GO FARTHER TOGETHER: CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING IN A CO-TAUGHT CLASSROOM

A Capstone Project

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APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, *Go Farther Together: Culturally Relevant Teaching in a Co-Taught Classroom*, has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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Abstract

Instead of ameliorating inequalities in our society, American schools too often reproduce them (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Culturally and linguistically diverse students and those with special needs graduate from high school, succeed on exams, and enroll in advanced courses at different rates than other students. These trends are true nationally, in Virginia, and at Washington High School ([WHS] Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Newman, 2011; Sanford et al., 2011; Umansky, 2016; Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2018). WHS is a diverse high school that has struggled to provide all students with equitable academic opportunities. Three years ago the Synthesis program, which combines English and US History, began as a way to address the segregation of English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students within the high school. Coach Wilson, a special education teacher, and Dr. Sumner, an ESOL and history teacher, collaboratively taught Synthesis and offered their students an education for empowerment. In this single case study, I observed and interviewed these two teachers to understand the beliefs and practices that created this unique classroom. I discovered that their strong co-teaching partnership enabled the culturally relevant instruction in their classroom. The teachers worked together to make the content accessible for students, to support students, and to enhance students' academic and career possibilities. Based on my observations, I developed a model of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) in a co-taught classroom. While this model is rooted in the observations of one classroom, my findings have implications for other teachers at WHS and possibly at other schools as well.

Keywords: co-teaching, Culturally Relevant Teaching, empowerment

DEDICATION

To:

My faithful editors who made all of this possible

The women who kept me sane throughout

And to Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the 1940s and 1950s, the members of the NAACP were confronting a deeply unequal educational system. While Black residents were paying taxes to fund schools, their tax dollars were often going to White students and not their own children. Black schools were dramatically underfunded relative to White schools with lower pay for teachers, less resources for students, and fewer and lower quality buildings (Anderson, 2006). The NAACP lawyers decided to focus not on cases centered on equal funding, but on racial integration cases (Guinier, 2004). In *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) the justices wrote:

> Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The effect is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group.

The court proposed remedying these detrimental effects through having Black and White students attend the same schools. While Brown v Board of Education focused on race, it led to rulings against the exclusion of children with special needs from school as well and eventually to laws for special education to protect these students (Minnow, 2010).

Over sixty years later, gaps remain between Black students and White students, and students with and without disabilities, as well as students labelled English learners and those who are not, in academic achievement, in high school graduation (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], 2017; Rumberger & Gandara, 2004), and in many other areas. School segregation remains pervasive and has even increased in some

areas of the country, especially for English Learners (Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003). The Supreme Court and communities throughout the country have retrenched on integration (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). While students with special needs are spending increasingly more time in general education classrooms, their services and outcomes vary widely from state to state (OSERS, 2017). Yet, the failure to change the racial enrollment of schools and to improve the outcomes of students with special needs is not the only challenge we have discovered in the years since *Brown v Board*.

We have learned that just fighting for school integration is not enough. We have learned that even within our integrated schools, segregation persists between classrooms. Black, Latinx, low-income students and English learners are more likely to be taught in lower-level classes than their English only, White, and wealthy peers (Burris, 2014; Callahan, 2005; Oakes, 2005). Washington High School [1] (WHS) in Virginia is no exception. While 80% of White students at the high school graduate with the most prestigious diploma, only 27% of Black students, 35% of Latinx students, 19% of English learners, and 8% of students with disabilities do the same. We have also learned that even in the most integrated of classrooms, culturally and linguistically diverse students are often offered a watered down, deficit-based education (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally and linguistically diverse students are too often over placed into special education programs and overserved in segregated, special education only settings (Newman et al., 2011 OSERS 2017). Once there, they are often seen and taught through a culturally insensitive or deficit lens (Gay, 2002; Shealey, McHatton, & Wilson, 2011).

[1] Names are anonymized to protect participant confidentiality

The Problem

Historical overview. American schools were not designed to serve all students equally. Today, they continue to struggle to provide an equitable education, defined as one where all students are held to the same high expectations and graduate and drop out at similar rates. Despite our cultural belief in the transformative and levelling power of schools, American schools far too often reproduce and compound the inequalities found in society (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Black, Latinx, American Indian, Native Alaskan, and low-income students, as well as students with disabilities and students learning English, face inequities in access to high-level courses and in academic outcomes compared to White and wealthy students.

During the colonial era, schools existed to teach children religion and to give the children of wealthy families an economic advantage (Labaree, 2010). In the 1800s, as part of the Common School reforms, more students began to attend school, filling up the seats in primary school classrooms. Labaree (2010) estimates that the average student in the US attended 210 days of school total in 1850 and over a thousand in 1900. Yet these schools were not built for everyone. Students from different ethnic, linguistic, and economic backgrounds had widely varying experiences with schools, differences that grew with the emergence of the comprehensive high school in the late 1800s. Until the 1970s, students with disabilities were routinely excluded from schools (Minnow, 2010).

The comprehensive high school emerged as a compromise between wealthy families whose children had historically gained a class advantage by attending high school and low-income, immigrant families whose children had previously been excluded. The compromise was that everyone, rich and poor, would attend the same high school but they would attend different courses within those high schools. Students were sorted into academic tracks based on their

perceived motivation, future social standing, and tested ability (Labaree, 2010; Oakes, 2005). White and wealthy students were overwhelmingly sorted into high-tracks while students of color and from low-income backgrounds were sorted into the lower-tracks (Oakes, 2005). While in the beginning years track assignment was explicitly done on the basis of class and race, by the 1930s it had gained a scientific veneer through the use of IQ testing (Goldstein, 2014). IQ testing though was never race neutral. Almost all immigrants scored in the low IQ range on early tests (Oakes, 2005) and IQ was misused by eugenicists to justify the oppression of Black Americans and the sterilization of large groups of people (Skiba, 2012). The emergence of racialized tracking in comprehensive high schools compounded the educational inequities already faced by Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and low-income students.

Westernized education has historically been part of oppression and cultural repression for Native American students. Native American families have survived not only waves of colonization and physical genocide, but also the brutal cultural repression of mission schools and government funded boarding schools (Brave Heart & De Bruyn, 1998). American Indian boarding schools began in the 1870s. The first one was started by an army officer whose quote, "Kill the Indian to save the man" (Bear, 2008), revealed the long-term goal of his school. Children were forcibly removed from the families across the country and sent to these schools where they were often physically, sexually, and emotionally abused (Bear, 2008; Brave Heart & De Bruyn, 1998; Native American Community Services & Douglas, 2010). These schools continued through the 1960s, with their "civilizing" missions intact (Bear, 2008). This legacy of trauma and abuse perpetuated by US government schools continues to impact the educational experience of Native Americans today. Native American students graduate high school at lower

rates and drop out at far higher rates than students from any other ethnic background (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2016; 2018).

Black students historically had the opposite experience of education. Rather than being forcibly required to attend government schools, they were forcibly excluded from those schools. The education and literacy of Black children was forbidden during slavery (Zion & Blanchett, 2011) and discouraged through violence and the withholding of funding in the years after slavery (Anderson, 2006; Galletta & Cross, 2007; Skiba et al., 2008). In the 1930s, Black families across the South built schools for their own children and levied additional taxes on themselves, despite their poverty, to give their children access to an education that was being denied to them by the state (Galletta & Cross, 2007). Yet, there were limits on how much families could self-fund schools. By World War II, only 23% of Black high school aged students in the South were attending high school. Enrollment was restricted because of the small number of high schools available for these students to attend (Anderson, 2006). Education of Black and American Indian students overall was geared at preparing students for their future low-level jobs and role in society (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Skiba et al., 2008) rather than at preparing them for college or equal opportunities.

Like Indigenous and Black students, Latinx students have also historically been denied access to an equal education. In the 1930s, years prior to *Brown v Board of Education*, Latinx families in Lemon Grove, California sued for their children's right to an integrated education. Latinx students in California and the Southwest were frequently educated in "Americanization" schools, schools that focused on hygiene and citizenship rather than academic skills (Madrid, 2008). Latinx families, along with Black families in Colorado sued the Denver school district over persistent segregation. In 1973, the Supreme Court in *Keyes v School District No. 1, Denver*

held that the de facto segregation in Denver was unconstitutional and that Brown applied to Latinx families as well as Black families. Like Black families throughout the country, these Latinx families as well wanted their children to receive an equal and academically rigorous education, an education that was being denied to them by their school system. For Latinx families whose children speak Spanish at home, the racial segregation was often accompanied by linguistic segregation. In the Southwest, Spanish speaking children were frequently segregated into special schools and programs (Gandara, & Orfield, 2012). Families whose children are learning English have also had to fight for their rights in court as well. Chinese speaking families in California sued over their children's lack of access to supplemental language instruction. In 1974, in *Lau v Nichols* the Supreme Court ruled that not providing English learners with supplemental instruction was a violation of the Civil Rights act. Students have historically been segregated in our schools by race, by linguistic background, and by perceived ability.

Students with disabilities were often denied access to schools (Minnow, 2010). In 1893, the State Supreme Court of Massachusetts upheld the expulsion of a child from school due to his "feeblemindedness" (Smith, 2004). In the 1920s, the Supreme Court affirmed the sterilization of a woman, and her forcible placement into a group home, because "three generations of imbeciles are enough" (*Buck v Bell*, 1924). In the 1950s and 60s, when students with special needs were offered an education, it was often in an isolated and exclusive setting (Villa & Thousand, 2005). The parents of children with disabilities have fought in the courts since Brown v Board of Education to help their children gain access to public schools and to an equal education (Minnow, 2010; Villa & Thousand, 2005).

Comprehensive high schools, and academic tracking, developed in this environment of unequal access to school and unequal expectations. While inequities in education occur across

the United States, they were particularly evident in Virginia following *Brown v Board of Education*. Prior to *Brown v Board*, per pupil spending by the state on students at segregated Black schools had been falling both in percentage and in total dollars as spending on White students continued to increase. In 1956, Fairfax, a major school district, had no high school that Black students could attend (Anderson, 2006). School districts in Virginia were heavily segregated and the government was openly opposed to school integration. Rather than integrate, many school districts in Virginia, including Lincoln School District, participated in Massive Resistance. In 1956, almost 100 members of Congress signed the Southern Manifesto, stating their opposition to school integration (Day, 2016). Two years prior to that, the Gray commission had been formed in Virginia to investigate the state's options after Brown. While the commission's original recommendations focused on local power, by 1956 the governor had assumed the power to unilaterally close schools and to deny funding to integrated schools. The governor used his power to close three schools for three years (Lewis, 2006). Other counties in Virginia closed their own schools to avoid integration, leaving students without public schools for up to five years (Day, 2016). When schools in Virginia reopened as integrated, several districts experienced White flight, with the White population of Norfolk, Virginia falling by 30% as its Black population grew by 20% (Carr & Zeigler, 1990). The intensity of Virginia's resistance to integration and the impact of that resistance on Black students across the state highlights the deep roots of segregation within the state.

Schools, including those in Virginia, remain segregated by race, class, and ability. In Virginia, about 17% of Black students attend almost completely minority high schools while just under 30% of Black students, and 35% of Latinx students, attend majority White high schools (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Only 63% of students with special needs in Virginia spend 80%

or more of their day in general education classrooms, putting the state in the bottom half of states nation-wide for inclusion (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], 2017). Segregation both between and within our high schools remains prevalent across the country. At the same time, the population of English learners in the state has grown from under 37,000 students in 2000 to 109,000 in 2015, from 3% of students to 9% of all students (NCES, n.d.a). This population growth presents new equity challenges for the state. In order to provide an equitable education, the state would need to offer all students the same access to educational opportunities and educational supports. Unfortunately, states, including Virginia, have struggled to reach that goal.

Disparities in academic outcomes by race, economic, linguistic, and disability statuses. Students of different races, classes, abilities, and linguistic backgrounds often attend different schools and different classes within the same school. In addition, they also have disparate academic outcomes. Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low-income students, as well as students with special needs and English learners, earn less rigorous academic course credits in high school, graduate high school and enroll in college at lower rates and drop out at higher rates than other students. During high school Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students earn fewer high-level course credits than their White peers (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016, Newman, 2011). English learners are far more likely to be enrolled in classes that do not earn them graduation credits or to have shortened school days, with empty periods, than the native English-speaking peers (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Umansky, 2016).

Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low-income students, as well as students with special needs and English learners, also graduate from high school at lower rates than their peers (Table 1.1). Nationwide, in 2016, 88% of White students, 79% of Latinx students, 76% of Black

students, 72% of Indigenous students (NCES, 2016a), and 78% of low-income students graduated from high school (NCES, 2016b). In 2015, 69.9% of students receiving special education services nationally graduated high school, with 89% of students graduating in Minnesota and only 31% graduating in Nevada (OSERS, 2017). That same year, nationally only 65% of English learners earned diplomas (Common Core of Data [CCD], n.d.). In Virginia, in 2017, 9% of students overall, and only 6% of White students, failed to graduate on time. Other groups had lower on time graduation rates with 12% of Black and Indigenous students, 19% of Latinx, 16% of low-income students, 26% of English learners, and 13% of students with disabilities failing to graduate on time (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2018).

This gap in graduation rates is also reflected in dropout rates, with White students and high-income students dropping out at lower rates than other students (Table 1.1). Nationally in 2016, 4.4% of White students, 6.1% of Black students, 6.5% of Latinx students, 10.3% of Indigenous students dropped out of high school (NCES, 2018a), as did 18% of students with disabilities in 2015 (OSERS, 2017). In 2014, 9.4% of low-income students dropped out of high school, compared to 5.4% of middle and 2.6% of high-income students (NCES, 2014). Virginia had a similar discrepancy with 6% of students overall dropping out and 4% of White, 7% of Black, 9% of Indigenous, 11% of low-income, 16% of Latinx students, 10% of students with special needs, and 24% of English learners dropping out of high school (VDOE, 2018).

Table 1.1

United States and Virginia Graduation and Drop Out Rates

Demographic Group	National graduation rates (CCD, n.d.; NCES, 2016a; b; OSERS, 2017)	Virginia graduation rates (VDOE, 2018)	National drop out rates (NCES, 2014; 2018a; OSERS, 2017)	Virginia drop out rates (VDOE, 2018)
Overall	84%	91%	5.2%	6%
Latinx	79%	81%	6.5%	16%
Black	76%	88%	6.1%	7%
White	88%	94%	4.4%	4%
Indigenous	72%	88%	10.3%	9%
Low-income	78%	84%	9.4%	11%
English Learners	65%	74%	--	24%
Students with disabilities	70%	87%	18%	10%

College enrollment and graduation rates also differ by ethnicity label, as well as by economic, English learner, and special education status. In 2013, White students were over three times as likely as Black and Latinx students and 58 times more likely than Indigenous students to be enrolled in degree granting institutions (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Students from high-income families are much more likely to immediately enroll in college than students from low-income families, with 81% of high-income students enrolling compared to 52% of low-income students (NCES, 2018b) and students with disabilities are much less likely to enroll in college than their general education peers (Sanford et al., 2011). In a nationally representative analysis, Kanno and Cromley (2013) found that just over half as many English learners enrolled in any college after graduation compared to their monolingual peers and only 40% as many enrolled in four-year institution. The gap in college graduation rates between students from different ethnic (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016), income (NCES, 2015), and linguistic (Kanno &Cromley, 2013) backgrounds and by special education status (Sanford et al., 2011) is even larger than the

enrollment and attendance rates. Of students who were in high school in 2002, 14% of low-income students, 29% of middle-income students, and 60% of high-income students had earned a bachelor's degree. While 32% of monolingual students earned a degree within eight years of graduating from high school, only 12% of their English learner peers did the same. While the causes of these unequal educational outcomes are complex, unequal access to rigorous courses is part of the problem.

Unequal access to rigorous courses. Black, Latinx, Indigenous, English learner, and low-income students are underrepresented in high-level courses across the country and students with special needs have widely varying levels of access to general education classrooms. Of students who entered high school in 2009, 6% of White students, 3% of Black students, and about 3% of Latinx students took advanced level courses in Biology, Chemistry, or Physics. White students were three times more likely than Black students and almost twice as likely as Latinx students to have Calculus be their highest math course while Black and Latinx students are more likely to have Algebra or Geometry be their highest math course (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). High-income students are at least three times as likely as low-income students to take math courses past Algebra 2 (Sciarra, 2010) and are more likely to take advanced courses overall than their low-income classmates (Conger, Long, & Iatarola, 2009). English learners, even ones who were in advanced classes in other countries, are overwhelmingly likely to be in the lowest levels of courses at schools (Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Shirfer, 2016; Kanno, 2018). Overall, across all subjects, indigenous students are the least likely of any group of students to take advanced courses (DeVoe, Darling-Churchhill, & Snyder, 2008).

In terms of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which are advanced courses that let students earn college credit in high school by passing a test, White students are overrepresented

in both test taking and test success. Success on the AP test is defined by the College Board as scoring a three or higher on the exam (College Board, 2014). Latinx, Black, and low-income students are all underrepresented on the exam relative to their percentage of school enrollment (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

National AP Participation

Demographic group	Percent of students (NCES 2016c; 2017)	Percent of AP test takers (College Board, 2014)	Percent of students scoring a 3 or higher (College Board, 2014)
Latinx	25%	19%	17%
Black	16%	9%	5%
White	50%	56%	61%
Indigenous	1%	<1%	<1%
Low-income	52%	27%	22%

While the College Board does not report pass rates by ethnicity within subject exams, the overall pattern of AP test taking in Social Studies shows similar discrepancies (Table 1.3). Black and Latinx students are underrepresented in AP test taking and White students are overrepresented.

Table 1.3

National Social Studies AP Participation

Demographic Group	Percent of students (NCES 2016c; 2017)	World History AP test takers (College Board, 2014)	US History AP test takers (College Board, 2014)	US Government test takers (College Board, 2014)
Latinx	25%	18%	16%	17%
Black	16%	10%	8%	8%
White	50%	52%	58%	57%
Indigenous	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

The discrepancy in AP course enrollment is also found in Virginia (Table 1.4). In 2013, in Virginia Black students were 23% of the student body, 14% of AP test takers, and 8% of students scoring at 3 or above on the test. Latinx students were better represented in AP courses, being 9% of population, 8% of test takers, and 8% of students scoring a three or above. Native American students were less than half of a percentage of all students on each measure. White students were overrepresented in high scores on tests. They were 60% of the population, 60% of test takers, and 65% of students scoring a three or above. The discrepancy between enrollment and test scores was the most extreme in Virginia for low-income students. Despite being 37% of all students, low-income students were only 11% of test takers and 8% of students scoring a three or higher on exams (College Board, 2014). This discrepancy between who is enrolled in schools and who is taking, and passing, AP exams shows the persistence of the racial and income gaps in education.

Table 1.4

Virginia AP Participation

Demographic group	Percent of students	Percent of AP test takers	Percent of students scoring a 3 or higher
Latinx	9%	8%	8%
Black	23%	14%	8%
White	60%	60%	65%
Indigenous	< 0.5%	< 0.5%	< 0.5%
Low-income	37%	11%	8%

In addition to AP courses, some schools in the US offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Like AP courses, IB courses are selective, rigorous courses that allow students to earn college credits while in high school. According to the IB organization, in 2015 of the 1,405 IB schools in the US, 60% were Title 1 high schools. Title 1 schools are those where at least

40% of enrolled students qualify for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch ([FRPL] NCES, n.d.). To qualify for a reduced-price meal, in 2018, a family of four needs to earn $46,435 or less. To qualify for a free meal plan, a family of four needs to earn $32,630 a year or less (Federal Register, 2018).

As with AP tests nationwide, White students are overrepresented in IB test taking, Latinx students are slightly underrepresented, and Black and low-income students are significantly underrepresented. At Title 1 IB schools, White students are 41% of the population and 48% of test takers while Latinx students are 25% of the population and 21% of test takers. Black students are noticeably underrepresented in IB exams, making up 24% of the population and 13% of test takers. Similarly, low-income students constitute 50% of the population of these schools and only 33% of test-takers (Gordon, VanderKamp, & Halic, 2015). In high-level courses, including both AP and IB courses, Black, Latinx, and low-income students are underrepresented relative to their overall enrollment. An administrator in LeTendre, Hofer, and Shimizu's (2003) study described the differences between the high and low-tracks as "very similar in many ways to the apartheid system, even though we have the Brown decision to integrate it" (p.75).

Black and Latinx students describe this imbalance vividly. A Latinx student in Irizarry's (2015) participatory action research project shared his impressions of the racial imbalance in course enrollment: "Latinos are in the lowest [level] classes. That's just the way it is, how it's been" (p.69). Multiple Black students in Yonezawa, Wells, and Serna's (2002) study of ten middle and high schools described feeling completely isolated when they tried to take high-level courses. Students described being "the only Black student in the room" (p.54) and feeling like the "token person" (p. 55). For many of the students in the study the racial imbalance lead to a

sense of not belonging and of feeling marginalized in the classes: “I was like, ‘Oh man, I don't even belong in here,’ because it was like 30 Caucasian kids and one African student” (p.56). Two high-achieving Latina English learners in Kanno’s (2018) study never enrolled in Advanced Placement or advanced level courses in high school despite their high achievement. One stated, “I thought I was not able to take AP classes,” (p.23) while the other said, when looking at her low-level courses, “[My counselor] say[s] that these classes are good for me to take right now” (p.23). Both students were excluded from high-level courses and did not matriculate into four-year colleges. Not only is the racial imbalance in course enrollment prevalent across the country, it has real negative impact on the marginalized students.

Students with disabilities are also underrepresented in these courses and face uneven access to general education courses, a trend which is especially true for students with disabilities who are from historically underserved groups. The underrepresentation of students with disabilities in Advanced Placement courses is so taken for granted that the College Board does not even report on the percentage of students with disabilities taking AP courses nor include them in special handouts on the participation of historically underrepresented students in AP courses (College Board, 2014). Students with disabilities take far more non-academic and non-vocational courses than their peers without disabilities (Newman et al., 2011). While this and the AP course access of students with disabilities could in theory be related to the learning challenges that caused them to receive special education services, the uneven distribution of access to general education for students with special needs across the country is an indicator that the disparities reflect more than just individual learning challenges.

Between 1988 and 2012, the percentage of students being included nationally, defined as spending 80% or more of their day in general education, almost doubled (National Center for

Education Statistics [NCES], 2001; 2016) as opinions about placement shifted. Today, students in different states are served in differing settings, as New Jersey includes only 46% of its students while Alabama includes 84% of its students with disabilities (OSERS, 2017). Wealthy and poor students are also served in different settings, with wealthy students being included more than poor students (Cosier & Causton-Theoharis, 2010). The differences in access to general education are even more pronounced for Black and Brown students with disabilities. In 2015, 66% of White students, 64% of Indigenous students, 61% of Latinx students, and 58% of Black students were included (OSERS, 2017). If Black students were served in general education at the same rate as White students, almost 90,000 more Black students nationwide would be included[2]. In an analysis of nationally representative data on students with special needs, Newman and colleagues (2011) found that White students with disabilities earned 70% of their academic credits in general education while Black students with disabilities earned only 57% of their credits in general education. The remainder of their credits were earned in secluded classrooms. As with disparities in access to high-level courses, these inequities have both long term and short-term impacts on students.

Impact of imbalance course enrollment. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, researchers have found negative impacts from racial imbalances and linguistic in course enrollment and from a lack of access to general education courses for students with special needs. In 2010, Muller and colleagues published a study of the longitudinal relationship between tenth grade math course level and senior year grade points averages (GPA) and college enrollment rates. At these 48 racially diverse high schools, when the researchers controlled for

[2] Calculated from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2017) child count numbers for the 50 states and DC.

student and school characteristics, schools with larger racial gaps in tenth grade course enrollment had larger GPA differences between Black, Latinx, and White students than were present at the schools with more equitable course enrollment. The gap in GPAs was up to three times larger at the most racially imbalanced high schools than at schools with average racial imbalances in enrollment. Black and Latinx students who attended schools with higher racial imbalances in course enrollments were also less likely to enroll in college. Attending a school with racially imbalanced course enrollment negatively impacts the academic outcomes of Black and Latinx students. Kanno (2018) and Callahan (2005) both found that English learners' lack of access to high-level courses made attending a four-year college out of reach for many students.

Imbalances in course enrollment also impact individual students' sense of belonging and equity. A Black student in Modica's (2015) study commented that "My skin color keeps me from leading" (p. 80). For Modica, his comment showed the effects of the school's disproportionate course enrollment. Students interviewed by Yonezawa and colleagues (2002) made the connection even more explicitly. Students described feeling "weird" or "uncomfortable" (p. 55) in their primarily White classes. They felt a pressure to represent all Black students, with students saying, "In general, I feel like I have to prove something extra to the White kids that are in there. Even if I know a piece of literature well, I feel like I have to study it over and over" (p.56) and "I felt like I had to prove myself and prove that Blacks aren't stupid. [I felt like] if I were to get a problem wrong and raise my hand, they would look at me and say, 'Ah, that Black'" (p.56). A high-achieving English learner in Kanno's (2018) study "begged" (p.30) her English Language Development teacher to move her from a regular English class back to his ELD one because she felt so insecure about her ability to speak English and

being around English only peers. The student interviewed in Irizarry's (2015) study described the impact that the racial imbalance he saw had on him:

> "At first I was like, we must be dumb, we are not smart like the other kids. Latinos are different… Then I start this research and start to think about it. Many Latinos are smart but still in the low classes. And are you saying that white [students] are smart because they are in the high classes, not fundamentals? It hurt me real bad at first… thinking that Latinos and myself are dumb or less than them" (p.69).

For these students, seeing people who looked like them excluded from high-level courses impacted their sense of belonging at their school and their desire to enroll in high-level courses.

For students with disabilities, the stakes are also high. Students with disabilities with less access to general education classes are less likely to graduate high school and have lower academic achievement than students with similar disabilities who have more access to general education classes (Hehir, Grindal, & Eidelman, 2012; Schifter, 2016). Students with disabilities spend more of their time on academic tasks when they are in general education (Helmsetter, Curry, Brennan, & Sampson-Saul, 1998) and receive a more rigorous education (Bacon, Rood, & Ferri, 2016) than when they are in special education classrooms. Being denied access to general education classrooms for students with special needs and to the highest-level of courses at a school for all students, has a negative impact on their educational experience.

Problem of Practice

Black, Latinx, low-income students and students learning English across the country and in Virginia are being excluded from high-level high school courses and students with special needs are not receiving equitable access to general education classrooms. These students are

underrepresented in AP courses, IB courses, and advanced science and math courses. Our comprehensive high schools were not designed to serve all students equally and they are currently not serving them equally. Black, Latinx, and low-income students, as well as students with disabilities and students learning English, are graduating at lower rates, dropping out at higher rates, and entering and graduating from college at lower rates than other groups of students. While this problem is broad and national, it is also a local problem.

Washington High School, a racially and economically diverse school, is wrestling with these national issues. Like other schools across the nation and in Virginia, WHS struggles with racial equity in course enrollment. Black, Latinx, and low-income students are underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the school (Table 1.4). In 2017, 35% of White students at WHS took AP courses while only 18% of Latinx students, 12% of low-income students, and10% of Black students did the same. The high school does not collect data on AP participation of students with disabilities or English learners. However, the gap in AP course enrollment is also reflected in diplomas that students earn.

