

The Impact of a Professional Development Model on Teacher Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This article draws on data from a three-year qualitative research study that examined the influence of professional development on teachers' implementation of culturally responsive teaching. The authors developed an instructional model, "Bridging Academic and Social Experiences" (BASE), and provided professional development for content area teachers on its implementation. The BASE model of instruction addresses ethnic and linguistic diversity through the appreciation of maintaining students' social language while extending it to their academic language.

Classroom observations, surveys, and teacher interviews revealed evidence of positive changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward culturally and linguistically diverse students. Over the three-year period, there was an increase in teacher awareness regarding culturally responsive teaching through the acceptance and appreciation of students' social language as a bridge to building academic language. Support from campus administrators appeared to be significant and valuable to the implementation of the BASE model throughout the campus.

INTRODUCTION

With the increase of diversity in American schools today, some teachers feel inexperienced with their instructional delivery to culturally diverse students. Ironically, more and more culturally untrained teachers find themselves in highly diverse classrooms. Inexperienced teachers are often placed in the most diverse schools, resulting in futile instruction for their students. There is little doubt that it is arduous for teachers to effectively teach if they do not understand the crucial link between student diversity and student learning.¹

Furthermore, many teacher preparation programs, both traditional and alternative, simply do not have the curriculum capacity to provide training in teaching students of diversity. Thus, when the opportunity to collaborate with a tremendously diverse school district presented itself, the researchers recognized this as a strategic opening to work together in efforts to address the learning needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students in this particular district, as well as the training of teachers in culturally responsive teaching.²

¹ Milner, H. Richard. *Start Where You Are, but Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Education Press, 2012.

² Wepner, Shelley. "Developing Partnerships through Collaboration to Promote Professional Development". Edited by Linda Martin, et al. 339-358. New York: The Guildford Press, 2014.

District leaders and the researchers agreed that implementation of the instructional model, “Bridging Academic and Social Experiences” (BASE), was an appropriate course of action because it addresses both student and teacher needs for optimal teaching and learning. BASE focuses on student diversity (African Americans, children of poverty, and English Language Learners) and understanding their social language and social experiences. BASE builds upon the premise that students’ social language serves as a connection, or bridge, to the acquisition of their academic language. Additionally, BASE acknowledges the cultural uniqueness of all students, values students’ everyday language, and uses this to advance to the acquisition of academic language, all while building on their previous experiences. BASE provides for the creation of a learning environment that promotes respect between teachers and students, resulting in greater learning.

RESEARCH AND THE BASE FRAMEWORK

Culturally responsive teaching is crucial to student success.³ It is important for educators to accept students’ culture, prior experiences based on traditions and customs, as well as highlighting their achievements.⁴ In order to achieve this, teachers must first examine their personal attitudes toward different cultures and be willing to make changes in perception when necessary.⁵ Utilizing the culture of students is central to their learning, and effective teachers demonstrate an ability to incorporate the culture of their students into the classroom through speech patterns, communication styles, and other indigenous traditions.^{6 7}

The basic premise of culturally responsive teaching involves the acknowledgment of diversity and using ethnicity to make learning relevant and meaningful to all students.⁸ Culturally responsive teaching relies on the ability to relate courteously and graciously with students from

³ Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

⁴ Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

⁵ Aceves, Terese and Orosco, Michael, “Culturally Responsive Teaching.” Ceedar Document No. IC-2. July 2014. <http://www.ceedar.org>

⁶ Ladson- Billings, Gloria. *Crossing over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

⁷ Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with Poverty in Mind: What Being Poor Does to Kids’ Brains and What Schools Can Do About It*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2010.

⁸ Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*.

cultures other than your own.⁹ It also utilizes scaffolding, building on students' prior cultural experiences to move them to the acquisition of challenging knowledge, concepts, and skills.¹⁰ Scaffolding further welcomes the use of student discourse in order to achieve a meaningful level of comprehension.¹¹ Culturally responsive teaching builds a strong sense of community and seeks out ways for all students to assume leadership roles.¹² Students' culture is supported, honored, and integrated into the curriculum.¹³ The BASE instructional model is designed to utilize culturally responsive teaching, by focusing on the use of students' social language as a strong link (bridge) to the acquisition of academic language and difficult concepts.

