth-graders at the beginning of the three-year study, the authors drew from interviews with 153 middle school students who remained in the study for its duration. Each student participated in three 30- to 45-minute interviews that took place during the spring of their sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade years. They also interviewed 114 eighth-graders during the first year of the study in order to remedy the influence of changes noted because of "adolescent maturation and development" and not actual changes in the school (p. 11). For the initial interview protocol development, the researchers involved both the school staff and staff from the funding agency, the Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF). Subsequent protocols were derived from issues that emerged from the previous year's interviews. The researchers relied solely on interviews to collect data, and they used "verbatim field notes" to record interviews. To analyze the abundance of data, researchers wrote descriptive memos as they read their field notes and noted emerging

themes to establish categories. After analyzing the data, they found similarities in the kinds of teachers wanted by students:

- The teacher ‘stayed on students’ to complete assignments.
 - The teacher was able to control student behavior without ignoring the lesson.
 - The teacher went out of his or her way to provide help.
 - The teacher explained things until the ‘light bulb went on’ for the whole class.
 - The teacher provided students with a variety of activities through which to learn.
 - The teacher understood students’ situations and factored that into their lessons.
- (p. 64)

The authors interpreted these findings to mean that students believed effective teachers demonstrated a “no excuses policy” that included both high expectations and a high level of support to meet those expectations (p. 64).

Black Students and Effective High School Teachers

Five of the 12 studies describing the beliefs and/or practices of exemplary teachers of Black students were focused on the secondary level. Focusing on the secondary level because it is “a level where teaching in urban areas is often most problematic” (p. 275), Foster (1991) described the life experiences and practices of five, African American urban high school teachers in various content areas. Each of these teachers was chosen by community nomination as an exemplary teacher of African American children. Specifically, Foster consulted Black newspapers, churches, organizations, and other individuals in the community to identify exemplary teachers. For two years, data were collected through life history interviews that lasted for two to four hours, limited classroom observations when possible, and archival data, such as newspapers, yearbooks, lesson plans, and other documents. Using a qualitative software program, Foster coded the data and allowed the following themes to emerge: community and school context; family, childhood, and community experiences; schooling experiences; and

connectedness to family and community. Foster found that, in addition to knowing their subject area well, all of the focal teachers held high expectations for their students and provided unlimited support for them to reach those expectations. They also maintained relationships with students outside of the classroom and demonstrated an abundance of knowledge of the communities they served. Further, they characterized themselves as “serious, tough, and hard” and encouraged parents to play an active role in the school.

Black Students and Effective English Teachers

Four studies focused specifically on the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of English teachers related to issues of literacy and diversity. Brookhart and Rusnak (1993) used structured interviews to learn from exemplary secondary urban teachers. After selecting six White teachers and two Black teachers from the 12 nominated by the Pittsburgh English Division Director, researchers conducted one interview with each teacher that lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. The audiotaped interviews focused on one recent, successful lesson from each of the teachers and took place in the teachers’ schools at a time that was convenient for the teacher. After coding the data twice to determine appropriate categories, the researchers analyzed the data to identify emerging themes using a constant comparative method. They found that each of the teachers described “student-centered lessons, explicit connections between the lesson content and students’ lives, giving and receiving feedback, especially about revision of student writing, an atmosphere of mutual respect among students and the teacher, an emphasis on modeling, teacher enthusiasm, explicit and broad academic goals, higher order thinking, and a sense of the importance of content” (p. 25). While these teaching practices and beliefs were not supported with actual classroom observations, they were consistent with research on exemplary teachers of Black students and with the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Key (1999) conducted formal and informal interviews and classroom observations with four high-school English teachers for four months to understand how teachers used their time to address the issue of literacy and how they interacted with students with different language and cultural backgrounds. She also performed document analysis and acted as a participant observer, but these processes were not described in the study. While the researcher did not describe the teacher selection process, she did identify the following research questions: (a) how do teachers utilize their instructional time to meet the literacy needs of their students in the English classroom, (b) what goals and expectations did the teachers have concerning academic achievement and/or literacy learning for their students, and (c) what did the teachers feel would enhance their teaching and students' learning by way of additional training or professional development. In response to her research questions, Key found "a 'cookie cutter' type of instructional strategy designed to meet the needs of the testing procedures" (p. 13) and most of the instructional time was devoted to literature instruction.

Key also noted that, while educational goals were much clearer in their honors classes than in their regular classes, the teachers were concerned with the Alabama Exit Exam and ACT in all of their classes. Although the teachers could articulate the importance of teaching other things, they all spent the majority of their time focusing on developing skills that would be assessed on the exams. All of the teachers also agreed that current professional development was not strong, and they wanted to learn effective strategies for teaching their Spanish-speaking students. The data supported the need for help with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Key, for example, found that teachers did not give much attention to students' diverse learning styles, abilities, cultural

backgrounds, or interests. They also had great difficulty communicating with Spanish-speaking students and demonstrated low expectations for these students. Teachers explained they lacked the time to teach these students effectively.

As part of a larger five-year study, the Excellence in English project (EIE) directed by Langer, that examined the classrooms of 88 teachers in 25 schools, Ostrowski (2002) investigated four English teachers in two secondary schools in an urban district to examine how they understood effective practice in the English classroom. Conducting one classroom observation during each of the two years of the study, Ostrowski found several commonalities among the teachers. All of these teachers worked in schools that researchers chose because they were “beating the odds” according to test scores and recommendations from state education departments, the National Council of Teachers of English, and other local, state, and national educational organizations (p. 67). William H. Turner Technical Arts High School, for example, was located in a community surrounded by severe socioeconomic depression, but the researcher found that all staff members were focused on academic success for all students. At the high school, not only were test scores and graduation rates high, but also the building was beautifully kept and the interaction between students and staff was meaningful. The middle school, Highland Oaks, also boasted of being an engaging learning environment that fostered meaningful relationships between students and staff. Serving a student population from more diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, Highland Oaks Middle School enrolled many students from less privileged circumstances. Two of the teachers taught at Turner Tech and two at Highland Oaks and were selected not only because they taught in a school in

which their students “beat the odds,” but also because they agreed to participate in the study for two years.

Ostrowski found these exceptionally effective teachers were not atypical in their schools. In fact, “their school and/or district (often both) encouraged all teachers, not just those in our study, to achieve comparable profession goals” and researchers found “the instructional approaches of the teachers in our study were widely accepted and carried out in their schools” (p. 11). First, they all implemented strategies they learned from professional development opportunities. The Miami-Dade County District Language Arts Department offered many workshops throughout the year, including an intensive writing institute for two weeks during the summer break. Teachers identified several strategies that they attributed to professional development workshops sponsored by the District that included: analysis of scoring rubrics used by the statewide writing exam, graphic organizers, modeling of poetry writing, literature circles, jigsawing, and reciprocal teaching (p. 73). A second commonality among the four teachers was the fact that they all were highly involved in their schools and worked closely with other effective teachers. Specifically, each of the teachers identified other teachers within their schools with whom they shared lesson plans and test ideas and even with whom they commiserated. The teachers at Turner Tech participated in Critical Friends Groups that met regularly throughout the month to address various educational issues. A third commonality identified by Ostrowski dealt with the influence effective teachers had on each other. The researcher noticed that, when the focal teachers attended the same NCTE and District workshops, they found each other and immediately shared teaching ideas they found to be effective. A fourth commonality among the focal teachers involved classroom

dynamics and intimacy. They all maintained quality relationships with their students that included being well-liked, trusted, and respected by students, using reader-response techniques that encouraged students to connect their personal lives to literature, wasting little time during class sessions, and holding high expectations for students' academic performance.

In his study of literary encounters in two English classes in two different urban high schools, Athanases (1998) conducted classroom observations, student surveys and interviews, teacher interviews, and interviews with parents and other school personnel to understand students' reactions to culturally responsive instruction. The two teachers selected for the study were identified through a nomination process that included nominations from teacher leaders and instructors at the local Writing Project and state Literature Project, instructors and supervisors from a teacher education program, the district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, English department chairs and members, directors of Poets and Artists in the Schools, and language and literacy researchers. After conducting classroom observations and interviews with 10 of the 30 teachers named through the nomination process, Athanases selected two teachers who fit his stated criteria that included the following: (a) urban setting, (b) multiethnic student population, (c) public school, (d) ninth or tenth grade English class, (e) academically heterogeneous, (f) typical class size for California schools, (g) focus on cultural diversity, (h) reputation for strong literature instruction, (i) facilitated classroom discussion, (j) valued student response, (k) reflective practitioner, and (l) expressed interest in research and inquiry (p. 270).

For the actual study, Athanases took field notes during two weekly classroom observations during one school year, recorded 30 class discussions, and conducted over 60 interviews with teachers, focal students, parents, and other school personnel. He also recorded some small-group discussions and collected student surveys and writing samples. After two years, he went back and captured retrospective data from students. In his analysis of data, Athanases coded data and identified emerging themes that he verified with both participants and outsiders of the study. According to his findings, teachers valued student interpretations and incorporated a great deal of class discussion to “support exploratory thinking” (p. 277). From the teachers, Athanases found the use of a variety of multicultural literature, the encouragement of diverse perspectives, and the exploration of students’ personal and cultural knowledge in relation to literature. From the students, he found they linked the literature to their own lived experiences, they reconsidered how they thought about culture and diversity, and some of them resisted engaging in difficult conversations about race. When the researcher went back to collect retrospective data from students, he found they not only valued the text selections made by their teachers, but also they remembered actual moments from class discussions that helped them to connect literature to their lived experiences outside of school.

Current research on secondary English teachers offers some insight into effective practice in classrooms populated primarily by students of color. Based on previous findings, we know the following about effective English teachers (Athanases, 1998; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Key, 1999; Ostrowski, 2002):

- Instruction is student-centered with explicit connections to students’ lives and students’ perspectives.
- Teachers provide specific feedback to students about their work in order to support their academic development.

- Teachers and students share a mutual respect for each other.
- Teachers demonstrate an excitement and enthusiasm for their content.
- Teachers seek professional development opportunities and value continuous learning and development of pedagogical skills.

Current research provides an adequate framework for effective English instruction among students of color, but it typically does not include student voice in identifying good teachers and it rarely provides detailed descriptions of the beliefs and daily practices of effective teachers of African American students. While beliefs and practices invariably will be different from teacher to teacher, there still may be some commonalities within the individual classrooms of effective teachers of Black students. By offering a comprehensive snapshot of the classrooms of two English teachers who have been identified as effective in predominantly Black schools, the present study gives practicing teachers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers the opportunity to learn from the experiences of the kinds of teachers they may not see during student teaching experiences. Such rich description provides the kind of teacher preparation that is missing from most teacher education programs simply because current research typically does not include more than generalizations about the practices and beliefs of effective teachers of students of color. It also generally does not value the contribution of students in the selection process. The present study's focus on the classrooms of teachers determined to be effective by students and administrators, therefore, paints a more complete picture of what happens from day to day in the classrooms of effective English teachers and how their beliefs influence their practices.

Conclusion

A review of current studies related to teachers' beliefs and practices justifies the need for continued interpretive research on effective teachers of Black students. Current

research, often in the form of quantitative inquiry, rarely examines the connections between teachers' attitudes and beliefs and their instructional practices when teaching diverse groups of students. Focusing on both preservice and practicing teachers, researchers have used quantitative surveys to understand teachers' beliefs and attitudes, but these studies rarely attempt to document the beliefs and attitudes of teachers identified as effective.

Researchers also have used both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the impact of coursework and workshops and to describe the practices of teachers who are particularly effective with students from various cultural backgrounds. These studies, however, often provide only generalizations of effective practices. Researchers in nine of the reviewed studies chose to examine teacher beliefs and practices across grade level and content areas in relation to issues of cultural diversity. These studies documented the teachers' decision-making processes, attitudes, and practices. Of the four quantitative studies, all relied on teacher self-report and did not include classroom observations or interviews with teachers to understand further how these beliefs were manifested in the classroom. Further, none of the quantitative studies sought to examine the beliefs and practices of effective teachers.

Regardless of level taught, the literature suggests the following strategies are used by effective teachers of students of color: (a) hold high expectations for all students, (b) focus on academics, (c) care about and incorporate students' lives and cultural backgrounds into instruction, (d) know and stay involved in the communities in which students live, and (e) hold high expectations for themselves as teachers (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Brown, 2003; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000;

Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002; Thompson, 2004). In addition, at the high school level, effective teachers: (a) know their subject matter well, (b) characterize themselves as hard but fair, (c) focus on both academic and social/emotional development of students, and (d) more than simply holding high expectations for their students, they do whatever it takes to ensure students' academic success (Foster, 1991; Howard, 2001; Wilson & Corbett, 2001). In the English classroom, in particular, effective teachers: (a) engage in instruction that is student-centered with explicit connections to students' lives and students' perspectives, (b) provide specific feedback to students about their work in order to support their academic development, (c) share a mutual respect with students, (d) demonstrate an excitement and enthusiasm for their content, and (e) seek professional development opportunities and value continuous learning and development of pedagogical skills (Ostrowski, 2002).

Much of the current research, however, either relies heavily on self-report of beliefs and practices or other data that does not include detailed snapshots of classroom practice. Current research also rarely includes detailed descriptions of the instructional day and complementary interviews to begin to understand what happens in the classrooms of successful secondary English teachers of African American students and how their beliefs influence their practices. This project, therefore, describes the classroom behaviors and practices of two secondary English teachers whom school administrators and students identified as effective teachers of Black students. Although the sample size limits the generalizability of the findings of this study, the project begins to fill the void in the research and open the door for more studies that provide detailed descriptions of

the beliefs and practices of effective high school English teachers, as determined by students and administrators, who facilitate academic gains among Black students.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

I was overwhelmed by how carefully the teachers thought out their practices and how cogently they talked about them. I was disappointed how little of their ‘wisdom of practice’ has found its way into teacher preparation literature... Therefore, it is more important than ever to capture this practice in order to build a knowledge base of effective pedagogical practice for African American students. (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 154)

Overview

The purpose of this study was to document the beliefs and practices of successful teachers of African American students. Through extended classroom observations, interviews, and the collection and examination of artifacts, I attempted to provide a snapshot of the classrooms of two high-school English teachers who facilitated academic gains among Black students in an urban school district. Following the example of research on school reform, I incorporated student voice, in addition to the insight offered by school administrators, in the nomination process. Researchers (Nieto, 2000; Poplin & Weeres, 1992; Wilson & Corbett, 2001) have found that students provide valuable insight into various topics relevant to school reform such as, “relationships, race/culture/class, values, teaching and learning, safety, and the physical environment” (Wilson & Corbett, 2001, p. 9). This study, therefore, sought to select teachers more credibly by including the voices of students who know their practices better than any other source.

According to Hatch (2002), this kind of qualitative study must take place within a natural setting, incorporate participant perspectives, utilize the researcher as the primary data gathering instrument, and include extended observation. The researcher, therefore,

along with the participants, co-constructed meaning, inferences, and conclusions from the beliefs and practices of the two individual teachers. Documenting the “wisdom of practice” of these teachers provided enough detail to accurately represent their voices and perspectives within this particular context and informs both the literature on teacher preparation and the literature on professional development. The following research questions guided this study:

- What are the beliefs and practices of two English teachers considered to be effective in their predominantly Black high schools?
- What are the connections between their beliefs and practices?
- What are the similarities and differences between the two teachers?

Introduction

Rationale

The purpose of the present study was to document the beliefs and practices of successful teachers of Black students in order to examine what they believed about teaching, how their beliefs influenced their practice, and how the teachers were similar and different in their perspectives and practices. Such an examination begins to fill a void in the research that, currently, does not include student voice in the selection process and provides little documentation of the daily practices of teachers who facilitate academic gains among Black students, particularly those in urban high schools. Further, the research rarely seeks to capture the connections between beliefs and practices in the secondary English classroom. The literature, instead, tends to focus on either beliefs or practices and typically does not focus on one particular subject area or engage students in the selection process. In addition, it usually provides an overview of classroom practices instead of offering detailed descriptions that could be used by teachers and teacher educators as tools for improving practice. The present study provides a snapshot of

teaching practices in the classrooms of two high school English teachers who teach in predominantly Black, urban schools. The study also examines the connection between these practices and the teachers' beliefs. These data offer rich, descriptive details that create a snapshot of this moment in time in these classrooms of effective teachers.

Research Orientation

Case study research. A case study examines a single entity, such as an individual or a classroom, within a particular context (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Yin, 2003). The focus on an individual or a classroom allows the researcher to create a vivid picture of the phenomenon. Case studies provide insight into processes that large studies fail to see. Their careful and comprehensive description helps educators and researchers to see what actually happens in individual classrooms. Such information can inform the development of theory. Howard (2001), for example, used case studies to understand the extent to which four African American secondary teachers implemented culturally relevant pedagogy in various content areas. Athanases (1998) also used case studies to examine students' reactions to culturally responsive pedagogy in two secondary English classrooms.

Interpretive case study. According to Merriam (1998), interpretive research considers education and schooling to be a dynamic process instead of a static entity. Therefore, an interpretive study seeks to gain understanding from an "inductive, hypothesis- or theory-generating (rather than a deductive or testing) mode of inquiry" (p. 4). As an interpretive investigation, therefore, the present study attempted to understand the process by which teachers made sense of their own practice and related this understanding to their beliefs, particularly as they related to teaching Black students. The interpretive approach to research, according to Rios (1996), "is emic as it searches for the

meanings constructed by participants as they seek to make sense of what they encounter in classrooms... The result, for the interpretivist researcher, is not to search for answers but rather to search for a source of criticism and generate new questions” (p. 11).

Like the studies of Howard and Athanases, the present study used interpretive case studies to examine closely teachers’ beliefs and practices in order to add depth to the literature on effective pedagogy and the academic achievement of Black students. Each investigation of the individual teachers was presented as a single case study. The investigation attempted to provide greater understanding of effective teaching of Black students by compiling two case studies that examined the beliefs and practices of individual teachers in different classroom settings, so it is best described as a collective case study (Kozol, 1991; Stake, 1994). Yin (2003) asserted that multiple case studies are preferable to single case studies for several reasons that include adding to generalizability because the contexts of the cases are likely to differ. Further, the findings that arise will have greater impact coming from more than one case. In a collective case study, analysis is derived from each case individually and across cases (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Ethnographic techniques. Drawing from ethnographic techniques of research allows researchers to see what actually happens in classrooms. Full ethnography requires extended participant observation (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) that is nearly impossible for classroom research. Therefore, education researchers use some of the techniques of ethnography in order to capture classroom activities. Some of these techniques include interviewing all participants and audiotaping and transcribing the interviews, observing classroom instruction and student interactions, and collecting relevant artifacts, such as teachers’ lesson plans and students’ papers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Foster (1991),

for example, collected data through interviews, observations, and the collection of archival data to describe the life experiences and practices of African American secondary teachers in various content areas. Further, Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted interviews and observations in order to examine the beliefs and practices of African American elementary school teachers. Similarly, the present study employed the ethnographic techniques of interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts to understand the beliefs and practices of urban high school English teachers. Ethnographic techniques were most appropriate to gather a significant amount of data about beliefs and practices in order to describe accurately the daily instructional practices of two teachers and the connections between those practices and their beliefs.

The Setting

The large school district in which the study took place was located in an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse county just outside of a major, urban mid-Atlantic city. The student population was just below 140,000 and was 78% African American, 11% Hispanic, 8% White, and 3% Asian. The graduation rate was approximately 90%. Forty-six percent of students enrolled qualified for free or reduced lunch.

The study focused on two teachers in two of the district's most challenged high schools, both of which served a student population that was over 95% African American. One of the high schools, Zora Neale Hurston High School (all names of people and places are pseudonyms), enrolled approximately 1,200 students and the other, Marian Wright Edelman High School, enrolled approximately 1,600 students. The graduation rate at both schools was below the district average, at approximately 80% and 40% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. According to state high school assessment

data, just below 40% of students in these two schools read at or above the proficiency level.

Ms. Morrison

Ms. Morrison, a Jamaican-American woman in her late thirties, was in her eighth year of teaching at Zora Neale Hurston High School. Prior to entering the classroom, Ms. Morrison earned a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from the local state college. After working in juvenile justice for two years, she decided to become a teacher and accepted a position at Hurston High School. Over the next few years, she fulfilled the certification requirements and, at the time of the study, she was fully certified in secondary English. During the study, she was the English department chairperson and the yearbook and newspaper sponsor. She also taught a general-level, ninth-grade English class and the honors-level, ninth-grade English class that participated in this study. The honors class consisted of 14 African American boys, 10 African American girls, one White girl, and one Latina.

Ms. Lomax

Ms. Lomax, an African American woman in her early forties, has taught English for 19 years. She entered the classroom immediately after completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from a nearby historically Black university and, early in her teaching career, she earned a Master of Education degree in education administration from a local, private university that established a partnership with the school district. She spent the first half of her career in a neighboring school district and has been at Marian Wright Edelman High School for the last nine years. Similar to Ms. Morrison, she was the English department chairperson and the sponsor of the literary magazine. In addition to the journalism class, she taught general-level, 11th-grade English and 11th-grade, advanced

placement English. The advance placement class participated in the present study and consisted of 15 students, 11 African American girls and four African American boys.

Procedures

Identification of Participants

The selection process. The selection process began with a variation of Foster's (1991) "community nomination." Foster, and later Ladson-Billings (1994), attempted to gain the insiders' point of view by selecting their participants from a list of names provided by members of the African American communities they studied. Foster solicited names from a variety of community members and sources, such as Black newspapers, churches, and organizations. Ladson-Billings gathered names from parents and cross-referenced those names with school principals. Instead of involving parents, who Ladson-Billings called "the consumers," this study treated students as the primary consumers and asked them to identify effective teachers on a nomination form (Appendix A) that was administered to 10th- through 12th-grade students at both high schools. Ninth graders were not included in the nomination process, because they had not had an English teacher for a full year of high school. This nomination form asked students to identify the best English teacher they had encountered in high school and their criteria for judging a teacher as good. The principals of the two high schools also were asked to complete nomination forms (Appendix B) to identify English teachers for whom they had evidence to support that they facilitated strong academic gains among Black students and the criteria they used to determine their selections. The list of teachers identified by students was cross-referenced with the lists from the principals. The two teachers who received the highest percentage of student nominations and received nominations from the principals were invited to participate in the present study.

Number of teachers. Two teachers were selected as participants for the present study. Yin (2003) asserted that two to three cases would be sufficient for collective case study. In the present study, both teachers taught secondary English at schools that served students from similar communities. Therefore, it was predicted that, while their individual practices and beliefs may differ in some ways, their classroom contexts could be similar. Further, Yin noted that, in a collective case design, it was up to the discretion of the researcher to determine the number of cases. For the present study, two cases were the maximum number that one researcher could examine closely and effectively.

Gaining access. All researchers affiliated with the University of Florida must secure Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission prior to conducting research that involves human subjects. The review process began with the submission an application that listed the following information: title of project, name of principal investigator, supervisor, dates of proposed research, source of funding, scientific purpose of the investigation, research methodology, potential benefits and anticipated risks, participant recruitment and compensation, and informed consent process. Once the board reviewed the application, they sent written notification of the decision to approve the study. The informed consent process, in particular, ensured that participants understood clearly what was asked of them. The informed consent (Appendix C) provided participants with a description of the research and asked for voluntary participation in the study which included the participant's signature.

Obtaining clearance from the school district to conduct research that did not involve student records required permission from the school principals. Copies of the dissertation abstract, the University of Florida IRB form and letter of approval, and the

nomination form that would be distributed to students were provided to the principals to gain permission to conduct research in the two schools. Upon approval, both principals requested that a summary report of findings be submitted to them at the conclusion of the study.

Participation in this project involved no more than minimal risk to teachers. The teachers remained anonymous and were given pseudonyms in all transcripts and reports.