In Virginia, students can earn two separate general education diplomas. The first is a Standard level diploma which is often pursued by students who plan on entering the workforce after high school. Of the graduating class of 2018, 28% of students pursued that diploma, including only 20% of White graduating seniors. Black, Latinx, low-income students, and students with disabilities however were much more likely to pursue that diploma with 64% of Black seniors, 34% of Latinx seniors, 50% of low-income seniors, 74% of seniors with disabilities, and 51% of English learners earning a Standard diploma. The second general education diploma is the more prestigious Advanced diploma, which was earned by 78% of White seniors and only 27% of Black, 36% of Latinx and low-income seniors, 18% of students

with disabilities, and 30% of English learners (Table 1.5). In addition to the disparities in who is earning which diploma, the school struggles with disparities in who is graduating. While 1% of White students and 8% of Black students drop out of WHS, 25% of the 2018 cohort of Latinx students dropped out. These disparities highlight the local impact of these national problems.

WHS 2017 Course Enrollment and Diploma Type

Demographic group	Number of students taking AP courses (% of each ethnic group)	Number of students with an Advanced diploma (% of each ethnic group)
All students	610	337
Black	23 (10.2%)	21 (27%)
Latinx	37 (18%)	20 (36%)
White	454 (35%)	248 (78%)
Students with disabilities	--	9 (18%)
English learners	--	16 (30%)
Low-Income	61 (12%)	50 (36%)

Furthermore, the school struggles with racial disparities in other areas as well, including special education and discipline. At Washington High School White students are disproportionately likely to be labeled as having autism and Black students are disproportionately labeled as having an emotional disturbance. While 6% of students across the nation and in Virginia are labeled as having emotional disturbances, 10% of students at Washington High School are served under that label. A total of 17% of black students are served under emotional disturbance while only 10% of white students are. Similarly, 17% of white student with IEPs at WHS are served under Autism, while only 9% of black students are served under that label. Those discrepancies represent underlying challenges, as do discipline disparities. Latino students, black students, and English language Learners are all over-represented in school discipline data. In 2015 black students made up 100% of the school's long-term suspensions and they were over represented at a three to one rate in short-term suspensions.

The challenges faced by WHS highlight the local importance of these broad national concerns about access to rigorous and advanced instruction. Therefore, understanding the instruction and relationships in a heterogeneous, co-taught, and culturally relevant history classroom at WHS is integral for understanding how teachers at WHS and at other schools can more effectively serve their culturally, linguistically, and neurologically diverse learners.

Purpose of the Current Study

At Washington High School, Dr. Sumner created the Synthesis program three years ago in response to the segregation of English learners within the school. Over the past three years, he and Coach Wilson, his special education co-teacher, have developed a culturally response program that empowers students to take action in their classroom and in the wider world. The purpose of this study is to understand what is happening in this classroom and what culturally relevant teaching looks like in a heterogeneous and co-taught classroom.

Research questions. Given this research focus, my capstone will be focused on the following research questions:

1. How do the co-teachers conceptualize and operationalize tracking, educational equity, and their own agency?
    a. What are the teachers' own educational histories and experiences with tracking?
    b. How do they view English learners, students with special needs, and students from underserved populations in the context of their definitions of equity?

    c. What capacity and limitations on creating change do the teachers perceive?
    d. What do they view as the ideal classroom? What do they see as necessary for that classroom to become a reality?

2. What does instruction look like in a co-taught, heterogeneous class with students learning English, students with disabilities, and students who have historically been academically successful?
    a. What evidence is there of differentiation and inclusion?
    b. What does the co-teaching look like?

Definitions. To increase the clarity of the research questions, I present the following definitions.

Tracking: "The sorting of students within a school or district that results in different access to academic curriculum and the opportunity to learn" (Burris, 2014, p.3).

Educational equity: Ensuring that all students have equal access to educational opportunities and educational supports.

Teachers' agency: Teachers' belief in their own capacity to create change in the system and to influence student outcomes.

Co-teaching: A special education service delivery model featuring a general and special education teacher serving students in the same classroom.

Differentiation: An instructional practice of building individual student success through knowing students and providing them with accessible instruction.

Inclusion: The placement of students with special needs in general education classrooms and the creation of a classroom community that provides students with meaningful academic and social opportunities for success.

Chapter Summary

American high schools were not designed to serve all students equitably and, over a hundred years since the inception of comprehensive high schools, they continue to fail to serve students equitably. While the lack of equity can be seen on a variety of indicators, including graduation and drop out rates, one key area is enrollment in advanced level, college preparatory courses. Black, Latinx, and low-income students, as well as English learners, across the nation, and within Virginia, are underrepresented in high-level high school courses. At Washington High School in Virginia, White and high-income students remain overrepresented in high-level courses and students with disabilities graduate with lower-level diplomas than their peers. Within this context Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson have created a co-taught, heterogenous, and culturally responsive classroom. To better understand their classroom and culturally relevant teaching in general, this study focuses on addressing research questions related to teachers' beliefs and actions in a co-taught classroom.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The inequalities among American schools are inescapable. The academic opportunities for Black and Latinx youth, students with special needs and students who are learning English are constrained by systemic inequalities. Researchers have studied the mechanisms that underlie the unequal outcomes, as well as ways to alleviate the inequalities. This section begins with looking at three causes of inequalities within schools before moving into a review of literature on three approaches to addressing these inequalities.

Unequal Outcomes: Mechanisms and Impact

While many factors impact the academic success and outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse youth and students with special needs, negative teacher beliefs, exclusionary curriculum, biased tracking, and the process of placing students with special needs are important areas to examine in understanding the challenges faced by these students.

Mechanism 1: Teacher beliefs, curriculum, and instruction. When it comes to looking at the historically poor outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with special needs, two concerns that researchers have identified are teacher beliefs and the white-washing of curriculum. Each of these has the potential to both impact the experience of a student within their classroom and their future academic success. When teachers see students through a deficit lens, they focus on those children's apparent weaknesses and blame the child's perceived challenges on factors outside the control of a teacher (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Abu-El Haj and Rubin (2009) found that, at schools that were embracing equity reforms,

many teachers continued to see students with disabilities and of color through deficit eyes, believing that no action of the school could remedy the children's weaknesses unless their families, the community, or the children themselves changed. When schools view speaking a language other than English at home as a deficit, they create systems that push English learners away from rigorous course work (Kanno, 2018; Umansky, 2016). When teachers underestimate the abilities of their students, they put off rigor and challenging standards and instead spoon feed the students rote curriculum (Hammond, 2015). Instead of being given tools to become independent learners at school, students who are seen as weaker or at risk are pushed to become dependent learners, relying on others for meaning making (Hammond, 2015). This deficit view of students with special needs and culturally and linguistically diverse learners is exacerbated in some classrooms by teachers' belief in color blindness.

When teachers state that they don't see a student's ethnicity or that culture should not be in schools, they create an environment where the realities of many students are ignored and where misperceptions are likely to occur. Researchers argue that in a society as deeply racialized as ours, a teacher saying that they don't see race is at best an overstatement. Furthermore, in school systems that are deeply based on cultural norms of independence, of particular patterns of speech and engagement, and culturally bound definitions of respect and achievement, not seeing culture means not seeing beyond one's own lens (Gay, 2009; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Often it can mean that the teacher does not recognize their own culture and beliefs, a blindness that can lead the to misunderstood students' volume, their patterns of interactions with teachers and peers, their style of work and engagement (Gay, 2009; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). This can create conditions where teachers see students as disruptive, disrespectful, or disengaged when the student is just simply different from the teacher. While

teachers' deficit thinking about students and their cultural blindness can negatively impact the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students, so to can the curriculum taught in the classroom.

Historically, the curriculum in American schools has excluded the views, experiences, contributions, and challenges of many, if not most, groups in society. Textbooks have often ignored or minimized the agency and experiences of women, Native Americans, Latinos, Black people, Asian Americans, and others (Banks, 2008; Gay, 2018). Indigenous students have historically been offered curriculums that encouraged their assimilation or wrote them out of history (Brave Heat & DeBruyn, 1998; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Concerns about who is represented, and how they are represented, in curriculum have been expressed by researchers studying history (Ladson-Billings, 2001), math (Bonner, 2009), and English (Ladson-Billings, 2009), as well as in other subjects (Gay, 2018). In 2015, the AP US History standards were revised to take a "softer" stance on slavery and race in America (Schlanger, 2015). In 2018, the College Board proposed new standards for AP World History that would effectively eliminate all discussion of pre-colonization Indigenous cultures (Luster, 2018). While Gay (2018) argues that blatant stereotypes and racism in textbooks are decreasing, she also argues that subtler stereotypes and exclusion persist in textbooks across subjects as seen in these two recent changes. When the curriculum excludes the stories of students in the room, they can become disengaged from their education and even disempowered within our schools (Hammond, 2015; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

This combination that some students experience of a curriculum that excludes people who look like or sound like them, teachers who misperceive their actions and culture, and the frequent messaging that something is wrong with them, their family, or their community

combine to create an environment that makes it challenging for those students to succeed in our schools. That challenge is exacerbated by the experiences of many culturally and linguistically diverse students in their schools' tracking systems and the experiences of students with disabilities in the Individual Education Program (IEP) process.

Mechanism 2: Tracking

An overview of tracking. Academic tracking underpins much of the segregation that occurs within our schools. Burris (2014) defines tracking as "the sorting of students within a school or district that results in different access to academic curriculum and the opportunity to learn" (p.3). Historically, students were openly sorted into rigid tracks. They took all their courses in these rigid tracks, were openly labelled by the track they took courses in and had little control over their courses. During the Civil Rights era however, pushback against the discriminatory nature of tracking lead to the creation of flexible tracking systems (LaPrade, 2011). Currently, at least in theory, students at most high schools can take an AP English course, an honors science course, and a remedial math course all at the same time. In reality however as discussed in Chapter 1, students across the country tend to be locked into one level of courses and struggle to move between levels over time.

While the form of tracking has changed since the Civil Rights era, tracking remains prevalent. National data from the 1990s showed that over 80% of American high school students were enrolled in tracked classes (Oakes, 2005). In the early 2000s, Schmidt and McKnight (2012) found extensive math and science tracking at 30 high schools across 18 districts. In 2007 Kelly found that over 50% of high schools across North Carolina were offering three or more levels of English courses. In 2011, Kelly and Price found that almost all schools in their sample of North Carolina high schools had policies limiting enrollment in advanced classes and that

GPAs, test scores, and teacher recommendations remained the most common prerequisites. They also found that most schools had corequisites in place that meant that students were required to take multiple courses at the same level. Tracking, both in its meanings of offering multiple levels of courses and in its sense of the exclusiveness of high-level courses, has remained a significant component of the American educational experience.

How students are placed into classes. When schools offer multiple levels of courses, someone must decide which level of course a student will be enrolled in. Who decides and how they decide however remains a complex and murky process that negatively impacts culturally and linguistically diverse students. In his North Carolina study, Kelly (2007) found that the most common requirement for enrolling in a high-level course was the recommendation of a previous teacher. In 2014, Bernhardt published a case study examining how three Social Studies teachers at one high school made future course recommendations for their current students. All three teachers had considerable autonomy over course placement decisions, but Bernhardt concluded that this came from "ill-defined expectations, poor communication, and a lack of clear administrative policies" (p.45) rather than because of the teachers' expertise. These teachers were the ones tasked with choosing students' future courses, but they were given little support in the process. Multiple teachers at a high school in Yonezawa and colleagues' (2002) study told the researchers "that parental involvement, sheer luck, and blatant discrimination were often better predictors of student placement than prior achievement or motivation" (p.53).

Parents however often disagree about how much power they have in course placement decisions. In 2003, LeTendre and colleagues found some parents believed that parents were kept in the dark by the schools while others believed that parents had a significant impact on their children's course placement. Parents felt that, to have influence, they had to know the minutiae

of course placement in their district. Parents who knew this, who were better educated and better able to wield power, exerted enough influence that an administrator described the course placement process as, “Teachers refer, counselors refer, parents push” (p.66). Yonezawa and colleagues (2002) found that Black and White students attending schools with open enrollment policies had different access to information. Local networks helped keep White parents informed of policies and changes while that information did not make it to Black parents. Similarly, in Kanno’s (2018) study she found that even educated parents of English learners did not know what courses to request for their children and less educated parents felt uncomfortable advocating for courses. In addition to formal mechanisms of course recommendations by teachers and parental course placement requests, other informal mechanisms also shape what courses students take.

The role of race, class, and linguistic background. Encouragement and discouragement from teachers and administrators also shape who enrolls in advanced level courses. Witenko, Mireles-Rios, and Rios (2017) surveyed over 1,000 students at one high school to see who encouraged them to take advanced classes. While White students were encouraged by their teachers, parents, and friends, Latinx students received encouragement primarily from nontraditional sources such as club advisors or the school’s security guards. In a study of over 10,000 students in Miami-Dade public schools, Kuralender and Yun (2005) found that students of different races were being encouraged to take high-level courses at different rates. While 54% of White students in the district reported being encouraged to enroll in AP courses, 45% or fewer of Black and Latinx students said that they had been encouraged to enroll in those same classes. They found that the discrepancy was even larger at more racially diverse schools.

In other studies, Black and low-income students have reported being actively discouraged from enrolling in advanced level courses. Two students in Yonezawa and colleagues' (2002) study described their failures in attempting to enroll in advanced courses. One student's counselor was never available to meet with him, which kept him in the low-level course. Another described being ignored by his counselor; "It seems like they put you in a class where they feel it's right. They don't listen to your opinion on what classes you want to be in" (p.48). A student in Modica's (2015) study described how an administrator tried to dissuade two of his Black classmates from taking high-level courses. One classmate was told that all he needed to enroll in an AP class was a teacher and a parent signature. The student got both, brought them to the administrator and was told, "Ahh, you aren't doing bad, but I don't know if you'll be able to handle it" (p.81). Another classmate wanted to enroll in an AP course and the administrator said, "I just don't know if it's gonna be a good idea" (p.81). In these studies, Black, Latinx, and low-income students were relegated to lower-level classes through a series of informal mechanisms.

Schools continue to offer multiple levels of courses and continue to use formal and informal course enrollment mechanisms to restrict access to the most advanced levels of courses of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Researchers have found that even when they control for students' prior achievement and test scores, Black and Latinx students are underrepresented in advanced level courses. In North Carolina, Corra, Scott, and Carter (2011) found that there were only half as many Black students in advanced courses as would be expected based on standardized test scores. Witenko and colleagues (2017) found that White students with a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) were five times more likely than their Latinx peers with the same GPA to be in advanced courses. Similarly, Oakes (2005) reports finding in her earlier research that students' ethnicity was a significant factor in predicting advanced math

course enrollment, even after controlling for prior achievement. In a longitudinal study of one school district in California, Umansky (2016) found that, even after controlling for students' backgrounds and prior achievement, English learners in the district took fewer credit bearing courses like English than their English only classmates. In addition, researchers have found that, especially at more racially diverse schools, students are likely to take all their courses at the same level, rather than taking different courses at different levels (Lucas & Berends, 2002). Tracking continues to restrict the opportunities offered to culturally and linguistically diverse students in our schools.

Mechanism 3: Placement of students with special needs.

The law. While students with disabilities are also often segregated within schools and denied access to rigorous courses, the process functions differently for these students. The process of determining where a student with special needs receives their education is unique due to the requirements of federal legislation. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 requires that students with disabilities be served in the least restrictive environment (LRE) "to the maximum extent appropriate" (§300.114(a)). Under the law, the restrictiveness of an environment is based on the proximity of students without special needs. The most restrictive environment is a child's own home, followed by a special education facility, and then by a special education classroom at a comprehensive school. The least restrictive environment is a general education classroom with no special education support, followed by a general education classroom with special education support. The law then compels schools to serve their students in general education to the "maximum extent appropriate."

LRE is part of a student's Individual Education Program (IEP) which is a document that outlines a student's present levels, goals, accommodations, and placement among other things.

Under the law, IEPs are supposed to be individualized so that a student who excels in science might go to a general education science class without any support. If that same student struggles in English Language Arts (ELA), they might attend an ELA class that has a special education co-teacher, attend a special education class for that subject, or receive extra support during their elective block. Each of these decisions is supposed to be based on the unique strengths and needs of an individual child. Each of these decisions also has monumental consequences as placement decisions dictate how rigorous a student's academic program will be, how much support they will receive, and what that support will look like.

The process of placement. While IDEIA stipulates that students need to be served in the Least Restrictive Environment possible for them, where students spend their time and how those decisions are made has often been contentious. While the majority of IEP teams come to a consensus on where a student will be served, some teams fail to reach an agreement. When researchers have examined the most common issues that cause parents to pursue mediation or due process, they find that placement is the biggest area of contention. In a study of 575 due process hearings from across the country, Mueller and Carranza (2011) found that 25% of all disputes were about placement and 24% were about program appropriateness. In addition to numerous Circuit Court rulings on placement, the Supreme Court has ruled twice on issues related to placement. The first case was in 1982 and the second was in 2017. In both cases, the courts emphasized the importance of serving students in the least restrictive environment without laying out a single procedure for how to determine placement or services (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Cooper, 2018). This ambiguity particularly impacts families with less societal power.

While parents are supposed to be equal members of IEP teams, researchers have found that parents are often marginalized at the meetings. In a literature review of 16 years of studies

on issues in IEP development, Blackwell and Rossetti (2014) found that lack of parent participation was a frequent concern. While parents are supposed to be equal participants in IEP meetings, able to shape the education program and placement of their child, researchers found that parents were often silenced at meetings and left to simply rubber stamp the decisions of the school-based team. Blackwell and Rossetti (2014) noted that this was especially true for low-income and racially diverse parents. This silencing of parents occurs despite specific federal guidance about the importance of including parents as full partners at special education meetings (Turnball et al., 2018). Given that location and amount of services are, as discussed earlier, two of the most disputed aspects of an IEP, this silencing of lower-income and minority parents has the potential to influence the placement of their children and could be part of the reason why students with disabilities of different ethnicities are served in different environments (OSERS, 2017).

What teams decide is the least restrictive environment for a student varies substantially across the country and within states based on the race of the student. Although the overall trend has been for greater inclusion of students with special needs, states continue to vary in how much they include students with special needs (NCES, 2001; 2016). Today, Alabama, Nebraska, and North Dakota each have over 74% of their students with special needs spending more than 80% of their day in general education. New Jersey, New Mexico, and Montana each include under 50% of their students with special needs (OSERS, 2017). There is also variation across the country in the LRE of students of different ethnicities. In 2015, 66% of White students, 64% of Indigenous students, 61% of Latinx students, and 58% of Black students were included (OSERS, 2017). If Black students were served in general education at the same rate as White students,

almost 90,000 more Black students nationwide would be included[3]. In an analysis of nationally representative data on students with special needs, Newman and colleagues (2011) found that White students with disabilities earned 70% of their academic credits in general education while Black students with disabilities earned only 57% of their credits in general education. In addition to the silencing of low-income and minoritized parents at IEP meetings, teacher beliefs about students also have the potential to impact IEP teams' decisions.

Ferri and Connor (2005) examined newspaper editorial pages from the years around the court's decision on Brown and during the height of the inclusion movement in the 1990s and found resistance to each rooted in ideas of extreme difference. The authors contend that segregation within schools through tracking is linked to the placement of Black and Brown students into special education and their eventual sequestering into separate classrooms. Zion and Blanchett (2011) contend that arguments about serving students in less restrictive environments have often ignored race, allowing the over representation of Black and Brown students in separate classrooms to continue without being challenged. Despite the existence of a federal law and many court cases on where students with special needs are served, ambiguity and contention remain part of the placement process for students. This ambiguity particularly seems to impact placements decisions about culturally and linguistically diverse students with special needs. As with decisions about course levels for all students, LRE decisions have a profound impact on the academic access and outcomes of students with special needs.

[3] Calculated from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2017) child count numbers for the 50 states and DC.

Impact of tracking and segregation. The lack of access to general education classrooms for students with special needs and the lack of access to rigorous courses for culturally and linguistically diverse students has impacts on their high school experience and future education.

Students with disabilities who spend more time in general education have better academic and social outcomes compared to their peers who are more isolated. Two studies have looked at the impact of inclusion in Massachusetts on student outcomes. Hehir, Grindal, and Eidelman (2012) were commissioned by the state to conduct a review of special education within the state. Among their findings were that, once the researchers controlled for income, race, and other factors, the extent of inclusion in the state was substantially linked to performance on the state tests and a lack of inclusion for some students was a contributing factor to lower test scores. In addition to getting higher scores on state tests, Hehir and colleagues found that included students also graduated from high school at higher rates than their colleagues. Students with Speech or Learning disabilities were five times more likely to graduate from high school if they spent 80% or more of their day in general education than if they spent 40% or less of their day in general education. While that difference was greater than was found for other disability categories, Hehir and colleagues still found that students who were included were at least twice as likely to graduate from high school on time than students with similar disabilities who were not included, a finding confirmed by Schifter (2016) who also looked at student data from Massachusetts. The relationship between achievement and inclusion has also been found in nationally representative data sets and in meta-analyses of studies on inclusion, as well as within individual states (Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Oh-Young & Filler, 2015). In addition to improving outcomes for individual students with disabilities, inclusion is linked to higher state test scores for students with disabilities across districts (Huberman, Navo, & Parrish, 2012).

The benefits to students with special needs who spend more time in general education classrooms goes beyond the academic. Fisher and Sorgen (2016) examined the density of social networks of students at two high schools across a variety of tracks, focusing on students with special needs. They found that students in the self-contained special education tracks reported less adaptive networks and less social participation than students who spent more time in general education classrooms. Similarly, in a study of thirty preschool students in three different settings, Kwon, Elicker, and Kontos, (2011) found that the students who were more included interacted more with their peers, a finding further confirmed by Oh-Young and Filler's (2015) meta-analysis. The researchers examined studies published on inclusion and service setting from 1980 to 2013, eventually including 24 studies in their meta-analysis. They found that, across the eight studies that collected social outcome data, students who were more included had stronger social outcomes than their excluded peers. Furthermore, there are indications that these benefits for students with special needs come with neutral or even potentially positive impacts on their general education peers (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007). Students with special needs do better academically and socially when they are included with their general education peers.

Similarly, students have better outcomes when they are placed into higher-level and more rigorous courses. Schmidt and McKnight (2012) found that the difference in achievement on the Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) between students in different tracks was the same size as the overall difference in TIMSS scores between the United States and Japan and South Korea. In a 2010 literature review of international studies on ability grouping, Schofield (2010) found that tiered schools widened the achievement gap between students as

students in higher-level programs learned more content than did students in lower-level courses. Schofield concluded that tracking exacerbates the impact of student background on achievement.

In general, students in lower-level courses graduate high school at lower rates (Beattie, 2011). They face lowered expectations (Walsemann & Bell, 2010), have more class time spent on behavior management, and are treated differently by their schools than students in high-level courses. They also are taught less academic content than are students in high-level courses (Oakes, 2005). While in the age of standardized testing all students are taking the same tests, Watanabe (2008) found that students in different levels of courses are still being taught differently. In her ethnographic case study of two teachers at one middle school, she found that, while the broad classroom activities were similar between levels, the instruction itself differed. Students in the higher-level class received less test preparation, received more and quicker feedback on their work, were given more homework, were assigned more independent projects, and were taught more challenging material than the students in the lower-level classes.

These differences in instruction make it challenging for even the strongest of students in the lower-level classes to stay caught up in academic knowledge and skills with students in the higher-level courses. When Oakes (2005) looked at the trajectories of students with the same test scores in San Jose who were placed into different levels of courses, she found that the achievement of students placed into remedial classes declined over time while that of students placed into regular classes increased slightly and that of students placed into advanced classes increased significantly. Her findings are in line with recent findings on the plasticity of the brain. While older conceptions of intelligence portrayed it as a fixed construct, we now know that even interventions as simple as reading to a child can impact their IQ score (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014). When we place students into more rigorous courses, they have more

opportunities to learn and to grow. When students are placed into lower-level classes, they learn less and often lose their opportunity to take more advanced courses later.

These challenges particularly impact culturally and linguistically diverse students. These students are more likely in special education to be served in restrictive settings. Outside of special education, they are less likely to be enrolled in higher-level and rigorous courses. While much has been written about the achievement gap, fixing it will require a systematic focus on improving outcomes for these historically segregated and underserved students.

Unequal Outcomes: Remedies

While researchers have studied a variety of ways to address the causes of unequal outcomes in schools, this section will focus on three. The first are reforms to academic tracking systems. The second is inclusion for students with special needs, with a focus on co-teaching as an inclusion strategy. The third is culturally relevant teaching. This section explores the rationale, implementation, strengths, and challenges of each reform.

Tracking reforms. One way that teachers, administrators, and parents have attempted to improve outcomes for historically underserved students has been by reforming the tracking system.

Recruitment. A simple way to reform tracking systems is to add recruitment to the model. Here teachers, guidance counselors, or other school staff actively seek out and recruit promising students into the more advanced courses. Pittsburgh schools saw a tripling in AP course enrollment by Black students following a push to identify and recruit academically strong Black students into these courses (Godley, Monroe, & Castma, 2015). An effort by school counselors to actively identify and recruit promising Black students into AP classes at another

school also showed success (Davis, Davis, & Mobley, 2013). An IB magnet school that was struggling with diversity began participating in parent recruitment at a local mall. By actively reaching out to parents, school officials were able to improve the diversity of their student body (Mayer, 2008). Other schools have successfully used Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs to increase the diversity of their high-level courses (Watt, Powell, Mendiola, & Cossio, 2006). AVID programs focus on recruiting and supporting small groups of historically underserved students in high-level courses. Each of these programs has had a positive impact on the racial diversity of high-level course enrollment. Yet, none has fully eradicated the enrollment gap nor addressed the broader challenges posed by academic tracking. Yonazawa and colleagues (2002) have argued that initiatives like these will never eradicate the enrollment gap because, as long as there are different levels of courses, there will be competition for the few spots in the highest levels of courses. That competition will continue to favor students and families with more wealth and educational power, which means that enrollment gaps will remain.

Detracking. In addition to trying recruitment, many schools and some school systems have tried to change their tracking structure altogether. One way they have done this is through detracking; "the process of dismantling institutional and organizational structures or instructional barriers that sort students according to ability" (LaPrade, 2011, p.742).

One of the most effective ways that schools have found to do this is by eliminating the lowest track first (Welner & Burris, 2006). Most schools affiliated with the High Schools That Work movement, of which there are over 2,000 around the country, have begun their detracking process by eliminating their lowest tracks of classes (Miller & Mittleman, 2012). Similarly, that was the beginning of the detracking process for public high schools in Evanston, Illinois. Over

the course of more than a decade, the Evanston school district has slowly decreased the number of academic tracks that it offers. In 2012, ninth graders at the school all took Honors Option English and Social Studies courses (Bavis, 2017). In Rockville Centre, New York, the district began by removing just the lowest track in each subject and then, after a few years, removed the track above that and then the track above that (Burris, 2014).

At some schools, rather than the entire school detracking, individual departments have taken on the initiative. Kelly (2007) and Kelly and Price (2011) found that departments within individual schools varied in their level of tracking and that their level of tracking changed over time. Watanabe and colleagues (2007) described how teachers in the chemistry department at one high school gradually decreased the number of levels of courses that they offered. The department was, as of 1997, offering four levels of chemistry. By 2002, the department was offering only chemistry and AP chemistry. That initiative developed because of the work of two committed teachers who worked to create new, effective chemistry curriculum for heterogeneous classes and who lobbied for detracking. In two cases studies, Boaler and Staples (2008) and Staples (2008) studied a detracked math department at a tracked high school. The teachers in this math department had worked together to develop innovative curriculums and teaching approaches that allowed their program to thrive in the context of their tracked school.