COMPONENTS OF THE BASE INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL

BASE provides strategies that can be incorporated into the existing curriculum and hence it is applicable for any content area and grade level. All strategies are designed to start with the existing social language that students possess and help them connect that social language to academic vocabulary and concepts. In order to do so, strategies have two parts; an initial social approach followed by an academic approach. The model is divided into three components: Motivation, Engagement, and Reflection.

Motivation strategies “hook” the learner, activate personal and linguistic background and the current use level of social language in order to build into academic language. Motivation strategies include; Visual Discoveries, BICS and CALP Listing, and Poster Write.

Engagement strategies require active participation in the learning experience. These strategies are usually implemented during the main part of the lesson and are used to deliver the content of the existing lesson. Students bring their own cultural and linguistic perspectives while broadening their understanding. Emphasis is on speaking and writing integrated with reading and listening (SWIRL). Higher-order thinking and problem-solving are embedded throughout. Engagement strategies include; Label Creator/Label Match, Words In, Words Out, and Pictograph Pacing.

⁹ Ladson-Billings, *The Dream Keepers*.

¹⁰ Zwiers, Jeff. *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classrooms, Grades 5-12*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.

¹¹ Aceves, “Culturally Responsive Teaching.”

¹² Ayers, William. *City Kids, City Schools: More Reports from the Front Row*. New York: New Press, 2008.

¹³ Milner, *Start Where You Are*.

Reflection strategies develop and encourage the processing and application of lesson content. Students are provided with opportunities to examine their current sociocultural and linguistic experiences while moving to new perspectives. They do so through speaking and writing. Reflection strategies include; Reflection Quilt, Response Reporting, and Blooming.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Effective professional development has been defined as job-embedded. This type of professional development relates to teachers' work in their specific content area. Interactive and ongoing learning opportunities are essential for application to the participants' teaching. Ongoing support and feedback must be part of professional development; coaching and mentorship enhance classroom application.¹⁴

Fisher and Frey discuss structures that can aid when designing and providing professional development. These structures begin with whole-faculty sessions and then move to smaller groups for knowledge development, even smaller groups for skill development and, also coaching to support implementation.¹⁵

University and district partnerships can be helpful in providing professional development for teachers and administrators by challenging minds and improving practices.¹⁶ To be effective, these partnerships must account for the needs of teachers and school and honor both sides through communication and compromise.

Role of Administrators in Professional Development

Tallerico describes the type of involvement from administrators that enhance teacher professional development.¹⁷ First, administrators can help by collaborating with teachers in establishing priority areas for professional development, based on students' needs. Second, administrators can influence teachers' motivation and persistence in professional development through

¹⁴ Swan, Dagen, Allison and Rita M. Bean. "High Quality Research Based Professional Development: An Essential for Enhancing High Quality Teaching", edited by Linda Martin, et al, 42-63. New York: The Guildford Press, 2014.

¹⁵ Fisher, Douglas and Nancy Frey. "Effective Professional Development in Secondary Schools", edited by Linda Martin, et al, 205-228. New York: The Guildford Press, 2014

¹⁶ Wepner, Shelley. "Developing Partnerships through Collaboration to Promote Professional Development". Edited by Linda Martin, et al. 339-358. New York: The Guildford Press, 2014.

¹⁷ Tallerico, Marilyn. "District Issues: Administrators at All Levels Involved in Teachers' Professional Development" Edited by Linda Martin, et al, 125-144. New York: The Guildford Press, 2014.

encouragement and recognition. Finally, administrators can help by structuring workplace conditions so that teachers have a common planning time and have release time for professional development.