Teacher knowledge of the study. Teachers were aware they had been chosen by students and the principal as successful teachers of Black students. They also were made aware that the purpose of the study was to document their beliefs and practices in order to understand how to facilitate academic growth among Black students. The purpose of the research was made clear to teachers in order to minimize any apprehension that teachers had about their classroom practices being observed and documented. Further, it was important to make the purpose of the research transparent to teachers in order to gain a full understanding of their beliefs and practices. To minimize any possible resentment toward the participants because of their recognition as exemplary teachers, they were asked to tell those who asked about the study, including students, that it was solely an investigation of teaching practices in secondary English classrooms. I also told students and others who asked that I was examining teaching practices in the secondary English classroom and in no way would I evaluate students' behavior during observations.

Data Collection

Data collection for the present study took place from April 2005 to June 2005. Methods of data collection included the following: classroom observations, interviews, and the collection of artifacts.

Observation. Observations were conducted in each teacher’s classroom for six weeks. Both of the high schools operated under block scheduling, so classes met for 87 minutes. Marian Wright Edelman High School held the same 87-minute classes everyday, while Zora Neale Hurston High School held them every other day. Therefore, over the course of six weeks, a class at Edelman High School met approximately 30 times and, at Hurston High School, met approximately 15 times. I observed each teacher for six weeks, or 26 class sessions at Edelman and 13 class sessions at Hurston, for a total of 39 classroom observations. The observation schedule was as follows:

Table 3-1. Schedule of observations

Week	Classroom observed
1	A
2	A B
3	A B
4	A B
5	B
6	A
7	A B
8	B

During the classroom observations, I took field notes and acted as a non-participant observer. These observations allowed me to gain a better understanding of the context and learn more about those things teachers did not mention in interviews (Hatch, 2002). Further, my research questions centered on understanding the teaching practices of these teachers, and the most effective way to capture their practice was to see it first-hand in a natural setting.

Field notes. The goal of the classroom observations was to document naturally occurring activities, and the observations served as the primary record of the situation being investigated (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998). During each of the classroom observations, field notes were taken by hand and transcribed after each visit. These

written accounts of the observations were the least distracting and most cost-effective means to record interactions that took place in the two teachers' classrooms. The raw field notes were recorded on a note pad and included detailed descriptions of events, behaviors, interactions, and dialogue that took place in the classroom. On the first visit to each of the classrooms, I described the classroom setting and paid attention to more general issues that were connected to my research questions, such as how the teachers organized their classes and what kinds of activities the teachers facilitated. Subsequent observations looked more closely at issues that may not have been addressed in interviews, such as what the teachers did when they first realized students were having difficulty or were ready to move forward. These raw field notes were as close to verbatim as possible and included graphic descriptions of the actions that occurred in the classroom during the observation (Hatch, 2002). Merriam (1998) suggested that field notes include descriptions of the setting, the people, the activities, and include direct quotations whenever possible, all of which were included in the field notes for this study. I also kept a record of time, beginning with the time the observation started and continuing approximately every five minutes.

As soon as possible after each observation and before the next observation, the field notes were typed into Microsoft Word and completed with information that was omitted due to time constraints or other interruptions in a process called "filling in" (Hatch, 2002). The resulting research protocols included the time and place of the observation, a list of participants, transcription of discussions, and a diagram of the setting. They made clear who the interlocutors were in the conversations and who the major actors were in the classroom activities. They also included as much concrete detail

as possible and included no generalizations or personal interpretations in the actual data. Instead, I bracketed my emerging feelings, reactions, insights, and interpretations in a separate column. After each observation, I also wrote personal reflections of the experience in a research journal. Further, I kept a research log to keep a record of every step of the data collection process (Hatch, 2002). As a non-participant observer, I was minimally involved in classroom activities, and I recorded field notes as unobtrusively as possible in order to minimize my impact on the classroom.

Interviewing. The present study included both structured interviews and unstructured interviews. A total of six structured interviews took place at the teachers' convenience and were audiotaped and transcribed. Periodic, unstructured interviews also took place during the study and were audiotaped and transcribed. These informal conversations allowed for clarification of data collected during the observations and provided the opportunity to work with the participants to understand what happened in the classroom. Field notes were also taken during these conversations. Each teacher was interviewed according to the following schedule:

Table 3-2. Interview schedule

Interview	Date of interview	Type of interview	Purpose of Interview
1	April	Structured	To document past schooling and professional experiences
2	May	Unstructured	To follow up on first and second weeks of observations
3	May	Structured	To solicit feedback on preliminary analysis and to discuss teachers' philosophy of teaching Black students
4	May	Unstructured	To follow up on observations
5	June	Structured	To solicit feedback on preliminary analysis and to address any questions not answered previously in interviews and observations

The teachers participated in three structured interviews (before the observations began, mid-way through the study, and at the conclusion of the observations). In addition, Ms. Morrison participated in two unstructured interviews, and Ms. Lomax participated in one. All interviews occurred at a time and place that were convenient for the teachers, and all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The purpose of the initial structured interview (Appendix D) was to document past schooling and professional experiences and the teachers' philosophies of teaching. The first interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and asked teachers about their educational backgrounds, their professional experience, the classroom setting, and the goals they held for their students. Interview questions pertaining to teachers' educational and professional background, the classroom setting, and the goals they had for their students were adapted from Ross (1978).

The second (Appendix E) and third (Appendix F) structured interviews, also lasting approximately 45 minutes each, were derived directly from classroom observations and preliminary data analysis. The purpose of these interviews was to solicit feedback and clarification on preliminary analysis. The second structured interview also solicited their perspectives on teaching Black students, and the questions were adapted from Ladson-Billings (1995). The third structured interview also sought to answer questions that had not been addressed through other means. Following an interview guide (Appendix G), the unstructured interviews began with a request for the teachers' perception on the classes observed during the previous weeks. They continued with questions to clarify and understand activities and interactions that took place during the classroom observations. These unstructured interviews also probed the teachers for information about perceptions of students' academic progress during the observation period. These unstructured

interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes at a time and place that were convenient for the teacher. All interview transcripts were given to participants for them to make corrections to meaning and intent.

Collection of artifacts. The present study attempted to understand the practices of effective English teachers. Therefore, materials used for instruction, including materials distributed to students, were collected, numbered, and indexed in the research log. The purpose of collecting these artifacts was to understand further the practices of these teachers based on how the kinds of activities they assigned to students.

Summary of data collection. Over the course of the eight-week study, I conducted 13 observations in Ms. Morrison's classroom and 26 observations in Ms. Lomax's classroom for a total of 39 observations. I also conducted three structured interviews and two unstructured interviews with Ms. Morrison and three structured interviews and one unstructured interview with Ms. Lomax for a total of six structured interviews and three unstructured interviews. Artifacts, including handouts distributed to students, also were collected throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Once researchers have gathered an exhaustive amount of data from observations and interviews, they must find ways to make sense of so much information. To make meaning of the abundance of data collected for this collective case study, I included both within-case and cross-case analysis. Within-case analysis involved following a series of steps to identify emerging themes in a single case. Cross-case analysis then involved identifying both similarities and differences that occurred between the two case studies.

Hatch (2002) recommended that interpretive analysis follow a number of steps that allow for making sense of the data and coming up with explanations. I followed these

steps from the first data collection. The first step simply involved reading the data to get an idea of the whole picture, so, after the first interview and after every subsequent data collection, I read through the transcripts, protocols, and artifacts. After reading through the data, I turned to those comments bracketed in the research protocols and recorded in my research journal, and I wrote each of these impressions and interpretations in separate memos. Then, I read through the data again recording new impressions in additional memos.

Once impressions and interpretations were identified and written in memos, I read the memos and organized them by emerging themes. Using the initial interpretations as a guide, I created a coding system to read through the data again to look for evidence to support or contradict these interpretations, and I noted on a separate page data that were connected to these interpretations. Next, I wrote a detailed summary that explained and supported my initial interpretations. When I completed the summary, I shared my thoughts with participants to serve as a member check. At that time, I solicited feedback from participants. Using their feedback, I revised the summary and added excerpts from the data to support my interpretations. Over time with each data collection, these summaries became more complete and led to the findings of the study.

Methodological Issues

To ensure the quality and rigor of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1986) recommend that researchers consider the following four issues: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Further, it is important to consider limitations and reciprocity (Cooper, 2000; Hatch, 2000; Merriam, 1998).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of trustworthiness in the research inquiry and the level to which the findings are an accurate portrayal of the participants and their context (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The use of multiple sources in order to triangulate the data ensures credibility of the study. Providing evidence from several sources makes the findings of the study more accurate and convincing (Yin, 2003). For the present study, data collection included observations, structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and the collection and examination of artifacts. I conducted six structured and three unstructured interviews with the primary participants. The unstructured interviews provided the opportunity to conduct member checks and clarify the information I collected in the structured interviews and the classroom observations. I also shared interpretations with both primary participants and my committee chair in order to clarify information. In addition, I spent eight weeks in the field observing 39 class sessions.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the idea of extending the findings of the study outside of the scope of the individual cases (Yin, 2003). While case studies cannot be generalized in the same way as larger studies, they do offer a thorough knowledge of the particular that can inform understanding of the general (Merriam, 1998). Merriam also outlines three strategies to maximize the transferability of a qualitative study. The first strategy, rich, thick description, offers such great detail that readers can decide if the context of the study relates to their own. The second strategy, typicality or modal category, refers to how similar the case under study is to others. The third strategy, multisite designs, encourages the use of more than one case so the findings can be applied to a greater

number of contexts. As a collective case study, the present study addressed all of these strategies.

Confirmability and Dependability

A qualitative study of high quality includes enough detail for it to be evident that the findings are either consistent with current research or, if the findings differ in some way from current research, they are easily understood from the detailed reporting of data collection and analysis included in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Therefore, researchers must maintain a high level of rigor in the data gathering and analysis process and in the reporting of the findings. To ensure the quality and confirmability of the current study, I included thorough explanations of every step of the research inquiry, from the selection of the participants to the reporting of findings.

Merriam (1998) asserted that a key characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. To ensure quality and authenticity in the writing of the final report, researchers must maintain sensitivity and integrity during data collection and analysis and this level of care depends on the qualifications of the researcher. The researcher plays such a significant part in qualitative research that it is important to state explicitly the researcher's qualifications and biases (Merriam, 1998). The following description documents my educational background and experiences that I believe made me qualified to conduct the present study.

I have earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in English education. I taught secondary English in public schools for three and a half years. During that time, I worked primarily with African American students. For two years, I taught English to African American high school students in the Upward Bound program at the University of Florida. This program was designed to enhance the academic and

social development of students who had been labeled as “at-risk.” As a teacher in Upward Bound, I conducted classroom research on effective reading strategies for reluctant readers. The study was published in an issue of *English Journal*.

Further, I have completed coursework for a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction, with an emphasis on English education. While in the program, I completed two courses in qualitative research methodology. One course focused on the foundations of qualitative research and the other course focused on methods of ethnographic research. Further, as a doctoral student, I have presented workshops to preservice and practicing teachers on culturally relevant pedagogy at various conferences.

Throughout my teaching career and the doctoral program, I have been concerned with preparing teachers to create classroom environments that make African American students feel valued and motivated to learn. I also have been particularly interested in helping teachers to understand and implement teaching strategies that promote academic and social-emotional growth among African American students. My research into the area of effective teaching for Black students has led me to develop a bias toward pedagogy that can be described as “culturally responsive teaching.” Therefore, I may have a tendency to look for elements of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classrooms I observe. To minimize the influence of this bias, I continually looked for disconfirming evidence whenever I began to find support for this interpretation.

Limitations

The present study focused on two English teachers in two urban high schools during one semester of one school year. It did not include the perspectives of other English teachers in the same schools or other urban schools, so it does not attempt to suggest that all English teachers demonstrate the same beliefs or practices or encounter

the same issues in their classrooms. Further, a qualitative case study is inevitably limited not only by its lack of representativeness, but also by the biases of the researcher (Merriam, 1998). This lack of representativeness, however, is bolstered by the rich data and thick description inherent in case studies.

Reciprocity

The teachers who chose to participate in this study sacrificed the time to participate in several interviews and to accommodate me in their classrooms. To demonstrate my understanding and appreciation, it was important that we establish a reciprocal relationship in which the teachers received some benefits for their participation in the study. Therefore, because I am certified to teach secondary English and have taught in the district in which the study took place, I offered to provide tutoring to students during times I was not conducting observations. This activity fell in line with my professional experience and training. I also provided participants with the findings from this study.

CHAPTER 4 MS. MORRISON

A proud moment for me is when they take responsibility and initiative without me having to make them. [In an interview, Ms. Morrison shared her thoughts about what makes her most proud as a teacher.] (T2.Int001.041505.li48-49)

Shortly after class began, Ms. Morrison distributed worksheets for students to use as a review for their final exam. She also reminded the class that she had not finished speaking with students about their research papers and would continue to do so during this class period. She called a male student to her desk and announced, "I'm in my office. The door is closed and it says do not disturb." Then, she sat with the student and took out the rubric for the assignment. They began to discuss his research paper on sixteenth century ballads. While the class worked on their handouts, Ms. Morrison began to read Mark's paper aloud. She paused in her reading to say, "Number one problem, we do not use slang in research papers. Everywhere you see you, you, you, you, take it out."

While they discussed the paper, another student walked up to the teacher's desk. Before the student spoke, Ms. Morrison said, "Didn't I say the door is shut?" The female student pretended to open the door, and Ms. Morrison responded, "You have no respect for Mark." The student said, "Excuse me," and Ms. Morrison replied, "Rude is rude." The student returned to her seat. Ms. Morrison continued her discussion with Mark and explained sections of the rubric while they walked through his paper, "Okay, so, it says, attention-getter, hooks the reader. First, I need you to define what a ballad is. Assume your reader knows nothing." Mark answered her questions and shared his thoughts about the paper while Ms. Morrison proceeded to ask for clarification. As they discussed it, the teacher recorded points on the rubric that she and the student could see. Their discussion addressed various issues related to clarity of expression, organization and mechanics, connecting the topic to present day, and even who he could turn to for assistance in his home and/or neighborhood. Ms. Morrison continued to read his paper and discuss ways he could improve it. While they discussed the paper, Ms. Morrison explained each point on the rubric and asked the student to show her where certain elements were when she could not identify them. This process allowed him to see when key components were missing, so he was not surprised by the grade he received and understood he had the opportunity to improve. (T2.Obs013.052605.li98-184)

Ms. Morrison's ninth grade honors English class, consisting of 14 African American boys, 10 African American girls, one White girl, and one Latina, participated

in the present study. Throughout the conversation that took place in this class of 26 students, Ms. Morrison, a Jamaican American woman in her eighth year of teaching, helped Mark to develop writing skills (i.e., “A paragraph is one idea that you build upon.”) and connect his existing knowledge to the assignment (i.e., “Who do you [think spreads news] in their rap lyrics, like you said, ballads are designed to spread news?”). Utilizing Mark’s knowledge of rap, and other students’ areas of interest, she also cultivated a community of learners whose prior knowledge was respected and valued. Then, by walking Mark through the rubric, Ms. Morrison incorporated formative assessment that served as a learning tool as well as an evaluation. The teacher engaged in these kinds of activities with each student before returning their research papers and encouraged each student to rewrite the paper based on their conversation. These strategies for facilitating student learning exemplified the components of the *How People Learn* (HPL) framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) and the features of effective English instruction (Langer, 2002), which together provided a theoretical basis to understand the connections between student learning and effective teaching.

Teaching and Learning in the Secondary English Classroom

The *How People Learn* (HPL) Framework

Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) adapted the *How People Learn* framework introduced by the National Academy of Sciences as a guide to understand teaching and learning. Initially crafted to provide a guide for thinking about children’s learning as documented in two National Academy of Sciences reports, the HPL framework also offered a theoretical framework for interpreting classroom practices and their connections to student learning. Effective teachers described in current research (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) consider and incorporate all four components of

the framework throughout their instructional practices. These components include the following considerations:

- What should be taught, why, and how to organize it (knowledge-centeredness)
- Who learns, how, and why (learner-centeredness)
- What kinds of classroom, school, and school-community environments support learning (community-centeredness)
- What kinds of evidence provide the most reliable information to students, teachers, parents, and others about student learning (assessment-centeredness) (p. 41)

To be most effective in supporting learning in their classrooms, successful teachers balance all four components of the framework.

Essential Features of Effective English Instruction

In a study that examined 44 English teachers in 25 schools in a variety of settings that served students from ethnically and socio-economically diverse backgrounds, Langer (2002) identified six features of effective literacy instruction. These features included instructional practices found in schools that “beat the odds,” or schools that fostered academic success despite societal factors that made learning and engagement more challenging for students. The six features included the following instructional practices:

- Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types.
- Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.
- Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life.
- Students learn strategies for ways to do the work.
- Students are expected to be creative thinkers.
- Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration. (p. 40)

These features of effective English instruction are consistent with the components of the HPL framework. Because the features of the HPL framework are broader constructs, the features of effective English instruction were subsumed within that framework to provide a theoretical framework to describe and interpret teaching and learning within secondary English classrooms.

English Instruction that Engages African American Students

The HPL framework, combined with Langer's features of effective English instruction, provided a theoretical base to discuss and analyze secondary English instruction. The first component of the framework, knowledge-centeredness, refers to the focus on what should be taught, why, and how. In the classrooms of effective teachers, decisions about what is worth knowing are carefully considered and, for effective English teachers in particular, teaching content knowledge includes teaching strategies for learning the particular content. The second component of the HPL framework, learner-centeredness, emphasizes the importance of understanding students' various learning preferences. For effective English teachers, this includes using a variety of instructional strategies and making connections across the curriculum and students' personal experiences.

The third component of the HPL framework is community-centeredness which refers to a focus on establishing a supportive learning environment. In the English classroom, this supportive learning environment should foster cognitive collaboration. The final component of the HPL framework, assessment-centeredness, refers to identifying and utilizing the kinds of evidence that provides the most useful information about student learning. In this sense, assessment becomes a learning tool through which teachers can make informed instructional decisions based on the students' particular needs. This attribute of the HPL framework also integrates test preparation into instruction to enhance the students' abilities to demonstrate their learning on various kinds of assessment tools. The successful English teacher provides frequent specific feedback, particularly on writing, as a formative assessment to encourage revision and further development of student understanding. The formative assessment also serves as a

window into student thinking which, again, can assist teachers in making the most appropriate instructional decisions (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Langer, 2002).

Layering characteristics of effective instruction for African American students onto the HPL framework and Langer's features of effective English instruction created a theoretical framework focused on English instruction that engaged African American students in particular. The HPL framework and Langer's features include some elements of effective pedagogy for Black students and infer other elements, but there are additional characteristics of effective instruction for African American students and culturally relevant pedagogy that fall within the scope of the HPL framework that should be included in a theoretical framework for English instruction that engages African American students. Researchers (Athanases, 1998; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002; Wilson & Corbett, 2002) have identified the following characteristics:

- Teachers facilitate scaffolding by allowing students to use what they know to learn what they need to know.
- Teachers maintain an instructional focus in the classroom.
- Teachers emphasize skill development.
- Teachers demonstrate strong knowledge of students and their communities.
- Teachers demonstrate high expectations for all students and provide support.
- Students are valued participants in a learning community.
- Teachers understand that learning is a social process.
- Teachers insist that students complete every assignment.
- Teachers check for all students' understanding.
- Teachers provide feedback, especially on students' writing.

These selected characteristics of instruction that engages Black students exemplify the four components of the HPL framework and are listed, along with the features of effective English instruction, in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. English instruction that engages African American students

Knowledge-centeredness	Learner-centeredness	Community-centeredness	Assessment-centeredness
Teachers provide students with strategies to learn the content	Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types	Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration	Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction
Teachers scaffold students to success	Teachers link instruction to students' lives and lived experiences	Teachers hold high expectations for all students and provide a great deal of support	Teachers use assessment and evidence to guide instructional decisions
Teachers maintain an instructional focus in the classroom	Teachers make connections across curriculum and life	Students are valued participants in a learning community	Teachers provide feedback, especially on students' writing
Teachers emphasize skill development	Teachers demonstrate strong knowledge of students	Teachers understand that learning is a social process	Teachers use formative and summative assessment
Teachers focus instruction on essential content	Students are expected to be creative thinkers		Teachers check for all students' understanding

The HPL framework, along with components of culturally relevant pedagogy, features of effective English instruction, and selected characteristics of effective teachers of Black students, can be consolidated into a model for engaging English instruction for Black students. This model (Table 4-2), which can be called “culturally competent English instruction,” reflects the beliefs and practices of successful secondary English teachers of Black students.

<p>Knowledge-Centered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students strategies to learn the content • Scaffold students to success • Maintain instructional focus • Emphasize skill development • Focus instruction on essential content 	<p>Learner-Centered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate multiple lesson types • Make connections across curriculum and life • Expect students to be creative thinkers • Demonstrate strong knowledge of students • Link instruction to students' lives and lived experiences
<p>Community-Centered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster collaboration • Hold high expectations • Value students' contribution to learning community • Understand social nature of learning 	<p>Assessment-Centered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and evidence are used to guide instructional decisions • Use formative and summative assessment • Integrate test preparation • Provide frequent feedback • Check for all students' understanding

Figure 4-1. Culturally competent English instruction

Knowledge-Centeredness

Knowledge-centeredness refers not only to a focus on the skills and material to be learned, but also to decisions about what is worth learning and knowing. In addition, knowledge-centeredness requires teachers to consider how knowledge is organized which influences the methods of instruction and the order in which new knowledge is introduced. This new knowledge includes both the standard curriculum, which lists areas to be covered, and the hidden curriculum, which “tacitly implements the underlying goals and perceptions schools and teachers hold for students individually and as a group” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 170). Effective teachers make both standard and hidden curricula visible to themselves and their students in order to make the most appropriate decisions about what is worth knowing.

With her strong knowledge of the subject matter, Ms. Morrison easily integrated a knowledge-centered approach in her classroom that facilitated student engagement. She made decisions about what was worth knowing and made clear the value of learning it. In one interview, Ms. Morrison explained that a major goal for her students was to get them to read more. Although she knew the school district only required students to read one book per quarter, she required her students to read at least three per quarter. She pointed out that reading had always been the goal for her students because she believed it was the foundation for learning and so many of the students who entered the school could not read. She explained her approach to teaching reading:

First, you start off small, you know, short stories. If you like the book, you know, this is out of a book, a chapter out of a book, a paragraph out of a book . . . you [have to] kind of invite them, lure them in, kind of like reel them in, trick them into reading it . . . I like the literature circles because it [places] responsibility on each [student] and kids don't want to feel left out, so [they] read the book because they don't want to feel left out, so I try to devise it in a way that [they] want to read and I choose books that they'll want to read, that's going to interest them. . . . I try to

start off with, like, *The Pearl*. That's six chapters, kind of easy. You kind of wear them to do a bigger [book]. (T2.Int001.041505.li51-54)

Ms. Morrison tried to emphasize the importance of reading inside and outside of the classroom and found ways to get students in the habit of reading. For one assignment early in the school year, for example, she required students to carry a book with them all day. Then, they had to discuss the experience, noting what their friends said or did when they noticed the book. While simply carrying around a book may have seemed like a trivial activity, based on students' responses, the activity made them feel smart and they were more motivated to actually read the book and talk about it in class. Through formal and informal learning activities, like the preceding assignment, Ms. Morrison maintained an instructional focus in her classroom from the moment students arrived and continued that focus throughout the class. In one discussion in particular, Ms. Morrison asked students to define the term "foil" and apply it to characters in *Romeo and Juliet* which allowed Ms. Morrison to instruct students through the use of questioning:

Ms. Morrison walked to the front of the room and pulled down the film screen to show the brief constructed response (BCR) writing prompts again. She asked Tyesha to answer question number two.