Inclusion. Just as parents, teachers, and administrators in some districts have examined ways to reform or eliminate the tracking system, advocates have also looked for ways ensure that more students with special needs are included in general education classrooms. According to the federal agencies overseeing special education, an included student is one who is spending 80% or more of their day in general education and inclusion refers to the percentage of time that students with special needs spend in general education (OSERS, 2017). Advocates however see

inclusion more broadly. They see inclusion as "about embracing everyone and making a commitment to provide each student in the community, each citizen in a democracy, with the inalienable right to belong" (Falvey & Givner, 2005) and as an "environment in which every student, including those who do not have disabilities, has the opportunity to flourish" (Inclusive Schools Network, 2015). Advocates see inclusion not just as the physical location where students are served but as their opportunities to be part of a classroom community.

The practice of inclusion. While the initial special education law passed in the 1970s included language about the Least Restrictive Environment, it wasn't until 1986 that the federal government offered guidance about schools' duty to try to serve students with moderate and severe needs in general education as well (Stainback & Smith, 2005). It was in the late 1980s that the inclusion movement gained steamed and encountered resistance. In their analysis of editorial pages in national newspapers from the years following Brown and the late 1980s, Ferri and Connor (2005) found that the message was often to proceed with caution. Rather than directly opposing inclusion, many writers urged that it be done slowly and described the vast differences between students with special needs and their general education peers. The authors view the resistance to desegregation, the overrepresentation of students of color in special education, the more restrictive placements of students of color in special education, and the emphasis on extreme differences between students with special needs and their general education peers as ways that an exclusionary status quo is maintained.

While Ferri and Connor (2005) found these themes in editorial pages, Abu El-Haj and Rubin (2009) found them in the classrooms. Teachers' fixed beliefs about intelligence and the role of students' race, backgrounds, and disability status on their ability to succeed at school have, in both authors' research, undermined inclusion and tracking reforms. They argued that

unless the underlying beliefs of teachers were addressed, equity-based reforms were doomed to fail. Unlike detracking, the amount of time that students with special needs spend in general education classrooms has been steadily increasing. As with tracking reforms, challenges remain, especially for students of color.

Co-teaching. While inclusion is the philosophy behind increasing the general education exposure of students with disabilities, co-teaching is a common practice that schools use to serve students with disabilities in general education settings. Co-teaching is an instructional practice in which a general education and special education teacher "jointly deliver… instruction to a diverse group of students" (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010, p.11). Co-teaching initially developed out of the inclusion movement and out of federal laws as a way to increase general education access for students with disabilities. Co-teaching however grew enormously in popularity and frequency after the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act of 2001. NCLB required that students be taught by highly qualified teachers and held schools accountable for the test scores of students with disabilities (Friend et al., 2010). In secondary schools, that meant that students with special needs now needed to be served by teachers who deeply knew the subject content as well as how to serve students with special needs. Despite the increase in popularity of co-teaching, general education teachers who work with students with special needs still report that it is the least common way their students receive support, behind one to one support and small group support for their students, leading researchers to conclude that there is still room for growth for the model (Kilanwoski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010).

While co-teaching has grown in popularity as a model, research on how effective it is for students is mixed or missing. While teachers, administrators, and students often describe the model as beneficial for students (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie,

2007; Wilson & Michaels, 2006), research on how the model impacts students has been less common. In 2001, Murawski and Swanson conducted a meta-analysis of studies on the impact of co-teaching on student outcomes. While they found a moderate effect size for co-teaching, they used only 6 of the 89 studies that they found due to a lack of strong research on the impact of co-teaching. In 2009, Hang and Rabren found that students with special needs in co-taught classrooms had improved scores on standardized tests relative to other students and their baseline, but that their attendance at school decreased. In 2010, Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, and Shamberger described the evidence base on the impact of co-teaching on student outcomes as mixed and wrote about the need for more research. The authors described the current state of research as "an incomplete knowledge base" (p.18) and said that much research thus far has focused on concerns about the implementation of the model, a concern echoed in textbooks on special education (Cook, McDuffie-Landrum, Oshita, & Cook, 2011).

Those concerns, and the ambiguity in the research, could be because of the wide variations in how co-teaching is implemented. Co-teaching models in the classroom vary from one teach, one assist to teaming. One teach, one assist is a model where one teacher delivers the instruction while the other provides individual students with support. Teaming is a model where both teachers deliver instruction to the whole class and where instructional responsibilities are shared (Friend et al., 2010). In 2007, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie published a metasynthesis of 32 qualitative studies on co-teaching. Across the 32 studies, one teach and one assist was the primary co-teaching model found in 24 of the studies. In those studies, the general education teacher provided the content instruction while the special education teacher provided support to individual students, often functional as an aide in the classroom. In five of the studies teachers used a combination of co-teaching models. Team teaching was the dominant model in

only three studies. Scruggs and colleagues also discussed the aide role that many special education teachers took on and the challenges that they faced with expertise and with turf.

Special education teachers often feel relegated to the sidelines in their co-taught classrooms because of the tensions from state testing, their lack of expertise in the subject area, or because of the general education teacher's desire to maintain control over their classroom. Mastropieri and colleagues (2005) found that high stakes testing changed instruction in classrooms and impacted how easily co-teachers were able to share power and innovate with instruction. Beyond high stakes testing, content knowledge and turf have both also been found to be constraints on effective co-teaching. Weiss and Lloyd (2003) found that almost all teachers in their study participated in a one teach and one assist model and the teachers described uncertainty with the content or feeling unwelcome in the general education teacher's classroom. In another study, a frustrated general education math teacher said this about his special education co-teacher, "I cannot plan with the co-teacher because the concepts are above her abilities" (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008). The lack of content knowledge on the part of the special education teacher and the frustration and judgments of the general education teacher had made this a dysfunctional relationship.

Furthermore, Scruggs and colleagues (2007) found that some teachers did not want the special education teacher to interrupt their lesson, did not want to adjust their instruction to better accommodate students with learning differences, or just preferred that the special education teacher handle all behavior management and modification needs that arose in the classroom so that they could continue to deliver instruction. Given that the teachers in the studies analyzed by Scruggs and colleagues were largely selected as strong models of co-teaching and that these

problems were so commonly noted, the researchers argued that co-teaching currently is problematic.

In addition to these challenges, researchers have found the co-teaching does not necessarily lead to a change in instruction. When the general education teacher continues to use a whole group instruction format, co-teachers are more likely to be relegated to the sidelines and students with special needs are less likely to show growth under the model (Cook et al., 2011; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007). One special education teacher stated, “I don't feel I'm earning my money when they're doing a basic lecture" (Trent, 1998, p.506), as during those times she was not providing meaningful assistance to students. Researchers have found that in some co-taught classrooms special education teachers spend over 20% of their time just observing instruction and do clerical work or plan for an additional 8% of their time while in others special education teachers are spending over 30% of their time on noninstructional activities (Cook et al., 2011). In the classes where the instruction was primarily textbook based and whole group focused, special education teachers often have the role of providing temporary assistance to students with special needs or handling behavioral challenges rather than working as experts to make the curriculum more accessible for students (Scruggs et al., 2007). Given the challenges that currently exist with co-teaching, several researchers have studied what makes some co-teaching relationships work. Researchers have identified school elements, teacher characteristics, beliefs, and actions that are associated with strong co-teaching partnerships.

Context for co-teaching. The first element associated with stronger partnerships is a school context with administrative support for co-teaching (Scruggs et al., 2007). While administrative support can take a variety of forms, one that teachers in studies consistently identified as crucial was time to plan together. Many teachers believe that they need common

planning time with their teaching partners for the partnership to work (Friend et al., 2010; Hang & Rabren, 2009; Scruggs et al., 2007; Shamberger, Williamson-Henriques, Moffee, Brownlee-Williams, 2014; Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & McCulley, 2012). An additional element of administrative support that teachers identified as helpful was training (Scruggs et al., 2007; Solis et al., 2012). While some teachers expressed concerns about the effectiveness of training, most teachers in the studies Scruggs and colleagues analyzed expressed a desire for more training on co-teaching. Besides training and co-planning time, administrative support also took the form of providing resources to teachers. In their review of studies on co-teaching, Solis, Vaughn, Swanson and McCulley (2012) found that resources, including access to needed materials was an important aspect of success for co-teaching models. Beyond the contextual elements, researchers have also identified some teacher characteristics common in high-quality partnerships.

Teacher characteristics for co-teaching. When teachers are interested in co-teaching, knowledgeable about the curriculum, and willing to share turf, the partnerships tend to be stronger. When teachers choose to co-teach, rather than were forced into the practice, co-teaching works better (Isherwood & Barger-Anderson, 2008; Scruggs et al., 2007; Van Hover, Hicks, & Sayeski, 2012). Besides a desire to co-teach, researchers have also found that when special education teachers know the curriculum, there is often more power sharing in the classroom and the co-teaching relationship is stronger (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007; Weiss & Lloyd, 2007). A third teacher characteristic that researchers have found to strengthen co-teaching is the willingness of the general education teacher to share turf and to share power in their classroom (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007; Shamberger, 2014; Weiss & Lloyd, 2007). Finally, Nevin & Cramer (2006) found that more collaborative co-teaching teams were likely to be interested in learning new things and to share a dedication to

teaching. These individual characteristics all have been identified by teachers and researchers as essential to strong co-teaching relationships.

Teacher beliefs for co-teaching. In addition to these individual characteristics, researchers have also found that co-teachers benefit from having similar beliefs. Teachers whose beliefs about effective teaching, attitudes towards students, beliefs about inclusion, and beliefs about class time are more similar seem to more easily co-teach (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007; Trent, 1998; Van Hover et al., 2012). A teacher in Weiss & Lloyd's (2003) study stated, "in my eyes collaborative only works if the two teachers have the same type of teaching philosophy" (p.35). That sentiment was echoed by teachers in Pratt's (2014) study who felt that perceived compatibility was important for forming "peer mentoring relationship[s]" (p.7). One belief that helps co-teaching is a belief in the expertise of the other teacher. In many successful relationships, the teachers see the general education teacher as the content expert and the special education teacher as the expert on individual modifications, curriculum adaptations, or handling challenging behaviors of individual students (Mastropieri, 2005; Pratt, 2014; Trent, 1997). This belief that the other teacher has unique skills to bring to the partnership is part of a respectful and trusting partnership. These shared beliefs, school context, and teacher characteristics create the foundation for a strong partnership, but the partnership becomes stronger as teachers engage in relationship building activities.

Teacher actions for co-teaching. Co-teaching partners who communicate frequently, reflect on their instruction, maintain flexibility, and who utilize effective educational practices often have stronger partnerships. In focus groups, both general and special education teachers listed communication as the most important skill for collaboration (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012). In a grounded theory study of the development of strong co-teaching partnerships, Pratt

(2014) found that the teachers she studied engaged in open communication to overcome challenges, shared details of their personal lives with each other, and positively reinforced each other's successes in the classroom. This frequent communication helped build mutual trust and respect. Two co-teachers in a successful social studies collaboration described beginning their co-teaching by establishing ground rules for communication. When asked about the success of their model, both attributed it in large part to their ongoing communication and their similar beliefs (Van Hover et al., 2012). Pratt (2014) also found that teachers in mature co-teaching relationships would meet after lessons or talk during them about what went well and what could be changed for the next time that they taught the lesson. Teachers reflected on their roles and relationship as well as on how to improve their instruction.

In Pratt's (2014) study, this frequent communication and reflection was accompanied by an increase in their role flexibility. While teachers in some studies began co-teaching with a rigid delineation of duties and responsibilities, over time they grew to share power fluidly in the classroom. The longer that teachers had taught together, the more likely they were to indicate that they shared responsibility for deciding what to teach (Cramer & Nevin, 2006). In stronger partnerships, both teachers worked with small groups of students, supported individual students, handled discipline challenges, and instructed the whole class by either trading off sections of the lesson or by building on the instruction of the other teacher (Bouck, 2007; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Pratt, 2014; Van Hover et al., 2012).

In contrast to classrooms where lecture and whole group instruction predominate, these are often classes that are more student centered and where activities and materials are selected to engage students and to support all students (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Shamberger et al., 2014). These are also classrooms where teachers are more likely to engage in differentiation and peer

tutoring (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007). In one chemistry class, the teachers used peer tutoring and had students work in small groups or partners on labs for most of class. In this classroom, both teachers equally were able to support the small groups of students and to modify material as needed (Mastropieri et al., 2005). In a co-taught history class, the teachers worked together through a series of opening activities, graphic organizers, readings, and extension activities with students in a way that enabled them each to support all students in the classroom (Van Hover et al., 2012). By engaging in these innovative pedagogies, teachers created a classroom where both co-teachers were able to instruct and support students equally.

Although the research on co-teaching has highlighted problems with how the model is implemented in many classrooms, the research also illuminates the characteristics and conditions for true team teaching and collaboration. Yet, co-teaching is only one way to improve the outcome for students with special needs. For many students, just changing who is teaching is not enough, nor is just changing the structure of tracking at their school. They need for instruction itself to be changed.

Culturally Relevant Teaching. Rather than just focusing on where students are served, culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies focus on how students are being served. What and how are they being taught? What is the classroom environment like? How are they being supported and being encouraged to excel? These closely related pedagogies focus on the answers to these questions.

Theories of CRT. While the terms used to describe this set of teaching practices and teacher beliefs vary, the underlying intent of these theories is consistent. Each is predicated on the idea that for historically underserved students to excel, they need to be supported,

empowered, and given the tools to excel in a way that sustains, rather than overwrites, their cultural and familial identities.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) described three components of a pedagogy aimed at collective empowerment that she labelled culturally relevant teaching. These three components are academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. While in other writings, Ladson-Billings (1995b) framed the three pillars slightly differently as achievement, cultural competence, and cultural critique, her basic structure remains the same. To effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse youth, teachers need to give the students the tools they need to excel academically, to align their teaching and curricula with the lived experiences and histories of their students, and to explicitly discuss and empower students to critique the inequities within society (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; 1995b; 2009).

Gay (2018) defines culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogy aimed at the empowerment of students through "academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal advocacy" (p.142). She frames the pedagogy as validating, comprehensive and inclusive, multi-dimensional, empowering, emancipatory, humanistic, and normative and ethnical. While the components of her framework differ, she too emphasizes the importance of academic competence, of cultural alignment, of relevance, and of student empowerment.

Other researchers have adapted either definition of the pedagogy or the terms slightly to meet their needs. Hammond (2015) focuses on relationships between students and teachers and on using "cultural knowledge as a scaffold" (p.15) to help students connect new learning to old. Unlike Gay and Ladson-Billings, her work focuses less on empowerment in broader society and cultural critiques. Irizarry (2007) pushed back against the reductionist views of culture in earlier research by articulating a theory of cultural connectedness that focused on the hybrid identities of

urban youth and on the cultural connectedness of teachers from different ethnic and lived backgrounds than their students. Paris (2012) proposed culturally sustaining pedagogies as a new term to move past relevance and responsiveness. He argues that the goal is to sustain and support multicultural and multilingual student identities rather than just to respond to them. Further, he emphasizes the critical action and consciousness component of Ladson-Billings work, an aspect that has not always been emphasized in later work on CRT.

While this paper will draw on elements from multiple frameworks of culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogies, Ladson-Billings's emphasis on critical consciousness is integral to this work and so will be the primary frame used in looking at classroom practices. To truly understand classroom practices of CRT however, we need to examine the teacher beliefs, teacher characteristics, and teacher actions that researchers have found to underpin the pedagogy.

Teacher beliefs for CRT. Theoreticians and researchers studying CRT have highlighted a constellation of teacher beliefs that underlie effective enactment of the model. First, teachers must truly believe that all their students can succeed rather than seeing their students through a deficit lens (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). A teacher in Ladson-Billings' (2009) book exemplified this belief this when she said, "I think that children let too many people, like bad teachers, convince them that they are incapable of things…. They need challenges. They can do it!" (p.52). Rather than seeing her students as impaired, she sees them as capable, just waiting to be challenged. Second, teachers must believe in their efficacy in the classroom, a belief that their classroom actions determine the success of the students in their room (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). When a teacher said, "I'm just going to do what I need to do in order for my children to achieve" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.141) during an

interview, she was conveying her belief that her actions can determine the success of her students. That belief is in opposition to that of teachers who believe that the children's' families, communities, or own inherent limitations are what drive their success and failures (Abu El-Haj & Rubin, 2009; Hammond, 2014), and is essential to CRT. Finally, they need to feel that it is their responsibility to help students in their classroom achieve (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Gay distinguishes between caring for children and caring about them. Caring about children conveys a sense of empathy and compassion, but no action. Gay describes culturally responsive teachers as those who care for their students by accepting responsibility for them and taking action. That responsibility can extend beyond the classroom (Milner, 2011) or be shared with community and family members (Ladson-Billings, 2009), but that sense of responsibility remains (Morrison et al., 2008). These three beliefs, in the ability of all students to succeed, in teachers' efficacy, and in teachers' responsibilities to help all students succeed underpin CRT.

Teacher characteristics for CRT. In addition to identifying teacher beliefs that underlie CRT, researchers and theoreticians have also identified several key characteristics of teachers who effectively or strongly implement CRT. These characteristics cluster around teachers' knowledge, passion, awareness, and reflectiveness. Before beginning, it is worth noting that researchers are quick to point out that effective CRT does not require the teacher to be of the same race or background as students and that race of teacher is not an indicator of effective CRT (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). In fact, Gay (2018) contends that arguments about the need for a cultural match between teachers and students often is a form of professional racism that limits teachers of color and abdicates responsibility for students of color.

Effective culturally relevant teachers understand their own cultural beliefs and lenses and understand the sociopolitical context in which their students' schools and lives are situated. Hammond (2015) describes teachers learning their own beliefs and lenses as the "inside-out" work of teaching. Other researchers discuss the importance of teachers learning to understand their own cultural beliefs which can shape how they see students' peer interactions, their behaviors, and their personalities (Bonner, 2014; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Gay (2018) describes "cultural self-awareness and consciousness-raising for teachers" (p.81) as a critical element of CRT. Because CRT is predicated on culture, effective teachers have a deep understanding of their own culture and background that they can draw on in creating a classroom climate that is supportive of all students. In addition to knowing their own backgrounds, these teachers have what Ladson-Billings (2009) describes as sociopolitical awareness and Hammond (2014) describes as sociopolitical consciousness. This is the awareness that power and privilege are unevenly distributed within society (Gay, 2018). In order for teachers to help students see power and challenge inequities, the teachers first must understand the inequities themselves.

In addition to understanding their own beliefs and the broader power structure of society, culturally relevant teachers must also both deeply know and have passion for the content that they are teaching (Bonner, 2009; 2014; Bonner & Adams, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009). All three teachers profiled in Bonner's (2014) grounded theory study of culturally responsive math instruction began from a foundation of deep understanding of the math content. When the high school social studies teacher profiled in Choi's (2013) study began redesigning curriculum for his students, he began with a deep dive into content, reading multiple religious texts and seeking first to make himself an expert in the content. By understanding the content itself, these teachers were positioned to support the academic excellence of their students. While not highlighted in

other theories of CRT, Ladson-Billings (2009) also emphasizes that culturally relevant teachers are passionate about their content as well as knowledgeable about it.

The final characteristic of culturally relevant teachers highlighted in the research is their reflectiveness and desire to improve. Gay described her own teaching practice saying, "I welcome the uncertainty and imperfection as invitations to be imaginative and innovative" (Gay, 2018, p.273). Bonner (2009) described a teacher in her study who would change a lesson during class or between classes if she felt that it wasn't resonating with students. Martell (2013) wrote a self-study of his practices in his social studies classroom to reflect on what he had done well and how he could improve as a culturally relevant educator. When describing culturally relevant teachers, Ladson-Billings (2009) writes that they see teaching "as an art" (p.28). Like artists, these teachers are all working to refine their skills and to improve their instruction. These characteristics of culturally relevant teachers, their knowledge of themselves and inequities in society, their understanding of and passion for the content, and their reflectiveness enable their implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Teacher actions for CRT. It is however in their actions within their classroom that culturally relevant teachers empower, support, and challenge their students to excel. Without these actions, teachers' beliefs and characteristics will not impact student outcomes. These actions consist of implementing relevant curriculum and lessons, of presenting curriculum in accessible ways, of creating a supportive environment, of holding students to high expectations, of building bridges between home and school, and of empowering students. It is through these actions that teachers can help students excel academically and to critique and change the inequalities within society.

Content. The first set of teacher actions revolves around the choice, development, and implementation of relevant curriculum and lessons. One teacher said, “I can't feed them a steady diet of cute little animal stories and happy middle-class kids. Their experiences have to be a part of our curriculum too (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.57). Ladson-Billings describes the power that teachers have over the curriculum used in their classrooms, a power that culturally relevant teachers take advantage of. One way that they do this is by challenging or supplementing the textbook. While textbooks have decreased in blatant racism and stereotypes, they still often fail to represent the history and present reality of many people of color (Gay, 2018). Rather than viewing the textbook as the ultimate source of authority, culturally relevant teachers often encourage students to think critically about the textbook (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison et al., 2008) and supplement the textbook with their own materials. Culturally relevant teachers often provide multiple texts for students to read (Choi, 2013; Morrison et al., 2008), use teacher created reading materials (Martell, 2013), or have students bring in curriculum related materials from home (Morrison et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009).

Beyond the textbook and the reading materials, culturally relevant teachers make students’ lived experiences part of the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and connect students’ learning to their lives outside of school (Gay, 2018). The teacher profiled in Choi’s (2013) study did this by redesigning the curriculum to focus on the cultures and heritages of his students. In his self-study, Martell (2013) described changing his instruction to include the histories and experiences of the diverse students in his U.S. history course. Teachers also use examples from students lives when teaching concepts (Morrison et al., 2008), use metaphors from students’ lives to connect the material to them (Hammond, 2015), draw diagrams comparing and contrasting the lives of one of their students with a character in a story (Ladson-Billings, 2009), and let students

create raps in the classroom (Irizarry, 2007). In these ways, big and small, culturally relevant teachers connect the class material to the lives of their students.

Delivery. Having relevant curriculum and materials is not enough for students to learn the content. They also need high-quality instruction delivered in a linguistically and potentially culturally congruent manner. In studies of culturally responsive classrooms, researchers have described multimodal instruction, modeling, academic scaffolding and metacognitive supports, frequent feedback, first language supports, and frequent use of group work.

The multi-modal instruction researchers noted featured strong visual supports, incorporation of movement and music, and hands on activities. Culturally relevant teachers often create visually rich environments and pair their written and oral instruction with visual supports (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Choi, 2013; Gay, 2018). They also build movement into instruction by incorporating it into lessons (Bonner & Adams, 2012), by allowing freedom of movement in the classroom (Morrison et al., 2008), or by frequently moving around the classrooms themselves (Bonner & Adams, 2012). These teachers also often use music in the classroom by incorporating music and rhythm into the instruction itself, such as when teachers have students incorporate clapping into a math review or sing some part of the content (Bonner & Adams, 2012; Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). Some teachers also build in hands on activities in order to give their students even more ways to access the curriculum (Morrison et al., 2008). Students are not learning just through reading textbooks but through music, pictures and videos, movement, and through engaging in hands on activities.

In addition to delivering multi-modal instruction, culturally responsive teachers frequently make their instruction more accessible to students through modeling, scaffolding, offering wait time, and providing metacognitive supports. Teachers model both the behaviors

they want students to exhibit in the classroom and how to do the academic task itself, sometimes modeling the activity themselves and sometimes having peers engage in modeling (Milner, 2011; Morrison et al., 2008). In addition, some culturally responsive teachers scaffold students' learning by determining where they are and beginning the instruction there (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and chunk information as needed to give students processing time (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). Another component of this is providing wait time after asking a question or giving a direction to ensure that as many students as possible in the classroom have time to think of answers and articulate questions (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009). These practices are paired in some classrooms with explicit instruction to students on how to learn and providing the students the metacognitive tools that they need to become independent learners (Hammond, 2015; Morrison et al., 2008). Doing this requires that teachers be flexible, that they know where the lesson is going but also are willing to adjust to ensure student learning (Bonner, 2009; Bonner & Adams, 2012). While not found in every study of culturally relevant teachers, these teachers' actions of modeling, scaffolding, and metacognitive instruction all are ways that teachers can help students achieve academic excellence.

The instructional support strategies that these researchers have seen culturally relevant teachers engage in are often accompanied by teacher actions of providing students with high-quality feedback and holistic assessments. Ladson-Billings (2009) describes the tension between letting students feel successful without deceiving them about their areas of need. Hammond (2015) draws on earlier researchers in describing the high-quality, wise feedback that she feels exemplifies CRT. This feedback is formative, timely, specific, frequent, and provided in a way that doesn't cause stress for the student. It is also feedback that makes clear to students that the teacher views them as capable of reaching high expectations. This feedback fits into what some

researchers have observed about assessment in a culturally relevant classroom. Rather than relying just on test scores to know students, culturally relevant teachers often engage in multidimensional assessment, using multiple formats, and drawing on multiple sources of data (Gay, 2018; Morrison et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009). The frequent feedback and rich assessment data that these culturally relevant teachers gathered provides them with another way to help students excel academically.

Beyond multimodal instruction, assessment, and instructional supports, many culturally relevant teachers also make curriculum accessible and success attainable through linguistic support. For students who speak languages other than English at home, this can take the form of letting students use their native languages in the classroom for social reasons, academic support, or building comprehension (Bonner, 2014; Choi, 2013; Morrison et al., 2008). For students who speak dialects of English at home other than standard English, this can take the form of allowing for a variety of discourse styles in class and sensitively presenting instruction in standard English (Bonner & Adams, 2012; Gay, 2018; Irizarry, 2007). Rather than viewing one form of English or one language as better than another, Gay (2018) recommends focusing on helping students learn the circumstances when one language or dialect is more appropriate than another. Teachers in Ladson-Billings (2009) book focused on helping students understand that their dialects were valid while also teaching them standard English so that they could draw on it when needed. A teacher said that "When I put it in the context of translation, they get excited" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.91). Rather than ignoring or denigrating students' home languages and dialects, these culturally responsive teachers brought them into the classroom and validated them while also providing students with explicit instruction in standard English. Gay (2018) describes the close relationship between language and culture and between communication and teaching. By

supporting students' home languages, these teachers are validating their culture and making the instruction communicatively accessible for more students.

A final way that culturally relevant teachers often make academic excellence more accessible for their students is by building in frequent group work. Hammond (2015) describes the importance of cooperation in collectivist cultures. Gay (2018) describes the emphasis on cooperation, collaboration, and community in many cultures. Both contend that by bringing these elements into the classroom, teachers make their instruction more culturally congruent for their students. One way that culturally relevant teachers make their classrooms culturally congruent for more students is by building in group work. These groups are often structured to be cooperative (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009) and involve students working collaboratively during class time (Choi, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison et al., 2008), building students interdependence and community. While cooperative and collaborative group work is beneficial to a wide variety of students, its connections to many students' home cultures makes it an important element of a culturally relevant classroom. The practices of bringing in students' home languages and including cooperative learning are often framed in CRP literature as key elements of cultural competence, along with knowing both the student and working to understand their culture. Here these teacher actions have been folded into teachers' actions of content delivery, knowing students, and building bridges.

Rather than simply choosing relevant materials and curriculum for their students, culturally relevant teachers are delivering the content in a way that makes it accessible to students. This can include providing students linguistic supports, giving them opportunities to work collaboratively, and providing multi-modal instruction, high quality feedback, and instructional supports. The manner in which culturally relevant teachers deliver their instruction

and structure their lessons builds on the relevance of their classroom materials and lays the groundwork for student success. That success however is dependent on the classroom environment that the teachers create and the relationships that they build with students, an area that many CRT researchers have identified as vital to strong, culturally responsive teaching.