School leaders can affect student learning by improving instruction in order that teachers can do their best teaching, increasing teacher participation in the professional community, and shaping the vision of academic success for all students and teachers.¹⁸ Oftentimes, however, conflicts between district central office and campus administrators get in the way of principal effectiveness, teacher development, and student achievement. Consistent district leadership that sets expectations but allows for school autonomy is most productive for all stakeholders.¹⁹

METHODOLOGY

The following two research questions guided the study and data analysis:

1. What effect, if any, does the BASE professional development have on the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of this group of teachers regarding culturally and linguistically response teaching?
2. What effect, if any, does the BASE instructional model have on the academic achievement of diverse populations?

The Setting and Participants

The study took place on a Title I sixth-grade campus in a large urban school district. The school is predominantly Hispanic (58.9%) and African American (34.8%). At the time of the study, white students accounted for 2.5% of the student body. The majority of the students were economically disadvantaged (91%), and 33.6% of the students were English Language Learners. At the time of the study, there were approximately 28 faculty members, including one Reading Interventionist and two Instructional Specialists. The faculty was diverse, with proportionality equal African Americans, Hispanic, and white teachers. The school had an African American male principal and a white female assistant principal. Due to the nature of this qualitative study, all students, all students, and faculty members participated in the study. Both the principal and assistant principal

¹⁸ "The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning." Wallace Foundation. Accessed March 29, 2018. <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/the-school-principal-as-leader-guiding-schools-to-better-teaching-and-learning.aspx>.

¹⁹ American Institutes for Research. "What experience from the field tells us about school leadership and turnaround..." http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/school-recovery/leadership_turnaround_schools.pdf, 2010.

were active participants throughout the entire three-year study. They attended all professional development sessions, participated in the small group work, required implementation of BASE by all faculty, observed BASE lessons, purchased materials and resources, and required that student artifacts from BASE strategies be displayed in the hallways. They even conducted a faculty book study of Gloria Ladson-Billings' book titled "The Dream Keepers Successful Teachers of African American Children." (The principal purchased these books for all faculty members).

A new campus library was built in 2006. The school underwent modernization in July of 2010, including improvements to the auditorium, cafeteria, and classrooms. In 2012, a grant provided for the transition of all classrooms into "smart classrooms." Administrators, faculty, and staff appeared to take great pride in their school campus.

Data Collection

Qualitative data for this study were collected over a three-year period. The school district requested that year one be a pilot implementation of the BASE model. During this first year, six teachers were selected by the principal, two each from language arts and mathematics, one from science and one from social studies. The principal selected these teachers due to their campus leadership skills and open-mindedness to innovative instructional approaches. These teachers were the first faculty members to participate in professional development on the BASE model of instruction provided by the researchers.

During the second year of the study, all teachers from all content areas, including art, music, and theater, participated in the professional development and implementation of the BASE instructional model into their classrooms. During the third year, the responsibility of BASE implementation was released to the lead teachers in each content area. The researchers continued to meet with the lead teachers and administrators throughout the year. During these meetings, a specific BASE strategy for campus-wide implementation was selected.

Data collection consisted of classroom observations during Year 1 and teacher surveys. Classroom observations were scheduled specifically around the use of BASE strategies. Surveys inquiring about teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward culturally responsive teaching were administered during the study. Following each classroom observation, the researchers met with the teachers observed. During these conversations, teachers reflected on the inclusion of the BASE strategies into the lesson. They talked about challenges and what they would do differently when

using the strategy again. Researchers provided positive reinforcement for well-executed lessons and offered suggestions for improvement, if necessary.

FINDINGS

Classroom Observations, Year 1

Observations were conducted in the six pilot classrooms during Year 1. Observations were conducted twice, once in February (about four weeks after initial training) and once again in April. Due to scheduling, preparation for standardized testing and the actual state test, visits did not occur at set intervals. The researchers tried to work with the school and teacher availability. The first set of observations was conducted by both researchers together. For the second visit, each researcher visited different classrooms and afterward discussed the observations. Most observations lasted one class period of about 45 minutes in length.

Field notes were taken during observations. Researchers looked for teacher implementation of BASE strategies and also observed for evidence of culturally responsive teaching. In order to account for other emerging themes, other behaviors and actions that emerged were also noted, along with our comments and reflections regarding the observations. After each observation, researchers met with the teacher to debrief the lesson.