Ms. Morrison: Give me the definition of foil and incorporate it. The nurse is considered a blank for Juliet.

Tyesha: A mother.

Ms. Morrison: A foil ... You have to understand the question in order to answer it.

Ms. Morrison repeats the question.

Robert: Protector.

Ms. Morrison: What is the definition of foil?

Students remained quiet.

Ms. Morrison: A striking contrast to Juliet.

Robert: They're alike.

Jessica: Are equal.

Ms. Morrison: They're not equal. The nurse acts as a foil to Juliet. Foil is not friend.

Julian: Oh, I know what a foil is ... a character is the exact opposite ... While looking at the foil, it brings out certain qualities in the other character.

(T2.Obs004.0426.05.li241-253)

In this example, Ms. Morrison persisted in her attempt to teach the concept of foil to her students so they could respond to the writing prompt effectively. Students guessed incorrectly and, when Ms. Morrison gave the definition and students still did not understand, she continued to push students until a student could explain it to the class. Her focus on instruction demonstrated the importance of student learning in her classroom and gave students room to try until they understood.

Langer (2002) asserted that, for students to succeed in secondary English classrooms, they needed to be taught explicitly how to do the work they were expected to complete. Students also needed to learn strategies for thinking about the material before them. When Ms. Morrison introduced a new concept, she explained exactly how students were to approach it. Making concepts accessible to students increased their level of engagement even if a task were challenging because they knew they had the tools to meet her high expectations. During one particular lesson, for example, students were required to write a BCR to a question about the play, *Romeo and Juliet*. Students were still learning how to approach BCR questions which mimicked the writing prompts that appeared on the state test later in the school year. In the following example, Ms. Morrison reminded students specifically how to approach a BCR question as they constructed their responses:

Writing prompt: Compare the reactions of Juliet's father and mother when Paris proposes marriage to their daughter Juliet.

Ms. Morrison: We know the BCR ... three things we got to do. Answer the question, provide what?

Jerome: Details.

Ms. Morrison: Provide details and explain your answer. ... Before you do number one, you have to come up with some kind of chart or Venn diagram.

Ms. Morrison walked to the board where she had a chart and a Venn diagram.

Ms. Morrison: Once you have [the details on your chart], you can respond. Once you explain the reactions, you begin to explain. ... Who's still copying? ... I want to see what type of chart you come up with in your journals.

Ms. Morrison: What scene are we talking about?

Imani: Act I, scene 2.

Ms. Morrison: Act I, scene 2. ... You've got to [think about] the visual imageries in your head, the one you created in your head and the one that you saw in the film. You can have a well constructed response. ... You need to find the exact reaction. Then give that emotion a name and don't say good or bad. That's not an option.

Paul: Can you say that again?

Ms. Morrison: Read the question to me.

The student read the question aloud.

Ms. Morrison: Paul, so you're thinking the Capulet response was what? Don't say it [aloud] because I want everybody to do it. Think about Lady Capulet's response. Find a line that supports what you're thinking. Then, you explain it again.

Aaliyah: On a separate sheet?

Ms. Morrison: Yes, on a separate sheet, so I can collect it. Anyone getting less than a three [out of a maximum score of four], I have a problem with. If you do those three things, [answer the question, provide details, and explain your answer], you should have more than a three.

(T2.Obs004.042605.li104-130)

In this example, Ms. Morrison identified specific steps for students to follow to respond to the BCR prompt successfully. She walked them through each step and shared her

expectation that, at the very least, they would earn three out of the four points for the question. This instructional activity built on what they previously learned about effective writing, and Ms. Morrison believed, if they followed the recommended steps, they would earn a perfect score.

Ms. Morrison often used guiding questions to scaffold students in learning how to analyze an assignment—an important skill necessary for independent learning. For example, when she assigned a brief essay about Juliet’s plan in *Romeo and Juliet*, she asked a student to examine the question being asked by the writing prompt. When the student, Julian, simply repeated the question in the writing prompt, she began a series of questions to scaffold his analysis of the question. The following example provided a snapshot of that series of questions:

Writing Prompt: Friar Lawrence has prepared to help Juliet to avoid marrying Paris. Describe the uncertainties which might complicate the plan.

Ms. Morrison: So, what are we looking for, Julian, in the answer? What are you describing?

Julian: What uncertainties complicate the plan?

Ms. Morrison: What does uncertainties mean because how are you going to answer the question if you don’t know the word? Let’s break it down, LaTanya.

LaTanya responded incorrectly.

Ms. Morrison: So, what does “un” mean?

Several students respond: Not.

Ms. Morrison: So, what does certain mean?

Several students respond: Sure.

Ms. Morrison: So, what does uncertain mean? Unsure.

(T2.Obs005.050405.li78-88)

Ms. Morrison used questions to clarify the assignment and guide students to figure out what was being asked of them. This kind of questioning allowed Ms. Morrison to show students how to analyze a writing prompt in order to complete the assignment and demonstrate their knowledge of the text under study.

In Ms. Morrison's classroom, student work primarily centered on writing about text. Her work as the sponsor of the school newspaper and her emphasis on teaching students to notice details in film, in literature, and in the world around them supported the notion that, to provide support and evidence in the analysis of literature or in life circumstances, they must notice details. Consequently, much of her instructional practice focused on teaching students how to notice and incorporate details in writing and in discussion. Ms. Morrison, therefore, created a learning environment where students had many opportunities to discuss, develop their own understanding of, and write about literature. Their less formal analyses of literature included tasks such as offering their opinions about a director's faithfulness to a playwright's intent and examining how the time period of the film influenced the adaptations a director chose to make. For more formal written analyses of literature, such as BCRs, Ms. Morrison generally walked students through the following steps that fit within the frameworks recommended by researchers (Calkins, 1994; Langer, 1995; Kirby and Liner, 1988):

- Students read and copied writing prompt.
- A student read the question aloud.
- Another student explained the writing prompt in his/her own words.
- Teacher used questioning to assist students with unfamiliar terms in the prompt. If the teacher noticed students still had difficulty with a term, then she directed a student to look up the word and read the definition to the class. Another student then put that definition in his/her own words. Once they understood the term, they returned to the prompt.

- Teacher recommended a strategy for approaching the prompt (i.e., using a graphic organizer, incorporating terms they have learned, or referring to the text).
- Teacher reminded students to find textual support and relevant details for their ideas that included using the exact line that led to their interpretation.
- Teacher encouraged students to begin the assignment without looking at the text as a self-evaluation of what they knew.
- Teacher encouraged students to turn to the text once they wrote their initial thoughts on the writing prompt.
- Teacher read initial drafts to see how students incorporated textual support.
- Teacher provided direct instruction for common writing errors (i.e., just listing quotations with no explanation).

Students appeared to be familiar with these steps and, often, would initiate at least some of them without prompting from Ms. Morrison.

Learner-Centeredness

Learner-centeredness refers to an understanding of how people learn and using that understanding to identify appropriate instructional strategies. This component of the HPL framework includes both the cognitive processes involved in learning and the impact of student motivation on learning. For learning to occur and for a learner to become fluent, the learner must attend to and work toward understanding the concept being taught. The amount of attention required to understand a concept depends on each learner's prior experience with that concept. The teacher, therefore, not only needs to be aware of where the students are in relation to a given concept, but also needs to help students to become metacognitive learners who can analyze their own learning. Further, effective teachers recognize the importance of intrinsic motivation in the learning process and help students to find ways to activate it (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Part of this motivation comes from applying new knowledge to situations that are relevant to students and

making connections to the students' lived experiences. Langer (1998) found "when [lower-performing students] were engaged in meaningful activities that they perceived as 'personally meaningful,' their meaning-building processes were more like those of their higher-performing classmates" (p. 19). Making connections to the learners' experiences, therefore, was important for the meaning-making process and for encouraging intrinsic motivation.

Ms. Morrison encouraged students to identify with characters in the text to make the literature more meaningful to them. In a discussion of *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, for example, she asked students if they would free Jabez so he would not be sent to hell, and she encouraged students to consider multiple possibilities by asking students to take opposing sides. The following excerpt from their discussion demonstrated their exploration:

Ms. Morrison: So, if you were on the jury, would you free Jabez?

Mia: Yes, I would think about my children and descendents.

Ms. Morrison: I want someone to play devil's advocate and be on the side of Scratch.

Aaliyah: I wouldn't free him. He made a decision.

Ms. Morrison: And, he signed a contract. ... My soul is damned. Does everybody get a second chance?

Aaliyah: No.

LaTanya: Did he sign it with his own blood?

Mia: Yes, he did.

Ms. Morrison: Imani, would you free him?

Imani: Yes and no.

T2: Yes or no.

Imani: I say no.

Ms. Morrison: Because?

Imani: Ain't nobody force him.

Ms. Morrison: Where is it? I want you all to get in the habit [of providing support for your arguments].

Julian: Page 428.

Ms. Morrison: Where?

Julian: Second, third paragraph.

Ms. Morrison: What? First column? Second column?

Julian: Second.

(T2.Obs010.051805.li142-164)

During this exchange, Ms. Morrison encouraged students to think beyond their current knowledge of the play to consider what could happen based on their own interpretation and understanding of the characters in the play. This kind of questioning allowed students to provide multiple answers as long as they supported their responses through reference to the text. Allowing students to offer and support various responses enabled them to create their own understanding of the text in a supportive, engaging learning environment.

Students Learn Skills and Knowledge in Multiple Lesson Types

For students to learn important concepts and skills in the English classroom, they must be taught in a variety of ways. These strategies should be balanced across three lesson types (Langer, 2002):

- separated, or taught in isolation
- simulated, or taught in the context of an exercise
- integrated, or taught in a meaningful way in the context of a larger activity

Spreading instruction across lesson types allows teachers to reach a wider variety of learners and to provide the opportunity for transfer of new knowledge to other situations. Ms. Morrison demonstrated an understanding of the importance of multiple lesson types by the variety of activities she offered to students. Table 4-2 identifies some examples of how Ms. Morrison addressed each of the three lesson types in her classroom.

Table 4-2. Lesson types found in the English classroom

Type of Lesson	Teaching strategy	Purpose
Separated	Requiring students to write paragraphs in response to BCR questions about <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	To prepare students for the state high school assessment
	Meeting individually with students upon completion of the research paper	To help students develop writing skills
Simulated	Drawing on knowledge of the Black church	To engage students in writing and performing eulogies for characters in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
	Providing an article from the local newspaper on a modern day Romeo and Juliet	To help students to understand <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
Integrated	Connecting an incident of school violence to <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	To encourage students to write stories for the school newspaper

In each of the teaching strategies mentioned in Table 4-2, Ms. Morrison facilitated high levels of student engagement by implementing strategies that crossed each of the three learner-centered lesson types.

Teachers Make Connections across Instruction, Curriculum, and Life

Effective English teachers observed by Langer (2002) made explicit connections across instruction, across curriculum, and across life. They found ways to scaffold student knowledge by integrating prior knowledge attained inside and outside of the

English classroom and the school into the curriculum. Bringing in students' lives and other learning experiences and making connections facilitated student engagement. Freire and Macedo (1987) pushed this idea further by asserting, "knowledge made from experience has to be the point of departure in any popular educational effort oriented toward the creation of a more rigorous knowledge on the part of the people" (p.78). Knowledge needed to grow from personal experiences with the world, not just built upon superficial connections articulated by the teacher.

Ms. Morrison regularly drew on her knowledge of African American culture to link course content to students' cultural and life experiences. For one assignment in particular, Ms. Morrison asked students to write eulogies for *Romeo and Juliet* from other characters in the play. She explained the assignment to the class in the following excerpt:

Ms. Morrison: I want you all to write a eulogy. Check it out. Girls on this side will write a eulogy [and will be Lady Capulet. You girls on this side] will be the nurse.

Robert: I don't know what a eulogy is.

Ms. Morrison: Look it up. Where my girls at? You'll each be the nurse or Lady Capulet. You'll eulogize either Juliet or Romeo. The boys, you will be Balthazar, Friar Lawrence, or Lord Capulet or Lord Montague. All the people that are still living ... come up here and do the eulogy of Romeo and Juliet after you take the test.

(T2.Obs006.050605.li287-290)

Although students left the classroom that day without learning about a eulogy, most of them returned the next day with interesting and entertaining eulogies that demonstrated an understanding of a eulogy. The following is an example of a eulogy for Juliet:

Ms. Morrison: All right, she has to leave so let's listen to her eulogy.

The student began to read her paper.

Alicia: The nurse to Juliet. From the day you were born, you never left my side ... I knew you were entering the beginning stages of becoming a woman. ... There has

never been nothing more rewarding ... oh, my Juliet ... Juliet, the girl who had a deep passion for life.

Aaliyah: That's very good.

Alicia (reading the eulogy): Rest in peace my dear child.

(T2.Obs007.051005.li161-171)

Some students were quite animated in their presentations of the eulogy and assumed the role of charismatic preachers. The rest of the class joined in and started shouting like the congregation in a traditional Black Baptist church. This assignment gave students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the play through an assignment that built upon their understanding of the Black church.

Ms. Morrison also drew on school experiences to make the curriculum more vivid. For example, during the present study, an incident occurred in the school that allowed Ms. Morrison to use her strong knowledge of students and their communities to effectively create knowledge that built upon students' personal experiences. On a Wednesday afternoon, a tenth grade student stabbed another tenth grade student on the school bus as students loaded the bus after school. According to police reports, problems existed between the two boys for several months prior to the incident and the school administration knew about the problems. In fact, the local newspaper reported that the administration decided to cancel a school dance earlier in the year to prevent any confrontation between the two boys. On the day of the stabbing, one of the boys boarded the other student's bus instead of his own and confronted him. In self-defense, the boy who sat on the correct bus pulled out a knife and stabbed the other boy. The student who was stabbed was taken to the hospital with non-life threatening injuries while the other student was arrested and later released. During a discussion of a feud in *Romeo and Juliet*

on the following day, Ms. Morrison mentioned the idea of the two families being alike in dignity. At that point, she saw a connection between the play and the stabbing and shared it with the class:

Ms. Morrison asked about local neighborhoods that were alike in dignity and students responded.

Ms. Morrison: We're going to write a prologue about neighborhoods. We could write a play about the stabbing on the bus.

Mia: They don't love each other.

Ms. Morrison: Romeo and Tybalt don't love each other ... I see a similarity. We're going to write it for our newspaper. Anybody who can rewrite the prologue for what happened, I'll give you an A most definitely. You have to write in the same rhyme scheme and I'll publish it.

Aaliyah: What did you challenge us to do again?

Ms. Morrison named the two neighborhoods from which the two boys involved in the stabbing came and began to discuss briefly what happened on the bus.

Ms. Morrison: I got to think about that. I may say you don't have to take the *Romeo and Juliet* final.

Mia: I'd rather take the *Romeo and Juliet* final.

Robert: Can I do it for extra credit?

(T2.Obs006.050605.li94-101)

Although Ms. Morrison did not spend a great deal of time on the topic, she did provide an opportunity for students to further develop their understanding of literature while they voiced their feelings about a traumatic experience that touched all of their lives.

Students are Expected to be Creative Thinkers, or Making Students Feel Smart

A third attribute of learner centeredness is expecting students to be creative thinkers. Langer (2002) explained that, in the classrooms of effective teachers, students were pushed to think beyond the minimum competencies. Instead, they were encouraged to be "generative thinkers – to know names, definitions, and facts, and then to explore the

additional roads that the new knowledge suggests” (p. 2). A number of examples previously described demonstrated this attribute. For example, when the class read *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, they were told to give their own perspectives on Jabez’s deal with the devil. As they developed their opinions, they were strongly encouraged to share interpretations that other students may not have considered. During the discussion of the play, Ms. Morrison reminded students, “Remember, life is about reading, but you also need to be able to interpret what you read” (T2.Obs010.051805.li98). Her comment further impressed upon students the importance of thinking creatively.

When students in Ms. Morrison’s classroom thought creatively, or in a new direction, they received positive feedback from her and she made them feel smart. When students felt capable, particularly when the material was challenging, they became even more engaged in the learning process. During one class discussion, for example, Mia answered a knowledge-level question incorrectly, but her response demonstrated insight so Ms. Morrison said to her, “I am very impressed that you would think of that.” Mia felt so pleased with Ms. Morrison’s feedback that she told her, “I feel smart” and Ms. Morrison told her that she should feel smart (T2.Obs010.051805.li15-23).

Community-Centeredness

Community-centeredness refers to the “social nature of learning” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 64). Not a superficial idea of everyone getting along and feeling good, the community-centeredness aspect of the HPL framework suggests a more rigorous kind of learning community that works together toward a common goal. The group recognizes the purpose and value of the work they undertake and support each other in the learning process. Community-centeredness grew out of Vygotsky’s (1978)

emphasis on the social and cultural aspects of learning, and the notion that intellect is not fixed at birth and develops through social engagement.

Ms. Morrison appeared to recognize the social aspects of learning and supported it in her classroom. Students were very social and talked a lot during Ms. Morrison's classes, and, in some classrooms, this would be considered evidence of non-engagement. In response to an interview question about facilitating academic gains among Black students, however, Ms. Morrison explained student talk in her classroom a little differently:

They're very social, so you can't let [their talking] get on your nerves. Actually, ... the only time [you're going to have a quiet atmosphere] is during tests because they don't want to get that zero for talking, but for the most part, I've learned that, when they're doing their work, they'll talk to themselves. They'll sing. They'll do whatever it is to tune out whatever is going on to focus. To them, talking is focusing and they will say I'm not talking. They're not talking to other people. They're talking to themselves, so they don't understand [because] they feel that talking is having a conversation with someone else. So, [you have to kind of] overlook all those things as long as they're staying on target. Like, when they're doing their work, they're not cheating. They're just [asking each other what number they're on] just to see. (T1.Int003.051005.li36-38)

With Ms. Morrison's explanation in mind, student talk was not coded as non-engagement in this study unless it did not relate to the task at hand. In fact, student talk in this case represented a high level of engagement.

Ms. Morrison further supported the social nature of learning whenever students completed writing assignments, aside from those assigned as practice for state tests. If students wrote a short essay or other writing, they read it aloud to the class in its entirety and, if it were a longer assignment, they summarized it for the class. Ms. Morrison encouraged students to ask questions at the conclusion of these presentations as a way to spark discussion. These discussions of students' work occurred 15 times out of the 49 instances of class discussion. During two class sessions, for example, students shared

their research projects. They submitted their papers at the beginning of class and, with no notes in hand, presented their topics and fielded questions from the class. Each student presented a different topic, such as crime and punishment during the Elizabethan era or Elizabethan fashion. In the following example, students asked questions following Andrew's presentation on Elizabethan theatre:

Mia: Very interesting.

Jessica: Have you heard of *Hamlet*?

Andrew: Yeah.

Jessica: What category will that be?

Andrew: That would be history.

Jessica: Was there a type that most people liked?

Andrew: Most people liked comedies. I read that most people wanted to see comedies. Any more questions? Thank you for your time.

Students applauded.

(T2.Obs012.052405.li166-173)

The student presenter usually facilitated the discussion, but Ms. Morrison stepped in when she felt the students were not asking enough questions or if there were an issue of disrespect, like in the following example from a presentation on Tudor history:

LaTanya: You said Henry the Seventh? He made his family rich or his father made the family rich?

Aaliyah: The family was already rich, but you have to make more.

Ms. Morrison: Second question?

Timothy: How long did a queen reign?

Aaliyah responded to his question.

Ms. Morrison: Travis has a question.

Travis: What happens [when a queen dies]?

Aaliyah: That ain't a question.

Ms. Morrison: Answer his question. It is important. Don't talk to him like that.

(T2.Obs011.052005.li90-99)

Ms. Morrison appeared to understand that students were learning the rules of discourse, so she pushed them to prolong the discussion and to remain respectful in the process.

Effective English classrooms support and encourage the social nature of learning and facilitate the sharing of and responding to ideas of members of the class (Langer, 2002). Similarly, Ms. Morrison often supported students' sharing and responding. Participating actively in creating new knowledge encouraged student engagement and motivation. Providing students with the opportunity to co-construct knowledge in concert with the teacher and other students during class discussions gave them the time to engage in exploration and reflection. Class discussion also allowed students to clarify or confirm their new knowledge.

Rosenblatt (1978) suggested that successful classroom discussion of literature stemmed from "two prime criteria of validity... that the reader's interpretation not be contradicted by any element of the text, and that nothing be projected for which there is no verbal basis" (p. 115). Students, therefore, were encouraged to return to the text frequently to find specific links between their interpretations and the text. Readers then constructed new meaning by interacting with the text and the experiences, thoughts, and ideas of other readers. During these discussions, the teacher acted as a facilitator allowing student voices to be the focus (Lindfors, 1991). Ms. Morrison employed instructional strategies that not only allowed student voices to be heard, but also created an

environment where students felt comfortable to participate even when they were unsure.

These strategies fell into six areas:

- Modeling respect and reminding students to show respect to each other (i.e., on the few occasions when students talked over another student, she said, “I respect you even if they don’t” and the student would continue to speak)
- Giving credit for trying (i.e., “Those of you who gave oral presentations got a hundred for being brave, but you got a hundred anyway for meeting all the requirements.”)
- Encouraging students to take unpopular sides in discussion (i.e., “I want someone to play devil’s advocate.”)
- Noticing when students were missing from discussions (i.e., “I miss your voice. Is everything okay?”)
- Fostering acceptance of multiple perspectives (i.e., “Look how everyone has their own opinion.”)
- Encouraging and responding to student questions (see example below)

By creating a safe environment for students to play with ideas, she provided students with the opportunity to think aloud in their discussions and to feel confident to take the lead as exemplified in the following discussion:

Ms. Morrison: She has a question.

Kim: Wasn’t Paris a Montague since he was Romeo’s cousin?

Students discussed it.

LaTanya: You lost.

Kim: No, I’m not.

LaTanya: Mercutio wasn’t part of the Montagues.

Kim: Yes, he was.

LaTanya: No, he was Romeo’s best friend.

Ms. Morrison: [Look at the text.] Paris is there first putting flowers on Juliet’s grave. Then, Romeo came and they got into a fight and Romeo killed Paris and Paris’ last words are, “Lay me next to Juliet ...” and [Romeo] does.

Kim: I want to know if Paris is related [to Romeo].

(T2.Obs006.050605.li238-249)

In this exchange, Kim sought the help of others as she constructed meaning from the text. Ms. Morrison redirected Kim, and the rest of the class, back to the text to help Kim find the answer to her question. Having the time and assistance to share her thinking helped Kim to develop her own thought process while also helping others in the class to learn from this process.

Discussions of literature in Ms. Morrison's class frequently involved discussions of film. Ms. Morrison explained, "I never show the entire film. I just take snippets, so they can see and that way you can do an effective [comparison] and just focus on a certain scene and analyze it for what it is because, by that time, the kids should know the play. They've read it" (T2.Int002.042205.li2-3). During class discussions of a piece of literature, Ms. Morrison often showed excerpts from a film and the class compared the scene from the movie to the scene in the text. Students appeared to be accustomed to making comparisons between snippets from film and a text, and these viewings served several purposes. First, they reinforced and further developed students' understanding of the literature by encouraging them to think critically about not only how the words and actions compared, but also how the mood and intention behind the scene differed. In addition, Ms. Morrison found it important that students analyzed critically the movies they saw outside of the classroom, so she encouraged them to ask the same kinds of questions whenever they saw movies outside of school.

Many of the discussions of film began with a general question about what students thought about the film adaptation. Then, she encouraged students to look more closely at the similarities and differences between the film version and the text version of a given scene. Students often took the lead in the discussion of the film:

Julian: This is really different from the other one.

Mia: That was more emotional than the [play].

Julian: The music, the surroundings-

Mark: The fight.

Mia: Mercutio wasn't really mad about it [in the play].