Environment. Researchers studying CRT often focus on the warm classroom environments that they observe and the strong relationships between teachers and students. Culturally responsive teachers create an environment conducive for learning by knowing their individual students, building relationships with students, demonstrating caring for students, being accessible for students beyond the classroom, positively reinforcing their behaviors and learning, and respectfully handling behavioral challenges. In terms of the physical space of the classroom, researchers have described it as organized (Hammond, 2015), as sometimes filled with music (Santamaria, 2009), and as featuring multicultural art and decorations (Gay, 2018; Morrison et al., 2008). In terms of the environment, researchers have described it as warm and safe and as a community of learners (Choi, 2013; Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Creating that rich learning environment for many culturally relevant teachers begins with knowing their students.

Culturally relevant teachers are frequently described as deeply knowing their individual students. For the teacher in Choi's (2013) study that meant knowing the challenges they face at home, and for the teacher in Milner's (2011) study that meant knowing the students' individual stories. A student interviewed in one study said that "Mr. Talbert is the first teacher to ever care about where I'm from and what I'm about. That's love." (Irizarry, 2007, p.26). Another teacher described the cause of discipline problems as being teachers' lack of knowledge about their students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These teachers also sometimes engaged in what Hammond

(2015) described as a pedagogy of listening where they focused on learning about their students, personally as well as academically (Bonner, 2009; 2014; Bonner & Adams, 2012; Gay, 2018). This learning about students often included understanding the students' cultures and backgrounds as well as the context of their lives (Bonner, 2014; Gay, 2018). Many teachers then used these forms of knowledge about their individual students to build strong relationships with them.

Many teachers were described as connected to their students, in partnership with them, or as having strong relationships with them (Bonner, 2009; 2014; Bonner & Adams, 2012; Milner, 2011). Teachers created these relationships through knowing their students and through personal conversations. Two teachers studied felt that it was important for students to know them as individuals as well as teachers and told personal stories and shared life details with their students (Irizarry, 2007; Milner, 2011). They spoke to students about their lives outside of school and sometimes did home visits (Morrison et al., 2008), demonstrating an interest in the students' lives (Brayboy & Castagno, 2007).

Beyond demonstrating an interest in students' lives, many of these teachers also demonstrated caring for their students. A teacher said about one of her students, "He's strong and beautiful but fragile. I have to build a safe and secure place for him and let him know that we - the class and I - will be here for him" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.120). This teacher cares about her student and shows it through her actions in a way that Hammond (2015) describes as affirming the personhood of the child. Another teacher told her students that "Every weekday morning when I wake up I know I'm on my way to work with the most important people in the world" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.41). Finally, a third teacher said to the researcher, "I care about everybody; I love them all...just like I would my own [biological children]" (Milner, 2011).

Other teachers demonstrated their caring through being there for students outside of the classroom. One teacher invited her students to join her for lunch while others saw their students at church or in girl scouts or were just available to support their students outside of regular class hours (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Morrison et al., 2008). Teachers further reinforced their caring for students by providing the students with positive reinforcement, celebrating their success and affirming them as learners (Hammond, 2015; Morrison et al., 2008). The warm, supportive environment of many of these teachers' classrooms was enabled by their strong relationships with students and backed by the caring that they demonstrated for the students.

In these teachers' classrooms, the caring persisted even when students struggled behaviorally. When a student was struggling with engagement in the class Milner (2011) studied, the teacher asked the student about basketball and eventually began to shoot hoops with him as a way to build their rapport and to increase the student's engagement. A teacher in Bonner's (2014) self-reflected when negative behaviors occurred, looking for ways to strengthen student engagement and the environment so the behavior did not repeat. Another teacher used the curriculum itself to redirect students. Instead of calling out students on their behaviors, this teacher would ask a curriculum-based question to get the student on track (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Other teachers approached behavior more directly, having students call their parents (Bonner, 2014), being strict (Morrison et al., 2008), or being "tough and tak[ing] no stuff" (Gay, 2018, p.80). While the behavior management styles of these teachers varied, each followed Ladson-Billings' (2009) description of discipline in a culturally relevant classroom, "Even when students were reprimanded, their dignity and basic humanity were not attacked" (p.74). These teachers maintained the dignity of their students, created warm environments, and built strong

communities. They did this while maintaining high expectations for their students and pushing their students to live up to those expectations.

High expectations. The teachers in these studies believed that their students were capable of success and acted on those beliefs. Hammond (2015) describes it as a balance between care for students and pushing students to excel, while Brayboy and Castagno (2008) describe it as encouragement and challenge, and Gay (2018) describes it as "being academically demanding but personally supportive and encouraging" (p.63). In individual classrooms, that looked like setting goals with students (Hammond, 2015), posting goals for students (Santamaria, 2009), providing multiple opportunities for success (Milner, 2011), working individually with students to push their thinking (Bonner, 2014), and tightly monitoring the progress of individual students (Morrison et al., 2008). Many of these teachers also held the students accountable for meeting those high expectations. The teacher in Bonner's (2009) study would call home and call out students who were not working to their potential. A teacher who combines high expectations and high supports is called a warm demander in some studies (Bonner, 2009; Gay, 2002; Hammond, 2015). However, a warm demander is also defined as someone with a no-nonsense discipline policy and a high-structure and high-discipline class (Bonner, 2014). Because of the ambiguity in usage, the term warm demander will not be used in this study. Regardless of terminology, researchers have consistently found that culturally relevant teachers have high expectations for their students and that they support students in reaching those expectations.

Building bridges. Rather than working in isolation, many culturally relevant teachers draw on students' families and members of the community as a resource in helping students meet those high expectations. Teachers in these studies have created night courses for parents (Bonner & Adams, 2012), given parents their phone numbers (Ladson-Billings, 2009), invited parents

into the classroom or visited them in their homes (Morrison et al., 2008), and reached out proactively to parents (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Bonner, 2014). This outreach to families is part of a broader sense of respect for families and desire to collaborate with parents and community members that researchers have identified in many culturally relevant teachers (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Gay, 2018). Rather than seeing their classroom as an isolated bubble, many of these teachers embraced the wider community of school, neighborhood, and family. Some teachers led Girl Scout troops and Sunday service lessons (Ladson-Billings, 2007), while others lived in the community (Irizarry, 2007), and others arranged community events that welcomed parents (Bonner, 2009). They reached out to the community and to parents and in turn many parents spoke highly of these teachers (Bonner 2009; 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The work that many of these teachers engaged in of building bridges and of helping students meet high expectations was part of a broader objective of empowering students.

Empowering students. Many of these teachers engaged in what Ladson-Billings (2009) described as an education for liberation. They empowered students in their classroom through giving students' choice, elevating their voices, and sharing power with them. They raised the students' sociopolitical consciousness, engaged in challenging conversations with them, and prepared them to take action in their lives and in their communities.

Rather than viewing their classrooms as top down operations, many of these teachers gave students power in the classroom. Within constraints, teachers offered students choices of topics, of resources, and of interest (Gay, 2018; Morrison et al., 2008). They elevated students voices by encouraging student talk (Hammond, 2015), using student presentations (Choi, 2013), asking open ended questions (Morrison et al., 2008), and leaving space in the day for students to express their curiosity and to inquire (Gay, 2018). More broadly, the teachers shared power with

the students. They built activities around student interests, had students help shape the curriculum (Morrison et al., 2008), encouraged students to drive the lessons through asking questions, sharing thought processes, and being inquisitive (Bonner, 2014). One teacher went to the back of the class, called a student to the front and said, “Alright you’re the teacher… Teach me how to do it” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.66). While not seen in every study, this focus on giving students’ power within the classroom is an important piece of the theory on CRT.

For some teachers, giving students power in the classroom was only the first step of empowerment. Some of the teachers built students’ sociopolitical consciousness and prepared them to act in the world. Both Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018) emphasized the importance of helping students understand power in society. Morrison and colleagues (2008) described this as making power visible. Teachers did this by engaging in controversial and challenging conversations, including explicitly discussing race and power in the classroom (Choi, 2013; Milner, 2011; Morrison et al., 2008) and by bringing multiple perspectives into their instruction (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Choi, 2013; Gay, 2018). For Ladson-Billings (2009) however, this consciousness raising should go further into a “collective struggle against the status quo” (p.120). Some teachers did this by supporting their students in serving the community, focusing on their roles as citizens, and preparing them for work beyond the class (Morrison et al., 2008). Yet, while this aspect of CRT is integral to both Gay’s (2018) and Ladson-Billings’ (2009) definitions, it is also the least seen in practice. In a study on the enactment of CRT, Young (2010) found that teachers avoided challenging topics, focused on feel good curriculum, and saw sociopolitical consciousness as being in tension with the content standards and testing, which was the teachers focus

Challenges. While these teacher actions of implementing CRT are powerful, in practice not all of them are implemented. Young (2010) described a watering down of CRT, a concern echoed by Paris (2012) in his drive to rename CRT into culturally sustaining pedagogy. Young (2010) described a feel-good curriculum and Paris (2012) compared relevance to tolerance as a term that is weak and fails to capture the power for change within CRT. Furthermore, researchers consistently point to standardized testing and the drive for test scores as a force that undermines CRT in even the classrooms of advocates (Gay, 2018; Irizarry, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Student impact. Despite these challenges, CRT continues to have potential to positively impact outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In their metasynthesis of studies, Aronson and Laughter (2016) found that CRT had a positive impact on students' academic skills as well as on their motivation and engagement. Larson, Pas, Bradshaw, Rosenberg and Day-Vines (2018) found, in their mixed methods study that observed enactment of CRT led to an increase in positive student behaviors, even once the researchers controlled for proactive behavior management. Students in one classroom expressed their appreciation for the relevant content, telling the teacher, "Thank you for the respect" (Choi, 2013, p.15). Students in Martell's (2013) self-study reported that the inclusive content led them to see additional opportunities for themselves today. The teachers that Ladson-Billings (2009) observed were identified as highly effective by parents and principals alike. Similarly, Bonner (2009; 2014) selected her teachers because of their reputations for effectiveness. While CRT has challenges in its implementation, it has the potential to meaningfully impact the education of historically underserved students.

Finding synergy. While disability is more than another aspect of student diversity (Anastasiou, Kauffman, & Michail, 2016), the challenges faced both by culturally and

linguistically diverse students and students with special needs in our schools calls for a closer examination of the potential overlap and differences between models designed to address the needs of each group. Co-teaching and CRT, while designed for different groups, have the potential to work synergistically to support the classroom success of all students.

Linguistically and culturally diverse students are overrepresented in special education, leading researchers to call for more CRT practices in special education (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2002; Sciuchetti, 2017; Shealey & Callins, 2007; van Garderen & Whittaker, 2006). Despite the articulated need for research on the overlap, empirical research on the topic is lacking. In reviewing fourteen articles on CRT in special education, including two literature reviews of studies on CRT in special education, I found only three articles focused on practicing teachers. One literature review focused on pre-service training (Webb-Johnson, Artiles, Trent, Jackson, & Velox, 1998) and the other found only eight empirical studies (Shealey et al., 2011). Of those eight, only three focused on practicing teachers and only one of those looked at implementation. However, that study by Daunic, Correa, and Reyes-Blanes (2004) focused on using a non-CRT measure to measure CRT. The researchers concluded that special education teachers were better at knowing individual students than general education teachers and that general education teachers were better at asking high level questions, which does not advance knowledge of CRT in special education classrooms. The second study of practicing teachers was a focus group study of three teachers, who might have taught special education or general education, and their responses to questions about disproportionality in special education (Jones-Goods & Brand, 2016).

The final research study was a survey of 344 special education teachers about their use of CRT and their efficacy (Chu & Garcia, 2018). Unfortunately, it was released close to when

Larson and colleagues (2018) released their findings showing very low correlation between teachers perceived efficacy with CRT and their actual enactment of the practice. The low number of available studies on CRT and special education, and the low quality of the empirical studies, highlights an enormous need for empirical research on CRT in special education classrooms. Given the growing popularity of co-teaching as a model for serving students with special needs, more research is needed on what CRT looks like in the context of a co-taught classroom.

The potential for synergy between the models is significant given the overlap in teacher characteristics, beliefs, and actions between the two. The overlap begins with teacher characteristics. Both models call for teachers who know the content and are passionate about it (Bonner, 2009; Mastropieri et al., 2005). A second overlap is the dedication of the teachers to the craft of teaching (Ladson-Billings, Nevin, & Cramer, 2006). A third is the willingness of teachers to share power. In co-teaching, the sharing of power is between two teachers and in CRT the sharing is between teachers and students, but both models rely on power sharing of some sort for success (Bonner, 2009; Scruggs et al., 2007). These three teacher characteristics are found across both models, as are several teacher beliefs.

While co-teaching research has focused on the importance of shared beliefs between co-teaching and CRT research has focused on underlying beliefs, there are still some overlaps. For example, co-teaching works best when the partners recognize and respect each other's expertise (Pratt, 2014). CRT works best when teachers see their students as experts who come in with their own set of knowledge (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015). Another potential overlap is a strengths-based view of students and belief in teachers' agency. While this has not been as examined in co-teaching literature, researchers studying special education inclusion have highlighted the importance of teachers' beliefs in their ability to impact the outcomes of students and the ability

to move beyond deficit views of students and families in making inclusion work (Abu-El Haj & Rubin, 2009). Similarly, researchers in CRT have repeatedly highlighted the importance of strengths-based views and teachers' sense of agency in implementing CRT (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Beyond these overlaps in teacher characteristics and beliefs, co-teaching and CRT also overlap in teacher actions.

There are three potential teacher actions where CRT and co-teaching could overlap. They are in instructional models, knowing students, and building bridges. The greatest overlap in teacher actions between the two models is in the movement away from whole group instruction. In classrooms where strong co-teaching is practiced, teachers are likely to use group work, peer tutoring, individual student support, and graphic organizers rather than to just rely on whole group, textbook based instruction (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007). Similarly, CRT researchers have stressed the importance of group work, peer experts, and skill building strategies (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Beyond this, CRT and co-teaching have the potential to overlap in knowing students and in building bridges. As Daunic and colleagues (2004) found, special education teachers are experts at knowing individual students and their needs, an expertise that benefits the general education teachers in co-teaching partnerships (Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007). That is a skill set needed for CRT, where knowing students is at the core of practice (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Furthermore, there is a potential overlap in building bridges to families and communities. While not discussed in the co-teaching literature, special education teachers are legally required to meet with students' parents at least once a year and to communicate with them more frequently than that (IDEIA, 2004). IEP teams have to work collaboratively with parents for IEPs to be signed. Despite this, some special education teachers have struggled with including parents

at meetings and treating them as partners (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014; Turnball et al., 2017). The need for teachers to build bridges to families is a part of CRT and of special education, highlighting another potential overlap between CRT and the instructional practice of having a general and special education teacher share a classroom. These overlaps between CRT and co-teaching highlight the complementary nature of the two models but it is in their differences that the synergistic possibilities appear.

CRT is at its essence about student empowerment and consciousness while co-teaching is about using two teachers to improve the educational experiences of students. Co-teaching focuses on the instructional techniques and the relationships and constraints afforded by having multiple, highly-trained adults in the classroom (Friend et al., 2010). Co-teaching allows a teacher who is an expert on knowing individual students and on modifying curriculum to meet students needs to pair with a content expert to improve instruction for students (Friend et al., 2010. Co-teaching can be seen as a method to enable to the high support emphasized in CRT literature and to help students set and reach goals. CRT emphasizes empowerment and action, a goal often ignored in co-teaching literature. While students with special needs are required to begin attending their own IEPs and are supposed to begin shaping their own transition plans by high school (IDEIA, 2004), special education programs have frequently been criticized for failing to teach students self-determination and self-advocacy (Alogzzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, & Eddy, 2005; Wehmeyer, 1996). CRT has the potential to add the empowerment and action elements that are often missing in special education back in.

While distinct, these two models have the potential to work together to improve the outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with special needs, and students with intersectional identities.

The gap in the literature. Despite the disproportionate number of culturally and linguistically diverse youth who receive special education services, research on culturally relevant teaching for these youth is sparse. Furthermore, researchers have rarely explored the nexus between co-teaching, tracking reforms, and culturally responsive teaching. This study is designed to address this gap in the literature using a researcher created model of CRT in a co-taught classroom.

Conceptual Framework

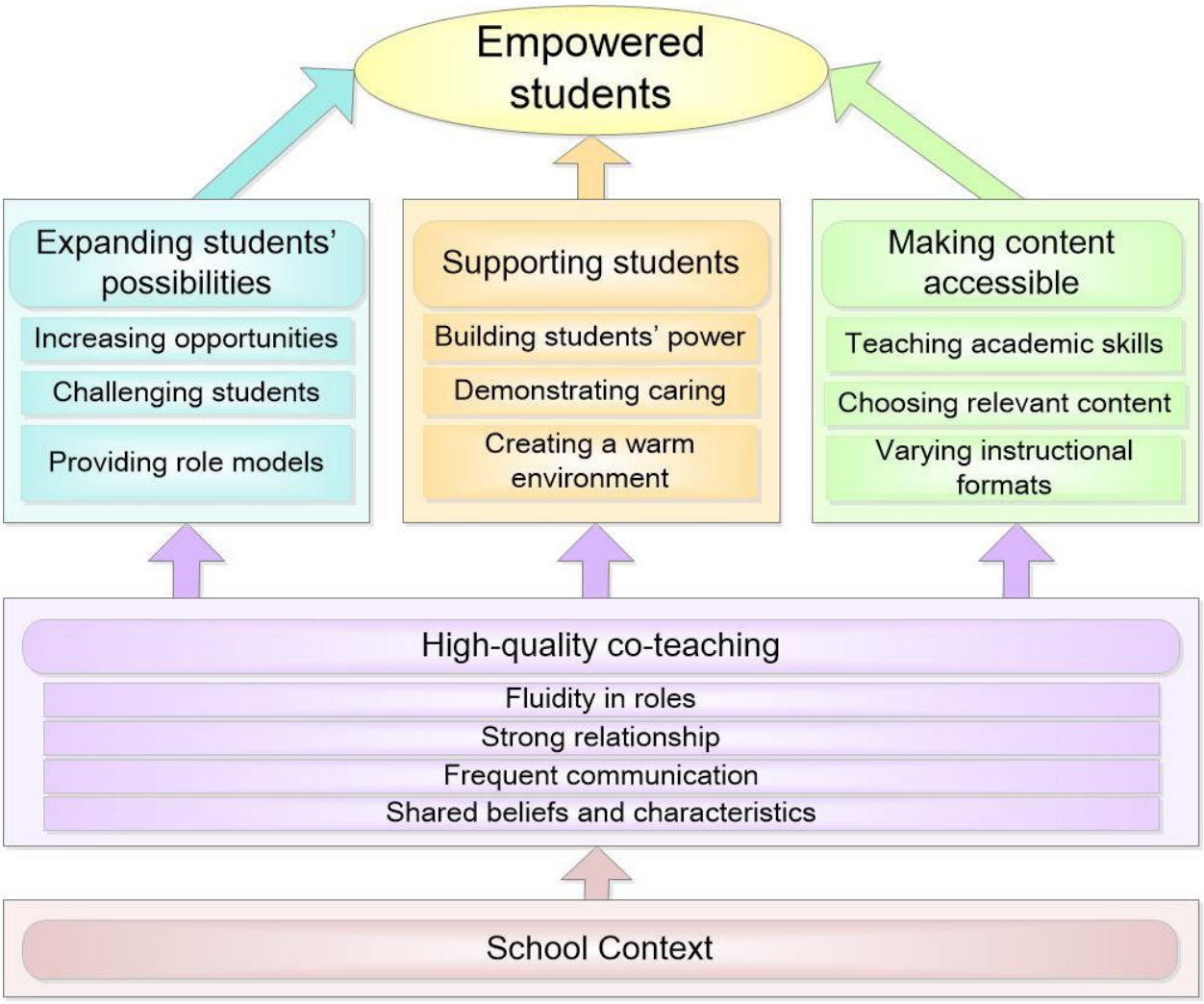

Figure 2.1. CRT in a co-taught classroom

As discussed in the previous section, CRT has the potential to improve the practice of special education and co-teaching has the potential to improve the implementation of CRT. Therefore, based on the literature and based on my own research, I propose a new model of CRT in a co-taught classroom (Figure 2.1). The goal of this model, in line with the goals of CRT as defined by Ladson-Billings (2009) and Gay (2018), is student empowerment. In this model empowerment has two components. The first is a student's ability to create change in the world.

The second is a student's ability to create change in their own lives, by setting and reaching goals. Teachers create the conditions for student empowerment through three pillars of teacher actions; making content accessible, supporting students, and expanding students' possibilities. Each pillar consists of three actions and each is supported and enabled by high-quality co-teaching. Finally, high-quality co-teaching itself relies on a supportive school context. School context is the base of the model, a base on which co-teaching rests. High quality co-teaching between a general and special education teacher in turns supports each of the three pillars. The pillars then help create the conditions for empowered students. Each element of the model has grounding in research on CRT and in my observations of CRT in a co-taught classroom, beginning with the foundation of the model.

School context. School context forms the base of the model. School context consists of both the broader culture of the school and how co-teaching is, or is not, supported at the school site. As discussed earlier in the chapter, researchers studying co-teaching have stressed the importance of administrative support for building strong co-teaching partnerships (Friend et al., 2010; Scruggs et al., 2007). These supports can include co-planning time, providing resources, training, and keeping partner teachers together over time. School culture is broader and includes institutional messaging about tracking, discipline norms, and equity.

High quality co-teaching. High quality co-teaching between a general and special education teacher is at the heart of the model. The actions and interactions of co-teachers are what enable the three pillars for empowerment. The four components of high-quality co-teaching highlighted in the model are also drawn from the literature. The first is shared teacher characteristics and beliefs. Teachers who have similar views on teaching and beliefs about students often teach better together (Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007; Trent, 1998). Based on

CRT research those common characteristics should include an awareness of power and privilege, a commitment to addressing those issues, and an avoidance of deficit views of students (Gay, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The second characteristic is frequent communication. This characteristic of high-quality co-teaching is drawn from research indicating that communication is at the heart of strong partnerships (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012; Pratt, 2014). The third characteristic is a strong relationship, meaning a relationship of mutual trust and respect (Pratt, 2014). The final characteristic is fluidity in roles. Fluidity in roles is defined as trading off roles in the classroom and sharing responsibility for students and for instruction (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Mastropieri et al., 2005). Taken together, the presence of these four characteristics indicates that the co-teaching partnership is powerful and could enable the instruction characterized in the three pillars.

Making content accessible. The first pillar for student empowerment is making content accessible. This pillar focuses on the instruction and curriculum used in the classroom. The first element of the pillar is varied instructional formats. Rather than lecturing students, the teachers give students opportunities to make meaning of the content and present information using a wide variety of modalities. The second element is the choice of relevant content. The teachers consciously choose materials that highlight people who look like their students and content that the teachers can connect to the lives of their students. The final element is teaching academic skills. Rather than ignoring the academic deficits of students, the teachers address those deficits by teaching students the skills they need to succeed, including the metacognitive skills for becoming an independent learner. Each of these three elements is drawn from literature on CRT (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009) and each is supported in the classroom by strong co-teaching. Special education teachers have unique expertise in addressing the individual

academic needs of students and in finding ways to make content accessible to more students. Co-teaching itself decreases the student to teacher ratio and can support small group work and individual support for students (Daunic et al., 2004; Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007). Each of these actions supports students' academic competence and helps build their academic skills. For students to achieve career and academic goals, many will need a strong academic foundation. Similarly, academic skills can support students in working to create change in society. By making content accessible to students, co-teachers in a culturally relevant classroom are helping create an educational environment conducive to student empowerment.

Supporting students. The second pillar is supporting students. In a culturally relevant co-taught classroom the teachers support students' social and emotional development as well as their academic development. The teachers do this first by creating a warm classroom environment. The teachers know their individual students and the students enjoy coming to class and feel safe. The teachers also demonstrate caring for their students by being there for them outside of class, listening to them, and treating them with respect even when redirecting their behavior. Finally, the third element of supporting students is building students' power. In these classrooms, the teachers engage in power sharing with the students by giving the students choice in the classroom, encouraging student talk, and treating students as experts. These three elements are all drawn from CRT research, (Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011; Morrison et al., 2008) and, as with making content accessible, are enhanced by co-teaching.

In many co-taught classrooms, general education teachers rely on the behavioral expertise of special education teachers (Scruggs et al., 2007). Special education teachers are often able to contribute unique knowledge of how to support students behaviorally, emotionally, and socially. In addition, the lowered student to teacher ratio in a co-taught classroom gives teachers more

freedom to address students' individual needs. Finally, the practice of power sharing at the heart of strong co-teaching creates a model for power sharing in the classroom and has the potential to transfer to power sharing with students. Strong co-teaching can enhance the support students receive in a classroom and that support in turn can help create conditions conducive for student empowerment. By increasing students' comfort and experience with making choices and having power, by giving students a safe space to grow, and by addressing students' non-academic needs, this pillar of supporting students contributes to student empowerment. Students need to feel safe to take risks (Hammond, 2015) and they need support to set and reach goals in their own lives, as well as to create change more broadly.

Expanding students' possibilities. The third pillar is expanding students' possibilities. While the other two pillars focus on developing students' academic skills and supporting socio-emotional growth, this pillar focuses on the ways that teachers expand what students think of as possible for themselves. This begins with role models. By providing students with role models of people who created change and people who set and achieved their goals, teachers plant the seeds for students to take on those actions in their own lives. These role models can be figures in stories or history or the models can be the teachers themselves. The second element is challenging students. By encouraging students to excel and raising the bar for them, teachers support students in setting and achieving ambitious goals. Teachers can also draw on students' families and the community in both challenging students and providing them with support. The final element is increasing academic and real world opportunities. In our society, students from different backgrounds have differing access to information about and opportunities to enroll in advanced academic opportunities. Teachers in a co-taught CRT classroom can help bridge that gap by providing students with information and connecting them to opportunities. Rather than

just increasing academic opportunities, the teachers also strive to expand students' real world opportunities by having them work on meaningful projects that address challenges in society.

While challenging students is discussed in the CRT literature (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015), the other two elements of this pillar are drawn more from my observations than from the literature. The importance of role models, whether known to the students or seen from a distance are touched on in CRT literature (Milner, 2011) but covered more extensively in other literature bodies (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1996; Yancey, Siegel, & McDaniel, 2002). Like the elements of the other two pillars, the elements of this pillar are also enabled and enhanced by co-teaching. Through their interactions with each other and the stories they tell, co-teachers can become role models for students. By providing students with more individual supports and through special education teachers' knowledge of individual students, co-teaching can support challenging students as well. Challenging students, increasing their opportunities, and providing them with empowered role models all directly support student empowerment.

Student empowerment. The model and the teacher actions embedded within it do not guarantee student empowerment, but they create the conditions for it within the classroom. Gay (2018) describes empowerments as a goal of Culturally Responsive Teaching. Her description of empowerment focuses primarily on personal confidence, academic competence, and the will to act (p.40), which is in alignment with the personal goal setting aspect of empowerment in this model. Ladson-Billings (1995a) instead describes a focus on critical consciousness, which includes students' awareness of societal equities. This model's focus on students' ability to take action however draws more heavily on Banks's (2008) model of multicultural education. In Banks's model, the highest level of multicultural education is the social action approach. Here students not only learn about problems but also take "personal, social, and civic actions related to

the concepts, problems, and issues they have studied" (p.49). The definition of empowerment in this model draws from all three researchers. The goal of the model is a classroom where students are given the tools and supports that they need to be empowered both in their own lives and in society.