Successes

The most frequently observed behaviors for this group of six pilot teachers included the implementation of BASE strategies (with adaptations), the display of student work resulting from BASE strategies and an increase in culturally responsive teacher-student dialogues in the classroom.

Implementation of BASE strategies

Another success observed was in the area of implementation of BASE strategies. All pilot teachers attempted to implement one or more BASE strategies, albeit with adaptations. These adaptations addressed mostly their specific content area. For example, mathematics teachers modified the strategies to reinforce students' approach to problem-solving. One of the two mathematics teachers asked for assistance to adapt the Visual Discoveries strategy for a lesson in geometry. Her team implemented and shared high increase in student engagement.

Display of student work resulting from BASE strategies

The fact that student work based on the BASE strategies was displayed in most classrooms

indicates that the strategies were utilized frequently. The familiarity that students demonstrated, especially during the second visit, with the strategies was also an indication of frequent implementation.

Increase in culturally relevant dialogues

Finally, between the first and the second observation, evidence of teacher-student culturally responsive dialogues increased. Examples of this type of dialogue included a language arts teacher talking with a student about the student's music, a science teacher addressing cultural differences with students regarding how some cultures celebrate holidays or eat certain foods

Challenges

During the observations, BASE implementation was observed at different levels of success. The most frequently observed challenges included classroom management and delivery of the strategies.

Classroom management

Some teachers were not used to teaching through small groups and interactions. These skills are important to the delivery of BASE strategies. As a result, some classrooms were chaotic during implementation. Practicing these skills over a period yielded more desirable results.

Delivery of the strategies

Adaptation of strategies to effectively deliver specific content proved challenging at times. Researchers observed either too much or not enough adaptation, sometimes rendering the strategies ineffective. Once again, additional practice was necessary for better results.

Surveys, Year 2

As mentioned before, during Year 2, the BASE Instructional Model moved from a small pilot with six teachers to full-campus implementation. All teachers in every content area were trained in the BASE Instructional Model.

Data collection during the second year consisted of a Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year and End of the Year Survey for all campus teachers. Between the beginning and the middle of the year, the entire campus participated in the BASE Instructional Model professional development. During implementation, the original pilot teachers served as teacher leaders and as a resource for those implementing for the first time. The campus administration supported the concept of the BASE Instructional Model and expected implementation from the teachers. The

buy-in from the administrators during this second year was a welcome change from some initial resistance at the start of the first year. However, this support gave teachers more confidence to implement new strategies. During this year, the researchers were available to the teachers and administrators by serving as a resource for questions regarding implementation and by assisting as needed. Professional development sessions were conducted three times that second year.

The survey asked teachers to describe their BASE implementation, explain if they had done anything differently for culturally and linguistically diverse students, discuss what worked and what did not work regarding BASE strategies and request help if needed.

All three surveys were analyzed through coding for emerging themes regarding successes, challenges, and actions taken by the teachers. Successes were defined as areas where teachers felt empowered in their work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Challenges included the difficulties perceived by teachers regarding their work with diverse students. Actions targeted behaviors and/or beliefs of teachers regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students and their teaching decisions based on such behaviors and beliefs.

Beginning of Year Survey

Successes

Small group work

At this campus, teachers had participated in cooperative learning professional development prior to serving as BASE pilot teachers. They learned the basic structure for Kagan Cooperative Learning. As a result, they felt more competent, as their teaching demonstrated, using strategies from BASE that called for student interaction.

Continuing implementation of selected BASE strategies

Pilot teachers continued implementation of BASE strategies at various levels. Specifically, in Language Arts and Science, the implementation increased and improved. Teachers continued to display student work.

Challenges

Communication Issues

An emerging theme from many of the teachers centered on issues communicating with students and students communicating with teachers and other students. Particularly as it related to English Language Learners, frequent breakdowns in academic conversations emerged. Less frequently, but

also observed, were difficulty in communication between teachers and African American students. This difficulty was most evident when students used non-standard dialect and often during non-academic conversations.