(T2.Obs003.042205.li229-235)

Sometimes, students began their comparison as soon as Ms. Morrison stopped the film without any prompting:

Ms. Morrison paused the tape.

Robert: Dag, you can really see the intensity in that.

Mia: Romeo was too dramatic.

Ms. Morrison: Romeo just came and got the gun and shot him. There was no build up, no fight. In the other one, there was building up ... they actually fought to the death, but that's how it is in today's society. You just shoot.

(T2.Obs003.042205.li253-255)

In both examples, students began to formulate critical interpretations of the film in comparison to the play. In the first excerpt, for example, Mia noticed that the film version exaggerated Mercutio's feelings of anger. In order for her to make such a claim, she needed to understand Mercutio's state of mind in the play. Also, in the second excerpt, Mia again noticed that the director of the film exaggerated Romeo's emotions. Sharing her thoughts on the film allowed her to further develop her thinking and allowed others to push their own thinking a step further.

Assessment-Centeredness

Assessment-centeredness refers to knowing what needs to be assessed, knowing and administering many different kinds of assessment, utilizing both formative and

summative assessment, and recognizing the value of assessment as a learning tool as well as an evaluative tool. By frequently implementing assessment in a variety of ways, effective teachers give students the chance to rethink their ideas and reconsider concepts that are new to them (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Frequent formative assessment proactively addresses potential challenges students have in understanding new concepts; it also allows teachers to see when they may not have made material accessible enough to their students. Treating assessment as another learning tool, and not a punishment, increases students' level of comfort in making mistakes and, therefore, increases their level of engagement (Langer, 2002).

Current research on teachers who facilitate academic gains emphasizes the importance of teachers providing frequent feedback to students in order to facilitate academic success. In addition, current research notes that effective teachers constantly monitor students' understanding as they push them to reach their full intellectual potential (Corbett et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Langer, 2002). These teachers emphasize that making mistakes is part of the learning process, so they provide formative feedback for students to use in revision. Ms. Morrison applied this strategy in her classroom and, when students received unsatisfactory grades (an unsatisfactory grade could be a D or an F on a test or quiz or less than an A on a writing assignment), they had the opportunity to retake tests or rewrite papers.

Ms. Morrison implemented frequent formative assessment, most often, through class discussion. When reading plays, students typically read a piece of literature aloud and then discussed it as a class. During their discussions of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Ms. Morrison often insisted that students find textual support for their claims,

one of Rosenblatt's (1978) criteria for effective discussion of literature. Morrison also encouraged students to apply elements of drama to their interpretations of the text. She encouraged students to go beyond memorization of facts and definitions in order to understand concepts and add depth to their analyses. In their discussion of Act I in *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Ms. Morrison continuously challenged students to develop their thinking and add more depth to their responses:

Ms. Morrison: Yes ... we're seeing, as a result of Romeo killing Tybalt, the whole plot changes. What happens to the main characters now?

A student responded. Ms. Morrison and the students talked about the typical punishment for murder, which was death. Since Romeo killed Tybalt, he was supposed to be put to death.

Ms. Morrison: It was supposed to be death, but why not Romeo? ... Why did the prince give banishment instead of death to Romeo?

Tyesha: I forgot, Ms. Morrison.

A student provided an incomplete response.

Ms. Morrison: When Romeo kills who?

Aaliyah: Tybalt.

Ms. Morrison: Okay.

The student continued to elaborate and said that Romeo was glad he killed Tybalt.

Ms. Morrison: I wouldn't say glad. Just look at the dynamics. We saw how it happened. We read it, we saw it, and we read it again.

Julian: Oh, I get it.

The student explained his answer and Ms. Morrison repeated it.

Ms. Morrison: Right, because Tybalt killed Mercutio ... Tybalt would've been [put to death for murder even if Romeo hadn't killed him and], since Romeo upheld the law [by killing Tybalt and he was] the prince's relative, he didn't suffer the most severe consequences for committing murder.

(T2.Obs002.042005.li72-95)

Obviously, students had difficulty understanding the significance of Romeo killing Tybalt, but asking them questions allowed Ms. Morrison to assess students' level of understanding and push them to rethink, clarify, or add to their ideas. It also allowed students to see when they did and did not understand a concept. This kind of co-construction of meaning provided Ms. Morrison with the opportunity to engage simultaneously in formative assessment of students' understanding of the text and instruction based on the evidence she gathered during the discussion.

To make sure students understood the text, Ms. Morrison also asked knowledge-level questions during and after class readings. These questions required students to answer information-seeking questions with a single right answer and, after Ms. Morrison called on a student who may or may not have volunteered to answer the question, she sometimes asked a clarification question to make sure she understood the student's response. In 58 instances out of 106 instances of teacher questioning, she asked these kinds of questions. During the following discussion, for example, Ms. Morrison asked students to find specific differences between the play, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, and the film adaptation:

Ms. Morrison stopped the tape again.

Ms. Morrison: Did y'all hear the comment in reference to Indians? What is the negative comment he made?

Sheila: If two New Hampshire men can't do it, we should give the country back to the Indians.

Ms. Morrison: Is that in the play?

Travis: Yeah.

Ms. Morrison: Let's find it. Where's it at?

Julian: It's not in there.

Kim: But, it said something about it.

Ms. Morrison: Let's find it. What's the difference?

Kim read the section of the text that was being portrayed at that point in the film.

Kim: No, they don't say it.

Ms. Morrison: The comment about the Indians. Look back at the time of the film ... What does that comment say?

Students responded.

Ms. Morrison: How is the director referring to Indians?

Robert: Superior.

Mia: Inferior.

(T2.Obs010.051805.li212-227)

In this part of the discussion, Ms. Morrison simply wanted students to state facts about the film in comparison to the play. She asked specifically whether or not certain events took place or comments were made in both the play and the film. Then, she asked students to find exact passages to support their answers. These kinds of questions appeared to assess students' level of understanding of the facts in the film and the play and allowed Ms. Morrison to gauge students' understanding and determine if she needed to re-teach or move forward.

Teachers Integrate Test Preparation into Instruction

Langer (2002) found that effective English teachers consistently integrated test preparation into their instructional practices. These teachers recognized the importance of preparing students for high-stakes tests, whether or not they supported the administration of those tests. Ms. Morrison similarly recognized the need to prepare her students for standardized tests and integrated test preparation into instruction. Even mundane tasks, like completing worksheets or answering writing prompts designed to prepare for state

tests, were perceived as personally meaningful to students depending on how and by whom they were presented to students. While Ms. Morrison did incorporate activities that students appeared to find fun and interesting, she also created an environment in which students appeared to find purpose in completing more ordinary tasks. Despite the fact that some tasks for test preparation could have seemed uninteresting to students, Ms. Morrison managed to maintain student engagement in the assignments by reminding students of the value of the tasks and encouraging them to rise to the challenge.

In an effort to prepare for standardized tests administered by the state, teachers were required to assign a certain number of brief constructed response (BCR) questions and extended constructed response (ECR) questions throughout the school year leading up to the state tests in May. The writing prompts mimicked the kinds of questions that appeared on the writing portion of the test, and the state not only expected teachers to assign these kinds of writing prompts, but also they provided the actual questions teachers should use for practice. A BCR was an open-ended question that could be answered in a paragraph or two, and, during test administration, students were expected to answer a BCR in about eight minutes. An ECR also was an open-ended question, but students were expected to write a longer response and, during test administration, they were expected to do it in about 15 minutes. Ms. Morrison assigned several BCR questions to students, but did not impose a time limit for students to complete their responses.

Although Ms. Morrison complied with state requirements and prepared students for the test, she explained that she believed written tests were one of the least effective ways to measure students' progress, particularly the progress of Black students. With that in

mind, she did see the usefulness in assigning BCR and ECR questions to students. To perform successfully on these kinds of questions, students must substantiate their claims and Ms. Morrison pointed out:

They've now gotten in the habit that, even when they're talking, they'll get proof or evidence from somewhere to substantiate what they're saying. So, it's not just talking or what you know. Well, here's the proof, so now they're substantiating things by proving it and it kind of carries on into their everyday conversations ... When they're writing for whatever, they'll say, on page this, this character said this. You know, in science, history, the [local newspaper] said that whatever. Now, they're used to, okay, if you want to be valid, you have to have some kind of proof. (T2.Int003.051005.li34-35)

With topics, such as comparing the reactions of Juliet's father and mother when Paris proposed marriage to their daughter, BCR and ECR questions asked student to use the text and their own experiences to respond to the writing prompt. For Ms. Morrison, providing practice in answering BCR and ECR questions served two purposes: (a) to prepare students for the state test and (b) to teach students to substantiate their claims in writing and in discussion.

Teachers Provide Feedback, Especially on Writing, and Check for All Students' Understanding

The final attribute of assessment-centeredness is the focus on providing feedback and checking for all students' understanding. To encourage students to work hard and to ensure their understanding of the material, Ms. Morrison usually gave immediate feedback to students when they completed assignments. Sometimes, that feedback was a general statement to the class. As students worked on their responses to BCR prompts, for example, Ms. Morrison said as she looked over them, "you can't put in a whole bunch of quotes and think that's the answer. You use the quotes as a device... to support your answer. You can't go quote, quote, quote" (T2.Obs004.042605.li289). Students were not explaining the quotations they included in their answers and Ms. Morrison provided

formative feedback to them while they wrote their answers. On other occasions, Ms. Morrison provided more detailed feedback, such as when she met individually with each student after they submitted their research papers.

Ms. Morrison also regularly checked for students' understanding of the topic under study. She gave frequent quizzes and provided immediate feedback to gauge students' understanding of literature. She also asked a lot of questions during reading and viewing of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. During one class session when students watched the most recent version of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, Ms. Morrison stopped the film at the beginning to make sure students understood what they saw and understood the differences between this version and an earlier version they previously viewed:

Ms. Morrison: Is the director true to the character? [Does the Zeffirelli version or this one have] more emotional intensity?

Mark: This one.

Aaliyah: The music.

Ms. Morrison: The music in this one is adding to the dramatic climax.

Aaliyah: The music lets you know something is going to happen.

Tyesha: This is really different from the other one.

Mark: That was more emotional than the other one.

Mia: The fight.

Mark: Mercutio wasn't really mad about it [in the other one].

Ms. Morrison: What is it about this Mercutio, this scene?

Mia: Because Tybalt wants to fight Romeo, but he just married Juliet and he was soft. Then, Mercutio jumped in.

Ms. Morrison: Do you prefer this one because of the music?

Aaliyah: Yeah.

Sheila: I prefer the other one.

Ms. Morrison: Why? Let's hear this.

LaTanya: That one was funny, but this one ...

Ms. Morrison: The intent in this one. Tybalt's intent was to kill. In the other one, it was an accident. Everyone can read the play and come up with a different interpretation. In the Zeffirelli, you're paying attention to the actors. In this one, you're paying attention to everything else. It's the special effects that's carrying this movie.

(T1.Obs003.042205.li206-244)

In this discussion, Ms. Morrison was able to assess students' level of understanding of the differences between the two versions of the play and begin to guide them toward an understanding of the impact of different effects. This discussion also allowed Ms. Morrison to see how well the students noticed details and to push them to think more deeply when necessary.

CHAPTER 5
MS. LOMAX

I think this class is weird. The first day I came in here ... everybody did the work and you don't need to call security on anybody. Can't nobody sleep. You so straightforward in the things you say. And then the parents, you tell them the truth. [Without provocation, Raymond shared his thoughts with the group at the end of a class.] (T3.Obs020.052005.li69-74)

Ms. Lomax routinely began class several minutes before the final bell rang signaling the beginning of class. On one morning in particular, Ms. Lomax and two students discussed *Native Son* while she distributed reading analysis sheets well before the bell rang. As more students entered the room, she explained, "I told you all this was creepy, but you need to look at what's symbolic. The violence isn't what's relevant" (T3.Obs001.042505.li46).

Three minutes before the bell rang, most of the class had arrived and Ms. Lomax told the class they were getting ready to start and, if they had questions about progress reports, they could ask after class. As soon as the bell rang, she began to ask questions about the novel and the discussion moved at a frenetic pace.

Ms. Lomax: A man who is emasculated doesn't feel enough of an identity. Did you even see Mr. Dalton be affectionate in any way to Mrs. Dalton? No, he was emasculated. What gave Mary her power?

Nadia: She's freaky and wild.

Ms. Lomax: Go deeper than that. You gave me a characterization of her. What did the drinking do to her mother?

Nadia: Hurt her.

Ms. Lomax: I'll ask you again. How did she get her power?

Nadia: She knew, if they worried about her, that could hurt them.

Ms. Lomax: Was her power direct or indirect?

Nadia: Indirect.

Ms. Lomax: Bigger's mother. How did she gain power?

Julian: She hurt him.

Ms. Lomax: Did she intentionally hurt him?

Julian: No.

Ms. Lomax: No, she wanted him to be the head of the household ... self-abnegation again. How was Vera indirectly powerful?

Mia: She would cry.

Ms. Lomax: She was emotionally powerful. She gained power because she was a nut. When she kept saying, "Don't look at me."

Mia: When they were changing their clothes.

Ms. Lomax: But deeper than that. Richard Wright had a meaning for everything he does. Listen to me now ... Mrs. Dalton had power, but she was blind to Mary, her husband, and the power of her money. She's a shadow character. She's not central. Write it down.

Ms. Lomax walked over to the chalk board and began to write.

(T3.Obs001.042505.li196-215)

Everyone appeared to remain alert for the entire hour-long discussion, and, throughout the discussion, Ms. Lomax provided feedback to students when they were on track and when they demonstrated some misunderstanding. Any lapse in attention for even a minute would surely make it difficult to participate, and the students appeared to understand this and worked to keep up with the discussion. While Ms. Lomax did a lot of talking during the discussion, she managed to facilitate engagement and student interaction in almost a call-response atmosphere in which her questions and statements, or "calls," were affirmed by students' brief responses (Smitherman, 1977).

Ms. Lomax's 11th-grade advanced placement English class, consisting of 11 African American girls and four African American boys, participated in the present study. All of the students in the class met the income restrictions to qualify for fee waivers on the advanced placement exam. Their teacher, an African American woman who has taught English for 19 years, seemed to use class discussion to both check students' understanding (i.e., "Bigger's mother. How did she gain power?") and to push them to think deeply and creatively (i.e., "Go deeper than that. You gave me a characterization of her."). She moved at such a rapid pace that she almost forced students

to be active participants in the discussion, and she demonstrated high expectations of their ability to think on their feet. Ms. Lomax regularly started before the bell, maintained an instructional focus throughout the entire class period, and continued instructional activities after the class ended and morning announcements began. Similar to Ms. Morrison, the teacher described in the previous chapter, Ms. Lomax implemented strategies for facilitating student learning that exemplified the components of the *How People Learn* (HPL) framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), the features of effective English instruction (Langer, 2002), and characteristics of effective instruction for African American students (Athanases, 1998; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002; Wilson & Corbett, 2002). Together, they provided a theoretical basis to understand the connections between student learning and effective teaching.

Teaching and Learning in the Secondary English Classroom

The *How People Learn* (HPL) Framework

As explained in the previous chapter, the *How People Learn* framework offers a theoretical framework for interpreting classroom practices and their connections to student learning. Effective teachers consider and incorporate all four components of the framework throughout their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). These components include the following considerations (p. 41):

- What should be taught, why, and how to organize it (knowledge-centeredness)
- Who learns, how, and why (learner-centeredness)
- What kinds of classroom, school, and school-community environments support learning (community-centeredness)
- What kinds of evidence provide the most reliable information to students, teachers, parents, and others about student learning (assessment-centeredness)

To be most effective in supporting learning in their classrooms, successful teachers balance all four components of the framework.

Essential Features of Effective English Instruction

Also explained in the previous chapter were features of effective literacy instruction identified by Langer (2002). These features include instructional practices found in schools that “beat the odds,” or schools that fostered academic success despite societal factors that made learning and engagement more challenging for students (p. 40):

- Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types.
- Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.
- Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum, and life.
- Students learn strategies for ways to do the work.
- Students are expected to be creative thinkers.
- Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration.

These features of effective English instruction coincide with the components of the HPL framework. They, therefore, were subsumed within that framework to provide a theoretical framework to describe and interpret teaching and learning within secondary English classrooms.

English Instruction that Engages African American Students

The HPL framework, combined with Langer’s features of effective English instruction, provided a theoretical base to analyze secondary English instruction. Adding characteristics of effective instruction for Black students to the HPL framework and the features of effective English instruction created a theoretical framework focused on English instruction that engaged African American students in particular. The HPL framework and Langer’s features include some elements of effective pedagogy for Black students and infer other elements, but there are additional characteristics of effective instruction for African American students and culturally relevant pedagogy that fall

within the scope of the HPL framework that should be included in a theoretical framework for English instruction that engages African American students. Researchers (Athanases, 1998; Boykin et al., 2005; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ostrowski, 2002; Wilson & Corbett, 2002) have identified the following characteristics:

- Teachers facilitate scaffolding by allowing students to use what they know to learn what they need to know.
- Teachers maintain an instructional focus in the classroom.
- Teachers emphasize skill development.
- Teachers demonstrate strong knowledge of students and the communities from which they come.
- Teachers demonstrate high expectations for all students and provide support.
- Students are valued participants in a learning community.
- Teachers understand that learning is a social process.
- Teachers insist that students complete every assignment.
- Teachers check for all students' understanding.
- Teachers provide feedback, especially on students' writing.

These selected characteristics exemplify the four components of the HPL framework and are listed, along with the features of effective English instruction, in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1. English instruction that engages African American students

Knowledge-centeredness	Learner-centeredness	Community-centeredness	Assessment-centeredness
Teachers provide students with strategies to learn the content	Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types	Classrooms foster cognitive collaboration	Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction
Teachers scaffold students to success	Teachers link instruction to students' lives and lived experiences	Teachers hold high expectations for all students and provide a great deal of support	Teachers use assessment and evidence to guide instructional decisions
Teachers maintain an instructional focus in the classroom	Teachers make connections across curriculum and life	Students are valued participants in a learning community	Teachers provide feedback, especially on students' writing
Teachers emphasize skill development	Teachers demonstrate strong knowledge of students Students are expected to be creative thinkers	Teachers understand that learning is a social process	Teachers use formative and summative assessment
Teachers focus instruction on essential content			Teachers check for all students' understanding

The HPL framework, combined with components of culturally relevant pedagogy, features of effective English instruction, and selected characteristics of effective teachers of Black students, can be consolidated into a model for English instruction that engages African American students. This model (Figure 4-1), which can be termed “culturally competent English instruction,” reflects the beliefs and practices of successful secondary English teachers of Black students.

Knowledge-Centeredness

Knowledge-centeredness focuses on the skills and information students should learn, how this material should be organized, and what instructional methods would be most appropriate. This attribute of effective teaching requires teachers to make decisions about what is most important for students to learn and to understand how to build on students’ prior knowledge. The new knowledge presented to students includes both the standard English curriculum and the underlying goals and objectives, or “hidden curriculum,” (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 170) of the school and the teacher. To make appropriate instructional decisions, effective teachers make the standard and hidden curricula visible to students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Ms. Lomax demonstrated a strong knowledge of English literature and criticism and a deep understanding of psychology and sociology that led her to challenge her students to gain a much deeper understanding of literature and its connections to life. She explained in an interview that effective teachers not only needed to know their subject matter well, but also “the things that complement the knowledge of the subject area” (T3.Int003.051305.li4). The teacher demonstrated her knowledge of complementary disciplines in the many class discussions where she encouraged students to look at

psychological and sociological aspects of literature and what their personal responses to the actions of various characters in a novel said about their own identity. For example, during a discussion of *Native Son*, Ms. Lomax asked students to consider how Richard Wright portrayed religion after a student asked a question about the preacher:

Mia: That preacher [in the novel] can't talk worth nothing.

Julia: How can the preacher have non-standard English and he talks for two pages straight?

Ms. Lomax: Often, people who are extremely religious are uneducated. Why do you think Richard Wright presented him [like that]? What institution does he represent?

Julia: Church.

Ms. Lomax: Religion. So, what is he saying about the institution of religion as it relates to Black people?

Students responded and speculated.

Ms. Lomax: Religion is the opiate of the masses. Do you know what an opiate is?

The students responded that they did not know.

Ms. Lomax: Do you know what heroin is?

The students responded that they did know what heroin was.

Ms. Lomax: Heroin is an opiate. What does heroin do?

Malcolm: It makes you feel better.

Brianna: Takes the pain away.

Ms. Lomax: It makes you slow-witted.

Yusef: You can control them.

Ms. Lomax: Easily controlled. ... Religion does not tell you to think. They tell you to believe what I'm telling you or you'll go to hell. What is Wright saying by making [the preacher] stupid?

Layla: It can control your mind. As long as you have God in your life, you don't need to be educated.

Ms. Lomax: Who's more easily controlled, an educated person who knows God gave you a mind to think or an uneducated person?

Nadia: Uneducated.

Ms. Lomax: Was Richard Wright telling you that religion is something wonderful?

Malcolm: No.

(T3.Obs007.050305.li128-156)

During this discussion, Ms. Lomax did not simply answer Julia's question. Instead, she pushed her and the class to consider the author's intentions and the human condition in general. She demonstrated similar instructional intentions as she explained how she challenged students to connect *Invisible Man* to larger psychological and sociological perspectives in an interview:

We talked about different scenarios that are found in the context of the novel to begin to get them to think about their own viewpoints, even as limited as they are in terms of their age. How do they view certain things? How is poverty and the search for identity, how does that create a different type of psychological or social condition? How does it make you a different person emotionally and intellectually? How does it change your world view? And, we began to talk about those different types of things, so that, when they saw the novel, there was more of an ah-ha moment instead of an, "Okay, what do I do with this?" And, it just makes for more interesting reading and then, when you sort of tie it in with what they already know and things that they've thought about or weird occurrences that they see everyday. Then, they anticipate what's coming instead of dreading what's coming, so that was the reason for that. (T3.Int002.042905.li10-12)

Ms. Lomax's decision to encourage students to consider their own worldview and how it related to the literature allowed students to scaffold learning by building, as she said, on what they already knew and what they had considered. This strategy of creating an environment where students examined both their thoughts about literature and what their thoughts said about them made the literature relevant and helped them to think about the people they were becoming.

To ensure that students engaged in the analysis of literature that met her standards, Ms. Lomax chose not to use a textbook. In an interview, she explained:

I don't use a textbook. I've made my own. I have 770 pages of a textbook that I've done myself. I don't want to wait for somebody to give me something. It requires too much energy, and then, if it's not of a substance and a quality that I feel like I can apply, then it makes me angry, so I would just as soon make my own.
(T3.Int001.041505.li52)

Ms. Lomax demonstrated high standards for herself and her students in order to facilitate learning of those topics she found important. In addition to creating her own textbook, she designed new assignments each year, depending on the particular students she had, instead of using the sample assignments provided in the county's curriculum guide. She explained her motivation behind creating her own assignments in an interview:

I couldn't find the reading analysis that I developed anywhere to the extent that I do it because it, in the same exercise, it calls for them to do so many different things and usually the instructional materials that I've seen are pretty unilateral. They only present certain skills to be taught, but they're not as global as I would like, so probably about close to ten years ago, I started doing my own. So, with a lot of the novels, I've developed my own curriculum just because it doesn't exist, and so many things are covered [in the materials I created]. You can do the reading analysis from the standpoint of social perspective. You can do it in terms of a psychological perspective. There're so many different angles you can address in the same reading analysis and, unfortunately or fortunately, I have to do it for every novel because they don't exist to the extent that I would like them to, but [mine have] been very successful. (T3.Int002.042805.li15-18)

Creating her own assignments allowed Ms. Lomax to provide students with meaningful work that pushed them to think. This year, she created a research project that required students to form an opinion on the work of an American author. She emphasized on the assignment sheet, "This is not a biography or a book report. Your goal is to make an assertion about the author's works, then develop and support it with facts you have gained through substantive research" (T3.Art005.051805). Her goal for this project was

not just that they explore the work of various authors, but that students develop a position and support it with facts, a process that was useful for literary analysis and for life.