The model in no way guarantees that students will be empowered, but it describes how teachers, through powerful co-teaching, can create conditions conducive to empowerment. The model builds both on the literature discussed throughout this chapter and findings of my qualitative case study, discussed in Chapter Four. The model is ultimately of just one classroom and one pair of co-teachers, but it has implications for other classrooms and pairs of co-teachers as well, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed several causes and potential solutions for unequal outcomes in schools. The first potential cause of unequal outcomes is the limitations that teachers place on students through their beliefs about and expectations for students (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009). The second is academic tracking, a process of sorting students that continues to disproportionately send students of color and students learning English to the lowest levels of courses (Burrs, 2014). The third is the process of special education placement, a process that has often excluded parents and resulted in unequal placement for students of color (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014). The exclusion of students with special needs from general education classrooms and the placement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in lower-levels of courses has a negative impact on both their experience of school and their academic outcomes (Cosier et al., 2013; Oakes, 2005).

In addition to causes, this chapter focused on several solutions. The first solution is tracking reforms. Tracking reforms can take the form of recruiting more diverse students into higher level courses or decreasing the number of levels of courses offered, often by eliminating the lowest levels of courses (Burris, 2014; Godley et al., 2014). While these two reforms have been successful in some schools and districts, they have also encountered challenges in others (Burris, 2014; Yonezawa et al., 2002). The second reform is inclusion. Inclusion encompasses both the amount of time students with special needs spend in general education classes and the quality of their experiences while there (Falvey & Givner, 2005). Inclusion is often accompanied by co-teaching, a practice of having a special education and general education teacher in the same classroom (Friend et al., 2010). While co-teaching has promise as an instructional technique, researchers have found significant challenges in its implementation as well (Scruggs et al., 2007).

The third reform is culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teaching includes an instructional focus on students' academic access, using their culture and lived experiences as a bridge to the curriculum, and developing students' sociopolitical awareness and empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 2009). While this reform too has had a positive impact for some students, implementation challenges also remain (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Young, 2010). While researchers have examined each of these three solutions, few have looked at the overlap between them. What does culturally relevant teaching look like in the context of a heterogeneous and co-taught classroom? The goal of this paper is to address this gap in the literature.

Chapter 3: Methods

In order to better understand the beliefs and practices of two co-teachers, I selected a single case design (Yin, 2018). In January and February of 2019, I interviewed and observed one Social Studies teacher and his special education co-teacher. The teachers were purposively sampled to maximize opportunities for developing concepts, finding relationships, and uncovering variation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The classroom that these teachers have created is a critical case for understanding what culturally relevant teaching looks like in a co-taught, high school classroom.

Research Design

Case studies are ideal for explanatory studies, ones in which the researcher seeks to understand how or why something is occurring (Yin, 2018). Given my interest in understanding teacher beliefs and practices in one co-taught classroom, I selected a case study for the project. Gerring (2004) defined a case study as "as an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (p.342). Gerring further describes researchers as making a trade off between knowing "more about less and knowing less about more" (p.348). Because I wanted to understand the beliefs and practices of one pair of co-teachers, a single case study allowed me to focus on knowing more about less, on knowing more about one case than less about a variety of cases. By studying this co-taught classroom, I gained insights that helped me understand co-teaching and culturally relevant teaching more broadly. The classroom was purposively sample as a site and case from which I could learn the most (Stake, 2005).

While the research design was driven by the research questions, it was also shaped by critical theory, a framework that influences how I view research. Critical theory combines a belief about the oppressive and exploitive nature of society with a belief in the possibility of society to change. Within critical theory, schools are viewed as historical sites of social and cultural reproduction that have the capacity to become sites of negotiation and resistance as well (Weiler, 1988). Critical research studies can look both at the hidden forces governing society, and the role of exploitation and oppression, while still exploring the possibilities created by human agency (DeMarrias & LeCompte, 1999). My desire to look at the contrasting forces of human agency and social reproduction in action helped lead me to a small scale, qualitative case study.

Sample

Washington High School. Washington High School (WHS) is a racially and economically diverse school in Virginia. In 2018 to 2019, the total enrollment was close to 2,000 students. Twenty-eight percent of students at the high school are economically disadvantaged according to the state. The state considers students to be economically disadvantaged if they receive a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL), receive Medicaid insurance, or receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) support. Fifty-seven percent of students at the school identify as White, 15% identify as Black and 14% identify as Latinx. Thirteen percent of students at the school receive special education supports and 10% are identified by the state as English learners.

WHS is a diverse school that continues to struggle with equity in course enrollment, in graduation and drop out rates, and in discipline. Course enrollment, as discussed in Chapter 1, remains skewed at WHS, with Black, Latinx, and low-income students, as well as students with

disabilities, underrepresented in Advanced Placement courses and in Advanced Studies diplomas. In addition to that, WHS has disparities in who graduates and who drops out of high school. In 2018, 99% of White students graduated from WHS and 1% dropped out of high school. Graduation and drop out statistics for Black, Latinx, and low-income students as well as those for students with disabilities lagged those of other students (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

WHS Graduation Rates

Demographic group	2018 On-time graduation rate	2018 Dropout rate
All students	94	5
Black	91	8
Latinx	70	25
Students with disabilities	92	8
White	99	1
Low-Income	85	12
English Learners	81	19

Similarly, discipline statistics reveal a pattern of disproportionate discipline at WHS. According to Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data, which is collected every two years, in 2015, 10% of Black, 12% of Latinx students, and 14% of students with disabilities attending the school received one or more days of in school suspension while only 1% of White students did. The disparities are even more stark for out of school suspension (Table 3.2). As with graduation and drop out rates, these number reveal a pattern of disproportionate treatment of students by race and disability status.

Table 3.2

Discipline Disparities at WHS

Demographic group	2015 Students receiving one or more out of school suspensions (% of enrolled students in that group)	2015 Students receiving one or more in school suspensions (% of enrolled students in that group)
All students	54 (3%)	75 (4%)
Black	23 (%)	31 (10%)
Latinx	18 (9%)	25 (12%)
Students with disabilities	38 (18%)	29 (14%)
White	13 (1%)	13 (1%)
Low-Income	--	--

The discrepancies continue with state exams. On the state exams, White students score above the school's average on all exams while Latinx, low-income, Black students, and students with disabilities score below the school's average. In Social Studies, in 2018 53% of Black students, 63% of Latinx students, 57% of low-income students, 65% of students with disabilities, and 87% of White students passed the state Social studies exams (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Percentage of Students at WHS Passing State Exams (aggregate)

Demographic group	2018 Reading exam	2018 Writing exam	2018 Math exam	2018 Social Studies exam
All students	86	89	73	78
Black	50	62	47	53
Latinx	67	76	76	63
Students with disabilities	58	66	41	65
White	95	96	96	87
Low-Income	61	66	59	57

As a racially and economically diverse school that has district initiatives to improve equity and a

principal committed to equity, WHS is an important site for this research.

Within the high school this study focuses on a pair of co-teachers in the social studies department. At WHS, the Social Studies department offers between three and four levels of World History, Government, and US History. The department is working to decrease the number of levels of courses offered in Social Studies for the 2019-2020 school year. The department is currently engaged in a conversation about how to effectively increase equity.

The program. The two teachers in this study, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner, co-teach in the Synthesis program at WHS. Synthesis began three years as a way to integrate U.S. History and English and to increase the inclusion of English learners. The school used to have segregated subject area courses for English learners, which the mixed-level Synthesis program replaced. For the first two years the program consisted of Dr. Sumner and Coach who co-taught the US History part of the class and another co-teaching pair who co-taught the English portion of the class. The four teachers met regularly and planned all major assignments and the structure of the course together. This year Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner began teaching a combined English and history Synthesis course. Rather than meeting for a period every other day with their students, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner see their students every day for a 75-minute block and combine the English and History instruction within their lessons. While they teach two sections of Synthesis, there is also a third section which is being taught by a second year history teacher, a different English teacher, and Coach Wilson. These teachers see their students every other day and, while they co-plan, the students continue to see separate teachers for English and history. The Synthesis course is considered Academic level and takes the place of an older, lower-level course that many students had taken. Students are also able to take the Synthesis class for Honors credit should they choose.

Currently, each of Coach's and Dr. Sumner's periods of Synthesis enrolls about 21 students, which is a fairly average class size for the high school. About four students in each period are taking the course for Honors credit. About one third of the students in each class are English learners, one third have IEPs, and the other third are neither. One student in the first period class has a one on one assistant and two students in the last period class have dedicated assistants. The student in the first period rarely interacts with his aide and the aide is typically not engaged in supporting instructional activities. The two students with aides in the last period typically receive significant support from the aides during class, sometimes according to the teachers, to the detriment of their independence. The majority of students with special needs in the class are served under the learning disabilities category although there are also students with emotional disturbances, Autism, and ADHD. Five or six of the ESOL students attend a dedicated ESOL class with Dr. Sumner and have been in the United States on average 1.5 to 3 years. Some of the other ESOL students have been in the United States for far longer, but Dr. Sumner notes that the ESOL students skew towards more recent immigrants as the administration wants them with an ESOL teacher for English and History.

Both classes have slightly more male students than female students and the classes are racially diverse. In one period, there are about seven White students, five Black students, seven Latino students, and one Nepali student. In the other class, there are about eight White students, seven Black students, and about six Latino students. These classes are more racially diverse than the school as a whole and far more diverse than the upper level classes. The students in AP Human Geography for example are almost all White.

The teachers. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner have been teaching together for three years. Coach is a Black man in his late thirties who has been a special education teacher and

head football coach at WHS for five years. For his first two years at the high school, he co-taught in Algebra 1 and taught a study hall class for students with disabilities. For the past three years, he has worked with Dr. Sumner in the Synthesis program. He currently co-teaches with Dr. Sumner two periods a day and then alternates between an English Synthesis class and a history Synthesis class for the other period. Coach Wilson was a coach for years before he became a certified teacher. After graduating from college, he pursued his dream of playing professional football and began coaching part time. That led to him taking substitute teaching jobs in local schools and eventually to pursuing a special education credential. Coach Wilson chose special education after receiving advice from his mentors that special education teachers, especially male special education teachers, were a high need for many schools. He taught special education for a year at a junior high school that he was coaching at before being offered a special education teaching and coaching job at WHS. Currently, he manages a coaching staff of ten, supports students in his classes, and manages a full case load of eleven students with special needs. Of his case load, only two students are in his Synthesis classes and he does not directly teach the nine other students.

Dr. Sumner is a White man in his early 40s who teaches Synthesis classes, English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes, and serves as chair for the school's ESOL department. Like Coach, Dr. Sumner did not pursue teaching in college. He majored in English and worked as a researcher for about a year before also moving into substitute teaching. He then went back for his masters and began working at a local high school as an ESOL teacher. He taught for two years at the high school, left and taught out of the country for a few years, came back and taught English for a few more years. He then left the classroom to pursue a doctorate and eventually came back to the district as an ESOL administrator. After working at the district level for a few years he

began teaching one period of ESOL a day. His experiences with that class led him to suggest and start the Synthesis program, which he has been teaching for the past three years. During his time back in the classroom he has won awards for his teaching excellence.

Researcher Access

I applied to access using the district's official channels. Once I gained access, I contacted the district's director of Social Studies for recommendations on which high schools to reach out to learn about tracking, equity, and teacher agency in the district. With his support, I chose and emailed the principal of Washington High School. After receiving site access, I contacted the department chair for advice and recommendations. The department chair sent out a brief study description to all teachers in the department. Dr. Sumner then emailed me about participating in the study. After my first classroom observation I reached out to his co-teacher, Coach Wilson, about also participating in the study. Based on my observations of the teachers, the study evolved from one of tracking and agency to a study of CRT in a co-taught classroom. Both teachers were offered $75 in classroom supplies as compensation for their time participating in the study.

Data Collection Strategies, Instruments

This study drew on observational and interview data of the two teachers, supported by classroom artifacts and archival information about the two teachers. I interviewed Teach A three times for fifty minutes per session, using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). I interviewed Coach Wilson three times for thirty minutes per session, also using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). After each interview, I immediately transcribed the notes and modified the protocol for the next interview based on comments made by the participants. I also modified each interview protocol based on comments the teachers made during class that I

wanted to follow up on.

Seidman (2006) describes interviewing as a relationship, one that is built over time. I scheduled the first round of interviews for a week after I began observing the classroom, scheduled the second round of interviews for the end of the week following that, and scheduled the last round of interviews during the fourth and fifth weeks of observations. By scheduling the interviews after I had been in the classroom multiple times and spreading them out over time, I strove to maximize my opportunities to build relationships with the teachers to add depth to the interviews. Seidman (2006) also recommends building a cautious rapport, one that begins with formality and common courtesies, including asking the participants whether they want to be called by their first name. Patton (2002) recommends beginning interviews with noncontroversial questions about current experiences and then segueing into questions about feelings and interpretations. I drew on both theories in designing my interview protocols, especially for the first interview where I focused on noncontroversial questions and maintained common courtesies.

I began the first interview for both teachers by asking about why they taught and their teaching careers. Then, in Dr. Sumner's interviews I asked background information about the classes that I was observing, including about enrollment, history of the course, placement of students into the program, and attendance. I also asked about the goals of the course, the difference between the Synthesis class and his ESOL class, projects the class has worked on, and classroom climate. With Coach Wilson, after asking about his background, path into teaching, and educational history, I focused on special education. I asked about the structure of his case load and of the school's special education program. As with Dr. Sumner, I ended the interview by asking about classroom climate and building relationships with students.

The second interviews for both teachers built both on the first interviews and on my observations. I asked both teachers about co-teaching, including their backgrounds and training and about their own definitions of tracking. With Coach Wilson, I also followed up on comments that he made in class about telling the untold story and breaking stereotypes and followed up on his passion for the content and goals for students. With Dr. Caver, I followed up on an advanced class recruitment event that he had organized, his beliefs about equity, and his perceptions of the current realities of his school.

In interview three, I asked both teachers about their perceived capacity to create change, their roles at the school, the successes and challenges of their classroom model, and their beliefs about special education inclusion. With Coach Wilson, I also followed up on his goals for students, comments he had made about plans for success for students, and comments he had made during class. With Dr. Sumner, I conducted his final interview after beginning analysis and I followed up both on specific instructional decisions in the classroom and on emerging themes from my analyses. In each interview, I worked to take advantage of the benefits of standardized interviews, which yield data that is easier to analyze and to compare across participants, with the benefits of more general and informal interviews, which allow the researcher to go more in depth and to be more responsive to what the interviewees are saying (Patton, 2002). Therefore, in each interview I combined carefully scripted, pre-written questions with responsive follow up questions based on comments made by the participants. Each interview was audio recorded on two devices and digitally transcribed using the TEMI platform. The digital transcriptions were then manually checked multiple times to ensure accuracy in transcription.

In addition to interviewing the two teachers, I also observed their co-taught classes for thirty-three 75-minute periods over the course of five weeks. They taught two periods a day of

their co-taught class and I observed 15 sessions of one class and 18 periods of the other. The first class was the first period of the school day and I consistently arrive early to capture the before school interactions between students and teachers. The second class met during the last period of the day and I generally stayed after to capture the after-school student and teacher interactions, meaning that each class period of observation was approximately 80 minutes long. To add depth to the study, I also observed Dr. Sumner's ESOL class for five class periods, observed a community event organized by Dr. Sumner, and observed a special in school event organized by Dr. Sumner.

Rather than participating in the class, I sat in the back-left corner, striving to reduce the impact of my presence on classroom instruction. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) describe a continuum of participant observation. My participation was at the low end of their continuum. While the teachers knew I was a researcher, they did not introduce me to their class. The two teachers frequently had other people in their classrooms. During each period, anywhere between one and three one on ones would be in the room and the specific one on ones changed from day to day. Other school staff frequently came to the classroom as well, sometimes to talk to a student, sometimes to talk to the teacher, sometimes to deliver a coffee or a treat to an adult in the room, and sometimes just to stand at the back and observe for a moment. In addition, the teachers sometimes had volunteers during the ESOL block, teachers from other schools observing during the Synthesis blocks, and other adults who came and went during the instruction. The students appeared used to having adults beside their teachers in the classroom and did not express any curiosity about my presence. At no point did any student address me or ask any question. I only interacted with a student once when I asked if I could sit next to him because my usual spot was taken. This was a student who the teachers had described as shy and

always chose to sit on his own. Because he seemed uncomfortable with the idea of me sitting at his table, I chose to stand at the back instead until my usual spot was available.

DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) also recommend preparing for systematic observation, which I did by developing an observation protocol (Appendix B). During the first observation, the protocol included a broad focus on the classroom itself, the bell schedule, the content on the walls, and other items that helped me better understand the physical place and routines of the school. My later observations focused on the interactions between the two teachers, their interactions with students, and the academic content and delivery of lessons. I typed field notes during each observation, typically about six to eight pages per period of observation. Immediately after each period of observation I edited those notes, including where appropriate my impressions to add richness to the data (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The only observation that I did not type notes during was that of the community event. During that event, I took no notes and instead wrote up my impressions immediately following the event.

As well as collecting observation and interview data, I collected documents and archival material. I took photos of course handouts, including note taking sheets and reading passages written by the teachers in the class. All of this information was anonymized and collected with the permission of the teachers. I also gathered articles written about both teachers and interviews done with them where they discussed their teaching or the course itself. I added all this information to my case study database to help triangulate data in the analysis phase.

Analytic Strategies

I engaged in three phases of data analysis. The first phase was done concurrently with data collection so that findings from initial analyses could be used to shape future data collection

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During this phase I focused on detailed memo writing. The second phase was done immediately following data collection and focused on coding the data using a qualitative software program, Nvivo, and working with critical friends on refining my codes. The third phase focused on coding my reflective journals and developing and refining models of CRT in a co-taught classroom. During this phase, I met with critical friends and checked for alternate models for the data.

In the first phase of analysis, I focused on recording and developing my impressions of the classroom. After each day of observation, I wrote about two pages of reflections on what I had seen during the day. I reflected on the instruction, the interactions between the teachers, the management style in the classroom, and the relationships between students and between students and teachers. At the end of each week of observation, I wrote a longer memo reflecting on the full week of observations and the patterns that I noticed in the classroom. While the study was initially designed to look at tracking and inclusion, during the first week of observations I began to write memos discussing the instruction that I was seeing. My reflective memos from that week reflect a growing awareness that I was observing culturally responsive pedagogy. At the end of my third day of observations I wrote:

> The narrative that is being told is radically inclusive and empowering. This is a narrative of Black people fighting for their dignity and their rights, of powerful women, of a counternarrative to main stream White history. That this is what is being taught to a roomful of Black and Latinx children matters—and the students are engaged with this. They make connections. There are huge threads of CRP running through here (Journal, 1/17).

While I continued to write reflections on my observations, I also went back to the literature and began to delve deeply into studies and theories of Culturally Relevant Teaching and to write memos discussing how, and how not, what I was seeing aligned with these models. While I had initially generated a start list of codes based on my research questions and the literature on inclusion and tracking (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), I modified that start list during the first few weeks of observation to focus more on themes and hallmarks of CRT. For example, I kept codes for the definition of tracking and teacher beliefs about tracking, but I added codes for relevance to students' lives and multiple perspectives based on the CRT literature and my observations. As I made changes to my start list of codes, I wrote memos about what was changing and the rationale for the changes.

Similarly, during the first phase of analysis I also focused on quickly transcribing and writing memos about my interviews. I digitally transcribed each interview immediately afterwards and wrote a brief memo about what I noticed during the interview. A few days later, I edited the transcription to include grammar and to catch transcription mistakes and then wrote about anything new that I had noticed. While Dr. Sumner's voice transcribed well, Coach Wilson often turned his head away from the recording devices which meant that I engaged in three rounds of editing of his transcriptions to ensure that I had accurately captured what he said. As with the observations, I wrote memos and reflections throughout the process of interviewing. My reflections were guided by Corbin and Strauss's (2008) technique of asking questions of the data. They describe asking questions of the data as a way to probe, think creatively about, and begin to understand the data. The questions that I asked in my early memos shaped what I wrote in later memos and helped me begin to understand my data.

As I began to read the literature on CRT, I also used Corbin and Strauss's (2008) technique of making comparisons, writing memos comparing my observations against what I learned from the research and memos comparing what I saw in the classroom and what I heard in interviews. This helped make sense of the data as well as help me notice information hidden in the data that I might otherwise have overlooked. I also met with a critical friend who is an expert in CRT and talked about my emerging findings with her. She gave me guidance on articles to read and guidance on ways to think about my data. By the end of the first phase of my analysis, I had a strong understanding of my data and a sense of some emerging themes within co-teaching and culturally relevant teaching.

Following data collection, I moved into the second phase of analysis. During this phase I focused on line by line coding by data in Nvivo, identifying patterns and relationships between my codes, working with critical friends, and writing memos about the analytic process. Initially, I began to code the first week's observations using my start list of codes. As I coded the data however I found that those codes did not effectively capture the nuances of my data. I generated broad codes that fit sections of the data like relevance or fluidity and coded the first few days of observations with those codes. Then I went back and looked at the first few days of data again and focused on identifying codes to capture the data that had been left out of those codes. That led me to codes such as proximity and time management.

After coding every line of the first week's data using a combination of broad and narrow codes, I then tried out those codes on the second week of observation data. Here I found that some of the broad codes were too vague and began to break them up and to generate new smaller codes. Once I had coded every line of the second week's data, I went back and recoded the first week's data, making sure that the refined codes still made sense. I continued this pattern with

each week of data collection so that by the time I was coding my week four data, week one had been coded three times. As I made changes to my codes, I documented the process in analytic memos, describing what I was changing and why. After completely coding the first four weeks of data, I had a long list of codes that were not sorted into parent and child codes. For example, I had almost fifty codes under instruction, including explicit instruction, off task, student engagement, and volume. I then separately coded my interview data, allowing codes to emerge from that data naturally. This led to codes about teacher beliefs, challenges, and ability to create change that sometimes overlapped with and sometimes were distinct from my observation codes.

I then began to look for patterns and relationships in the codes and to develop parent and child codes based on those relationships. As hierarchical codes emerged, I recoded the observation data again. For example, I developed a parent code in my observations of making it fun based on something in my interviews. That led me to create a child code of students laughing or smiling and to key word search my observations. In this phase of checking my codes, I used key word searches as well as line by line reading to ensure that I was capturing all the data. I also went through each of the parent and child code and checked for consistency and independence. For example, I noted that I needed a broad code for multi-modal instruction to better organize instructional codes and that I needed to move where I had information on guidance counselors to create more independence between teacher actions related to college access and the school's tracking structure. I then met again with my critical friend to discuss the codes I had developed and revised my coding structure based on her feedback.

Once that was complete and my observation and interview codes reconciled, I ran cluster analyses in Nvivo to check for redundancies and overlaps in my codes. I wrote detailed notes highlighting what overlaps I found and how they were addressed. For example, I wrote,

"Realized that there were way too few examples of clarification so did key word searches… Then I redid the full section." Once the issues found in the cluster analysis were addressed, I wrote an initial findings memo putting the relationships that I had found in my codes into narrative form. In addition to writing a findings memo at the end of the second phase of analysis, I also wrote detailed analytic memos throughout the process, describing my thought process, feedback from my critical friend and peers, and any changes that I made in my codes.

The third phase of data analysis began immediately after completing the second round. I went back to the literature on co-teaching and CRT and, with the broad coding structure of my findings in mind, began looking for points of similarity and differences with the literature. I developed a new data analysis framework from the literature. At this point I had three distinct frameworks to use in analyzing the data. The first was the structure of my parent and child codes. The second was from an early, full length, findings memo I had written. The third was based on a combination of the literature and the codes. I planned to create a fourth structure based on my reflective journal but, as I reread the journal I realized the information in it fit well into the existing frameworks. I instead coded the journal in Nvivo and used the reflective journal content to define the parent codes. When that was done, I reconciled the three data analysis frameworks and developed a model of CRT in a co-taught classroom that drew from all three frameworks. I then met with my critical friend to check the model for robustness and to discuss alternate theories and weaknesses in the model. Following the meeting, I revised the model and then went back to the data, fleshing out the model with quotes from my journals, field notes, and interviews. As I did this, I actively looked for disconfirming evidence and for information that did not fit within the model. As I found data that was omitted from the model or that added complexity to it, I revised the model. When the model was done, I used it to write an initial draft

of my findings, which I shared with critical friends and began fine tuning the model. Throughout this process, I continued to write memos documenting the changes that I was making and the evolution of my thinking about the data.

Establishing Credibility, Validity

Throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this research study I engaged in a variety of practices to increase both the credibility and validity of my final findings. Before beginning my research, I created a research database (Yin, 2018). Throughout the research process, I uploaded all documents and notes to this database, saving and archiving older versions of documents. The database is a key component of my audit trail (Rogers & Cowles, 1993) and my journal, with a compilation of all my reflective and analytic memos is a key component of the database. I also exported and saved multiple versions of my coding schema in Nvivo to strengthen the audit trail. My goal for the database was both to increase the ease with which other researchers could retrace my steps in the research and to increase the overall reliability of my research (Yazan, 2015).

During data collection, I also triangulated my findings by gathering evidence from a variety of sources (Yin, 2018). The different sources of evidence included interviews, observations, document analysis, and archival analysis. I used the multiple sources of evidence to confirm my findings and to clarify meaning (Stake, 2005). In addition to gathering information from a variety of sources, I also triangulated my observations and interviews by observing and interviewing multiple participants. Hearing and seeing multiple perspectives further helped me clarify meaning.

During data analysis, I continued to build validity by having experienced colleagues check my analyses for reliability and validity (Yin, 2018). As I wrote memos and developed themes, I also searched for rival explanations (Yin, 2018), using critical friends to support me and to help me find alternate theories that could also explain my findings. For example, I considered whether the instruction that I saw would have been possible with the presence of the second teacher. Based on my observations of the classroom when one teacher was absent I decided that alternate theory did not fit my data. I also considered whether what I was observing was just good teaching, which also did not account for all of my data. As I explored different theories and built new models, I attempted to apply each to the data from my study. When the model failed to account for some of the data, I revised it to ensure that the final model accounted for as much of my data as possible.

Finally, in the writing process I used both thick rich description and the disclosure of researcher bias to further build validity (Yazan, 2015). Merriam, according to Yazan (2015), recommends that researchers disclose their bias to enhance the study's internal validity. In line with this, I have included a researcher as instrument statement here to make my own biases and beliefs clear. Merriam also recommends that researchers use thick description and provide enough detail in their writing that readers can think through the data on their own without having to rely exclusively on the researcher's interpretations (Yazan, 2015). In line with this, I wrote my findings in rich detail, including concrete examples and anecdotes that readers can make sense of on their own, without just having to rely on my interpretation of events. My goal was that, by focusing on these techniques at every stage of the research process from the study design to data collection to data analysis and writing, I would create a capstone that is both credible and valid.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that my project adheres to the highest ethical standards, I followed all guidelines laid out by the school district, UVA's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and best practices in research. I gained UVA IRB approval in September and approval in January for a modified proposal. I also went through the school district's IRB process and gained site access from the school principal before contacting department chairs. Once I gained access to the site, I reviewed my study with prospective participants, giving them as much information as possible so that they could give informed consent. Stake (2005) wrote that "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 459). With Stake's advice, and Thorne's (2004) concerns about the role of power in research and the limitations of informed consent in mind, my intention was to be as honest and upfront during the consent process as possible, to act as an exemplary guest during data collection, and to remain reflective and ethical throughout the data analysis process as well.