Student resistance

Emerging as a second theme was teachers' perception that many students were unwilling to use English in class or unwilling to comply with other class requirements where they had to use conventional English. Teachers saw this language issue as willful rather than as a lack of ability to use conventional English.

Student limitations

A third emerging theme came from teachers' perceptions that the students did not have what it took to do well in class; for example, a common perception that students lacked background knowledge and/or opportunity to practice English at home because of the use of first language or a non-standard form of English. From teachers' perspectives, these limitations interfered with students' academic success and, in some ways, led to the belief that "these kids can't learn."

Actions

Actions regarding behaviors and/or beliefs towards culturally and linguistically diverse students at the start of the year reflected teachers' perceptions that most of their students were children of poverty. Low socio-economic status was seen as a pressing consideration that impacted much of what happened at the campus. Another emerging action belief was teachers' perception of Hispanic students as family-oriented.

TEACHERS' VOICES FOR THE BEGINNING OF YEAR

In order to capture additional qualitative data showing teachers' involvement in the BASE professional development and their perceptions regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students, teachers' voices from the Year 2 surveys were analyzed.

Comments from teachers regarding students and teaching included:

"They are very social and have lots of social language. Getting them invested in learning and wanting to learn the academic language is harder..."

"The challenge is encouraging them to accept the change in language. It is largely beneficial to them, but they need to see this."

"Communication could be a little challenging. English language is not their first option."

“Students don’t have an avenue to practice outside the class that they are interested in.”

“Sometimes focus isn’t there because the students have a more pressing matter. Home life does not teach discipline.”

“Most don’t have the background and it’s not modeled at home, so it takes a while for them to learn it.”

“They don’t speak in proper English.”

“Lower income and working-class families.”

“Most are economically disadvantaged, raised by family members other than their parents.”

“I know a lot more about Hispanic culture than AA. Family, language and tradition play a big role in the cultural structure and are strongly present in their everyday lives.”

“Most come from poor households; a lot do not have parents that are married or living together. They value expensive shoes and phones but don’t bring basic school supplies.”

MIDDLE OF YEAR SURVEY

Successes

Student engagement

At the start of the second semester, teachers discussed student engagement as one of their top successes resulting from the implementation of BASE strategies. They discussed how students were fully involved in the learning process more than they had been previously.

Implementation of BASE strategies

The second most frequently discussed success for the middle of the year survey was the implementation of BASE. Teachers tried to incorporate BASE strategies into their lesson plans. Strategies were implemented with and without adaptations; teachers reported feeling comfortable with both approaches to meet the needs of their students.

Social to academic language transfer

Another emerging theme during this time was teacher awareness of how using social language can help to develop and to connect to academic language. As mentioned before, this awareness is one of the main tenets of BASE. For the first time, this theme emerged as teachers completed the survey.

Challenges

Emerging themes regarding challenges for the middle of the year survey focused on academic language, time and limited application to content. Each theme is explained in frequency order.

Academic language

A frequently discussed theme was the fact that students still lacked the academic language necessary for school assignments, textbook readings, class discussions, and testing. This challenge contrasted with the theme of success that emerged from the same survey, where teachers discussed awareness related to using social language to help with the development of academic language. A possible interpretation is that teachers had increased knowledge of language development but had not yet seen it in action.

Time

Another challenge, limited time to teach the curriculum along with implementing BASE strategies, was noted on several occasions. Some teachers understood BASE as a curriculum in addition to the regular curriculum and hence difficult to incorporate into their schedule. On the other hand, teachers who realized that BASE strategies were meant to complement their existing curriculum and did not constitute a new curriculum were least likely to see time as a challenge.

Limited application to content

As BASE expanded to the entire campus, some teachers did not see that the strategies specifically applied to their content. This failure to connect BASE to content was most frequently found in the area of mathematics, followed by art, physical education, and band.

Actions

No actions

In the area of actions, “no actions taken” regarding culturally responsive teaching was the most frequent response. Those responding this way acknowledged not having addressed social language differences or cultural differences through their teaching of diverse students.