Teachers Maintain an Instructional Focus in the Classroom

As mentioned in the opening vignette, Ms. Lomax maintained an instructional focus for the entire 90-minute class period. One of her strategies for maximizing instructional time was to move quickly, and students appeared accustomed to this procedure. She moved so fast that her students rarely had time to focus on anything but the instructional activity. As soon as the bell rang on one occasion, for example, she began to explain a complex group assignment and, when students complained about her going too fast, she told them, “You all are going to have to improve your dictation skills” (T3.Obs004.042805.li60) and kept going. While students may have asked their group members to explain the assignment again, they did not ask Ms. Lomax and, in the final product, they all addressed everything she mentioned.

In addition to moving quickly through each task, Ms. Lomax typically gave students complex assignments that only could be completed in class if every student worked every minute she allotted to them. She explained one particular group assignment in the following excerpt:

Part one, role of primary characters ... part two ... secondary characters may make an appearance ..., but not significant. Part three, ... development of possible symbols. Now, there are some things I expect to see and we've already talked about that ... obvious symbols. Next one, analysis of how the chapter creates an overall picture ... Next one, author's message to the reader and what you think may be totally different from someone else, but if you support it with the text, that's fine. Journey of Bigger as a character. He began as an angry, formless character with the skillet, and I'm going to say there's an event that gives him a sense of his own existence. ... We're starting at 8:40. (T3.Obs004.042805.li60-64)

In groups of four, students were given only 45 minutes to examine character development, symbolism, plot, and theme in a chapter of *Native Son*. The desks in the

classroom were already arranged into groups of four, so students immediately began to discuss the assignment. After 35 minutes, Ms. Lomax alerted the class that they had 10 minutes to finish and she asked for a group to volunteer to begin their presentation exactly 10 minutes later. Throughout this class session, and generally all others, Ms. Lomax ensured that students remained engaged by providing a great deal of substantive work and maintaining an instructional focus. Students appeared to be accustomed to this kind of learning environment.

Teachers Emphasize Skill Development

Ms. Lomax appeared to hold very high expectations for all of her students and, even in casual conversations with them, she emphasized skill development. If her students mispronounced a word, did not enunciate clearly, or made some kind of grammatical error, they were admonished by the teacher to try again, even if they were in the middle of presenting their work. Students seemed to understand their teacher's goal was not to embarrass them, but to help them develop their writing skills so they quickly corrected their mistakes and moved on with their presentations. During one class session, for example, students shared with the class their written responses to a chapter in *Native Son*:

Mia: As Miss Thomas stated. ... Truly Miss Thomas self-abnegates herself.

Ms. Lomax: You don't need herself. It's redundant.

Mia: Okay, Miss Thomas chooses self-abnegation.

Ms. Lomax: Better.

Mia: Bigger cannot even look at his mother. ... He seemed as if he cared, but in reality, he did not care. Vera is portrayed as a cry-baby ... helpless. Richard Wright put women as helpless characters. Wright showed women needed guidance and would follow anything. ... Bigger's hatred of women killed Bessie and Mary. Wright tried to portray that he hated what women stood for ... but, they also stood

for power which he did not have. Women represent weakness and disloyalty, but also power being that--

Ms. Lomax: All right, Mia, get rid of that “being that.”

Mia: What should I put in its place?

Ms. Lomax: Because. Do you all need to start those grammar usage exams every week again?

Nadia: We all right.

Ms. Lomax: What do you mean we all right?

Mia: I changed it.

Ms. Lomax: Circle it in red ... no being that. It doesn't exist.

(T3.Obs012.051005.li173-183)

During this exchange, Ms. Lomax offered constructive feedback in a manner that student appeared to find non-threatening, and the student not only responded positively to Ms. Lomax's constructive criticism, but also asked for help. With the teacher's assistance, the student learned alternatives that made her writing more clear.

Learner-Centeredness

Learner-centeredness demonstrates an understanding of how people learn. This attribute of the HPL framework also refers to the identification and implementation of instructional strategies that address the various ways that people learn, and it includes both the cognitive processes involved in learning and how student motivation influences learning. Effective teachers recognize where students are academically and help students to assess their own level of understanding in order for them to become metacognitive learners. In addition, they understand the role of motivation in student learning and assist students in finding ways to increase their intrinsic motivation (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). One way effective teachers address motivation is by providing

opportunities for students to apply what they learn to real situations that exist in their own worlds. These teachers also find ways to engage students in instructional activities that are in some way personally meaningful to them (Langer, 1998).

In Ms. Lomax's classroom, she routinely provided opportunities for students to make connections to their own lives and world view. Her motivation for making such connections was two-fold. First, she believed her students already thought deeply about the world around them, and she wanted to provide a forum for them to share and further develop those thoughts. She also believed that, once students made their own connections to the literature in class and began to understand the implicit messages about the world communicated through literature, they would approach everything they read with a more critical eye and increase their level of comprehension. She explained this idea in an interview:

If I bring something up that they never thought about, they take it and they run with it and then they make their own connections, so it's worked out very well, but I think the key is in actually making connections with what they already know ..., because teenagers tend to think about things far more deeply than we do, they already have what they need in their own minds in things that they think about everyday, in their daydreaming, in their reflecting on how they fit into the scheme of things. So, all they need to do is carry that a little step further and see that everything is not what it appears, that sometimes individuals that write or communicate a message are looking for you to see something else, so that they can convey their own message and, once they see that and they see it even once, they run with it and then they apply it to everything that they read and that increases the comprehension. It works well, I think. (T3.Int002.042905.li14-16)

Ms. Lomax's strategy was not to make the connections for her students. Instead, she created an environment in which they could share and refine their thoughts in their interaction with various texts.

During the reading of *Native Son*, for example, Ms. Lomax presented various opportunities for students to make connections. She explained that her students found the

novel engaging because “they get to see how different people perceive actions, how mere perceptions affect how you view Bigger Thomas as a character, and pretty much how you look at your own sense of moral awareness and compare it to what he actually does in the novel” (T3.Int002.042905.li177-191). Making these connections fostered an environment where students engaged in literary analysis and metacognition by examining what their own thoughts about events and characters meant for their own identity. After students read a non-fiction essay about a brutal killing, for example, they wrote essays about their thoughts on the minds and hearts of serial killers. Students in the class shared their writing with the class and engaged in an examination of their own thoughts in the following discussion:

Julia: We all experience rage and inappropriate instincts, but we have a cage ...

Ms. Lomax: Good metaphor.

Julia: People may say it was the way they were raised. ... He didn't have a purpose until he was in jail. ... As a way of illustration, most serial killers ... lack a sense of control ... prey on people weaker than them.

Ms. Lomax: All right, hun ... weaker than they, not weaker than them ... because you would have weaker than they are, right?

Julia: I do believe there is a good person deep down inside even the worst criminal.

Ms. Lomax: That's interesting. So, you're saying everybody wants to be good? Do you believe that?

Julia: Unless something is missing.

Ms. Lomax: So, you believe everybody can be fixed?

Julia: Yeah.

(T3.Obs021.052305.li222-232)

The class continued the discussion about whether people were born good or born bad, and Ms. Lomax often presented the unpopular view that some people were born evil

which encouraged students in the class to further develop and articulate their own opinions.

Students Learn Skills and Knowledge in Multiple Lesson Types

Langer (2002) asserted that teachers must provide instruction through a variety of lesson types in order to reach a broader audience of students. Teaching concepts in multiple ways increases the likelihood that students will transfer the new knowledge to other situations. According to Langer, instruction in the classrooms of effective teachers generally falls into three categories:

- separated, or taught in isolation
- simulated, or taught in the context of an exercise
- integrated, or taught in a meaningful way in the context of a larger activity

Effective teachers balance these three lesson types recognizing the value of each.

Separated lessons allow teachers to implement direct instruction and teach specific skills to their students. Simulated lessons give students the opportunity to attempt new skills through guided practice, and integrated lessons give students opportunities for application. Ms. Lomax incorporated all three lesson types into her instructional practices, and Table 5-2 identified some examples of how she addressed them in her classroom.

Table 5-2. Lesson types found in the English classroom

Type of Lesson	Teaching strategy	Purpose
Separated	Administering weekly grammar usage exams	To help students to develop their writing skills
	Typing individual evaluations during presentations of student writing	To help students to see specific areas in their writing that need further development
Simulated	Drawing on her knowledge of psychology and sociology when directing students through an analysis of text	To help students to make literature relevant by connecting to their own lives
	Delivering a mini-lecture on major themes in <i>Native Son</i>	To give students a lens through which to examine the text
Integrated	Requiring students to develop a position on an author's work	To help students to learn how to support their position

In each of the examples listed in the table, Ms. Lomax facilitated high levels of student engagement by implementing strategies that crossed each of the three learner-centered lesson types.

Students are Expected to Be Creative Thinkers

Another facet of learner-centeredness is the expectation that students will be creative thinkers. Teachers who demonstrate this expectation encourage students to learn more than the minimum competencies required for state tests. They provide opportunities for students to be generative thinkers who explore multiple possibilities based on their experiences with the world and the interaction with texts (Langer, 2002). As mentioned previously in this chapter, Ms. Lomax's stated beliefs and classroom practices supported this kind of learning environment.

At the beginning of the year, for example, Ms. Lomax set the tone for students to think more creatively. She admonished them not to recite plot summary in their analysis of literature because she wanted them to think more deeply about what they read. In an interview, she explained how she instructed her students:

Well, in the beginning of the year, it was, and they love to say that I say this, go beneath the surface. What are you seeing? Go beneath the surface. Think it out. Don't give me plot summary. Don't tell me what happened. Tell me why it happened. Tell me why is it relevant. Tell me how it fits in with your own worldview. Tell me what it foreshadows for the rest of the novel as you go along. Don't think about, don't tell me about what you see. Tell me about why and I think that works better. (T3.Int002.042905.li28)

To push students beyond the superficial, Ms. Lomax asked questions that made the students think about what they read. If they provided plot summary, they needed to tell her why events happened as they did or why it was relevant or how it connected to their own outlook on the world. By the end of the school year, students were demonstrating the

ability to consider the underlying messages behind characters' actions and events in the novel in their group presentations of a chapter from *Native Son*:

Yusef: Bigger feels shame he has felt his entire life. ... He felt in some way, "the insane man was him." This was a turning point for Bigger. Character number two. The coroner ... face of White America ... made visible in coroner. Intended to provoke ... man who displays bodies of oppressed race.

Ms. Lomax: Yusef, how did you know that one? That's a little bit beyond y'all's level.

Yusef: Remember that night I wrote the other analysis?

T3: Did you have a protein bar that night?

Yusef: No, but I had coffee like you said.

Ms. Lomax: You all are getting stuff you're not supposed to be getting.

Eva: Isn't that the point?

Ms. Lomax smiled and Yusef continued to read.

Yusef: He sits behind Bigger at the inquest, he challenges the coroner's actions ... Makes up his mind to trust Bigger. Mr. Dalton, like his wife, he was questioned ... Max hammered Mr. Dalton ... raised suspicions of Mr. Dalton's contribution to the African American community. Why send ping pong tables and charge more rent? ... Bigger wondered if he could trust the White man. ... On the witness stand, Jan stood strong ... building of trust ... and, now, the Communist party ...

Ms. Lomax: Wow, [that was so good that it] made me forget what I was going to say.

(T3.Obs012.051005.li116-134)

As Yusef shared his response with the class, he demonstrated depth of thought and a level of analysis that even surprised Ms. Lomax. Creating an environment where students could take intellectual risks appeared to breed great insight. Students found support and constructive feedback from each other and Ms. Lomax, so, even when they failed, they seemed more willing to try.

Community-Centeredness

Community-centeredness, the third attribute of the HPL framework, is an emphasis on creating a rigorous learning environment in which all community members work together toward a common purpose. Recognizing the social nature of learning, teachers who support community-centeredness facilitate a supportive community of learners who recognize the value and purpose of working together and supporting each other throughout the learning process. The social and cultural aspects of learning must be taken into consideration for instruction to be most academically enriching, and effective teachers implement practices that allow students to collaborate and to feel like valued members of a supportive learning community (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Ms. Lomax demonstrated an understanding of the social nature of learning by fostering a learning environment characterized by collaboration and high expectations.

Classrooms Foster Cognitive Collaboration

During group discussions of literature facilitated by a list of questions provided by Ms. Lomax, students were encouraged not only to share their interpretations of literature but also to probe and debate each other's ideas in order to think about complex ideas collaboratively and to reach a joint understanding of the text. When individual students attempted to divide group assignments among the group, another student inevitably said something like, "I think we all should take part in this. It takes longer to divide it [within the group and go through each person's part after they've worked on it] and say, 'This is wrong. This is wrong.'" (T3.Obs007.050305.li67-75). Students appeared to recognize the value and added depth of collaborating on every part of the assignment. Previously during class, Ms. Lomax pointed out to students that they would suffer the consequences

of not knowing a concept if a member of their group did not explore it thoroughly and, by doing this, she encouraged them to think through the concepts together to develop the most complete answer.

Ms. Lomax also facilitated cognitive collaboration during class discussions of literature. She frequently challenged students think in new ways and, to do so, she provided many opportunities for them to think aloud as a class and work through their understandings. When the class discussed *Native Son*, for example, Ms. Lomax probed a student's comment about Bigger's feelings about Bessie:

Mia made a comment that Bigger loves Bessie.

Ms. Lomax: I'm surprised you used the word "love" for anything in this novel.

Nadia: He said he wasn't in love with her.

Julia: Maybe because he hated everybody in his family, it carried over to people outside his family.

The class continued to discuss Bigger.

(T3.Obs007.050305.li235-244)

When Ms. Lomax expressed some confusion over a student's comment, she invited other students into the discussion as they all developed their understanding of Bigger as a character. For class discussions and group projects, Ms. Lomax implemented several strategies to facilitate cognitive collaboration. These strategies included:

- Asking questions or making comments to invite alternative thoughts so students began to play with possibilities (i.e., "I'm surprised you used the word 'love' for anything in this novel.")
- Admonishing students to remember that they were responsible for knowing all topics in depth, regardless of who addressed it in their group (i.e., "If [someone in your group] does not do a particularly good job. ... If I decide I'm going to test you all on this, you'll be in trouble [so make sure you discuss each topic as a group].")
- Allowing students to choose their own groups once they understood the class routines (i.e., "Initially, I had assigned seating, but at some point, I just said, 'Okay,

drift off toward the person that feeds you intellectually ... and that's what they did.")

- Making group assignments so comprehensive that students have time for nothing else (i.e., For one class, each group was responsible for answering complex questions that covered almost forty pages of the novel.)

Within an organized learning environment, these strategies fostered a community of learners who supported each other, considered multiple interpretations, and willingly reached for the teacher's high expectations.

Students are Valued Participants in a Learning Community

In addition to fostering collaboration among students and demonstrating high expectations, Ms. Lomax appeared to sincerely value students' contributions to the learning community. She wanted to hear what they had to say and built on their thoughts as often as her own. She also seemed to treat their ideas with the same respect she would want for her own. The following discussion exemplified how Ms. Lomax valued her students' contribution to discussion:

Ms. Lomax: Do you think he gave a damn about losing his job? Imagine hating your life, but being afraid of losing the life you have. ... Back to Ellison, dispossession of the dispossessed. Evidence of self-abnegation ... everything has been removed and afraid of losing ... White folks don't want us to have and probably still don't. Dispossessed, but afraid of losing the little they've given him. Back to the whole concept of fear.

Julia: Can her being blind represent being pure? She's can't see his color.

Ms. Lomax: You said something profound. You probably didn't even hear. You said something very profound [about her not seeing color]. Did she have color?

Julia: No.

Ms. Lomax: She was pale, ghostly pale. The only concept of Mary she had at all was what?

Tyra: Drinking.

Ms. Lomax: Mary only got attention through her wild ways. Probably, the only way she could get back at her parents. If she didn't drink ... probably get with a little Black momo ...

Nadia: Why did he beat him up?

Ms. Lomax: You guys know how I think.

Nadia: His fear of him going to actually try to rob a White man. So, he figured ...

Ms. Lomax: Excellent, so what was he hiding?

Nadia: His fear.

Ms. Lomax: Excellent, right, you already know he's fearful, but a man who is fearful is also what?

Tyra: Emasculated.

Ms. Lomax: He was afraid of losing the little he had.

(T3.Obs001.042505.li251-267)

In this discussion, and others like it, Ms. Lomax made sure that she acknowledged students' contributions and pushed them to extend their thinking. She brought attention to those who were particularly insightful and helped them to carry their ideas forward.

Assessment-Centeredness

Assessment-centeredness is evidenced by an understanding of a variety of assessments and what they measure, the importance of formative and summative assessment, and the role of assessment for learning and for evaluation. Teachers who emphasize assessment-centeredness recognize what needs to be assessed and how it should be assessed. They also administer assessment frequently in order to make appropriate instructional decisions (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Further, by making assessment a regular part of instruction, they allow students to become comfortable with it as a learning tool and are able to address possible challenges before they become major problems. As a result, teachers maintain student engagement because

they treat their students in a supportive, rather than punitive, manner when they make mistakes or fail to understand a concept.

Effective teachers of Black students discussed in current research pay close attention to students' level of understanding and provide them with frequent feedback in an effort to facilitate academic growth (Corbett et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Similarly, Ms. Lomax constantly monitored students' understanding. As mentioned in previous examples, she said things, such as, "go deeper" when students engaged in superficial analysis. Also, when students made mistakes in language usage, they were immediately corrected with brief comments, like, "change install to instill." While Ms. Lomax concentrated primarily on using formative assessment to provide timely feedback to nurture students' progress, she did implement summative assessment periodically to determine their ability to apply new knowledge. The research paper on the works of an American author described previously was an example of summative assessment. Ms. Lomax described the purpose of using the project to evaluate students' understanding instead of an exam in an interview:

The research paper served as a reflection of all the skills the students were taught this year. An exam, multiple choice or essay, in my estimation is redundant and superfluous. Asking my students to remember a quote given by an author they read in August, or a scene that is irrelevant in the whole scheme of things, or a list of 150 literary terms is totally unproductive. Instead, I prefer to test real skills and practical knowledge. (T3.finalinterviews.061505.li25)

Using the research paper as an assessment tool allowed Ms. Lomax to gauge how well her students understood the skills and knowledge introduced to them throughout the school year. Her explanation suggested that, for her, it was most important that students could apply new knowledge, not just recite it. Ultimately, she believed that academic success was a matter of a student perfecting "the skill of compensating for what they

don't have, building on what they do have, and a making a decision to acquire as much knowledge as they possibly can... a willingness to learn, a willingness to overcome challenges to gain knowledge that means academic success" (T3.Int003.051305.li12-13). Simply put, she assessed academic success as a willingness to do the hard work of learning.

Ms. Lomax held clear expectations for what she assessed as academic progress throughout the school year which she explained in an interview:

It seems to me that, historically, what I have done is looked at writing from the beginning to the current time to assess what knowledge they have gained, what knowledge they've acquired ... how open they are to doing more and more challenging types of activities. Their reactions to a graded paper where once they had a fit, they begin to see it as something useful, something productive, their receptiveness when I give them an assignment that I know is totally unreasonable, but they are excited about it ... when they call me on the telephone at home nagging me to explain something, when they apply for things that they didn't think they could do before, when they bother me for an extension for an assignment that I've done to add something onto what I've already given. That was a trip. (T3.Int003.051305.li16-19)

In this statement, Ms. Lomax articulated an holistic perspective on what she assessed as growth in students' writing. She further elaborated by describing writing that did not meet her expectations. She explained, "If I were to state what an unsatisfactory writing would be, I would have to say that I would fail an assignment which reflected apathy and a total lack of depth in a student whom I knew was capable of better" (T3.finalinterviews 061505.li20).

To make sure there were no surprises at the end of the school year, Ms. Lomax also sat at her laptop and typed reports whenever students presented their writing to the class. In those reports, she listed what they included, what they did not include, and any other comments she had about the writing. She began writing these reports at the beginning of the school year, and students found the feedback helpful. While she did not mention basic

skills in her explanations of assessment, she did demonstrate an emphasis on the importance of mastering them in her instructional practices. She, for example, administered weekly grammar usage tests at the beginning of the year until all students demonstrated mastery of those skills. When she noticed students making more mistakes in usage, she quickly corrected them, threatened to give those tests again, and noted it in their individual reports.

Ms. Lomax also threatened to give quizzes to check students' understanding of reading assignments, but she rarely followed through with it. She emphasized that she would give quizzes only if they failed to complete an assignment, so students typically completed all of the assignments and participated actively in class discussions in order to demonstrate their understanding of the material. Ms. Lomax said things like, "Okay, folks, hello, you know I'm going to be up to doing something underhanded if you haven't read *Flight*... Make sure you've read" (Obs004.042805.li287-288). This kind of comment appeared to be enough to motivate students to read. During one class discussion in particular, it was obvious that students read the assigned chapter, but as Ms. Lomax listened to their responses to questions, she realized they did not quite understand a particular scene:

Yusef: Symbolism ... psychological and physical symbols. First, I analyzed the newspaper and media's depiction of Bigger. ... Feeling of superiority Whites felt toward Blacks. ... People got tortured and killed everyday ... raped and still alive only to freeze to death. Bigger is the black ape ... only uses Bessie to prove ... When animals attack or kill people, they are put to death and, to White America, Bigger was an animal. ... When Bigger had talked to the preacher, he knew he would probably be put to death ... left Dalton's house ... cross burning on top of it.

Ms. Lomax: Was it burning or was it lit? There was nothing burning. It was something else.

(T3.Obs012.051005.li90-97)

In this example, Yusef saw something bright, but based on his what he wrote, he misunderstood what created that bright light. By allowing students to share their responses frequently, Ms. Lomax was able to check students' understanding and clarify and misunderstanding in a safe learning environment that recognized the value of making mistakes.

CHAPTER 6
STRATEGIES THAT FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT AMONG AFRICAN
AMERICAN STUDENTS

Student learning is contingent on teachers' ability to create and sustain optimal learning environments. (Brown, 2004, pp. 266-267)

When students believe they have the intellectual capacity to succeed and know their teachers value them and hold high expectations for them, they are more likely to be engaged in schoolwork (Brown, 2004; Lee, 2001; Linnebrink & Pintrich, 2002; Patrick, Turner, Meyer, & Midgley, 2003). The level of engagement, as evidenced by completing assignments, participating in class, and generally putting forth effort, is directly connected to a teacher's practices (Patrick et al., 2003). For the teachers in the present study, classroom management was a key element in facilitating high levels of student engagement. Ms. Morrison's and Ms. Lomax's instructional decisions, although different, created structured learning environments where students were motivated to work hard, ask questions, and participate in classroom activities. In their interviews, the teachers not only stated a belief in the importance of student engagement, but also they adopted classroom practices that ensured it, such as helping students to see themselves in what they read, dealing immediately with inappropriate behavior, creating an environment where students were not "embarrassed to be wrong or right" (T2.Int005.052705.li30), and giving students opportunities to see their success when they worked hard. These kinds of classroom practices, which can be characterized as culturally responsive classroom management strategies, created demanding, but supportive learning communities based in an ethic of care and respect (Brown, 2003, 2004, 2005).