One way of doing that was by maintaining the confidentiality of participant names and locations. While I cannot guarantee anonymity, as participants and their colleagues might be able to identify themselves in the final report (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005), I could take measures to increase the confidentiality of my participants. These measures included using pseudonyms for all participants, their school, and their district in my field notes and write ups as well as in my final report. I also stored all my notes on a password protected server and deleted audio transcripts after they have been digitally transcribed.

Researcher Reflexivity and Role

As a qualitative researcher, I cannot be written out of the research process. Who I am shapes what questions I ask, my interactions with participants, (Lecompte & Preissle, 1993), and what I see when I look at the data. Prior to beginning my program at UVA, I worked in special education for 13 years at the elementary school level. During that time, I focused on working with historically underserved populations, including recent immigrants and children in foster care, because of my ideological commitment to equity. I believe in the existence of structural inequalities that limit future possibilities for children and I believe that teachers have an ethical obligation to work to reverse and overcome those inequalities. I am deeply committed in both my professional and personal life to address structural inequality, a passion that informs my research and my analysis. As a former teacher, I care about teacher agency and view teachers as change makers. These deeply held beliefs shape how I view the world, how I ask questions, and how I conduct research. As a qualitative researcher my goal is not to eliminate my biases but to remain aware and reflective of how they are influencing my study. My deep personal commitment to equity and to ensuring that all students are offered a high quality and empowering education both helps me identify patterns of inequality and empowerment in situations while also predisposing me to see those patterns.

I kept a reflective journal in my case study database that I updated frequently throughout the research process. During data analysis, I reviewed the journal and reflected on how the beliefs, experiences, and biases illuminated in the journal impacted my data collection. Throughout my data analysis process, I shared my thinking with critical friends and used the journal to reduce the impact of my biases for creating change and increasing equity on my findings.

Chapter Summary

This single case study focused on two co-teachers working in a heterogeneous United States history classroom. By combining interviews of both teachers with observations and document analysis, I was able to form a rich, triangulated picture of the classroom and the teachers' practices. I engaged in three phases of data analysis to uncover patterns and themes within the data. To increase the credibility of the findings, I worked extensively with critical friends, maintained a case study data base, searched for disconfirming evidence, and engaged in member checking of the findings. Throughout the research, I worked to maintain high ethical standards and to adhere to university and district institutional review board procedures.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study was designed to answer questions about teachers' beliefs and instruction in one co-taught, heterogeneous class. My specific research questions focused on teacher beliefs about tracking, equity, and agency as well as what co-teaching and differentiation looked like in the classroom. In answering these questions, I noticed that the teachers' actions and beliefs fit into a broader model of Culturally Relevant Teaching. Based on these observations, the focus of the Capstone shifted from identifying beliefs and actions to understanding how those beliefs and actions fit together into a new model of CRT in a co-taught classroom.

The model of CRT in a co-taught classroom introduced in the literature review describes three pillars of teacher actions that create an environment conducive for student empowerment (Figure 4.1). The pillars are enabled by high-quality co-teaching and rest on a foundation of the school's unique context.

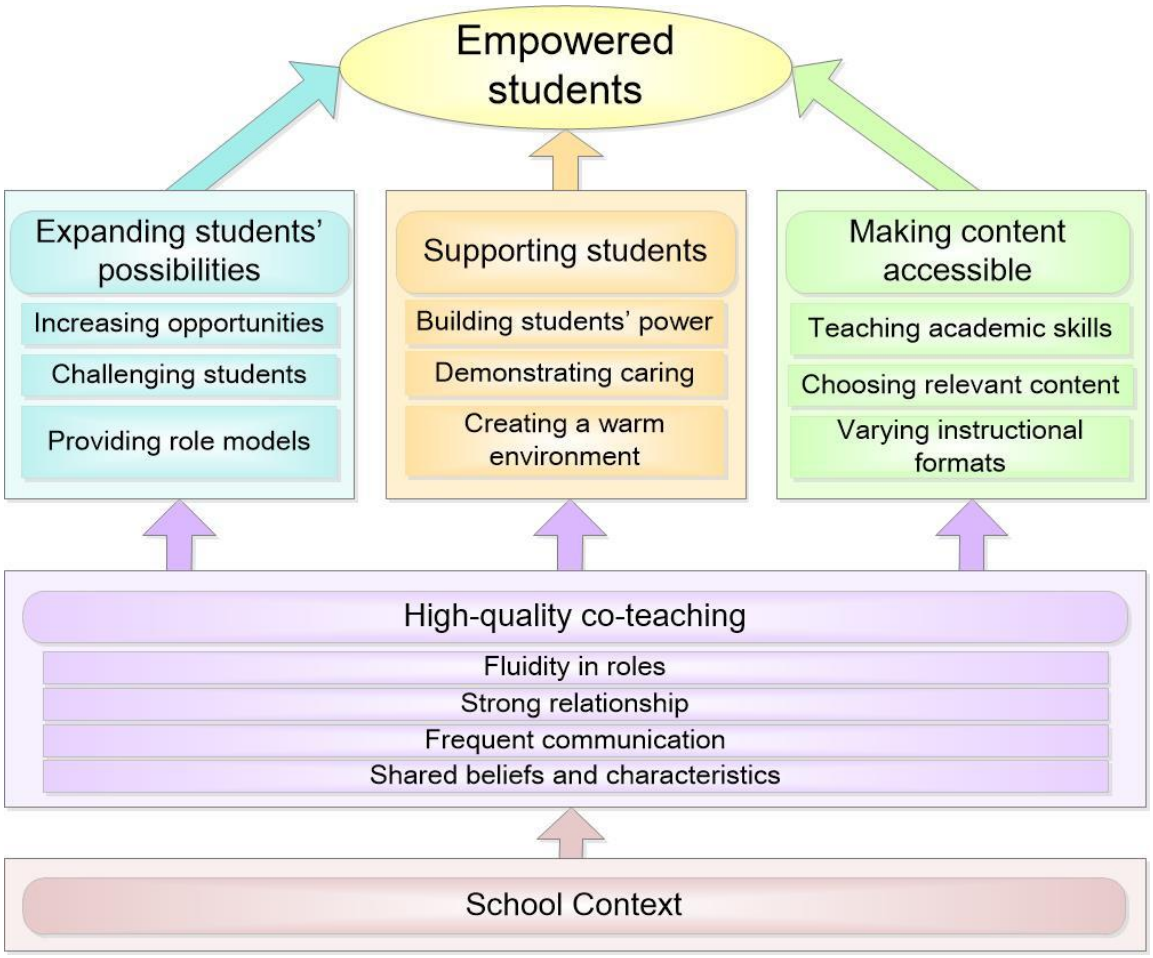

Figure 4.1. Model of CRT in a co-taught classroom.

In alignment with the model, I begin this chapter with a discussion of the unique context of WHS, including the school's racial disparities and the administrative support offered to the Synthesis program. In the second section I focus on the co-teaching itself, including the teachers' beliefs and characteristics, the teachers' communication, their relationship, and the fluidity in roles in the classroom. In the third section I describe how Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner made content accessible to students through varying instructional formats, choosing relevant content, and teaching academic skills. In the fourth section I discuss how the teachers supported students, including their creation of a warm classroom environment, the ways they demonstrated caring for their students, and their work to build students' power in the classroom. Finally, in the fifth

section I examine how Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson expanded students' possibilities through providing students with role models, challenging them to excel, and increasing their academic and real world opportunities. In line with the model, I connect each of these back to the teachers' ultimate goals of helping students become empowered in the world and in their lives. The goal of this findings section is to describe the teacher actions and beliefs in this empowerment focused classroom.

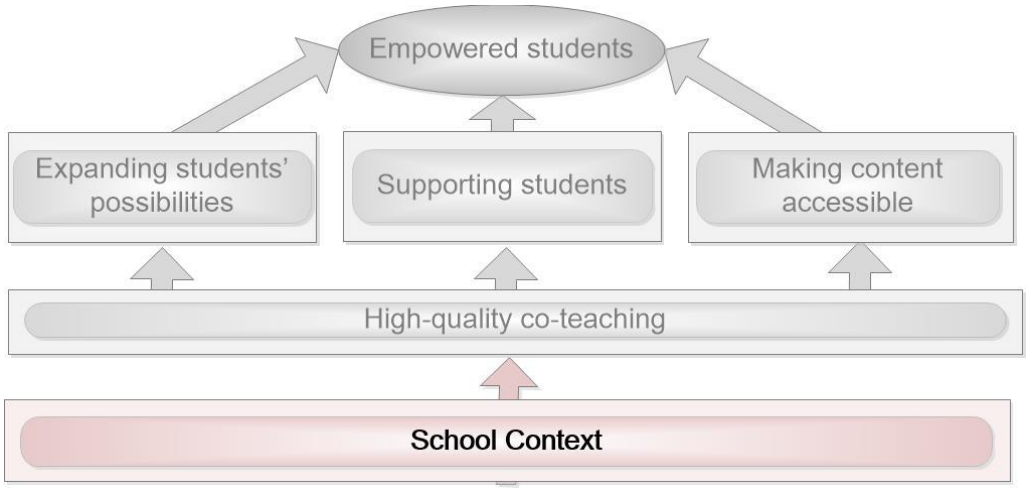

Figure 4.2. School context.

School Context

> Today I watched Dr. Sumner work with two Black students, Black American not immigrants, on the plural for woman. They are in 11th grade. That is about a third-grade standard. What has been these students' experiences of school that they are at that level now? Both of those students are excellent in class. They might goof around a little, but these are the students who are wholeheartedly participating, who are some of the most engaged. Regardless of any disability, these are students who should have learned this by now because they clearly want to learn. When Dr. Sumner was working with one of the two boys today and going over his comments on the student's writing, the student was

> respectful and engaged. He seemed almost excited to be getting the individual feedback and to be filing away what the teacher was saying. So why did this kid not know the plural of woman? Something has to be broken in the system for a student like that to be so far behind. (Journal, 1/25)

The Synthesis program exists within the unique ecosystem of Washington High School, a school with deep racial divisions in access to high-level courses, discipline, and graduation (Figure 4.2). WHS however is also a school whose administration has supported the innovative Synthesis program by allowing the program to grow, keeping the co-teachers together over time, and providing co-planning time and resources. The school's internally segregated environment led to the creation of the Synthesis program while the administration's support has helped it to succeed.

"It's not like we were doing better 30 years ago, 40 years ago, or 10 years ago": Racial disparities at Washington High School. Racial disparities at Washington High School are noticeable in every area of the school, from graduation rates to course enrollment patterns. Dr. Sumner described the racism at the school as a "a very subtle and silent but powerful type of racism" (Int, 2/1), one that was deliberately constructed to be hidden from those benefiting from the system. He sees the disparities at the school as reflecting the long, entrenched history of racism within the school, district, and county; "I think if you look, it's not like we were doing better 30 years ago, 40 years ago or 10 years ago.... this goes back to the beginning" (Int, 2/1). The journal excerpt at the beginning of this section highlights the impact on individual students of the entrenched racism and institutional challenges. Coach Wilson described the school today by saying, "Systematically, there's not a plan of success for everybody" (Int, 2/1). The legacy of

racism and the lack of a plan of success for all students particularly impacts Black and Latinx students.

WHS's discrepancies in graduation rates, diploma types, discipline, and special education were included in Chapters One and Three. My observations however added context to those numbers. In discipline, the numbers for the school's discipline disparities do not show the confusion at the student level. One day two ESOL students walked into class late. One said that he had detention. When Dr. Sumner asked why, the student replied that he did not know. The teacher tried to backtrack the student's day and realized that the student had to eat lunch in the office. When the teacher asked if he had a pass to go to class, the student was not sure. The teacher walked the two students to the office to learn more. Later he came back with the two students. The one who thought he had detention had actually been sent home although it was unclear whether or not it was a suspension and, if so, for what. When he left to go home, the other student went as well, although he did not seem to have been disciplined (Obs, 1/17). While the teacher and the students were both confused about what had happened, the end result was still that the students left school early. The inequities in discipline at WHS went beyond the numbers in days of suspension. The inequities also included the confusion and lack of clarity about the system experienced by students like these two.

Similarly, the numbers show the high number of Latinx students that drop out but do not reveal the nuances of why. Dr. Sumner described the need to work faced by many students, including a student of his who dropped out this year because his father was laid off and the family was facing eviction. The additional income the student could bring in meant the difference between shelter and homelessness. The student's family was also undocumented and in small ways undocumented students have been isolated at the school. While the school did not

inquire about the documentation status of students or families, that legal compliance was also at times accompanied by blindness about undocumented students' unique needs. Dr. Sumner described teachers in previous years who did not understand why some students could not get driver's licenses and who were oblivious to the challenges the students faced (Int, 2/1). Similarly, the school had visitors swipe in with driver's licenses using a system that stored the information. When visitors did not have that identification or did not want it to be stored, the secretary would have them wait longer in the office and sometimes, according to her, try to make the safety implications of not properly signing in clear to the families. She said that most of the parents in this situation were Latinx. In those small ways, the school created an unwelcoming environment for some undocumented students and families.

WHS, as discussed in previous chapters, also struggles with equity in graduation rates. During my observations, I saw how missing institutional supports at WHS impacted students' graduation possibilities. A guidance counselor came to talk to Dr. Sumner about a student who was at risk of not graduating high school. She came to show Dr. Sumner a documentation sheet and the conversation quickly became heated. Dr. Sumner was deeply frustrated by the lack of support that the student had received. He spoke about all of the challenges that this student, who was a refugee with interrupted schooling, significant trauma, and difficulties in the home, had faced. When the counselor spoke about a process that had started, Dr. Sumner rearticulated his commitment to supporting the student and his family and said, "If this was the attitude we had about our other students, none of them would graduate." He continued by saying, "This sheet does not reflect the student as a human being and how much he has grown" (Obs, 1/31). The challenges this student was facing at the school exemplify what Coach Wilson said about the school's lack of a plan of success for all students.

Tracking. The school's tracking system, which is both rigid and exclusive, further demonstrates WHS's lack of a plan of success for all students. Dr. Sumner described the school as having seven separate tracks and discussed about the lack of overlap in lives and experiences between the students in the higher and lower-level tracks. Both teachers spoke about the lack of flexibility in the system and how few students were able to move up from lower-level to higher-level courses. Coach Wilson spoke about his concerns about the lack of "welcome for the kids that don't pick it up early" (Int, 2/1). He compared tracking to a race where "your parents need to put you on this track, in like second grade…. If not, you might even be a student that's a dual enrollment level kid, but you're in standard level classes" (Int, 2/1). Dr. Sumner's wife taught Kindergarten and he spoke about seeing the signs of tracking at that early grade level. While both teachers identified tracking as beginning before high school, it was at WHS that they saw the rigidity of the tracks. Coach Wilson coached students who he felt should be in advanced classes but were not, which hurt their ability to get into college; "They are college level students, but they don't get in college because… they don't meet the criteria" (Int, 2/8). In both his students lives and his own, Coach Wilson saw problems with who was given access to information and who was denied it. When he was in high school, he was not given information about how to earn college credit in high school or how to graduate early. Coach Wilson saw the students he coached also being denied the same information and opportunities (Int, 2/8). Both teachers strongly felt that there were students at the high school that were being given that information and those opportunities, but the students they taught and coached were not among them.

Both Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner saw tracking as a system that harmed students. During one interview, Coach Wilson, unsolicited, said "I don't really think there should be levels to be honest" (Int, 2/8). Dr. Sumner also was explicitly against tracking and held as an ideal "a

public school that reflects the diversity of our country and… a learning community that also reflects that diversity" (Int, 2/13). Both teachers however were concerned about how to implement tracking reforms at WHS. For Coach Wilson, the question was how to most effectively differentiate for widely varying students in more heterogeneous classrooms. For Dr. Sumner, the concern was the political ramifications of attempting to change a system that was working for powerful students and families. The teachers' beliefs about tracking led them to focus on expanding opportunities for their students but they often worked in opposition to the wider school.

Within the school, the students in the Synthesis classes were given mixed messages about advanced classes. Recruitment into high-level courses was on a "teacher to teacher basis" (Dr. Caver, Int, 2/1) and not institution wide. A former student of Dr. Sumner's came by after school and told him that she had dropped a DE course recently. Dr. Sumner immediately asked when and whether the drop had gone on her record. He spoke about the potential financial aid and college acceptance consequences of a late drop. He asked if her guidance counselor knew about the drop and the student said that she did, but that the counselor had not mentioned any potential negative consequences. The guidance counselor had failed to give this student the information she needed to make an informed decision. The lack of institutional support for Synthesis students was evident in the presentations that a guidance counselor did for their class.

During one class the Synthesis students and the students from another class went to the cafeteria to do course enrollment. A guidance counselor gave a brief presentation about the enrollment process and course options. The counselor emphasized that the school and teachers would help students pay for course materials and tests as needed. At the same time as she gave that inclusive message, she also presented a narrow definition of ability and of who belonged in

advanced courses. She explicitly defined ability as SAT scores and state test scores. At WHS, a school with a large racial achievement gap, that definition excluded many Black and Latinx students from AP and DE courses. The guidance counselor described honors courses as a "a step up from academic or advanced courses" and presented the courses in a ranked order. Rather than encouraging students to take high-level courses she emphasized that they should; "Find a challenge that you can have some success in... You know what is going on in your life" (Obs, 2/14). She encouraged them to balance their schedule with a mixture of rigor and comfort. This same guidance counselor also spoke to the Synthesis students during a DE recruitment event organized by Dr. Sumner. There she told students that she believed they could all take college-level courses and manage them. What she emphasized however was they should balance their schedules and realize where they were strong enough to be happy in those courses. Many of the students in the Synthesis class were from demographic groups that have rarely enrolled in advanced courses at WHS. By giving them caution warnings about enrolling in these courses, the guidance counselor was subtly reinforcing the segregated status quo. Her comments reflected Dr. Sumner's concerns about the school's lack of strength in impacting the outcomes of historically underserved students.

"Things are slowly getting better": Progress and support at WHS. While Dr. Sumner had concerns about the status quo at WHS, he also saw progress and support within the school and believed that "things are slowly getting better" (Int, 2/13). The school administration had supported the creation of the Synthesis program and supported the co-teaching model throughout the past three years. That consistent support allowed the program to grow and the teachers to build a strong relationship. In addition, the overall segregation of English Learners in the high school had been decreasing over time, with the end of separate schools for newcomers

and discussion of eliminating the lowest levels of courses, in part because of Dr. Sumner's advocacy.

Teacher agency and Synthesis. Four years ago, Dr. Sumner was a district administrator who decided to teach one ESOL class a day. His students appreciated the class but complained to him about how segregated they were in the school. The Synthesis program was his response. He proposed the program, which entailed eliminating some of the segregated ESOL subject classes. The class was supposed to be heterogeneous, but the first group of students assigned to it were 75% male and 90% Latino or African-American. Dr. Sumner addressed the imbalance with the administration and the students were reassigned so that the class was more diverse. As chair of the ESOL department, Dr. Sumner has continued to work to eliminate more low-level, segregated classes. Throughout his time at WHS, the administration has supported his ideas and the changes he wanted to create. Perhaps in part because of these experiences and his history, Dr. Sumner strongly believed in his ability to create change within the system, saying, "Anybody can make a change" (Int, 2/13). Coach Wilson, who spoke about the challenges he faced as a football coach with no schedule adjustment to manage that demanding role, had a different perception of his power in the system. When asked about his power to create change he said, "Not much… if you have an idea, if you have something to say then it just becomes another comment in a pool of comments" (Int, 2/8). The administration in Dr. Sumner's eyes was working to improve equity at the school, but the extent to which the administration supported the empowerment of individual teachers to create change was unclear. However, there was agreement between the teachers about the support that they had received for co-teaching.

Support for co-teaching. The teachers discussed the longevity of their co-teaching relationship and their common planning time as evidence of administrative support for their

partnership. They both felt that the longevity of their relationship was what helped them juggle their roles and appreciated the administrative support that had kept them together. While the teachers relied on their co-planning time less than in the past, both teachers saw that time as essential to their success. In addition, Dr. Sumner described the classroom resources the administration provided as another form of support for their co-teaching. The administration supported co-teaching through keeping the partners together and providing co-planning time and resources. While other studies have found that training is another important administrative support (Scruggs et al., 2007), Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson had received no training in co-teaching for this partnership and had received very little training on co-teaching for prior partnerships. Neither saw this lack of training as a concern. Overall, both teachers expressed satisfaction with WHS's support for their co-teaching partnership.

WHS provided a unique context for Synthesis, with its combination of segregation, tracking, and administrative support. However, it was the characteristics of and relationship between the two teachers that truly underpinned CRT in their classroom.

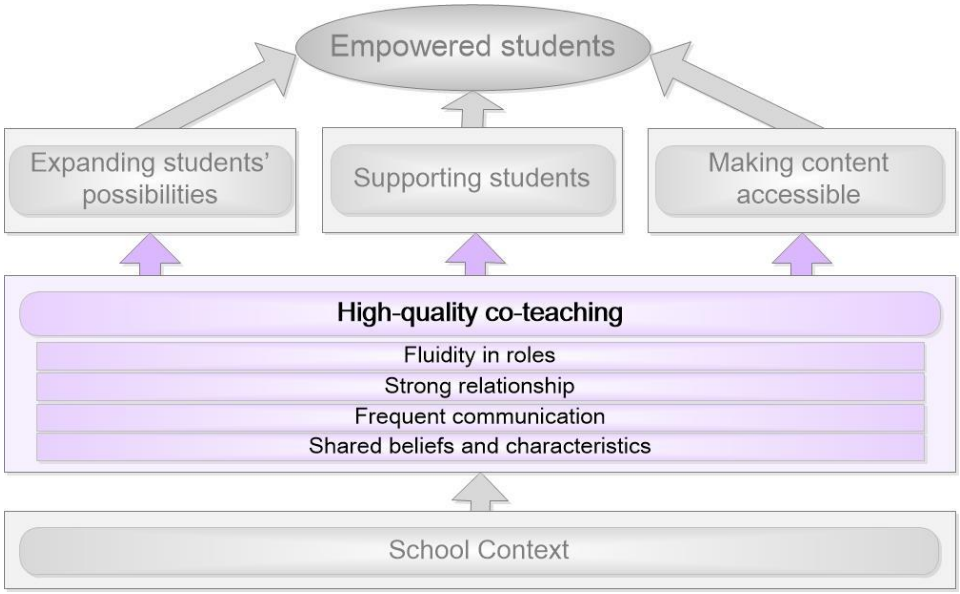

Figure 4.3. High-quality co-teaching.

High Quality Co-teaching

> Fortunately… we kind of came to it with the same vision… There were some differences but not huge ones. I mean, we both feel strongly about… trying to make a difference for kids who may have been left out in the past… I think our values are really similar. (Dr. Sumner, Int, 2/1)

CRT in the Synthesis classroom was enabled by high-quality co-teaching (Figure 4.3). The strength of the co-teaching began with the teachers' common characteristics and beliefs. The teachers built on that foundation by constantly communicating about life, students, and instruction. They built a strong and trusting relationship that facilitated the fluid transition in roles and power sharing between the teachers that was on display in the classroom. This high-quality co-teaching was evident in every class that I observed. One week Dr. Sumner was unwell and exhausted from testing. During that week, at times the instruction would veer more towards one teach, one assist than team teaching but Dr. Sumner would always in the end pull back and rebalance the power between the two teachers.

Figure 4.4. Shared beliefs and characteristics.

"Just to care about the kids": Teacher characteristics and beliefs. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson shared several characteristics and beliefs that enabled both their co-teaching and their culturally relevant teaching within the classroom (Figure 4.4). They shared a passion for teaching, history, and overcoming inequalities. They both wanted to co-teach, were willing to

share power, and believed in putting kids first. Coach Wilson spoke about how he loved the fact that he and Dr. Sumner "have the same attitude and mentality" (Int, 2/8). In the excerpt at the beginning of the section, Dr. Sumner described their similarities, saying that they "kind of came to it with the same vision" (Int, 2/1).

Their similar views and beliefs are impressive given that the two teachers did not choose to work together. In fact, the teachers did not know each other until after they were assigned to co-teach. Both teachers however had reputations that preceded them. Dr. Sumner said, "I didn't know much about [Coach Wilson], but you know, had heard about him before, so I was really excited" (Int, 2/1). Colleagues kept telling Coach Wilson "Oh, Dr. Sumner is great" (Int, 1/25) before they met. Once the teachers met, it quickly became clear how much they had in common. Both saw their commonalities as integral to their partnership. Coach Wilson argued that, for co-teaching to work, "the personality and…the mental approach and the patience, all of that…has to align" (Int, 2/8). When Dr. Sumner described a previous co-teaching partnership that was unsuccessful, he attributed much of the failure to their differing beliefs and vision. In this partnership however, the teachers had far more similarities than differences.

"Passion for… teaching": Shared love of teaching. Both teachers began careers in other fields before becoming teachers. Dr. Sumner became a teacher because of the "sense of fulfillment" (Int, 1/24) that he found in substitute teaching. He then left the classroom for his doctorate and to be an administrator. He came back to the classroom because he missed the students and missed teaching. Coach Wilson coached football long before he began teaching and coaching remains an enormous element of his identity. For him, coaching and teaching were deeply linked as he saw both as mentors and believed that coaches that "really love the profession, they are teachers in a way" (Int, 2/8). While he enjoyed his early teaching roles, his

first two years at WHS sapped his passion for teaching. Coach Wilson co-taught Algebra 1 for two years. He struggled with Geometry in high school and discovered he had a learning disability in a related area when he got to college. For two years he felt that he was not properly supportive of his co-teacher or the students in the classroom because he was not an expert in the content. He said that getting to co-teach Synthesis "kinda like rejuvenated my passion for actually teaching and being in the classroom and working with kids" (Int, 1/25). In interviews, both teachers repeatedly used the word "love" to describe their feelings about teaching and their feelings about the history content.

"He has a lot of like random, like history trivia": Knowledge of and passion for the content. History was a shared passion of the teachers. While Coach Wilson disliked Algebra, he loved history. Coach Wilson majored in sociology and one of his first substitute teaching positions was in a history classroom which he enjoyed so much that he thought about getting his teaching certificate in history. His comment on his time in that position was, "I love history" (Int, 1/25). While Coach Wilson loved history, Dr. Sumner had a tremendously deep knowledge of US history. In class students would ask him random questions about which presidents were generals, the military rank of Teddy Roosevelt, and the history of the Federalist Party. Dr. Sumner not only answered the questions, but he also shared anecdotes. He told the student who was interested in Teddy Roosevelt that Teddy hunted and donated many of the animals in Smithsonian museum of natural history.

Coach Wilson often drew on Dr. Sumner's knowledge in class. At the end of a class focused on the robber barons, Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson began to discuss Andrew Carnegie in depth. The conversation went through the end of class, through the transition time, and almost into the next period. Coach Wilson then took the information from that conversation and shared

it with a small group of students later in class. Similarly, on a different day the two teachers became involved in a long discussion about share cropping and convict leasing. The conversation went beyond what was covered in the course, as Dr. Sumner said; “We don’t talk about this in the course, but that was also a way to keep you where you were” (Obs, 1/17). Coach Wilson described these interactions as; “Just having random conversations amongst ourselves because he has a lot of … history trivia I've never heard of. Like I'll tell them about something and he’ll tell me some story about it” (Int, 2/1). The teachers communicated about content outside of school as well. Coach Wilson described texting news stories and items he found on social media to Dr. Sumner on the weekends. In class their excitement about the content was evident. The teachers talked with students about documentaries and films they had watched at home and sometimes got students excited enough that the students said that they would watch them. When Dr. Sumner showed documentary clips that were new to Coach Wilson, Coach Wilson would comment, “Wow!” or “Crazy!” throughout the clips. The teachers’ passion for teaching and for the content were however only the first of their shared characteristics.