Planned discussions

Planned discussion emerged as an action frequently taken. These teachers prepared questions beforehand to encourage discussion and participation from all students, but specifically culturally and linguistically diverse students. Discussions provided students with opportunities to use social and academic language.

TEACHERS’ VOICES FOR THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR

“Students still struggle with academic language.”

“Hard to use in Math.”

[Difficulty] “adapting to Math content.”

[Difficulty} “finding strategies to fit our Math content.”

“Letting students socialize [is a challenge] ...worry about them getting off topic.”

[Challenge of] “transitions to academic from social”

“Students have trouble transitioning to academic language.”

“Getting them to switch gears to get back to academics.”

“Some structures are time-consuming for short class periods.”

“It is difficult to find time.”

“Students were more engaged and had fun learning.”

“United academic and social.”

“The kids really get into doing the social side and because administration supports this it has really allowed kids to relax so they can feel safe while learning.”

END OF THE YEAR SURVEY

Between the middle of the year and the end of the year surveys, the whole campus participated in another BASE professional development session. Because teachers in subject areas such as mathematics, art, and physical education did not see BASE as applicable to their content and also at their request, the researchers met with each subject area separately once during the second semester and conducted BASE training specifically targeting their content. The meeting also included ample opportunity for dialogue and discussion.

Successes

Strategy implementation

Strategy implementation as a theme emerged most frequently in the area of success at the end of the year. Teachers felt more confident in their ability to implement BASE strategies successfully. Teachers discussed how their students were better able to do well in class than they had prior to the teacher’s participation in BASE. Improvement was most often described in reference to increased participation in class, better retention of content, increased vocabulary and higher interaction between students. Achievement on the state test was mentioned on a few occasions.

Student engagement

Along with the improvement due to strategy implementation, the second emerging theme was student engagement. Teachers felt that students were more engaged in academic discussions and in learning in general and attributed that engagement to BASE strategies.

Challenges

Limited time for implementation

Time continued to be an issue, but its frequency decreased since the middle of the year survey. Those who mentioned time showed concern mostly with the time taken with strategy implementation rather than with test preparation.

Not content specific

This theme decreased since the middle of the year due probably to the content-specific professional development session and dialogue. However, it was still mentioned by some at the end of the year.

Actions

Actions in teacher behaviors were most noticeable for the end of the year survey. The middle of the year, limited actions gave way to increased work in the teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

More use of comprehensible input strategies

This was the most frequent theme. Teachers discussed their increasing knowledge and ability to use strategies that made content comprehensible for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Other actions

More culturally responsive teaching, more opportunities for students to talk and interact and more social to academic practices emerged as themes of change and new action in teachers' behaviors.

TEACHERS' VOICES FOR THE END OF THE YEAR

"Strategies are engaging and getting students excited about the reading."

"The BASE strategies work."

"All the strategies are great, it's just hard figuring out how to tie it into our [math] curriculum."

"Strategies are great, just time management."

[I started doing] "more conversations about the math vs. everyday meanings of the words...relating math problems to life (concepts too)."

"When students are able to apply their social lives to academic concepts, it allows for them to be able to understand concepts better."

[I'm providing] "more opportunities for them to talk and discuss before they put ideas on paper. All response doesn't have to be academic."

"Not [doing] so much radically different as just to be more in tune with their needs; greater emphasis on vocabulary...more discussions as needed."

YEAR 3

During the third year, we met with the campus administrators and one teacher leader (from the original pilot teachers) at the start of the year, in order to set the agenda for the year. We agreed that teacher leaders would take the lead and guide the implementation of BASE at the campus, with the researchers serving as a resource but not leading the professional development.

The administrators asked for a BASE strategy to be implemented each six weeks campus-wide. For the rest of the year until February, teachers taught a BASE strategy with the guidance of the teacher leaders. We met with teacher leaders and administrators once per six weeks. By February, the work with the campus had stopped due to new mandates from the district administration.

DISCUSSION

Culturally responsive teaching continues to be an important issue in education today, mainly because of the increase in changing demographics and the increased awareness that diverse students require differentiated teaching practices. During this study, we provided professional development on the BASE (Bridging Academic and Social Experiences) Instructional Model, observed teachers during BASE implementation, conducted interviews and provided support for three years.