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

Based in the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive classroom management reflects a balance between providing instruction that sets high expectations for students and maintaining a caring, structured, cooperative classroom environment that addresses students' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds through a variety of measures (Brown, 2004). To further understand the concept of culturally responsive classroom management, Brown (2004) conducted extensive interviews with 13 secondary teachers from seven major cities across the United States to understand how teachers considered to be effective by their peers approached classroom management in urban schools. Specifically, he sought to understand how they created a cooperative learning environment among students and addressed cultural differences in a way that facilitated academic gains. In the investigation of these teachers, he identified four common themes across the 13 teachers: a caring attitude, assertiveness and authority, congruent communication processes, and a demand for effort. Strikingly, in Brown's study and in the present study, teachers typically addressed inappropriate behavior non-punitively. Instead, they created learning environments built on strong relationships and mutual respect where students generally chose not to engage in activities that would disrupt the instructional activities. Similarly, the teachers in the present study demonstrated practices that reflected the four attributes of culturally responsive classroom management that Brown noticed across interviews with urban teachers.

A Caring Attitude

Researchers (Brown, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 1992, 1995, 2003) have suggested that student engagement is further enhanced when teachers demonstrate concern for their students and

this may be even more important for students of color. Brown (1999), for example, found that urban middle school students were more likely to develop relationships with teachers who took a special interest in them. Further, Ladson-Billings (1994) observed that successful teachers of African American students were highly involved in the social and emotional development of their students. The goal for teachers who demonstrate this kind of engagement in students' lives often is to guide them toward becoming, "persons who will support worthy institutions, live compassionately, work productively but not obsessively, care for older and younger generations, be admired, trusted, and respected" (Noddings, 1992, p. 221). Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax articulated similar beliefs about teaching. For example, when asked for a description of her job, Ms. Morrison said:

Describing what I do, in a nutshell, I would say love and care for the students and what I do and then, to me, everything else will come along because, if I love what I do and [care for the students], then I'm going to do what it is that I do to the best of my ability. (T2.Int005.052705.li4-5)

Teachers who demonstrate a special interest in their students do more than simply acknowledge it as a belief. They recognize the widespread implications for instructional goals and decisions, assessment, and teacher-student interactions. In this kind of learning community, students engage in learning activities that are meaningful and worthwhile to them (Noddings, 1992). In an atmosphere of high-stakes testing, creating a community of care also means incorporating strategies that make connections for students to material that may not be obviously meaningful to them.

Similar to Ms. Morrison, Ms. Lomax understood that building a caring community required more than developing strong relationships with students. It required she understand that student learning, particularly among Black students, was tied to the level of concern she showed for them. She explained this idea in an interview:

Their acceptance of learning is connected with whether or not they think you like them. Black kids, I think, are more open to learning different things, but they're not willing to learn from people who they feel don't have their best interest at heart. Black kids are more show me you care about me before I ask you for what you know, and I think that's the greatest difference [between teaching Black students and White students]. (T3.Int003.051305.li10-12)

Ms. Lomax genuinely cared for her students, and her goal for them was that they take what they learned in her classroom, from language usage to complex analytical skills, and have the confidence to work toward their dreams. In an interview, she explained her hope for her students:

That they get further along than I am, just the things that I've had to deal with, they don't have to deal with those things, that they know more than I do, that they can teach me something. If they can wake up one day fully convinced that they can do anything they want to do and if they can grow up without limitations, the idea of having personal limitations, and if they can grow up uncontaminated by the negativity of us. I think those are my goals for them. Everything else falls into place. (T3.Int001.041505.li41-44)

By pushing students to reach their full intellectual capacity and by being their biggest cheerleader and, at times, a strong critic, Ms. Lomax demonstrated her desire for them “to grow up without limitations.” Through her support, enthusiasm, and sheer enjoyment in the classroom—she once said to the class that coming to work, for her, was like going to a party because she had so much fun—she appeared to want them to live meaningful lives as much as she wanted it for herself.

Creating a community of care. In a caring community, teachers typically integrate modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation in order to give students the opportunity to discuss issues such as respect, compassion, and living a productive life and to see them in action (Noddings, 1992, p. 222). Modeling an ethic of care and explicitly confirming behaviors that support it allows teachers to create an atmosphere where students can understand its value inside and outside of the classroom. Ms. Morrison and

Ms. Lomax often provided living examples for their students. An example of how Ms. Morrison modeled an ethic of care was seen in her response to student distribution of a controversial issue of the school newspaper that resulted in an official reprimand to her from the school principal.

Ms. Morrison was the sponsor of the newspaper and, earlier in the school year, the students in the journalism class distributed surveys to students to determine what topics they found interesting. Two of the issues frequently mentioned by students related to sex and drugs, so, together with Ms. Morrison, the newspaper staff decided to devote the April issue to those topics. After meeting with the school principal and school board, Ms. Morrison and the staff agreed to post “Parental Advisory” across the top of the front page, to submit a draft of the edition to the principal for review, and to require students to purchase the newspaper from the school store with parental permission instead of distributing it for free as usual. Ms. Morrison allowed students to send the newspaper to the printer after they submitted a copy to the principal. She planned to be out of town when the newspaper returned from the printer, so she left her student editor in charge of production. Students distributed the paper to students free of charge during the last period of the day on the day it arrived, and then the crisis began.

Several teachers were immediately offended by the graphic nature of the newspaper and collected them from students shortly after distributing them. The edition contained stories about AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and a question and answer section that addressed oral sex, anal sex, the transmission of STDs, and birth control. It also included articles about marijuana, ecstasy, and “the dippa,” which is a tobacco cigarette or marijuana joint dipped in PCP. These articles took up three pages of

an eight page newspaper. The majority of the issue, however, focused on self-respect, entertainment, and school news. Somehow, a member of the school board received a copy of the paper and called a meeting with the school principal. According to Ms. Morrison, the principal claimed not to have read the preliminary draft of the paper, placed the blame on her, and wrote an official letter of reprimand stating that publishing the newspaper demonstrated lack of professionalism and poor judgment. While she accepted responsibility for her staff failing to follow the established agreement of limited distribution to students with parental permission, she appeared to feel betrayed by the principal for attacking her after agreeing to the issue (T2.Obs005.050405.li2-3).

On the day Ms. Morrison received the letter of reprimand, she was called to the principal's office several times, including during the class observed for this study. Although she mentioned the issue to me before class started, she never mentioned it to her students and, while she was more subdued than usual, she never showed her frustration to her students. Later that day, however, she did meet with the newspaper staff to discuss the repercussions of widely distributing the newspaper. During their discussion, she asked students about the agreement they had with the principal and the school board. They told her they forgot about the agreement, and she believed them. She also told them they had her full support because they articulated valid reasons for publishing the issue, and she admonished them to remember those reasons when defending their decision to publish to those who criticized them.

Ms. Morrison's response to the publication and distribution of the school newspaper demonstrated the high level of respect and care she had for her students. In her response to the letter of reprimand, she maintained respect and care for the students by

supporting them in their decision to publish such an issue, believing they did forget about the agreement, not blaming them when she suffered consequences for their actions, and assisting them as they defended their decision to the adults in the building. These actions showed the students what being a professional looked like. Her response exemplified the behavior that led her students to admire, respect, and trust her. Her actions also gave students the opportunity to practice an ethic of care by allowing them to choose topics that demonstrated their concern for their peers and by giving them a platform to gain respect from her and their peers. She confirmed their behavior by supporting them through the controversy and not blaming them for the consequences she suffered. Ms. Morrison's response promoted a learning environment of care, respect, and intellectual rigor.

Ms. Lomax demonstrated a special interest in her students through her daily interactions with them and in some of her instructional practices. A few days before the school year ended, for example, she distributed certificates that exemplified her care for every student in the classroom. Each certificate, typed on pink card stock in a calligraphy font, expressed a different sentiment that celebrated the student's personal qualities and individual contributions to the class. Ms. Lomax passed out the certificates at the beginning of class:

Ms. Lomax: Somebody pick up Julian's [certificate]. Mia, did you get one?

The two students walked to the teacher's desk and she handed each of them a certificate.

Julian: Each one is different?

Julian looked at his certificate as he returned to his seat. He smiled as he read it. He continued to read and reread the certificate for a couple of minutes.

(T3.Obs024.052605.li16-18)

Although Julian sometimes complained when Ms. Lomax pushed him to support statements he made in class, his reaction clearly demonstrated that he recognized she held a great deal of respect for him. Often quite talkative, Julian was silent for about two minutes as he sat with his certificate. While other students did not appear quite as reflective as Julian, they did appear to appreciate the certificates and several hugged Ms. Lomax after they received them. In a subsequent interview, Ms. Lomax explained the purpose of the certificates:

The certificates are a statement of love and include details of what it is about each student that captured my heart or made an impression on me. I did it for all my classes, and I don't remember when I started. I have been doing that, or a form of it, since my first years of teaching. I have done it because memories are made in such ways, and, in those times of unhappiness, it is memories of being loved that help us through life's more challenging moments. (T3.finalinterviews.061505.li32-42)

The certificates demonstrated the level of respect Ms. Lomax had for her students, and they allowed her to model an ethic of care and confirm students' behaviors that supported their learning community throughout the school year. She also affirmed their successes throughout the year by periodically holding breakfast celebrations. On those days, one of which occurred during the study, she prepared a feast that included foods, such as sausage, eggs, doughnuts, and even her famous macaroni and cheese upon request. Consistent with her instructional focus, she never mixed business with pleasure and did not conduct a class session on the days of celebration.

Strong relationships and mutual respect. Research (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Brown, 2004; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994) on effective teachers of Black students stresses the importance of strong relationships between teachers and students. In communities of care, teachers recognize how their interactions with students impact learning and they establish an environment of mutual respect and

trust. Both teachers in this study understood the importance of relationships, and they believed it was important for students to see the level of their commitment to them in their words and actions.

Growing up not too far from the communities in which her students lived in circumstances similar to theirs, Ms. Morrison felt a special connection to her students and maintained strong relationships them. She genuinely seemed to enjoy her students and, when asked to describe a student she would not want to teach again, she could not identify a single student who she would not want to return to her classroom. She explained her response in the following excerpt:

Another teacher's worst student is a good student for me, so I don't have any that I would be glad to get rid of because it's the challenge. When they step in the room, they're mine ... and it's like a child. You just can't get rid of your child if they've done something wrong. You talk to them and you try to guide them and instruct them and get them to understand what they have done. You just don't shun them. I don't put children out of my room. I don't say get out and stuff like that. It's worse. Stay in here. I'm not putting you out. Putting them out is too easy. You're giving them free reign. For what? What's outside your classroom? Nothing but trouble. I rather them be in here under my guidance as opposed to being out there unsupervised. (T2.int005.052705.li25-26)

Her response demonstrated a commitment to the students in her classroom and, as she mentioned, she never put a student out of her room during the observations for the present study.

Students appeared to hold the same level of respect for Ms. Morrison as she did for them and wanted to be a part of the class. Ms. Morrison recognized their desire to be engaged in the community of learners and explained, "The kids don't skip my class which tells me a lot because you can see the hallways are always crowded ... They want to participate. They're not afraid of a challenge" (T2.Int001.041505.li48). A student confirmed Ms. Morrison's belief about her students when he entered the class one

morning and said, “This is the best class. It’s a challenge” (T2.Obs004.042605.li14) after Ms. Morrison told the class to scan the front page and other sections of the local newspaper shortly before the bell rang. Ms. Morrison further developed her relationship with students by giving them explicit strategies for becoming more knowledgeable. She shared her approach in an interview:

They think I am so smart because I know so much, and I said [to them], “All you have to do is read a little bit about a lot of things and talk about it, and that will make you smart.” So, now, [I have them] read the newspaper [for the first ten minutes of class everyday] and you notice, when they’re talking, [they say things like], “Oh, did you know about this?” Now, their peers think that they’re so smart. (T2.Int003.051005.li38-40)

The students’ beliefs about Ms. Morrison’s intellect and her willingness to show them how to develop their own intellect demonstrated the mutual respect shared between Ms. Morrison and her students. Developing strong relationships with students was the foundation for creating a caring community.

Ms. Lomax and her students also demonstrated strong relationships characterized by mutual respect. In an interview, she said that her students were “fabulous” when asked to assess their academic progress this year and she shared her appreciation for their hard work with them often. They too thought very highly of her and, before and after class, students came to her room to discuss personal and academic issues because they valued her honest opinions. For Ms. Lomax, the community of care extended beyond the classroom to include the parents of her students. She held strong beliefs about how her relationships with students influenced her relationships with their parents as she described in an interview:

I think that, when I call [parents], they understand because the kids talk to their parents. They understand that, if I’m calling, it’s for a specific purpose in mind. It’s not because I’m calling to demean the kids because the kids already know that they’re cared about, so of course they tell their parents that and, if you form that

relationship with the kids, then the parents already know what you're about, so I haven't gotten any animosity when I've called and, in times of misunderstanding, when we sit down and talk, the same thing that works for the parents works for the kids. Physical contact, as you're talking, and pure motivation. Human beings pick up when you don't mean to do right by them. They pick these things up, and I think it's insulting to assume that you can hide that for long. Just like one of my old principals told me, if it's rotten, it's going to stink eventually, and that's certainly true of this as well, so I don't have issues with my parents. (T3.Int003.051305.li24-25)

In her instructional practices and in her interactions with students and parents, Ms.

Lomax emphasized the importance of building strong relationships and understanding human nature.

Ms. Lomax's strong relationships with students also were evident when they struggled with issues in their personal lives. On one occasion, a student who she had pushed intellectually a great deal during class lingered in her classroom after the bell rang. She asked the student if she had, "figured out her situation." The student responded that she did have a place to stay, but it was outside of the school district so she had to take public transportation to and from school. Ms. Lomax asked her where she was staying and, after she answered the question, the teacher responded, "Let me know if you need a ride, because I go right through [there]" (T3.Obs004.042805.li296). This exchange was an example of the kind of substantive relationships she had with students.

Establishing Assertiveness and Authority

Researchers (Brown, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Perry & Delpit, 1998) have found that African American students generally show more respect for teachers who speak and act with authority. Irvine (1999) called these assertive teachers "warm demanders" who "provide a tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured and disciplined classroom environment for kids whom society had psychologically and physically abandoned" (p. 56). These teachers understand the urgency for African American students to learn in order to ensure

future opportunities, so they insist on it. In the classrooms of warm demanders, students realize the teacher is the clear authority, and the teachers push students to succeed because they want them to succeed and know they can. While these teachers may appear to be mean to some, they assert their authority without anger or malice. In fact, Foster (1995) found students of warm demanders to be “proud of their teacher’s meanness” because they knew the reason behind the teacher’s insistence on learning.

Wilson and Corbett (2001) also found that students responded positively to what, on the surface, appeared to be harsh words from their teachers. One eighth-grade student in their study, for example, explained, “I think everyone should have a strict teacher like my teacher. We know there ain’t no playing around. It’s not a time to play... You can finish high school if you have a strict teacher” (p. 69). Many students in the study agreed that strict teachers helped them to succeed in school. Another eighth-grade student captured many students’ thoughts on teachers who insisted on learning, “In that classroom—we all say she was the meanest teacher, but I bet you, you will learn something in there. She will force you to learn. Even if I say to her “Stop bothering me,” I like it. I still want them to be nagging me” (p. 91). Students of color, in particular, acknowledge that caring teachers not only build strong relationships with them, but also assertively insist on high behavioral expectations that include completing all assignments, actively participating in the class, and working hard (Brown, 2004).

Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax demonstrated behaviors that would characterize them as warm demanders, and some of their words, in isolation, may have sounded harsh. Their words, however, were delivered within an ethos of care, and their students, like those described in current research, appeared to respond positively. In fact, to participate

in this study, the teachers needed to be nominated by students as great English teachers, and only the teacher with the highest percentage of student nominations and a nomination from the principal at each school was selected to participate. The two teachers in this study, therefore, may sound mean at times, but students thought they were great teachers. Ms. Morrison exemplified a warm demander as she described her beliefs about classroom management:

Classroom management is a dictatorship. This is my classroom and you're going to respect my classroom and there's no compromising in that. This is mine and these are the rules and that's it, and you just stick to that and you don't have a problem and they understand it. (T2.Int003.051005.li48-49)

Her beliefs, although a bit strict, fell in line with the characteristics of warm demanders who insisted on appropriate behavior in a community of care and respect (Brown, 2004).

Similar to Ms. Morrison, Ms. Lomax articulated beliefs about classroom management that stressed establishing clear, unwavering expectations from the beginning of the school year. She provided a detailed explanation of her classroom management strategies in an interview:

I've never had a problem with classroom management, and I don't understand people who do, but I think, if I were going to tell a young teacher, I would tell them start out hard. Make sure the kids know what your expectations are and don't waver because, if you waver, they automatically think you're fair game. Explain to them why it's important once in the beginning of the year and never offer up anymore explanations, because they will challenge you. Now, when one of them asks me why, it's not a question of why. Do what I asked you to do, period. There's no debate here because I think that, once they feel like they're your equal, they can debate you. Then, you have additional problems, so there's no debate. You were asked to do something. Do it or face the consequences, and I think that's been very effective. I don't have any kinds of issues. I think a lot of teachers are afraid not to be liked. I've never cared, and I think that, with anything else, if you're needy, the degree of respect you get goes down exponentially, so it's not about do you like me. I'm here to do a job. This is business, and you've been told to do something because it's going to be conducive to the growth of everybody in here and, if you don't do it, things are going to be very unpleasant for you. And, at some point, they realize that, even though that's true, they're still cared about and they make that balance and then there's no more issue. (T3.Int003.051305.li26-27)

The strategies articulated in this interview can be summarized as follows:

- Start out strict and make your rules and expectations clear to students.
- Explain the purpose of your rules and expectations and, after allowing for discussion in the beginning, do not entertain further debate.
- Establish rules and expectations from an ethic of care.
- Never waver from your expectations and be sure to enforce consequences.
- Make decisions that will garner respect, even if students appear not to like you.

Ms. Lomax stated that she did not care if students liked her, but it was obvious that they did. They “hovered like ravens” before and after school, as she mentioned to a student one morning, and they appeared to flourish in the structured learning environment created by Ms. Lomax.

Both Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax demonstrated teaching practices that supported their stated beliefs about classroom management. Ms. Morrison, for example, implemented teaching practices that typically facilitated such high levels of engagement that major infractions were rare in her classroom, but when she noticed behaviors that detracted from student learning, she reacted swiftly. Students encountered fair consequences that facilitated and maintained student engagement. She explained why they were reprimanded, followed through on the consequences, and never lost control or appeared to be frustrated. Occasionally, she even responded with humor, like in the following example:

Ms. Morrison: Miss Davis, why have you crossed the River Jordan?

Jessica explained why she decided to get out of her seat.

Ms. Morrison: You don't see the Promised Land. Go back.

Jessica: She keeps talking smart to me.

Jessica returned to her seat.

(T2.Obs004.042605.li298-302)

In this exchange, the student explained her reason for leaving her seat, but she returned as soon as Ms. Morrison spoke to her. Ms. Morrison simply needed to make a brief comment for Jessica to comply with the rules.

During another class, Ms. Morrison seemed to respond more seriously when a student repeatedly ignored established rules:

Ms. Morrison: Now, you're eating in class. Give it to me.

Mia handed her bag of Fritos to Ms. Morrison, and she threw it in the trash can.

Sheila: You should've kept it for yourself.

Ms. Morrison: If it was something I liked, I would've eaten it. (To Mia) I gave you a pen. I gave you paper. I accommodated you. I wasn't angry, and this is the thanks I get.

(T2.Obs003.042205.li78-80)

In her conversation with Mia, Ms. Morrison not only reprimanded her and enforced the consequences, but also while remaining in control of the situation, she explained to Mia why her infraction was particularly troublesome. She treated her fairly, and Mia took advantage of it. Ms. Morrison wanted her to understand that.

Ms. Morrison not only insisted on every student's active participation in instructional activities, but also she expected them to collaborate with her to maintain a productive learning environment. She explained that she modeled the behavior she expected from students and gradually turned responsibility over to them. When students read from the text, for example, she assigned the role of narrator to a student. In her class, narrators did not simply read parts from the play. The narrators assigned roles to readers and made sure all students participated. Their grade for the day depended not only on reading the text but also on how well they kept the class focused on learning. By the middle of the school year, the student narrators redirected the class without any

prompting from Ms. Morrison. When students read “The Devil and Daniel Webster,” for example, a student assigned as the narrator admonished the class to pay attention:

Veronica: Okay, hey, you guys, hello.

Julian: Shut up, people. Jerome, shut up you.

Jerome: I’m sorry.

Julian: Are we ready?

Veronica: No? Jessica, am I boring you?

(T2.Obs009.051605.li88-93)

At the end of this exchange and in response to most students’ encouragement to focus, other students returned their attention to the reading giving the same level of respect to their peers that they gave to Ms. Morrison.

On another occasion, Ms. Morrison stepped out of the classroom and into the journalism office. Joshua followed her into the office to sharpen his pencil and, when he returned, he turned on the overhead projector with the warm-up activity and said to the class, “We need to start doing this before Ms. Morrison comes back,” and the class began to work on the assignment while they talked quietly to one another (T2.Obs007.051005.li187-188). The students responded to Joshua just as they responded to the teacher. In both instances, students showed they shared responsibility with the teacher to keep their peers focused on learning and to maintain a productive learning community. By assigning the role of monitoring student engagement to students during particular assignments, Ms. Morrison created an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration.

Always insisting on high levels of student engagement and order in her classroom, Ms. Lomax also could be characterized as a “warm demander.” By this point in the school year, students appeared to understand their teacher’s expectations for their

behavior in class and rarely did they commit more than minor infractions. For Ms. Lomax, maintaining discipline in the classroom was about helping students to be academically successful, not rules and consequences, and she explained her philosophy during an interview:

I'm convinced, even if you're not willing to believe it, I'm convinced that the only individuals that have disciplinary issues are individuals who have not proven to their kids that they can be successful because, when you know you can do it, the temptation to act crazy is not there anymore. When you know that, okay, if I focus, I can do this, I can get this A, you don't need to draw negative attention to yourself anymore, because you know. (T3.Int001.041505.li37-39)

Ms. Lomax expressed a belief that students exhibited negative behavior only when they did not receive positive attention, so she created a structured, academically rigorous environment in an effort to make sure that all of her students experienced academic success. Every time they succeeded in some way, large or small, she would acknowledge it with a comment (i.e., "You said something profound"), a token (i.e., the certificates), or even a celebration, like their periodic breakfasts. When her students fell short of her expectations, behaviorally or academically, however, she quickly admonished them for it. For example, when students began to complain about their reading assignment, they were redirected back to the assignment at hand:

Ms. Lomax: The whole book can be read in a few hours.

Tyra: In a small room with a little lamp?

Nadia: If I can finish, you can finish.

Julian: You read the whole book?

Nadia: No, but I [finished the chapter she assigned] and the sheet.

Ms. Lomax: Hello, we're not going to degenerate into a scream fest.

Julian: [Nadia] makes me feel stupid.

Ms. Lomax: No one can make you feel stupid. Stop complaining and get my work done. [To another student] I don't want you all chewing gum. It's tacky.

Mia (who was chewing the gum): After 9:05, I'm no longer yours.

Ms. Lomax: That's a lie. You're always mine.

Mia continued to complain quietly.

Ms. Lomax: Mia is having a moment. Give her a group hug. Once you have it, get back to work. What did you guys think of the cat [in *Native Son*]?

Students responded to the question.

(T3.Obs003.042705.li209-237)

In this exchange, Ms. Lomax stayed calm and responded firmly (i.e., "Stop complaining and get my work done"), but supportively (i.e., "You're always mine") and almost humorously, particularly in its timing (i.e., "I don't want you all chewing gum. It's tacky."). She also quickly returned to their discussion of the novel, and the students followed along with her never returning to their complaints.

Establishing Congruent Communication Processes

Congruent communication involves "using active listening techniques; demonstrating body language and facial expressions that match verbal messages; avoiding traditional communication roadblocks [that dismiss students' feelings]; responding with empathy to students' anxiety and frustration; [and] using culturally responsive communication processes" (Brown, 2005, p. 13). Establishing congruent communication also requires attention to cultural differences that may exist between teachers and students (Brown, 2003). When students interact with their teachers, they pay close attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues exhibited by their teachers and use them to decide if they will be engaged in the learning environment. It is important, therefore, for teachers to be aware of the messages they send through their words and actions.