“Who’s allowed opportunities?”: Knowledge of and passion for addressing structural inequalities. Beyond their knowledge and passion for the content and teaching, both teachers saw inequalities in society and felt a responsibility to address those inequalities in the classroom. Coach Wilson discussed structural inequality through the lenses of his own experiences and of coaching. He was aware both of the knowledge that was denied him in high school and the opportunities his students were not receiving. He saw similar patterns of missing information and denied opportunities in who gains access to teaching. Coach Wilson found his way into teaching with the support of older African-American men who mentored him and guided him through the process. Once he became a teacher, he saw younger coaches who deeply cared about kids but did

not become teachers because no one helped them understand or navigate the process. This problem of who gets access to information and who does not was one that Coach Wilson frequently returned to. When asked explicitly about race and opportunities, Coach Wilson stated; "For me, it's not about race as much as it's about like who? Like who's allowed opportunities?... And more important who has access and support?" (Int, 2/8). Dr. Sumner also shared a deep awareness of and commitment to changing structural inequalities. Dr. Sumner explicitly discussed race both in the classroom and in interviews. He described race historically as "a tool to divide the lower classes against each other in order to keep the indentured servants and the African indentured servants from working together" (Int, 2/1). Dr. Sumner spoke passionately about the achievement gaps at his school and in the district. He also helped create the district's first equity report. Both teachers were deeply aware of the structural inequalities that impacted the lives and educations of their students.

Beyond seeing the inequalities, both felt a responsibility to address them. Dr. Sumner said that teachers need "to take control over what we have power over in the building" (Int, 1/24). He argued that, "teacher student interaction is the greatest predictor of student achievement outside of family income" (Int, 2/1). His belief in the power and efficacy of teachers created an obligation for him to act within the classroom. When talking about his ESOL students' experiences in immigration courts, Dr. Sumner said that his goal was to help them "form a narrative about their experience in this country that empowers them" (Int, 1/24). He felt a responsibility to help students address the inequalities they faced. Similarly, Coach Wilson worked to provide the students that he coached, and the students in Synthesis, with the knowledge and support that they might otherwise have been denied. Dr. Sumner described Coach Wilson as not being focused on just winning games but also on "serving as a mentor for

the kids on the team," and working to help students "advance their goals" (Int, 2/1). Coach Wilson talked about the job of a teacher being to help students "reach their potential" and to create "constant opportunities for progress" (Int, 2/1). Coach Wilson had reflected on the structural inequalities that his students faced and worked to provide them the mentoring and support they need. The teachers saw inequalities and cared for, not just about, their students (Gay, 2018).

The teachers' knowledge of inequalities and focus on supporting students also meant they saw students through a strengths-based lens. When asked about intelligence, Dr. Sumner defined it as cognitive adaptability. He saw students who speak non-dominant languages at home as more intelligent because they were having to "adapt cognitively further" (Int, 2/13). Rather than being at a deficit, students who spoke other languages at home were, in his view, at an advantage. Coach Wilson focused on overcoming the stereotypes that teachers often have about students that limit their ability to see a child's potential. As a coach, Coach Wilson was aware of the differences in the abilities of individual students, but he was also aware of the stereotypes that blocked people's abilities to see a student's true potential. The teachers looked at inequality, solutions, and strengths slightly differently, but they were both focused first and foremost on supporting their students. They were also united in viewing co-teaching as a way to better support students.

"Not an ego guy": Co-teaching and sharing power. The teachers saw benefits in co-teaching. Dr. Sumner described co-teaching as being "like the saying… if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go with a group of people" (Int, 2/1). Dr. Sumner had co-taught multiple times and said that he "loves co-teaching" (Int, 2/1). He saw the impact of the model as well; "In the long run, if you make that investment [in a co-teaching relationship], then things

end up working better" (Int, 2/1). Coach Wilson viewed co-teaching as increasing the number of adults "kids could connect with and have relationships with" (Int, 2/8). Coach Wilson said that he used the presence of multiple adults to reinforce important messages to students. Both teachers saw the benefit of co-teaching, but they also were aware of the extra work it created. Dr. Sumner commented that co-teaching added "another layer that you have to think about in your work. Like you have to think about your relationship with these other people and not just your relationship with the students" (Int, 2/1).

Part of that extra layer was figuring out how to share power in the classroom. The power sharing in this classroom was underpinned by the fact that neither teacher was, according to Coach Wilson, "an ego guy" (Int, 2/8). Dr. Sumner discussed their goal of "support[ing] all students" (Int, 2/1). He said that he and Coach Wilson "both feel strongly about… trying to make a difference for kids who, who may have been left out in the past" (Int, 2/1). Coach Wilson believed that the job of the teacher was "just to care about the kids" (Int, 2/8). The teachers saw this shared focus on students as part of what made their partnership work. Rather than focusing on their egos, Coach Wilson saw them both as focusing instead on the students; "Like he can teach the whole class, or I can teach the whole class… because it's about the kids" (Int, 2/8).

For Coach Wilson, not being an ego guy meant in part, being "the guy that's quietly running around doing these different things" rather than the guy "standing on a table" (Int, 2/8). In class, when Coach Wilson was unsure of something in the English content, he would tell the students that and ask for support from Dr. Sumner. Coach Wilson believed that his willingness to be open about what he knew and did not know kept him "humble and… allows [him] to take in as much as possible" (Int, 2/8). By not putting his ego first he felt he could better support students and learn. Similarly, Dr. Sumner resisted complaining even when asked about the

challenges he faces in juggling multiple roles, responding instead that he handles things, "One day at a time" (Int, 2/13). He repeatedly noted the limits of his knowledge in interviews, recommending other people to speak to or stating that he was unsure. In interviews, both were humble about their accomplishments, complimenting each other and their students and demonstrating what Coach Wilson had said about them not being "ego guy[s]." Their shared focus on supporting students and their humbleness, as well as their other shared beliefs and characteristics, laid the foundation for their co-teaching partnership. They built on this foundation through frequent communication.

Figure 4.5. Frequent communication.

"Talk constantly": Frequent communication. For Dr. Sumner, communication "whether it's texting, email, [or] face-to-face communication" (Int, 2/1) was what made co-teaching in general and his relationship with Coach Wilson in particular work (Figure 4.5). The two teachers were in constant communication during the school day about life, about students, and about instruction. They spoke before and after class, checked in frequently during class, and reported texting and emailing often over the weekend. In addition to discussing their classes, the two teachers would talk about their lives and interests outside of school. They talked about the Superbowl, about politics, about home repair issues, and about birthday plans. When Coach Wilson talked to a student about his own baseball playing history, Dr. Sumner asked several

follow up questions. When Dr. Sumner talked to the class about a course he took in college, Coach Wilson asked follow up questions.

They also talked about their other roles at the school, as football coach and ESOL coordinator. Both roles were time consuming. Coach Wilson managed a large coaching staff, monitored students on his team, taught weightlifting, and worked to get his students signed by colleges. All of this was is in addition to his regular teaching and case management work. Dr. Sumner was the head of the ESOL department and coordinated the extensive state testing for the more than 200 ESOL students at the high school. The teachers spoke to each other about these roles as well as about their lives. Coach Wilson talked to Dr. Sumner about students that he was working with to get signed and Dr. Sumner spoke to Coach Wilson about the testing that he was coordinating. While the majority of their conversations focused on the classes and students that they taught together, these conversations were different and showed a genuine interest by the teachers in each others' lives.

Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson showed the same interest in the lives of their students, communicating about them during and outside of class. During class the teachers would sometimes check in briefly about how groups were going and who needed support. After class, they would sometimes speak about whether they needed to change students' seating to "help them learn better" (Coach Wilson, Int, 2/8). After school one day Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson began to discuss their students. They talked about how individual students did on a quiz, who had "tanked" and who had excelled. Coach Wilson talked about how one of the students cracked him up. He repeated some of the student's funniest lines and they agreed that the student "is smarter than he lets on" (Obs, 2/6). Then they moved on to discussing a student that they were both worried about. Dr. Sumner said that she did not do very well on the quiz and Coach Wilson

talked about the involvement of Child Protective Services in the home. Coach Wilson shared the challenges that he was having figuring out how and what to say to the family. In an interview, Coach Wilson emphasized the importance of this type of communication, saying that he and Dr. Sumner "talk constantly about kids we're worried about" (Int, 2/8). He then described individual students who they were concerned about and actively monitoring. The teachers also used check ins about students to stay on the same page behaviorally, as Coach Wilson described in an interview;

> I see him handle a situation a certain way. Then I say, 'Oh, what happened?' He'll tell me what happened, and he'll tell me his perspective and I'm like, 'Oh, okay.' Because sometimes it is a different perspective than I see, the same ideas and philosophy, it's just a different approach... So, we just make sure that we are on the same page and be ourselves but also be linked together (Int, 1/25).

Through these frequent check ins about students, the two teachers were able to stay on the same page and to tightly monitor their students.

In addition to checking in about instruction outside of class, the teachers frequently checked in about instruction while they were teaching. Dr. Sumner would point out a student that needed support to Coach Wilson or they would decide which of them was going to pass out papers or go over part of the lesson. Sometimes, they would discuss lesson timing, determining when to end or how long to continue an activity for. At other times, they would quickly conference to decide whether they should change up something in the lesson such as whether the students would say or write their responses. They would talk to each other about the lesson itself as when, following a quick, successful introduction to an activity, Dr. Sumner commented that it was nice to be able to start something and then just let it go. Finally, after finishing a direction or

explaining a concept one teacher would often ask the other one, “Did I explain that okay?” or “Is there anything you want to add?” During each class period, the teachers would check in at least three, often far more times, to make sure that they were on the same page and to modify the lesson. These frequent and informal check ins were representative of how the teachers co-planned and worked to improve their instruction.

“Figuring out ways to improve”: Reflecting and co-planning. While Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson shared a planning block, most of their co-planning happened during informal check ins and over email as they worked to improve their instruction. Coach Wilson described their instruction as “just a work in progress all the time” (Int, 2/8) and the teachers constantly made adjustments to their teaching. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner often changed their lessons from the morning class to the afternoon class. At least once a week, and generally more often, the teachers would change something between the two classes of the day. One day they refined the directions for an activity. Another day, they added a handout for note taking. The changes were generally small, such as showing a different section of a video, switching the order of activities in a class, or reframing materials to avoid confusion that came up during the first period. The teachers often made the decisions to change something together, although Dr. Sumner was typically the one to suggest the change. During class one day, Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson began talking about how groups were doing with an activity, which led to Dr. Sumner commenting, “Maybe it would work better if we have partners” (Obs 2/17). That day they changed group structures between the two periods. Coach Wilson described how the teachers “might meet before lunch and say, ‘Ah, let's take this first part out for this next block’” (Int, 1/25). These informal check ins let them adjust their instruction between periods.

The teachers also used informal check ins to plan future lessons. During the first year of Synthesis, the four teachers of the program met regularly and developed a bank of lessons and activities. Now the teachers "pick and choose depending on what we think is going to be best" (Int, 1/24), "pull from stuff from the past" (Int, 1/25) and use that content as the basis for new lessons. Because they have worked together for so long and have materials from previous years, the teachers could plan quickly. They were able to "have a 20-minute conversation about what [they] need to do and then… roll with it" (Int, 2/8). That was what enabled them, according to Dr. Sumner to "juggle everything… that's how I think we're able to be productive because at this point we're not planning every lesson" (Int, 2/13).

Their lesson planning consisted in part of quick check ins, in part of drawing on previous materials, in part of work done during co-planning time, and in part of work done by Dr. Sumner at home. When it came to day to day lessons, Dr. Sumner did the bulk of the planning and material creation. Dr. Sumner would typically draft up a lesson plan and then send it to Coach Wilson the night before to see what he thought, what he wanted to change, and what he wanted to facilitate. Generally, Coach Wilson would respond in the morning or "come in the morning and… debrief about it and make any adjustments" (Int, 2/1). For Coach Wilson, it was important to show respect in the planning process and to acknowledge that he was not the one doing the majority of planning, which meant that he wanted the other teacher to "feel good" (Int, 1/25) about the lesson. Dr. Sumner however also wanted Coach Wilson to feel comfortable, which meant frequently checking in with Coach Wilson about lessons plans and instructional responsibilities.

At the end of school one day, I observed the two teachers planning a lesson for the next day. Dr. Sumner asked Coach Wilson if he wanted to do the political cartoon activity the next

day. They spoke about how the lesson had been structured in the past and what they wanted to change for this year. Dr. Sumner suggested a structure for the lesson and Coach Wilson clarified it. Then they went over options, and Coach Wilson chose the one that he liked which was; "10-minute quick write, discuss together, and then be prepared to present." Then Dr. Sumner suggested adding in quiz review and described some resources that he had found. Coach Wilson agreed. Within ten minutes, their lesson for the following day was planned (Int, 2/6). They drew on expertise from previous years and materials Dr. Sumner had found. During that brief ten-minute meeting, they were able to co-plan a lesson that addressed students' misconceptions from the quiz, built new knowledge, and included active learning activities. On another day, I watched them check in before school about pacing and whether or not they needed to extend the previous day's lesson into the new class. They agreed to move on to the new content, and then they followed up with students in class. Much of the planning for the course had become informal and collaborative, building off of the materials they had co-created in the past and the new materials that Dr. Sumner created.

Even during their co-planning times, the teachers' focus remained on how to meet the academic needs of their students. Coach Wilson described them as "constant[ly] figuring out ways to improve" (Int, 1/25). Just as the two teachers changed lessons between class periods, they also took what they had done in the past and modified it to meet the needs of their current students. They frequently discussed the progress and needs of individual students and made adjustments based on that. That might mean choosing a different project than they did the previous year or tinkering with existing lessons to improve them. The teachers worked to be considerate of each other as well as thoughtful about their students. That consideration,

combined with the frequent communication between teachers about life and lessons, helped strengthen the relationship between teachers.

Figure 4.6. Strong relationship.

"Pretty much a blessing": Strong relationship. The teachers deep respect for each other was evident in their words and actions (Figure 4.6). Both took time in their interviews to praise the other teacher to discuss how much they respected their co-teacher. Dr. Sumner talked about Coach Wilson's focus on mentoring his students. Coach Wilson spoke about how he took what he and Dr. Sumner spoke about philosophically to the students he coached. When Coach Wilson described their co-teaching partnership he said, "It's been pretty much a blessing for me to be able to work with somebody like him" (Int, 1/25).

The teachers seemed to enjoy each others' company, choosing to spend time together, laughing and smiling during conversations, and joking in class. When Coach Wilson was not actively working with students on the football team, he made their room his home base. Coach Wilson stayed in the room during his prep time when Dr. Sumner taught ESOL and would sometimes contribute to the class or watch the students if Dr. Sumner had to step out. In addition to choosing to spend time together, the teachers seemed to have fun together. During conversations, they frequently smiled, nodded, or laughed. During class they joked with each other. When they were watching a clip of a party from the Great Gatsby, they quietly joked about how the party goers would feel the next day. When Dr. Sumner did not turn on the music one

day, Coach Wilson looked at him and loudly said, “Music!” Dr. Sumner laughed, said, “Yes sir!” and put the music on. During another lesson, Dr. Sumner looked at Coach Wilson and joked that they were doing “assembly line learning.” The teachers appeared to enjoy spending time together and they also supported each other. When one had to leave the classroom to take care of something, the other would smoothly step up, allowing them both to juggle their multiple roles within the school. They listened to each, respected each other, supported each other, and had fun together. This strong relationship was part of what enabled the ease with which they shared roles and responsibilities in the classroom.

Figure 4.7. Fluidity in roles.

“It just became more natural”: Fluidity in roles. Rather than one teacher leading all activities, the two teachers took turns giving directions, instructing students, and supporting students (Figure 4.7). That fluidity, according to Coach Wilson, had evolved over time. In the beginning, “we’d really be like, okay, slide five Coach Wilson will work on that” (Int, 2/1) and rigidly divided up duties in the classroom. Now, the teachers might talk in advance about what sections of the lesson each would lead but more often they built off of each other in the classroom. Coach Wilson said that during the first class he sometimes liked to take more of a back seat on some of the instruction to see how Dr. Sumner framed it and then he liked to lead more in the afternoon. However, it was also important to him to monitor Dr. Sumner and to step in when he was “doing too much” (Int, 2/1) and working too hard. They teachers frequently built

off of each other in the class, adding on to the other's instruction or switching in mid-questioning to take the lead. Both teachers gave students directions, provided time prompts, and called the class back together. In general, Dr. Sumner was more likely to do previews of material and Coach Wilson was more likely to review material. Dr. Sumner was more likely to introduce content and concepts and Coach Wilson was more likely to build off what Dr. Sumner said. Finally, Dr. Sumner was more likely to announce time limits, and Coach Wilson was more likely to call the group back together.

Often the two teachers switched roles repeatedly during instruction. Before one class, Dr. Sumner suggested that the teachers do a write aloud to model the essay that students were being asked to write. Coach Wilson agreed, and they briefly discussed who they would write about. After class started, Dr. Sumner sat down and typed the heading and the first paragraph. Students, and Coach Wilson, could see what he was typing on the projector. As Dr. Sumner thought aloud and wrote, Coach Wilson called out words or phrases that Dr. Sumner could use. At the end of the first paragraph, they switched. Coach Wilson sat down and began to write the first body paragraph. As he thought aloud, Coach Wilson asked for students' help with phrases. Dr. Sumner positively reinforced what he was writing, saying "I like how you said maintain the goals of the group instead of repeating the mission. Nice." Then Dr. Sumner asked a question about what Coach Wilson was writing and Coach Wilson made a change. They switched off writers again and again so that Dr. Sumner wrote the next body paragraph and Coach Wilson wrote the conclusion (Obs, 1/30). That trading off between teachers was common in the classroom. Whenever the two teachers did a read aloud, they would take turns reading each paragraph. During PowerPoint lectures, they would trade off every few slides, although Coach Wilson was often likely to do fewer slides in the morning period and more in the afternoon one.

The teachers also frequently added onto or clarified what the other one had said. The following short excerpt is representative of a pattern of asking questions and taking turns that characterized the two teachers' whole group instruction:

> Coach Wilson asks, "Why are they rebuilding?" Students answer, and Dr. Sumner takes notes on the front whiteboard. Dr. Sumner reads the notes, saying, "We needed to rebuild the south. Remember the union military just slammed the south. Did they leave?" Coach Wilson adds, "Why are they there?" A student says, "To make sure the south doesn't go back to their old ways." Coach Wilson asks another question, "But what else was going on? When you are talking about equal rights, what are you talking about?" Dr. Sumner takes notes on the board as students speak. Dr. Sumner then asks, "Who wasn't treated equally?" (Obs, 1/15)

Both teachers taught the class, both asked questions, and both felt comfortable asking follow up questions and building on what the other teacher said. The exception to this was during grammar or formatting instruction. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner both said that the English content was new to Coach Wilson and he was still becoming comfortable with it. As a result, Dr. Sumner led most of the English instruction, although both teachers supported small groups and individual students with their English and writing work.

The students spent most of class time working in small groups or independently on activities. During these times, both teachers constantly walked around the classroom and supported students. Their styles were slightly different. Coach Wilson tended to listen a bit more and Dr. Sumner tended to ask a few more questions. Coach Wilson tended to stay with each student a bit longer and Dr. Sumner tended to more quickly move from student to student. Despite the differences in their styles, both worked with every student and offered fairly similar

support. The following excerpt shows what their combined support for students looked like in the classroom:

> Coach Wilson goes to the next student and looks at his work and says something. Dr. Sumner is with a new student looking at her screen. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson switch sides of the room. Coach Wilson is saying to a student, "You good?" Dr. Sumner is saying to a student, "What are some things that she did that show us her impact today?" (Obs, 1/24)

Rather than just one teacher supporting students or each teacher supporting only some students, both of these teachers supported all students. Their support for all students was important to Coach Wilson who admitted that he struggled with the idea that as a special education teacher he was "supposed to be supporting kids who have disabilities who have needs" when he could see that other students had needs as well (Int, 2/8). Because both teachers worked with every student, Coach Wilson was able to avoid feeling a need to focus more on the students with disabilities.

The teachers' willingness to work with all students included addressing the behavioral challenges and emotional needs of all students. Both teachers reinforced and praised students for good work, although Dr. Sumner was slightly more likely to do it verbally and Coach Wilson more likely to do it nonverbally with a high-five or snap. With Edwin, a student who sometimes struggled with behavior, Dr. Sumner would take the lead on responding to him one day and Coach Wilson the next. There was only one student, Antoine, that Coach Wilson tended to work with a more than Dr. Sumner. Both teachers checked on the student during every class. Antoine tended not to work with other students and Coach Wilson would often spend a bit longer with him, making sure he was working and keeping him company. The teachers shared their behavioral and instructional duties, but each maintained their own unique style.

As their individual styles differed so too did some of the responsibilities that the teachers took on in the classroom. As discussed previously, Dr. Sumner did the bulk of the day to day planning, wrote the handouts, selected the videos, and prepared the presentations. Many of these drew on materials he and Coach Wilson had created in the past, but the day to day instructional materials were created by Dr. Sumner and approved by or added to by Coach Wilson. Similarly, Dr. Sumner did all grading for the course and provided much of the written feedback on students' work. Dr. Sumner frequently worked on grading and material creation for Synthesis outside of class, and provided students from Synthesis before and after school support. Coach Wilson primarily worked on special education case management and coaching duties outside of class.

Outside of class, the responsibilities for Synthesis were not evenly divided and at times this was also apparent in the classroom. In class Dr. Sumner typically gave the feedback on assignments and assessments and presented the introductions to material, assignments, and videos. Dr. Sumner also took the lead on presenting English instruction and content. Other than this these examples however the teachers worked to evenly divide instructional responsibilities within the classroom. Overall, the teachers shared power and they shared responsibility for students in a way that was a testament both to their strong relationship and to their frequent communication. The impact of their work with each other was the most evident however when one teacher was out of the class.

"Better when both teachers are there": The power of having two teachers. Both teachers were able to run the class on their own, but the class was not as good as when both teachers were there. One morning Coach Wilson was out for the first 20 minutes of class helping sign a student. Dr. Sumner began the class with a PowerPoint presentation. He asked the students

many questions and showed visually interesting pictures, but students were only moderately engaged and the presentation felt like a lecture. Antoine was on a video game site the whole time. That afternoon, I saw the same presentation with both teachers present. The lesson felt more like a game and more interactive. The students were far more engaged, and I noted in my journal that the class felt more "fun and fluid" (Obs, 2/6). The following morning, Dr. Sumner missed the first 10 or so minutes of class to help with testing. Coach Wilson introduced a reflection activity about the quiz that the students had taken two days before, assigned them into groups to discuss their thoughts about the quiz, and supported individual students. Coach Wilson ran a strong activity, yet there were multiple students off task and the lesson again felt boring. The two teachers together presented the same reflection in the afternoon class. This time there was more playfulness, more modeling of desired responses for students, and far more on task behaviors by students. In my journal I wrote;

> Just like seeing Dr. Sumner on his own, Coach Wilson is good, but he is better when Dr. Sumner is there. Having seen both teachers on their own, I am comfortable saying that instruction and the rhythm and feel of the class is better when both teachers are there. Students get more individualized support and the two teachers feed off of each other well (Journal, 2/7).

Each teacher was strong, but together they were stronger. When one teacher was out, the constant interruptions in the classroom were also much more noticeable. The phone rang at least twice per period and adults were frequently walking in and out, looking for students, speaking to teachers, or talking to assistants. The two teachers generally took this in stride and accommodated all of the interruptions without losing the rhythm of their lesson. When Dr.

Sumner was gone however, Coach Wilson grew visibly frustrated with the ringing of phone that kept interrupting his attempts to get the groups started on their reflections.

Given Dr. Sumner's extensive planning and grading responsibilities in the classroom and his deep knowledge of the content, I considered the alternate theory that the co-teaching in the classroom was additional to the type of instruction I observed, but not integral to it. While I cannot rule out this theory, the weaknesses that I saw in instruction when one teacher was out led me to conclude that co-teaching contributed something unique and important to the instruction in the classroom. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson created a strong partnership based on shared beliefs and characteristics and frequent communication. They used that relationship to create a program that was better with the both of them than it would be with either teacher alone. The relationship took time and energy to make work and, as Dr. Sumner noted, added another layer to planning and to instructional decisions, but the teachers viewed the investment as worth the effort. The teachers used their relationship and their co-teaching expertise to create a culturally relevant classroom where students were empowered both within the classroom and within the broader world.

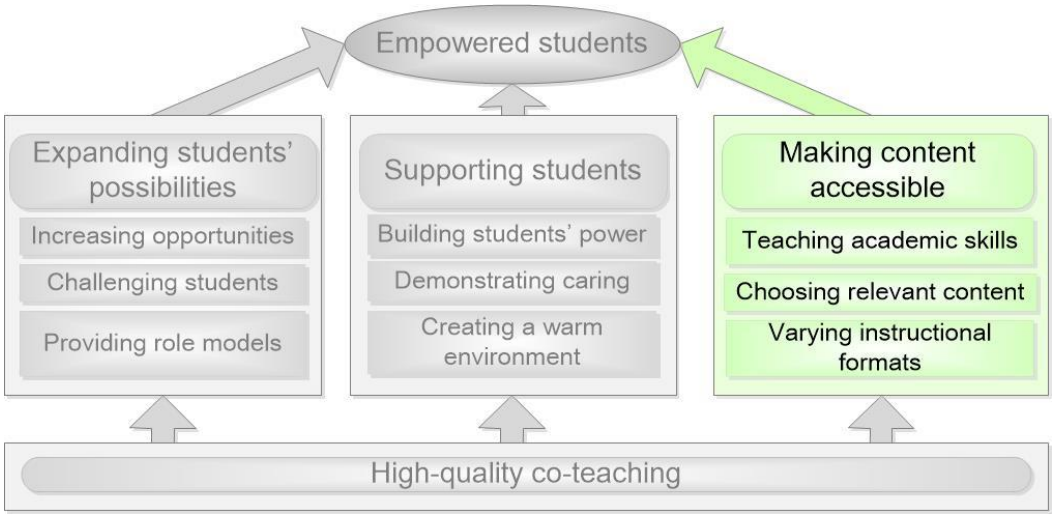

Figure 4.8. Making content accessible

Making Content Accessible

> When we're deciding what we're going to cover in class, we always take from the state standards, but we [put] an emphasis on what we feel like is going to connect most to them.... We have a unit on immigration and [discuss] every single standard that talks about integration [and]… African American history… Historically these classes have been… where predominantly our African American students are placed…So we put an emphasis on teaching African American history. (Dr. Sumner, int, 1/24)

The teachers used their strong relationship and flexibility in classroom roles to support students by making the content accessible to them (Figure 4.8). They did this in three ways. The first way was by choosing relevant content, which required them to reframe the curriculum and to find ways to connect the content students were learning to their own lives and to today. The second way the teachers made the content accessible was by varying instructional formats within lessons. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner taught using a variety of modalities and used a variety of structures including group work. They also varied instructional formats by using specific instructional strategies such as reviewing content to enhance students' learning. The third way that the teachers made the content accessible to students was by teaching them academic skills. The teachers taught students specific writing, linguistic, reading, and metacognitive skills. The students responded to the accessible content with engagement and with academic growth. During every lesson I observed, the teachers used at least one of these elements to make the content more accessible to students, but which element was used and how essential it was to the lesson varied by day.