Data analysis indicates that there were positive effects of the BASE professional development on the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of this group of teachers that took place during the three years of the intervention. For example, consistently throughout this study, researchers observed increased teacher participation. Teachers sought to learn the new strategies in order to provide more effective instruction for their students. Through the BASE intervention, teachers learned more about the culture and language of their students and that new awareness, in turn, seemed to influence their actions and led to more effective and culturally responsive teaching.

The positive effects of the professional BASE professional development at this school are largely due to the strong support provided by the campus administrators. Both administrators encouraged teachers, provided planning time, purchased materials and resources and monitored the implementation of the BASE strategies. Not surprisingly, researchers noticed that not all teachers implemented BASE strategies at the same level. Perhaps this is because, in some cases, their negative preconceived beliefs towards students' cultures affected the way they perceived and

acted towards students. For example, one teacher stated, “These kids don’t speak proper English.” Another teacher stated, “These kids only value shoes and phones, and they don’t even have school supplies.”

Findings indicate that BASE instructional strategies did have a positive impact on diverse populations at this school during the time of the intervention. Two areas of student performance were most impacted: student engagement and increase in language use. Partly because of the strategies and partly due to a new awareness regarding the need for interaction, teachers provided more opportunities for students to use language, both at the social and academic levels. Students participated more in class and engaged more actively in the strategies. For example, a reading teacher reported that when incorporating the type of music enjoyed by her African American students into a lesson, students were more enthusiastic and involved in the learning than usual. One of the science teachers shared that when her students were encouraged to use their social language when defining science concepts, they were more engaged and had a deeper understanding of the academic language related to content than normal. Student vocabulary tests reflected this increased understanding.

It is important to note that the BASE model of instruction is not a scripted program. Less experienced teachers appeared to want a “recipe” for how to deliver BASE strategies. Instead, BASE builds capacity for teachers to use their expertise while incorporating BASE strategies into their curriculum. The intent of the model is for teachers to use their personal teaching styles when implementing this instructional model. The strategies provide a strong foundation for culturally responsive teaching across core content areas, without providing specific steps and scripts.

LIMITATIONS

Initially, the collaboration between the district and researchers was meant to be ongoing, even with the idea of spreading the BASE instructional model to all sixth-grade campuses in the district. However, with the change in district officials, new district initiatives replaced the plans for BASE implementation. Without the researchers’ knowledge, BASE abruptly came to a stop. This interfered with the full implementation of the model as originally planned.

Another limitation is teacher attrition that partially interfered with full implementation of BASE. Also, at this time, BASE has only been piloted on one campus. Implementation on additional campuses will render additional findings.

CONCLUSION

Our study shows the value of implementing culturally responsive teaching for students of diversity. Application of the BASE model of instruction provided teachers an opportunity to participate in both professional development and guidance while executing culturally responsive teaching methods. Teachers were presented with the theory that teaching to the cultural strengths of all students positively affects their acquisition of academic language development.^{20 21} As Ladson-Billings reminds us, these teachers were encouraged to examine their own perceptions of diversity and to interact with respect and consideration toward their students.²²²³ Our study also confirms the importance of administrative support for successful implementation of innovative methods. Both the principal and assistant principal were key players in supporting and overseeing the application of BASE. They both attended all professional development sessions and required all faculty members to implement BASE strategies into their curriculum.

Ultimately, our study indicated that through the professional development and implementation of the BASE instructional model teachers became more aware and appreciative of the culture and language of their students. Our study additionally indicates that there was an increase in student engagement and language use, both social and academic.

We can conclude that the BASE model of instruction is successful in increasing teacher awareness of the importance of culturally responsive teaching as well as increasing the engagement, enthusiasm, and learning of students of diversity. The study reinforces that with professional development, administrative support, and guidance, the BASE model is easily implemented into already existing curriculums and provides positive effects on both teaching and student learning.

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²¹ Milner, *Start Where You Are, but Don't Stay There*.

²² Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*.

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