Both teachers in this study showed great care and empathy when students shared their feelings about different personal and academic issues. During these instances, their words were confirmed by congruent nonverbal behaviors. Shortly before class started, for example, Ms. Lomax expressed concern for a student by letting her know that her friend needed help. She stopped preparing for class to focus only on the student's needs:

A female student entered the room. While standing at the board, Ms. Lomax encouraged her to speak to her friend.

Ms. Lomax: You need to be very supportive of Jackie today.

Julia: Why?

Ms. Lomax: I talked to her. Trust me.

Julia: Me and her don't really talk anymore.

Ms. Lomax: Aren't you two friends?

The student explained that they stopped talking because the other girl always waited for her to speak when she entered a room. She never talked to her first. Ms. Lomax stepped away from the board where she was writing the days' agenda and pulled a desk next to where Julia is sitting.

Ms. Lomax: Is it something that can be worked out?

The student said that it was also some other things and the two continued their conversation quietly for a few more minutes. (T3.Obs001.li16-23)

In this exchange, Ms. Lomax demonstrated great empathy for Julia by not only encouraging her to speak to her friend, but also by interrupting her activities to focus solely on her once she realized how serious the situation was for her. Often, students hear the nonverbal messages teachers send much louder than their verbal messages. Both Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax seemed to understand the importance nonverbal messages, and they showed great concern, care, and cultural competence in their words and actions.

Ms. Morrison also engaged in congruent communication processes in her interactions with students. She understood the social nature of her students, and she also

recognized the messages her nonverbal behaviors sent to her students. In an interview, she explained the importance of congruent communication processes in her classroom:

You really [have] got to be hands-on with them. For the most part, you can't sit behind your desk because that's intimidating to them. You're saying to them that [they're] not worthy [for you] to come out into the audience. You have to be with Black kids. I feel you have to be out there. I mean, your desk should be in the middle with them. You take a student's desk to let them know that they're not beneath you. You're on the same level as far as I'm not afraid to come into your world, and you go out there. You sit at a desk. You stand up in the aisles and you make yourself connected to them ... you walk around. You touch their desk and stuff like that ... so just trying to make it a friendly environment. Just like they're very social, you have to be social, too. (T2.Int003.051005)

In the previous excerpt, Ms. Morrison expressed the importance of congruent communication processes and her daily teaching practices supported it. She often moved around the classroom, and both she and Ms. Lomax sat at student desks. By demonstrating such insight about the importance of nonverbal communication, Ms. Morrison helped to maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Demanding Effort

Teachers who successfully create engaging, academically rigorous learning communities establish consistent classroom routines, procedures, and behavioral expectations from the beginning of the school year (Ladson-Billings, 1994). These structures ensure students' success by building an environment conducive to learning and based in respect and high expectations. Successful teachers of Black students in particular demand effort from the moment students enter the classroom, and they require students to remain engaged for the entire class period (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ms. Morrison, for example, required students to remain busy for the entire class period. The days' activities were explained at the beginning of class, so, when students

finished one activity, whether it was a group or individual one, they were expected to begin the next activity. Although Ms. Morrison did not expect the students to remain quiet during the class, she did expect them to be engaged in the learning activities. Students appeared to enjoy even the most mundane worksheets because Ms. Morrison described them as “a challenge” that would show them how smart they were. Then, at the end of the class, she told them exactly what they would work on in the next class period. Her practices were consistent and there were no surprises.

In addition to insisting students stay on task, Ms. Morrison pushed students to perform even when they were unprepared. On one occasion, for example, when she asked students to prepare oral reports and a student came to class unprepared to deliver it, she encouraged him to think on his feet and deliver the presentation anyway. She said to him and the entire class, “Y’all need to exercise some common sense. If you’re coming up to the front, do I know you don’t have anything prepared for me? Act like you spent the last seven days [working on it]” (T2.Obs008.051205.li126). She later explained that she knew he had completed the reading, so he should have been able to give the presentation. With the encouragement from Ms. Morrison and the rest of the class, the student delivered the presentation. In this example, Ms. Morrison taught this student and the class a strategy for academic success that crossed content areas. Although the student failed to complete the assignment, he knew the material and Ms. Morrison encouraged him (and sent a message to others) to have the confidence to fake it. Her actions taught her students a lesson that she and more savvy students understand; if you talk (or write) long enough, even if you do not know something, you will get some credit and the teacher may not even notice that you faked it.

Like Ms. Morrison, Ms. Lomax clearly implemented strict behavioral expectations from the beginning of the school year. Every morning, for example, she arrived early to set up her class for the day. Then, she began about five to seven minutes before the final bell. The students appeared to be accustomed to this routine. When the final bell rang, students were fully engaged in the instructional activity. On only one occasion out of 26 observations did a student complain about the fact that class began early. Her complaint arose in a discussion about information that was given before the bell that she did not receive:

Mia: How is this graded?

Ms. Lomax: When I initially read these questions, what did I say this was going to be graded as?

Flavia: Group project.

Ms. Lomax: There are going to be dire consequences for those of you who don't listen, and I see I'm going to have to prove that.

Flavia explained why Mia didn't know.

Ms. Lomax: Flavia says you weren't here. You need to be here by 7:40 in the morning.

Mia pointed out that school did not start at 7:40.

Ms. Lomax: Didn't we talk about this ...? That's when you need to be here, when I get started.

(T3.Obs004.042805.li79-84)

Interestingly, even the student who came to Mia's defense did not complain about the routine and, once Ms. Lomax reminded her of their previous discussion, she heard no other complaints. The teacher wanted to maximize instructional time, so she took care of any introductory activities, such as collecting homework, making announcements, or explaining assignments, before the class officially began, and most students seemed to

realize they would miss important information if they did not arrive early so they were there. Homeroom immediately followed this particular class, so Ms. Lomax also took advantage of that time and usually continued the class after the morning announcements began.

Researchers (e.g., Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991) have noted that effective teachers expect students to meet high expectations that include such things as completing every assignment and doing high quality work. They also treat each student as capable and create an environment where students can see their strengths and, in collaboration with the teacher, establish their own academic and behavioral goals and participate in decision-making and assessment (Bowers, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Both Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax explicitly stated and demonstrated high expectations for all of their students, and they provided a great deal of support for students to reach those expectations.

In an interview, Ms. Morrison stated a belief that all students can learn and want to learn, and she elaborated on this idea in the following excerpt:

All students want to receive knowledge. Even though they act like they don't want to, they do. As long as you keep that in mind, don't feel like what you're doing is in vain because they are learning from you ... just know that every student in your classroom wants to learn if they're there. So, if they're there, teach them.
(T2.Int003.051005.li7-8)

In Ms. Morrison's classroom, students remained engaged because there was no alternative. She expected them to learn, she treated them as capable of learning, and she truly believed, if they showed up in the class, they wanted to learn. One way Ms. Morrison created an environment that was conducive to learning was by maintaining high expectations on a daily basis. She expressed a belief that, for students to take teachers seriously, they must not allow "free" days. According to Ms. Morrison, students must

know that, from the first day of school to the last day of school, they will be expected to participate actively in the learning community. Ms. Morrison demonstrated this consistency by expecting students to be actively engaged in instructional activities everyday. Even on days when the school seemed a bit chaotic, Ms. Morrison maintained an instructional focus in her classroom and expected students to participate in activities that required thought and effort.

Along with her high expectations, Ms. Morrison provided a great deal of support for students to meet those expectations. When asked, she explained that, in addition to the academic support she provided during class, she encouraged students to come to her room during lunch and before and after school to get help or to complete assignments. Throughout the study, students did often come to Ms. Morrison for help outside of class time and, because she constantly reiterated her willingness to provide this assistance, her students sought it when they needed it. At the end of one class session, for example, Nadia asked for extra help and made it clear that it was not because she wanted a special reward; she wanted to understand the material.

Ms. Lomax also ascribed to the belief that all of her students would meet high expectations, and she explained her perspective in an interview:

I don't let them give up. It's not an option for me, and I guess they get so sick of me nagging that they give up and say, "Okay" because if you stay on them constantly, somehow, they start to believe it. It's like, okay, she wouldn't be nagging everyday unless she knew that this was something that I could do and it's like with grown folks. Once you do it, it's not a question anymore. You know and, once you know that you can do this, then there's something else and something else. I think it's a human being's nature to defeat obstacles and I think, once you know that you have the confidence to do it, it's the next step, next step, next step, next step, and, before you know it, it's done and you're onto something else.
(T3.Int001.041505.li40-45)

Ms. Lomax required her students to examine literature in ways usually present only in upper level college English courses, but she provided an unlimited amount of support as they developed their thoughts. Never did she allow them to give up on themselves and, at this point in the school year, they complained periodically but they did not quit. When asked how she fostered an environment where students welcomed her high expectations, Ms. Lomax explained that she was “really obnoxious” and never gave them a chance to take it easy. She said:

Putting them in a position where they knew what the expectation was and surrounding them with individuals who took up the challenge and, through those individuals, they can see I am successful. This is what it took. I can do this as well. Presenting them with the knowledge, presenting them with the materials that I have access to, developing new ones if they don't grasp a particular concept. They have my home telephone number. That's been very effective because they call me at all hours of the day and night ... and being myself. If they don't [do the work], they're sorry because constantly I'm calling on the phone. Have you done my A, B, C? Uh, Ms. Lomax, give me a break, you know, or they call me. So, either way, it gets done. (T3.Int003.051305.li17-19)

Ms. Lomax established this kind of learning community where students had no alternative but to achieve by implementing certain strategies. These strategies included:

- Never letting students give up. If she needed to call them at home and speak to them, not their parents, until she became a nuisance, she did so.
- Providing specific, constructive feedback (i.e., “We have that. That's plot, honey. Anything else that's a symbol?”).
- Providing specific praise (i.e., “Very good. You're the only one who got that.”)
- Assigning challenging material (i.e., “I'm not really interested in having you write about something that's easy.”)
- Demonstrating an enthusiasm for the material and students' success (see the following example).

When asked about an example of student success, Ms. Lomax described a student who took risks to facilitate her own academic growth:

I have one little girl who, when she came to me, she was clueless. Almost every vocabulary word on the particular list that I gave them, she tried to use it in one piece of writing and, of course, most of them were out of context, but I was so

impressed by that because she was just using all of those big words, and I was like, “Sweetie, that is so cool,” and she was just thrilled. Maybe, I should’ve been more circumspect in my response, but she did it in every other paper and I was like, oh, God, Althea, please. Her classmates would laugh ... incredible spirit in this little girl. She laughed right along with it, and she said, “Well, you all know how I go.” She was just incredible. That was Althea. She sits right there in that chair and they laugh, but her writing has just gone so much further than before. Things like that just make me want to come to work. (T3.Int001.041505.li48-50)

The teacher demonstrated a genuine interest in this student’s and every student’s growth and recognized that making mistakes along the way was the only way to reach her high expectations.

Summary

In Ms. Morrison’s and Ms. Lomax’s classrooms, culturally responsive classroom management was a major factor in their ability to facilitate engagement among African American students. Both teachers, in their own way, exhibited a caring attitude, established assertiveness and authority, established congruent communication processes, and demanded effort. Implementing these strategies motivated students to learn for several reasons. First, they knew the teacher took a special interest in them, so they wanted to establish relationships with them. They also thought their teachers were strict but fair, and they realized that, in these classrooms, being strict was a sign of care. In addition, students believed their teachers were sincere because their nonverbal behaviors confirmed what they said to them. Finally, they saw their teachers consistently holding high expectations for them while providing unlimited support to reach those expectations.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks, 1994, p. 13)

Overview

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs and practices of two teachers identified as particularly successful with African American students in order to gain insight into how to facilitate academic gains among Black students. To identify successful teachers, principals in predominantly Black high schools were asked to nominate English teachers who facilitated strong academic gains among their students and students were asked to nominate their best English teachers. The two lists were cross-referenced to determine the English teachers within the schools who were particularly successful teachers of Black students. One teacher was identified within each of the two high schools, and the investigation examined their daily instructional practices, their stated beliefs, and the connections between their practices and beliefs.

A review of the literature revealed several studies that investigated the “wisdom of practice” of successful teachers of African American students (Athanases, 1998; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Cooper, 2003; Foster, 1991, 1993; Howard, 2001; Key, 1999; Knoeller, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Ostrowski, 2002). These studies provided a solid foundation on which to build a general understanding of effective practice. Most of these studies, however, centered on the elementary level, lacked extended classroom observations, or examined teachers across disciplines instead of in a

single, “gate-keeping” subject, like English. This study, therefore, included extensive observations in the classrooms of secondary English teachers considered to be effective by students and principals in order to understand their beliefs and how they addressed the academic and social-emotional needs of high school students in a content area bombarded nationally by state tests. This chapter includes a discussion of the overall beliefs and practices of each teacher, the similarities and differences across the teachers, the findings in relation to current research, and the implications for future research and practice.

Summaries of the Cases

Ms. Morrison

The investigation of Ms. Morrison’s classroom practice revealed that she held strong beliefs about teaching African American students. She believed all of her students were capable and intelligent, and, because she came from a background similar to theirs, she also knew the power of education to open doors that would otherwise be closed to them. In fact, periodically, she reminded them that their academic success in high school could bring scholarships that would allow them to go to schools on the other side of the country, so they could be far removed from the crises present in their neighborhoods. Her primary goal, therefore, was to help them develop the tools they needed for academic achievement in all of their current classes and for their future. She achieved this goal by spending time with individual students before, after, and during class, providing academic resources for them, and showing loyalty and care during challenging times. It appeared that Ms. Morrison believed in the utility of academic success; it had the power to remove students from their current circumstances by making college an option. Students then could learn, grow, and return, like she did, with a wealth of wisdom and knowledge to offer their communities.

Ms. Morrison believed, for her students to achieve academically, it was important for them to become independent learners and to take responsibility for themselves, so she put several structures in place to ensure their independence. These structures included:

- Using guiding questions to help students in learning how to analyze writing prompts similar to those found on the state assessment test and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)
- Providing many opportunities for students to develop their understanding through discussion
- Encouraging students to make connections between their lives and perspectives and the literature they read in class
- Encouraging students to work together and to push each other to complete assignments and stay focused in class
- Expecting students to always come to class prepared
- Opening her room before school, after school, and during lunch to current and former students to provide help with their assignments

By the end of the school year, it was evident that these structures, and other more specific strategies for reading and writing, were leading students to become independent, but Ms. Morrison constantly reminded them to follow these structures so they would remember them once they left her class at the end of the school year. On most occasions, for example, students came to class with necessary supplies so they would not have to purchase them from her, but she often reminded them that they were available. Students also encouraged and supported each other academically without prodding from the teacher, and she reinforced this behavior by encouraging their collaborative efforts when she saw them working together. Although students were often reminded of the steps she wanted them to follow for different tasks, such as interpreting a complex writing prompt, they appeared to be aware of these steps. Further, to make sure her students understood how to make connections to their own experiences, she often scaffolded them to make connections that they may not have considered.

All of Ms. Morrison's instructional decisions connected to her belief in the power of education to create opportunities for her students. She knew they were talented and intelligent, but she also knew their current circumstances could impede their progress in life. She wanted her students to learn strategies for succeeding in school and, in particular, strategies for performing well on standardized tests, which she believed played a major role in determining their fate. Consequently, most assignments carried a direct link to some component of the state test, so students would have an abundance of practice in preparation for the test.

Ms. Lomax

The examination of Ms. Lomax's classroom practice also demonstrated that she held strong beliefs about teaching in general and teaching Black students in particular. She believed her students were brilliant and that, if they overcame academic challenges in the classroom, they would welcome other challenges, whether academic or personal, throughout their lives. In the classroom, Ms. Lomax, a warm but demanding teacher with a great sense of humor, demonstrated this belief by pushing her students to write papers and hold discussions that required them think deeply and engage in cognitive collaboration with their peers. She saw academic success as a way for her students to develop the confidence to live their lives without limitations, to know that anything they wanted was within their reach. Her role, then, was to provide unlimited support for students to meet the rigorous intellectual demands of her class.

Ms. Lomax believed in the importance of presenting intellectual challenges within a supportive learning community, so she incorporated several strategies to facilitate this kind of environment for her students. As discussed in a previous chapter, her approach included the following strategies:

- Never letting students give up
- Providing specific, constructive feedback
- Providing specific praise
- Assigning challenging material
- Demonstrating an enthusiasm for the material and students' success

During every class observed throughout the study, Ms. Lomax demonstrated at least one of the preceding strategies. She enjoyed discussing literature with her students and welcomed and respected their insights. She also thought highly of her students' intellectual abilities and believed that one of her roles was to help her students recognize and utilize those abilities.

Ms. Lomax also thought deeply about her instructional practices. Drawing from her training and experience as a teacher, she had a clear idea of the kinds of resources necessary for her students to achieve academic success. She did everything in her power to make those resources available to her students, even if it meant creating them herself. She accepted only the best from her students and pursued academic challenges for the fun of it. In fact, she pursued a graduate degree in educational leadership not to become a school administrator, but because she wanted the intellectual stimulation. When Ms. Lomax entered her classroom, she wanted to push her own thinking as well as her students, so she expected students to engage in demanding instructional activities. She recognized that she placed great cognitive challenges before her students, and she provided unlimited support to them.

The teacher noted that, early in the school year, students needed a great deal of support to manage the intellectual rigor, but by the end of the school year, she was often surprised by their insightful analyses that made her consider new possibilities of interpretation. The observations for this study took place in Ms. Lomax's advanced

placement English class, but she reported that the routines, norms, and assignments were no different for her general-level English class. Further, she noted that, intellectually, the students in both levels were at approximately the same place. It is important, therefore, to consider that the intellectual rigor of the class was due to Ms. Lomax's practices, not solely to the academic abilities of the students.

Similarities and Differences in the Beliefs and Practices of Effective Teachers of African American Students

The beliefs and practices of the two teachers described in the present study are consistent with the findings of current research on effective teachers of Black students. As noted in chapter one, the literature across grade levels and subject areas (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Boykin, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Ostrowski, 2002; Thompson, 2004) describes a set of beliefs and practices that has been termed culturally relevant pedagogy. The beliefs and practices suggested by the research generally fit into the four components of the *How People Learn* (HPL) framework adapted by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, p. 41):

- Knowledge-centeredness
- Learner-centeredness
- Community-centeredness
- Assessment-centeredness

Effective teachers of Black students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) balance all four components of the framework and integrate characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy throughout their instructional practices (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Boykin et al., 2005; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Ostrowski, 2002;

Thompson, 2004). Successful English teachers in urban schools also integrate Langer's (2002) features of effective English instruction. Including all of these components facilitates academic achievement among Black students by empowering them academically and emotionally (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994), and, in the classrooms observed during this study, both of the teachers addressed all of these areas to some degree.

Knowledge-Centeredness

Knowledge-centeredness refers to what should be taught, why, and how (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41). Specifically, this attribute of the HPL framework includes the decisions teachers make about what is worth learning and knowing and what skills and material will make the new knowledge accessible. Knowledge-centeredness, therefore, requires teachers to think about the most effective ways to organize instruction and the most appropriate methods of instruction for their particular students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Both of the teachers in this study understood the importance of making careful decisions about what students should learn, why they should learn it, and how they should learn it.

Similarities. One of the ways that the two teachers emphasized knowledge-centeredness was by maintaining an instructional focus in the classroom. The teachers did not believe in "free time," and they engaged students in learning activities for the entire 90-minute period. To make sure students did not have time to lose focus, the teachers planned activities that could be completed only if students worked on them for the whole class period. The teachers' behaviors are consistent with current research on effective teachers of Black students that argues teachers who facilitate academic gains maintain an

academic purpose at all times (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Another way the two teachers in this study emphasized knowledge-centeredness was by teaching students strategies for doing the work. Langer (2002) observed that teachers who facilitated academic success in urban, secondary English classrooms taught students explicitly how to complete the work they were assigned. They also shared strategies for how students could think about the material presented to them. Similarly, both Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax showed students how to approach the learning activities in their classrooms. Ms. Morrison, for example, made challenging tasks accessible to students by providing steps for them to follow, and Ms. Lomax often modeled the level of thinking she expected from her students.

Differences. Although Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax emphasized knowledge-centeredness in their beliefs and practices, they differed in their beliefs about what was worth knowing and how to teach it. Both teachers demonstrated a strong knowledge of their content area, but they approached it differently. Ms. Lomax appeared to be an intellectual invested in learning for its own sake, and Ms. Morrison appeared to be a pragmatist who saw the utility of gaining an education. The two teachers, consequently, valued different kinds of knowledge. When Ms. Lomax entered her classroom, for example, she wanted to push her students' thinking, so she expected students to engage in demanding instructional activities, such as writing a metacognitive analysis of what their reactions to characters' behaviors said about their own worldview. Ms. Lomax's approach was consistent with current research that maintains effective teachers challenge students to move beyond minimum competencies to mastery of challenging curriculum

with continuous support from the teacher (Corbett et al., 2002; Foster, 1991; Thompson, 2004).

Ms. Morrison wanted to equip her students with the tools they needed for academic success, so she engaged students in learning activities that developed the skills they would need to succeed in other classes and on standardized tests, such as practicing the kinds of writing assignments that appeared on the state assessment test. Although different from Ms. Lomax, Ms. Morrison's approach also was consistent with some of the research on effective teachers of African American students. Delpit (1995), for example, argued that effective teachers of Black students realized that their students needed to develop the skills to get into college and these skills needed to be taught explicitly. Like Ms. Morrison, these teachers did not engage students in repetitious drills. Defining skills as, "useful and usable knowledge which contributes to a student's ability to communicate in standard, generally accepted literary form" (Delpit, 1995, pp. 18-19), these teachers involved students in meaningful learning activities to acquire these skills.

Both supported by the literature on successful teachers of African American students, the teachers' approaches to knowledge-centeredness facilitated academic gains among their students. In Ms. Lomax's class, students developed the skills to engage in in-depth analysis of literature and the world, and, in Ms. Morrison's classroom, students developed the skills and knowledge they needed to succeed in college. While the teachers' decisions about what was worth learning influenced students' access to knowledge, in both classrooms, students acquired skills and knowledge in meaningful, learner-centered contexts.

Learner-Centeredness

Learner-centeredness refers to who learns, how, and why (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41). This component of the HPL framework includes understanding how people learn, identifying appropriate instructional strategies, and knowing the impact of motivation on learning. Teachers who integrate a learner-centeredness approach recognize that, for learning to occur, students must attend to the concept being taught. The amount of attention required to understand a concept depends on each learner's prior experience with that concept. Teachers, therefore, need to be able to identify appropriate instructional strategies that activate students' prior knowledge and facilitate student engagement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The teachers in this study successfully implemented learner-centeredness into their practice by using a variety of instructional strategies, connecting the material to students' experiences, and giving students the opportunity to think creatively.

Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax similarly supported learner-centeredness by addressing the various needs and preferences of the learners in their classrooms. Both of the teachers utilized separated (direct instruction), simulated (guided practice), and integrated (application) lesson types which allowed them to reach a broader audience of students (Langer, 2002). The teachers balanced all three lesson types in their instructional practices, and there were times when all three were observed during a single class session. The research on effective teachers in urban schools has found that teaching skills and knowledge through multiple lesson types facilitates engagement and academic growth by meeting the needs of individual learners (Langer, 2002).

The teachers in this study also scaffolded student knowledge by integrating into the curriculum prior knowledge attained inside and outside of the English classroom and the

school. Bringing students' lives and other learning experiences into the classroom made learners' needs a priority and increased engagement. Current research has noted the importance of making explicit connections across life and across curricula to enhance student learning (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Langer, 2002). The literature also has recognized the impact of intrinsic motivation on the learning process and has found that effective teachers help students to find ways to activate motivation (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Part of this motivation comes from applying new knowledge to situations that are relevant to students and making connections to the students' lived experiences (Langer, 1998). Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax frequently made students' backgrounds and experiences part of the curriculum, and they created assignments that required students to connect their lives outside of school with text they read in class.

Community-Centeredness

Community-centeredness, the third attribute of the HPL framework, refers to the kinds of classroom, school, and school-community environments that support learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 41). Teachers who value community-centeredness recognize the social nature of learning and implement practices that allow students to collaborate and feel like valued members of the classroom community (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). These strategies foster a rigorous, academically enriching learning environment where the teacher and the students work together toward a common purpose. Both of the teachers in this study demonstrated a community-centered approach by fostering cognitive collaboration and by valuing the contributions of all students. They built on the social nature of their students and often used collaboration and discussion in the classroom.

The literature has stressed that successful teachers of African American students create communities of learners by providing instructional activities that encourage students to think deeply and critically in collaboration with others (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Similarly, both teachers in this study provided their students with the opportunity to push their thinking individually and collectively. These experiences prepared students to approach both the questions asked on standardized tests and situations in their own lives with a more critical eye, and both teachers reminded students to apply these skills in various contexts.

As noted in the previous chapter, for the two teachers in the study, culturally responsive classroom management formed the foundation on which they built their learning communities. These communities were characterized by a caring attitude, assertiveness and authority, congruent communication processes, and a demand for effort, all components of culturally responsive classroom management (Brown, 2004). Both of the teachers said explicitly that they cared about their students and their practices reflected it. Each of the teachers came to the rescue of their students when they were in need. In both of the classrooms observed for this study, the teachers set high expectations within highly structured and supportive learning environments. They established and enforced clear rules and routines that helped to maintain an orderly, academically stimulating classroom setting. Ms. Lomax, for example, required students to arrive early so they could take advantage of the full class period. To ensure that everyone participated in instructional activities, Ms. Morrison required her students to purchase any supplies they may have forgotten for a nominal fee. These strategies and others established their

authority and helped to create an environment conducive to learning. This kind of environment also allowed students to feel cared for and to see the value of participating in demanding instructional activities.

Both of the teachers believed their students were at the developmental stage where they needed to learn how to take responsibility for their own learning, and they created learning communities in which students learned how to support their own academic development. To that end, the teachers communicated frequently with students about their progress. Ms. Morrison, for example, met with her students individually during class after they submitted major papers or tests and before or after school to monitor progress. In addition, Ms. Lomax called her students at home to remind them of assignments, and she encouraged them to call her at home whenever they needed help. Current research often has emphasized parental involvement at the elementary level to support student learning (Foster, 1991), but as it was evident in these two classrooms, the secondary-level learning community may center on providing students with the tools they need to support their own learning.

Assessment-Centeredness

Assessment-centeredness refers to the kinds of evidence that provide the most reliable information to students, teachers, parents, and others about student learning. This attribute of the HPL framework includes knowing what needs to be assessed, different ways to assess, and the value of assessment as a learning tool. In an assessment-centered environment, teachers frequently utilize both formative and summative assessment to give students the opportunity to reconsider ideas and concepts that are new to them (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Treating assessment as a learning tool helps students to become more comfortable with making mistakes, and it helps teachers to

proactively address possible challenges and to see when they may not have made material clear enough to their students. Both of the teachers in this study frequently used formative and summative assessment to check for students' understanding and to provide appropriate feedback.

Similarities. The two teachers in this study believed that, to facilitate academic growth, they needed to monitor students' understanding and provide frequent feedback. Both of the teachers, therefore, engaged in informal, formative assessment through discussion in almost every class to make sure students understood the material presented to them. The teachers provided specific feedback when students performed well on assessments and, when they did not, the teachers discussed it with them individually to give them the tools to revise. Their strategies for addressing mistakes as a part of the learning process demonstrated an ethos of care and empowered students to take the risks associated with learning (Noddings, 1992). These strategies also are consistent with current research that has noted the importance of checking for understanding and providing feedback to students (Corbett et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Differences. Assessment-centeredness played a major role in both Ms. Morrison's and Ms. Lomax's classrooms, but the two teachers differed in their beliefs about how to implement assessment and what kinds of evidence provided the most reliable information about student learning. As noted in the case study, Ms. Lomax, for example, explained that she preferred to test skills and knowledge in the context of a larger assignment, like a research paper. She believed there was no value in testing concepts in isolation, and she never did during this study. She also rarely asked knowledge-level questions unless they dealt directly with a larger topic. This teacher believed students must have basic skills

and knowledge to analyze a text coherently and thoroughly, so the quality of the analysis allowed her to assess students' level of understanding. For Ms. Lomax, the purpose of formative or summative assessment was not for students to recite new knowledge; she wanted them to be able to apply it. Ms. Lomax's beliefs and practices are consistent with current research which has argued effective teachers of Black students encourage students to inquire, problem-solve, and construct knowledge about big concepts instead of isolated facts (Ayers & Shubert, 1994; Bowers, 2000; Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

In contrast, Ms. Morrison's ninth-grade English class was the preparation course for the high school assessment test administered by the state, and she, therefore, used classroom assessment as practice for that test. The high-stakes, standardized test served as a barrier to graduation for her students. Consequently, Ms. Morrison focused on test preparation in her class to make sure her students would be eligible to graduate from high school. On the tests she administered in her classroom, she included content and questions that were similar to those on the state exam. Asking these kinds of questions explicitly on a worksheet, on a test, or in a discussion pushed her students to think about how the smallest detail influenced meaning which she hoped would help them to make appropriate choices for the reading comprehension questions on the standardized assessment. Ms. Morrison also included writing prompts similar to those that appeared on state tests when she designed her own assessment tools. She believed that implementing frequent formative and summative assessment through quizzes, essays, worksheets, and tests not only allowed her to gauge her students' level of understanding, but also it gave them the opportunity to become familiar with the types of questions that would appear on

the state assessment test at the end of the school year. Further, according to the research of Chen, Salahuddin, Horsch, and Wagner (2000), when teachers made curricular and instructional decisions that aligned with district standards, students' reading scores increased almost five percent in one year on the state assessment test. By incorporating assessment that included questions and content that were consistent with the state test, Ms. Morrison demonstrated an approach that was consistent with this research.

Despite their differences, the two teachers implemented assessment that not only is consistent with current research and facilitated academic gains in their classrooms, but also it met the immediate needs of their particular students. Ms. Lomax saw assessment as a tool for her students to demonstrate understanding through their application of new knowledge. Her students had the option to take the advanced placement test at the end of the school year, and that test expected students to apply their knowledge of literature in complex ways, just as Ms. Lomax expected of them. Ms. Morrison, in contrast, used classroom assessment to evaluate students' understanding in ways that provided practice for standardized tests. The upcoming state assessment test was a major factor in her students' eligibility to graduate from high school, and she did everything she could to ensure their success. The teachers' different approaches inevitably inculcated in their students contrasting views on how to demonstrate understanding, both of which are supported by current research, but their approaches also met the most pressing needs of their students.

Implications

Much of the current research on effective teachers of African American students focuses on the elementary level. While this literature provides useful insight into the typical beliefs and practices of successful teachers, it cannot address issues unique to the

secondary classroom. There is, however, a growing body of research focused on high school teachers in a single, “gate-keeping” subject, like English (Athanases, 1998; Key, 1999; Ostrowski, 2002), but it rarely includes both extended classroom observations and interviews to understand the connections between beliefs and practices. This study, therefore, included extended observations and interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of teachers’ beliefs, daily classroom practices, and the connections between the two. The findings of this study have implications for teacher education and professional development.

Teacher Education

The present study provides thick description of the two teachers’ beliefs and practices. This detailed understanding of specific teaching strategies and how teachers’ beliefs influenced those strategies may offer concrete examples for teacher educators to use as they prepare future teachers. Specifically, the case studies provide a window into the daily life of two classrooms that facilitate academic gains among Black students. Teacher educators can use this information to teach their students specific strategies that have been successful for these teachers and may be successful for others. With its attention to detail, the study also can help prospective teachers to see how everything they do, great or small, influences student learning.

Further, because most prospective teachers will not have the opportunity to observe or perform their student teaching in the classroom of a teacher who has been identified as particularly effective with Black students, they can use this study as a vicarious experience in the classroom with these teachers. To that end, teacher education programs should consider incorporating case-based courses, similar to those found in business schools, which would give prospective teachers the opportunity to experience multiple

classrooms before they begin student teaching. In addition, many teacher educators lack experience in predominantly Black, high-poverty schools, and this study can provide them with a picture of what good teachers do. The study also can help teacher educators to cultivate in preservice teachers the kinds of beliefs that lead teachers to do whatever it takes to support their students' academic growth.

Professional Development

A second implication of this study is in the area of professional development for practicing teachers. In addition to using the study to support practicing teachers in ways similar to teacher education programs, professional development programs can use the findings of this study to better support teachers who enter the classroom through alternative routes. These teachers, who are often placed in high-poverty schools, typically miss the opportunity to engage in student teaching prior to entering the classroom. It, therefore, may be helpful for them to “see” successful teachers in similar situations in order to give them specific classroom experiences from which they can draw to learn particular instructional strategies.

This study also offers some insight into the different coursework requirements for advanced placement and typical English classes. While Ms. Morrison taught an honors-level class, she held the same responsibility for preparing students for the state test as all other ninth-grade teachers in the state. This enormous responsibility required her to incorporate certain kinds of practices, such as her approach to assessment, in order to make sure her students were eligible to graduate from high school. Without the pressure of the state assessment test, Ms. Lomax, conversely, had more flexibility in the curriculum for the advanced placement English course which allowed her to provide more opportunities for students to apply new knowledge. The two case studies, therefore,

have implications for the kinds of professional development appropriate for particular courses within an English department. They also allow other practicing teachers to understand how successful teachers adapt to meet the immediate academic needs of their students.

Future Research Directions

The present study revealed several topics that should be considered for future research. One of the areas that calls for more research is culturally responsive pedagogy at the secondary level. Although current research across grade levels has provided a foundation for examining effective practice and has offered some insight into effective pedagogy for African American students, it inadvertently overlooks some of the nuances unique to the secondary classroom. More research focused on the secondary level may uncover some areas of particular concern to high school teachers.

A second topic for further study suggested by this investigation is culturally responsive classroom management. While many studies examine culturally relevant pedagogy in general, few focus narrowly on culturally responsive classroom management. Additional research in this area would provide a greater understanding of how to implement it in the classroom.

A third topic that calls for further study is the differences in beliefs and practices, if any, that may appear in general-level (as opposed to honors-level) secondary English classrooms. The present study took place in honors and advanced placement English classes. Both teachers emphasized that they held the same expectations for their general-level students and engaged in similar practices with those students. Future research could examine the beliefs and practices of successful teachers of Black students who teach

various academic levels to understand if they facilitate the same kind of learning environment and hold the same beliefs for all of their students.

A fourth topic for consideration is beginning of the school year teaching practices that create learning environments that facilitate academic gains among African American students. This study took place near the end of the school year and did not include observations of practices that established the routines and norms for the classes. Further research, therefore, could investigate the classrooms of successful teachers of Black students at the beginning of the school year to understand further the strategies they implement to build productive and supportive learning communities.

A fifth area for future researchers to consider is the impact of shared cultural identity between teachers and students on academic success and the possible differences that may occur if a cultural mismatch exists between the teacher and the students. Much of the current research on successful teachers of Black students focuses on Black teachers. Additional research on successful teachers who do not share the same cultural identity as their students would provide greater understanding of the implications of race and academic success. Future research also should include further extensive observation in secondary classrooms. In addition to further qualitative studies, researchers should engage in more large-scale quantitative studies to validate the set of emerging practices and to systematically examine the beliefs of teachers identified as successful teachers of African American students. Such research would add to the literature on teacher preparation, professional development, and effective teaching among Black students.

A final area for future research concerns technology. Conspicuously absent from both classrooms was the use of technology. Although each teacher had access to a

personal laptop provided by the school district, they rarely had internet access on those computers and they both were instructed not to allow students to use them. The two schools did have computer labs, but the computers in those labs worked inconsistently. If the two teachers had access to technology beyond overhead projectors and video cassette recorders, their practices perhaps would have changed in some way. Future research, therefore, should consider the influence of technology on the practices of effective teachers of Black students. In both classrooms in the present study, relationships and discussion were a major factor and further study could examine if and how the addition of technology changes teachers' approaches to instruction.

Summary

This study sought to understand the beliefs and practices of two secondary English teachers who were identified as particularly effective with African American students in high-poverty schools. Each case study described the daily classroom practices and beliefs of the two teachers and how they fit within the HPL Framework (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) in order to understand how they facilitated academic gains in their classrooms. The third findings chapter looked more closely at the classroom management strategies the teachers used to create structured learning environments based in high expectations and an ethic of care. Five areas of further study emerged through the analysis of the teachers' beliefs and practices. The areas include culturally responsive pedagogy at the secondary level, culturally responsive classroom management in practice, similarities and differences between the general-level and honors-level classrooms of successful teachers of Black students, beginning of the year instructional practices of effective teachers of Black students, and the influence of the teachers'

cultural backgrounds on their ability to facilitate academic gains among African American students.

The research presented in this study can be useful to teacher preparation programs by offering a vicarious experience in the classrooms of teachers identified as particularly successful with Black students. Many teacher education programs cannot offer their students the opportunity to visit the classrooms of those identified as effective teachers of African American students, and this study provides a way for them to provide a snapshot into these kinds of classrooms. These snapshots can facilitate critical inquiry into the connections between beliefs and practices. As a professional development tool, this study can encourage practicing teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and how they influence their practice. Teachers inevitably will see similarities between the classrooms observed for this study and their own urban classrooms, and they may be more likely to take risks and try something new to facilitate academic growth in their own students.

The achievement gap between Black students and other racial and ethnic groups is wide and longstanding. The present study of two high school English teachers brings awareness of how their beliefs and practices work to reduce the achievement gap by facilitating academic growth among Black students. This awareness may encourage teachers and teacher educators in all disciplines to reconsider their approaches to raising the academic performance of African American students. It also may lead school administrators and researchers to put more resources into developing teachers instead of into creating more supplemental academic programs that suggest the achievement gap is caused primarily by the unwillingness or inability of Black students to learn.

APPENDIX A
STUDENT NOMINATION FORM

DIRECTIONS: Please answer each of the questions below. This information will be kept strictly confidential. **PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM.**

1. Who is the greatest English teacher you've had **since the ninth grade**? If you've never had a great English teacher, please check "no nomination."

- a. What is the name of your greatest English teacher? _____
- b. In what grade did you have this teacher? 9th____ 10th____ 11th____ 12th____
- c. At what school did you have this teacher? _____

OR

d. If you've never had a great English teacher, check the box below.

No Nomination

2. Did your greatest English teacher make you **want** to work hard? Yes _____ No _____

3. Is there another high school English teacher who made you **want** to work hard?

- a. Yes _____ No _____
- b. If yes, who? _____
- c. In what grade did you have this teacher? 9th____ 10th____ 11th____ 12th____
- d. At what school did you have this teacher? _____

4. What grade are you in? 9th____ 10th____ 11th____ 12th____

5. What is your race/ethnicity?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a. American Indian/Alaskan Native _____ | d. Hispanic _____ |
| b. Black or African American _____ | e. White _____ |
| c. Asian or Pacific Islander _____ | f. Other (Please list: _____) |

6. What is your gender?

- a. Female _____
- b. Male _____

APPENDIX B
PRINCIPAL NOMINATION FORM

DIRECTIONS: Please answer each of the questions below. This information will be kept strictly confidential.

1. Of the English teachers who currently work in this school, who has been particularly effective in facilitating academic gains among African American students (**please nominate teachers for whom you have evidence to support that their students have made strong academic gains**)?

Please list as many English teachers as you believe are particularly effective.

Name	Level(s) Taught	Grade(s) Taught
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Please identify the criteria you used to determine that each of these English teachers is particularly effective at facilitating academic gains among African American students?

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Educator:

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Teaching and Learning at the University of Florida conducting case study research for a dissertation on the beliefs and practices of effective teachers. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Dr. Dorene Ross. The purpose of this study is to document the beliefs and practices of effective teachers of Black students in order to examine how they think about teaching and how their thinking influences their practice. I am asking you to participate in this study because you have been identified by students, principals, and the District Language Arts Supervisor as an effective teacher.

With your permission, I would like to observe one class of yours for a total of six weeks. Together, we can select a class and, for four weeks, I will observe it every time it occurs within your block schedule. After a two week break in the observations, I will return for an additional two weeks to observe the same class in the same manner as the initial observations. I will talk field notes during these observations. I also will take field notes during informal interviews we have about classroom practices and student interactions. I also will ask to conduct formal interviews with you that will serve as data for the study. Formal interviews will last no more than one hour and will be scheduled at your convenience after I have received a copy of the signed consent from you. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. With your permission, I would like to audiotape these interviews. Only Dr. Ross and I will have access to the audiotapes, which I will transcribe personally, removing any identifiers during transcription and replacing your name and any other names mentioned with pseudonyms. The tapes will be kept locked in a file cabinet in my office. The tapes will be transcribed within three months of the interview. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law, and your identity will not be revealed in the final manuscript.

There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. You are free to withdraw consent and may discontinue your participation at any time without consequence.

If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at (352) 284-3311 or taa1110@hotmail.com. You also may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Dorene Ross, at (352) 392-9191 or dross@coe.ufl.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Please sign and return this copy of the letter to me. A second copy is provided for your records. By signing this letter, you give me permission to report the data I collect in interviews with you and observations in your classes. This report will be submitted to my faculty supervisor as part of my dissertation requirements. Also, by signing, you give me permission to use these data in academic presentations and publications.

Thank you,
Theresa Adkins

I have read the procedure described above for the study entitled, "Beliefs and Practices of English Teachers who Facilitate Academic Gains among Black Students." I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and have received a copy of this description.

Signature of participant

Date

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

1. What undergraduate institution did you attend? What was your major?
2. Did you attend graduate school? If so, what school did you attend? What was your major?
3. Where else have you taught? What can you tell me about those experiences? How do they compare to teaching in Jacksonville?
4. What grades have you taught? What other levels have you taught? How do those experiences compare to the grade and level you teach now?
5. Can you describe an exemplary English teacher you have had? Can you describe any exemplary English teachers you know now? What makes them stand out to you?
6. Have you always arranged your classroom in this way? What made you decide to arrange it in this way?
7. Who provides your classroom materials?
8. What materials do you consider absolutely necessary for teaching English? Why?
9. If you were given extra money for classroom materials, what would you purchase and why?
10. Do you use computers in your classroom? If so, how?
11. Describe a time you felt especially proud as a teacher.
12. What do you most hope to accomplish with your students?

13. What goals as an English teacher have you been most successful in reaching?

How do you judge this?

14. What goals as an English teacher have you had the greatest difficulty in reaching?

How do you know you are struggling with them?

15. What do you do when students have difficulty in understanding? How do you know students are having difficulty? How do you judge student success?

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

1. Why did you decide to teach?
2. What is your teaching philosophy? Has it changed since you have been in the classroom? If so, how?
3. What characteristics, if any, do Black students as a group bring to the classroom?
4. What do you consider to be academic success? What do you think contributes to academic success among Black students?
5. What kinds of things do you do to judge academic gains among Black students?
6. What have you done in the classroom to facilitate academic achievement among Black students?
7. Where does your knowledge of teaching Black students come from? Teacher training, either in-service or preservice, personal experiences, or somewhere else?
8. How would you change teacher education programs to help teachers to be more effective in facilitating academic success among Black students?
9. Describe your relationship with the parents of your Black students.
10. What strategies do you use for classroom management? Would these strategies differ if you were teaching in a predominantly white school? If so, how?
11. In what ways do you think school differs for white students in middle-class communities?

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 3

1. If you had to write a job description for your replacement, how would you describe what you do?
2. What professional development activities, if any, have helped you to become a better teacher? Have there been other experiences (in or out of the school) that have helped you to become a better teacher?
3. When do you communicate with parents? How? Newsletters? Conferences? Home visits? Phone calls?
4. Describe a student you presently teach or have taught in the past whom you would choose to keep another year for the sheer joy of it? PROBES: Describe the student physically and the student's typical behaviors, grade level, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. What is your relationship with the student's parents? Please explain in detail why teaching this student is such a joy.
5. Describe a student you presently teach or have taught in the past whom you would be relieved to have removed from your class, if possible. PROBES: Describe the student physically and the student's typical behaviors, grade level, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. What is your relationship with the child's parents? Please explain in detail why removing this student from your class would be such a relief.
6. Was the class I observed over the six-week period typical of your other classes this year and in previous years? If so, how so? If not, how was it different?
7. What was your greatest success over the last six weeks in the class I observed? What made it a success?
8. What was your greatest challenge over the last six weeks in the class I observed? What made it a challenge?
9. What kinds of academic gains did you see over the last six weeks in the class I observed? How did you identify those gains?
10. Were there academic gains made by students that you didn't expect? Were there gains that you expected, but didn't see? Please explain.

11. Based on the feedback I have shared from observations, is there anything you hoped I would see, but didn't? Is there anything I saw that you didn't expect me to see?
12. What, if anything, do you believe the school does to facilitate academic gains among students in this school? What, if anything, does it do to hinder academic gains?
13. What do you believe the school as a whole could do to facilitate academic gains among the students in this school?
14. What can you share with me that will help me to understand better the community from which your students come?
15. What do you believe teacher preparation programs could do to better prepare English teachers to facilitate academic gains among Black students?

APPENDIX G
UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

This guide will be used for each of the weekly informal interviews.

1. This week, I noticed that you focused on (provide specific topic). How did you decide how to introduce the topic? Did students seem to understand it? How did you evaluate their level of understanding?
2. (If students did not seem to understand the topic) Did you have to change your original plan because they didn't grasp the concept? If so, how?
3. I also noticed that you assigned (provide example of specific assignment). Can you describe an example of student work for that assignment that met your expectations? What kind of feedback, if any, did you offer the student? Can you describe an example of student work for that assignment that did not meet your expectations? What kind of feedback, if any, did you offer the student? (repeat question as necessary)
4. I noticed that you (provide specific example of classroom interaction). Why did you decide to do that? (repeat question as necessary)
5. Was there anything else you thought to do with your students related to (provide specific topic)? If so, why didn't you do that?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Theresa Ann Adkins was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on November 10, 1971, to two educators, Rutherford and Jacqueline Adkins. As a child, she moved with her family to Maryland where she graduated from High Point High School. Upon graduation, she majored in English at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and it was as an undergraduate that she developed a passion for teaching while working as a tutor for the John Hope Homes Community Center. Theresa decided to follow her passion for teaching when she graduated in 1993 and entered a Master of Arts program in English education at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Deciding to move closer to home, she accepted her first teaching position at Charlottesville High School in Charlottesville, Virginia, when she completed her teacher education program in 1995.

As a teacher in Virginia and Maryland, Theresa began to see how public schools underserved students of color and, after four years of teaching, she left the classroom to learn more about teaching and learning in the doctoral program at the University of Florida. While enrolled at UF, Theresa participated in various projects, including presenting workshops and working with teachers and teacher education students through the Florida Fund for Minority Teachers, Inc., teaching English in the Upward Bound program, tutoring athletes with learning disabilities, and serving as editorial assistant for *Theory and Research in Social Education*.

Theresa is committed to serving students who are often overlooked by public schools and to supporting the teachers who work with them. Through her research and

active membership in organizations such as the American Educational Research Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, she hopes to continue her work to prepare prospective teachers and to support practicing teachers more effectively by learning from the wisdom of successful teachers and adding to the literature on effective pedagogy.