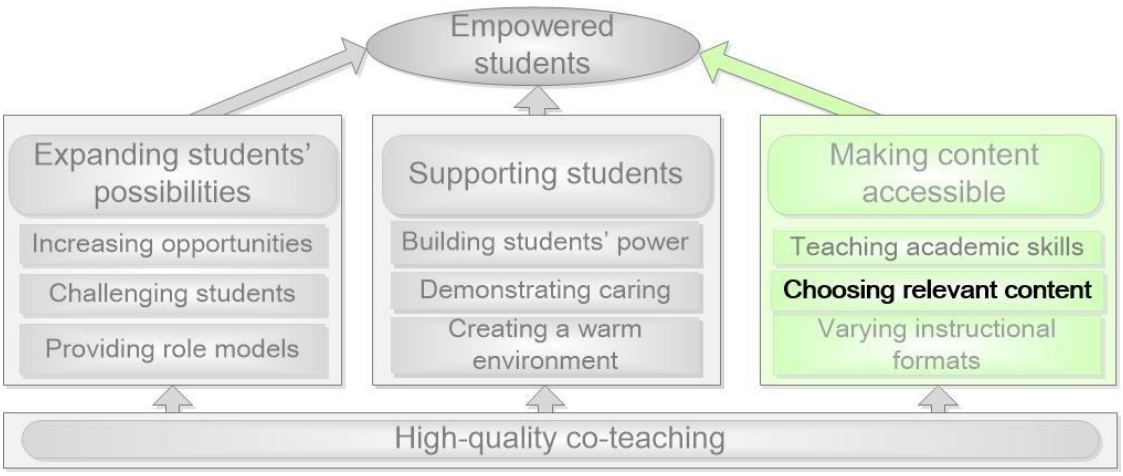

Figure 4.9. Choosing relevant content.

"A mirror and a window": Delivering relevant content. While the teachers wanted the students in the Synthesis classes to succeed on the high-stakes tests they took in English and US History, they wanted them to learn more than just facts for an exam (Figure 4.9). In class, Coach Wilson told the students, "We have talked in this class about being excluded, about being marginalized, about telling the untold story" (Obs, 1/18). Instead of just teaching the facts students needed for the exams, the teachers reframed the curriculum and told the untold stories from US history, including the stories of people who looked like or had similar experiences to those of students in the classroom.

The curriculum in the class began with the state standards. The English portion of the course was where Dr. Sumner said he found the most freedom. He described the 11th grade English standards as about "persuasive writing and understanding persuasive nonfiction texts" which enabled the teachers to focus on elevating students' voices and seeing multiple perspectives (Int, 1/24). Dr. Sumner felt much more limited in US History where the high-stakes exam constrained his freedom to "explore what they're interested in." Dr. Sumner estimated that in class they addressed 90% of the US History standards and all of the most commonly tested

ones. He reported that the teachers' direct instruction focused on the state standards' content. There were days in the Synthesis class that were clearly content coverage days, where the teachers went over terms such as robber barons or the Homestead Act and quizzed students on definitions. The focus on helping students pass the high-stakes exam was also evident in the quiz questions the students answered and the review games they played. The students played Kahoot! and Quizlet Live games using questions that were often taken directly from the state test or that used similar wording.

"We really want them to get the bigger picture": Reframing the content. Even within history the teachers found ways to reframe the content. Dr. Sumner stated that within the state standards, the teachers worked to put an "emphasis on what [they] feel like is going to connect most" to the students (Int, 1/24). Coach Wilson said that they found ways to work within and around the official content; "Obviously there's a curriculum that we have to follow, but we really want them to get the bigger picture of things" (Int, 2/8). During the lessons I observed, they covered Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, Westward Expansion, the Suffrage movement, the Progressive era, and the Roaring Twenties. Within each content area, I compared what the teachers were doing to the district curriculum framework and state standards. While the teachers addressed the required content, what they emphasized and how they presented the material often differed significantly from the frameworks. For example, women's suffrage was a small part of the district curriculum with just a mention of leadership in the movement, the movement's antecedence of modern protests, the role of women working in World War 1, and the 19th amendment. The teachers however also presented the torture of the Suffragettes and the role of racism in the Suffrage movement. They also discussed ongoing bias against women, including the historic exclusion of women from the military and from local universities and the current

lack of statues and holidays dedicated to women. I saw evidence of a reframing of district and state standards in each unit that I observed, although the extent of the reframing varied by unit.

Often that meant moving away from the textbook. The history class had three textbooks, at three readings levels that students could choose from. The students however rarely ever read from the textbook. In class reading was only one small component of instruction and when students read, they often read material that Dr. Sumner had created rather than from the textbooks. He said that he wrote his own materials because the textbooks were not perfectly aligned to state standards and because they did not emphasize the academic language that his students needed exposure to. He also wrote his own materials to highlight multiple perspectives in history. Dr. Sumner also drew teaching materials from documentaries, from primary sources, and from YouTube videos. Dr. Sumner spoke about wanting the curriculum to be a "mirror and a window" for students (Int, 2/8). He wanted them to see people like them in the curriculum and to expose students to multiple perspectives about history, including the perspectives of women, of Indigenous people, of Latinos, of African Americans, of immigrants, of poor people, and of wealthy people. In a four-paragraph handout that he wrote on Westward Expansion, he included the disruption to Indigenous lives, Wounded Knee, and the number of single women moving west as well as the standard content of urbanization and covered wagons. The perspectives of women and of Indigenous people were emphasized more in his writing than in the district's curriculum framework. In the accompanying PowerPoint and lecture, he and Coach Wilson emphasized Latino and African American perspectives as well. Rather than just telling the dominant narrative of history, in class students learned about inequality, and were exposed to multiple perspectives on events.

"We talk about stereotypes": Exposing power and inequality. During almost all lessons focused on the acquisition of content, the teachers included explicit discussions of power, oppression, and structural inequalities. When the teachers presented the Great Migration, Dr. Sumner described it as "African Americans fleeing the terrorism of the South" (Obs, 2/1). Coach Wilson spoke about voter suppression to individual students and Dr. Sumner to the whole class. Dr. Sumner asked how Southern states worked to get around the 15th amendment, saying, "They don't want Black people to vote so how do they get around it?" The teachers had students listen to and read the lyrics of Home on the Range, including a line about "red men" being pressed from the West. They discussed the meaning of the line and Dr. Sumner described the song as "propaganda to get people to move to the west" (Obs, 2/1). The teachers talked about the low percentage of African Americans who moved west as being "in part because of discrimination which made it harder for non-White people to sign up for the program" (Obs, 2/1). They discussed gender stereotypes, wealth inequality, and who is excluded from the stories that we tell. In a class discussion of Ida B. Wells, Dr. Sumner discussed lynching in depth by describing its role in maintaining White economic power. In each of these examples, the teachers were exposing the historic roots of inequalities in society. The teachers were also telling the stories of people like many of the students, people who have often been oppressed in American history whether because of their gender, race, economic, or immigration status.

While some of this content was included in the standards, the depth and intensity of this focus in class reflected the teachers' beliefs in exposing and breaking stereotypes. Coach Wilson told students that, "We talk about stereotypes in the class, perspectives" (Obs, 1/31). When asked about that in an interview he spoke about the longevity and intensity of stereotypes about people and said, "those are things that I feel like we challenge in this class" (Int, 2/1). When asked how,

he discussed the importance of directly addressing stereotypes, saying, “I think just making them more aware of the stereotypes” (Int, 2/8). The teachers worked to expose power in society, to make students aware of stereotypes, and to help them see inequalities. They taught content that both expanded students’ knowledge of power and content that students could use as a mirror to see themselves and the experiences of people like them. They further helped to make the content relevant to students by connecting the content to students’ lives and to today.

***“Making it relevant to them”: Connecting content to students*.** In order to help students see the connections between the past and today and between the content and their own lives, the teachers used students in their content examples, highlighted the importance of the content, and directly connected the content to students’ lives and to current events. Dr. Sumner described a focus on “connecting [content] to what they care about [and] making it relevant to them” (Int, 2/13). Coach Wilson said that, in order to build student engagement, they needed to help the students “understand… what's important, what's applicable to their lives and how the stuff that they're learning… affects them” (Int, 2/8). Both teachers viewed relevance as essential to student learning.

One way the teachers made the content accessible to students was by using them in examples. Sometimes it was as basic as showing a picture of children working in the coal mines and Coach Wilson saying, “You would be in the coal mines! Getting your fingers cut off. No worker’s comp. Think how lucky you are!” (Obs, 2/5). Sometimes it was more elaborate such as when Dr. Sumner pretended two students were business owners creating a trust and that other students were workers fighting to unionize. The teachers used this technique primarily when they were presenting abstract concepts such as buying stocks on margin, deflation, laissez faire economics, and the economic impact of monopolies. The examples often began simply like this:

"Imagine L is selling hats and he has the only hat business in town. Then Juan opens a hat business too and says I am going to sell it for 75 cents" (Obs, 2/5). Then the teachers quickly built the examples to include more and more students in different roles. Throughout the examples, students would laugh or comment. The students would also refer back to the examples later when asked about the content. In addition to using students in examples, the teachers also made the content relevant to students by highlighting its importance.

As the teachers moved through lessons and introduced activities, they would pause at least once every few classes to discuss why some aspect of what they were learning was important. After discussing the loopholes in the 13th amendment, Dr. Sumner transitioned into writing by saying, "Look how that clause in the 13th mattered—writing matters" (Obs, 1/16). Later after they watched part of *Slavery By Another Name*, Dr. Sumner connected the letters by incarcerated people highlighted in the film to the importance of writing by saying, "I want you to think about the power of writing to survive long after you are gone" (Obs, 1/16). During class, the teachers would ask students why something they had watched was important. In assigning students' women's day speeches which they would be sending to real politicians, Dr. Sumner said, "I think there is an opportunity here" (Obs, 1/18). The teachers began creating engagement in their lessons by using students as examples and highlighting the importance of what they were discussing. They most strongly built relevance however by connecting the history to events today and to students' lives.

Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson used connections between today and the history to draw students in and to help them understand the content. Coach Wilson described them as "us[ing] things that are happening currently as well to pull them in" (Int, 1/25). Dr. Sumner described them as highlighting how "history connects to things that are happening in our country or in the

world today" (Int, 1/24). On a day to day basis, Dr. Sumner was primarily the teacher who found ways to bring today into content coverage lessons. During a lesson on women's suffrage, the teachers showed the class a video of the first female Rangers from only a year or two ago and had students connect that back to suffrage. When the class discussed trusts, Dr. Sumner described how they are illegal today, outside of the health care industry, "which is part of the reason health care is so expensive" (Obs, 2/5). When the class discussed income inequality in the 1920s, Dr. Sumner showed a graph of inequality today and had the students look at the similarities (Obs, 2/5). When the class discussed the opulence of the Roaring Twenties, Dr. Sumner connected it to people showing off their money on Instagram today. Dr. Sumner also connected the monopolies of then to Amazon today. Finally, when the class discussed the role of the federal reserve in the Depression, Dr. Sumner connected it to the financial crisis in 2008. The teachers worked to highlight how the history the students were learning connected to the world around them today.

Beyond highlighting how issues from history connected to today, the teachers also made the content personal. In addition to their work selecting content that would connect to students and that they could use as a mirror to see themselves, the teachers also connected the content to themselves and to individual students. Dr. Sumner repeated stories that his great-grandmother told him about the Depression and how it had impacted her. Coach Wilson connected unionization in the Progressive Era to the National Football League's Players Union (NFLPU), and the role that they serve for football players. Coach Wilson also connected monopolies to Narcos, a show that he was currently watching. The teachers built the students interests and experiences into class too. Dr. Sumner described an interest survey they gave students at the beginning of the year and how they tried to work the content from that into the lessons. He

described how they built in music, the Civil Rights era, video games, and immigration into the class right away based on that survey, "trying to make sure that kids see from the beginning that this course is going to connect to, to something that you care about" (Int, 2/1). In addition to bringing in students' interests, the teachers also brought students' lived experiences into the classroom.

Students own experiences were incorporated into lessons at least once a week. Many of the students in the class had jobs, and that experience was connected to lessons on convict leasing and on Progressive Era labor laws. In the Reconstruction example, the connection was fleeting, focusing on what it means to work for no pay. In the labor laws example, Dr. Sumner highlighted the emergence of a minimum wage during that time period and how that protects workers today. The teachers connected the content to students' lived experiences in other ways as well. After watching a video on the Shirtwaist Factory fire, Dr. Sumner pointed to the classroom's double doors and explained how they were connected. When talking about buying on credit, Coach Wilson connected it to getting a loan for a car, an example that resonated with a student whose sister had just bought a car. Students' individual experiences were also included in the class. When students were confused about the Great Migration, Dr. Sumner called on a student and asked, "What is one reason your family left El Salvador?" When the student replied, "Because there were no jobs, and the danger, the gangs," Dr. Sumner connected that back to the Great Migration and why people left the South (Obs, 2/7).

Finally, Dr. Sumner connected the content of the amendments to students' lives. During an activity on the first fifteen amendments, students answered a question about which amendment protected you if someone said that you were not a citizen even though you were born here. Several students in the classroom had parents who were undocumented, making that

example particularly relevant to those students. In a different class, Dr. Sumner connected the 14th amendment to the school's expulsion policy. The teachers made the content relevant to students by including their experiences, connecting to today, highlighting the importance of content, using students in examples, and selecting content that students could use as a mirror.

While CRT discusses the importance of culturally relevant content, defined as content chosen based on the race of the students in the class, these teachers shied away from that. While they included perspectives in history of people who looked like the students in the class, they avoided making assumptions about what students would be interested in and making generalizations based on the race or ethnicity of their students. Coach Wilson described culture as "all about people learning about each other" (Int, 2/1) and his focus was on learning about individual students. Similarly, Dr. Sumner believed in providing students with multiple options and multiple perspectives rather than making assumptions about what would resonate with students. While the curriculum in the classroom was designed to be relevant to students, the focus was on making it personally relevant more than relevant to students based on their ethnicities. In addition, relevance was only one way that the teachers made the content accessible to students.

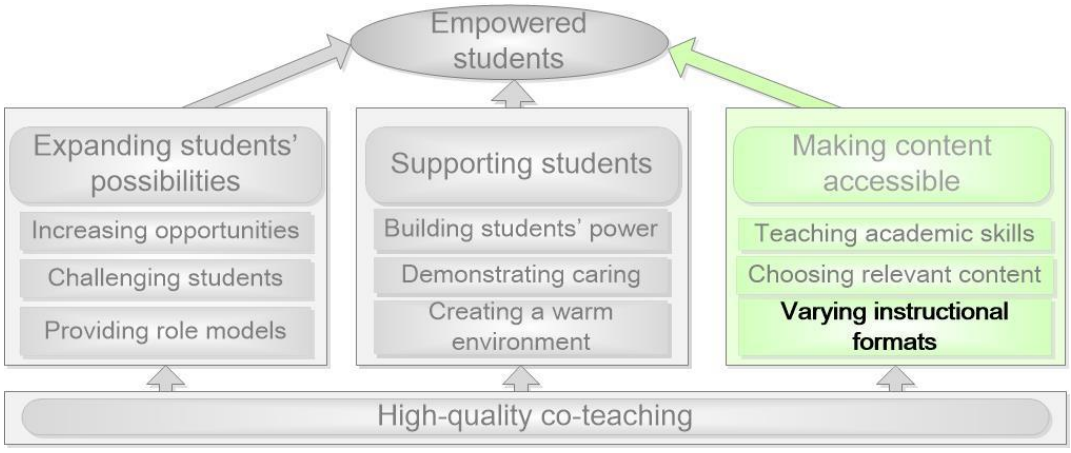

Figure 4.10. Varying instructional formats

"Tell me what we are doing": Varying instructional formats. In addition to choosing relevant content, the teachers also made the content accessible by varying instructional formats within and between classes on a daily basis (Figure 4.10). The teachers varied class structures, used multiple modalities in their instruction, incorporated group work into classes, and used varied instructional strategies. Each of these instructional choices further helped to make the content accessible to the students in Synthesis and each was supported by the teachers' high-quality co-teaching.

"The bell rings": Class structure. The class schedule varied widely by day, but classes were consistently structured to maximize instructional time. Class almost always began with a "Do Now." The Do Nows included looking at pictures with table-mates, reviewing individual quiz grades, revising sentences independently, finishing a group project, and beginning to talk with a partner about a question posted on the board. After the Do Now, class would vary. Some classes focused on acquisition of new content. These classes typically combined a Do Now with a discussion of new content, an interactive PowerPoint discussion, a reading and discussion activity, a brief video, and a small group activity. Other classes focused on projects. During these classes, students might work independently for the full period or work with their classmates on a group project. The posted schedule for one class said, "1) Do now: Picture exploration, 2) Great depression notes, 3) Doritos simulation" (Obs, 2/15). For another day, it said, "1) Do Now: Finish your commercials, 2) Partner reading and notes, 3) Review, 4) Political cartoon" (Obs, 2/5). During one class with a quiz, the structure was a fifteen minute interactive lecture, a twenty minute Kahoot! review for the quiz, a twenty minute quiz, and an eighteen minute documentary. During one of the classes where students worked on their speeches, the students spent five minutes looking over a political cartoon about Suffrage, fifteen minutes

watching and discussing a short news clip about female Rangers, ten minutes discussing the cartoon from the beginning of the class, and then spent the rest of the class working independently on their project. While the class structure varied significantly by day, one thing that remained consistent was the maximization of class time.

The teachers worked to use every moment of class time. When students came in, there was always a Do Now up on the projector or work waiting on their tables. Dr. Sumner would greet them and prompt them to start the Do Now. Often students were getting ready to work even before the bell rang, getting out their computers or looking over the material on their tables. Class ended when the bell rang. Sometimes the students watched documentaries until the bell rang and sometimes presentations ran until the bell. Even more commonly, as the class began to become distracted close to bell time, Coach Wilson would lead a fast paced and highly interactive review session. He would run it until the bell rang, telling students to "Hang in there" when they grew antsy.

The teachers also tried to maximize time during the class. The teachers often prompted students about tasks to complete when they were done with their activity to minimize wasted time. The tasks to do when done varied. Sometimes the teachers put on a documentary for students who were done and sometimes they told the early finishers to start on their homework or begin a reading for the next class. In addition to minimizing down time by providing the students with follow-up tasks, the teachers also managed time effectively. The teachers frequently used countdowns and timers for activities, with Dr. Sumner often setting a timer and Coach Wilson giving the time warnings. The teachers also tried to speed up transitions between activities. The teachers often had students move around during class. Some students tended to move slowly, and Coach Wilson would give them the hurry up signal from football or walk over and tell them to

speed up. There were times where students did not have work to do when they were done, when activities went a bit too long, or when transitions took a while, but the teachers actively worked to minimize these times. Sometimes the teachers even wrote the minutes for an activity on the board next to each item on the schedule. The teachers' tight focus on productivity also carried over into students' assessments.

Homework and quizzes, along with students written work and revisions, were part of the students' grades. Work that students did not complete during class could become homework, although the teachers also gave students time during lunch, before and after school, or during a support period to work on incomplete work. About once a week, students had official homework that often consisted of reading a passage and answering questions. If students completed the homework on time, they both got extra credit on the quiz and were able to use it as a resource during the quiz. The connection of the homework to the quizzes was a new policy, designed to help students "see the connection between the homework and what [they] are assessed on" (Obs, 1/24). Sometimes students had choices within the homework of what to read and whether to write or draw responses to the readings.

In addition to homework, students also took untimed quizzes and tests that they were expected to study for. The multiple-choice questions on the assessments resembled the questions that students would see on the high-stakes state exam while the short answer questions were more variable. The tests built off of the quizzes which built off in class reviews and off of homework and class content. The online program the teachers used for the assessments instantly graded students' responses, and the teachers went over questions that students got wrong with them individually if one or two missed the question or by adding in review content if multiple students missed the question. While the class structure, the assessments, and the focus on

classroom productivity formed the skeleton of the course, it was in the teachers' instruction that the course became fleshed out.

"Imagine listening to this 100 years ago": Multi-modal instruction. Rather than just presenting information orally through lectures, the teachers used visuals, videos, music, and concrete materials to help the students understand the content. They also occasionally used lectures, although these were rarely more than fifteen minutes long and were often punctuated with questions for students. The PowerPoints slides used in lectures primarily consisted of images with brief captions. The teachers would often ask the students a question about the picture and then use the students' responses as a base for explaining the content.

In addition to heavily visual PowerPoints, classroom activities were also often based around visuals. During the Suffrage unit, the class analyzed a political cartoon. Students looked at the cartoon on their own, discussed it as a class, and then eventually wrote about it. During the Progressive Era unit, groups of students were given different political cartoons and tasked with teaching the rest of the class about their cartoon. Students discussed and wrote about the cartoons in their small groups before presenting them to the whole class. Other visually focused activities including having students post comments in groups on a picture based Padlet and having groups of students analyze and briefly present photos from the Great Depression. In addition to teaching with visuals, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner also encouraged students to create visuals by drawing in their notes. The teachers also heavily used short video clips to build students' comprehension. During a class segment on the Roaring Twenties, the students watched a four-minute clip from an extravagant party from the Great Gatsby. During a review of Ida B. Wells, the students watched a four-minute video of her life. They watched similar length clips about the Suffrage movement, about the first female Rangers, and of famous speeches by women. They

watched longer, ten to fifteen minute clips, of documentaries on convict leasing, Westward Expansion, and the Progressive Era. When students were confused about a concept such as assembly lines, Dr. Sumner would often find and show a short video clip to clarify the concept rather than trying to re-explain it with words. While I frame this strategy as part of making content accessible for all students, this focus on visuals also relates to Dr. Sumner's background as an ESOL teacher and his desire to support those students.

Although less common, the teachers used music, digital resources, and physical materials as well during lessons and activities. Students listened to and analyzed the lyrics of Home on the Range during Westward Expansion. The teachers introduced The Roaring Twenties through the music of Duke Ellington. Dr. Sumner turned up the volume on one of Duke Ellington's songs and said, "Imagine listening to this 100 years ago. On your radio. Which you just bought, because radios were new. Before this you would have had to have a phonograph. There was no TV" (Obs, 2/15). While music often played in the background of the class, in these cases the music was part of the instruction.

The teachers also built technology into many classes. They used games like Kahoot! and Quizlet Live to make test review more interesting. The teachers included shared Google documents in most classes and used other technologies like Padlets occasionally. In addition to digital materials, the teachers also used a variety of physical materials in the classroom. The students often wrote on walls, boards, and tables with whiteboard markers. The students used poster paper to create advertisements for one project and looked at large, poster sized photos for another. During a simulation of wealth inequality, the teachers gave students plates of Doritos. The amount of Doritos a student had represented the student's share of wealth. There was one student with a huge pile of Doritos, a few students with three or four Doritos, and many students

with just one third of a Dorito. Then the teachers simulated the impact of the Depression by taking Doritos away from students, leaving the wealthiest student with a still large pile and almost everyone else with no Doritos. Finally, after the students discussed what they noticed and were thinking, the teachers showed the impact of the redistribution of the New Deal and then the impact of the jobs created by World War II by giving each of the lower-income students more Doritos. Rather than just hearing a lesson, the students were able to study photos, listen to songs, watch videos, play games, and interact with physical materials. The teachers used these varied modalities to build student comprehension of the content. They further built student comprehension and engagement by including group work in most classes.

"That shows you are connected": Group work. While students did complete some independent projects, in almost every class the teachers gave them time to work with partners or in groups. The students frequently smiled and laughed as they worked with classmates. During one class, Dr. Sumner commented on this, saying, "That shows that you are connected and that makes for good learning… we hope that working together in groups is fun for you" (Obs, 1/24). The teachers worked to add in even more group work after students gave feedback on the course as students indicated that they enjoyed the group work. Group work was a way that the teachers built community in the classroom, fostered student engagement, and made the content accessible to students.

The teachers built group work into reading activities, writing assignments, discussions, and presentations. When the teachers asked students to read, they often gave the students choices of reading on their own or doing partner readings. When the students did not have choices on how to read, it was because the teachers were requiring them to read with a partner or small group and to talk with other students about the reading. The students also often worked with

partners or in groups on writing. When students worked on shared writing projects, typically one person would create a shared document and the other students would all type on it. During some writing activities, the teachers would ask one student in each group to be a notetaker or writer, but more often all students in the group were expected to contribute to the Google document. The teachers also built group work into writing by asking students to use their peers as support. When students were working on counter claims for their speeches, the teachers told them to go and talk to peers who researched someone different. Over half of the students in the class, at one point or another, spoke to a peer about who they had studied. The teachers built group work even into this independent writing activity. Sometimes Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson built group work into reviews for tests as well through partner flash card practice or Quizlet! live in teams.

In addition to using group work for activities, the teachers also built group work into discussions. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner used a combination of whole group, small group, and partner discussion in the class. One day, the teachers asked students to discuss the pictures on their tables in table groups. On another day, the teachers told groups of students to rotate through question stations in small groups. When the teachers asked students to reflect on their quiz grades, they asked them to reflect in groups and to discuss which questions were challenging and why. In addition, on multiple occasions the teachers had students develop presentations with the people in their group.

The teachers said they used group work because the students enjoyed it and because it helped build classroom community. The students were also often engaged in their groups, talking and working to make meaning of the content. CRT literature highlights the importance of group work as a culturally relevant teaching strategy for students from collectivist cultures (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015), these teachers viewed group work as a strategy that students enjoyed and that

built community. Group work was also a way that the teachers built students' comprehension of and engagement with the content. Group work and multi-modal instruction however were only two of the ways that the teachers varied instructional formats to increase the accessibility of content for students. The teachers also used a wide variety of instructional strategies to support students' learning of the content and important academic skills.

"Tell me what we are doing today": Instructional strategies. In both instruction and activities, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner used a wide variety of instructional strategies to help students learn the content. These strategies included clarifying directions, checking for understanding, connecting the content back to material the students already knew, providing scaffolding, and previewing and reviewing the content. The teachers used these strategies with the whole class and with individual students.

When asked about disability specific strategies, the number one strategy that Coach Wilson identified using was clarifying whether or not students understood directions. He reported using this strategy by frequently saying, "Alright, so tell me what we are doing right now" (Int, 2/1). In class Coach Wilson frequently did just that. After one of the two teachers gave a direction, Coach Wilson would often either rephrase the directions, ask the students questions about the directions, or ask students to repeat the directions back to him. One day in class he said, "Does anyone not understand what we are doing? No? Okay, J. tell me what we are doing today" (Obs, 1/25). Both teachers would also go to individual students and clarify or repeat the directions for an activity as needed.

The teachers often combined clarifying directions with checking for student understanding of directions and terms. At least once per class, one of the teachers would ask students a version of "Does this make sense?" They also used non-verbal signals and emphasized

the importance of students' sharing their confusions. During a review of the Great Migration, Dr. Sumner asked the students if they understood and modeled using a thumbs up, thumbs down, and thumbs halfway up gesture. Only one student responded, and Coach Wilson told the class, "It is important to let us know" (Obs, 2/7). Beyond asking students if they understood, the teachers also checked for understanding by actively monitoring students, looking at their work on their computers, asking them individual questions, and listening to the conversations in small groups during activities. By clarifying directions and checking for understanding, the teachers worked to ensure that students understood activities. When it came to helping students understand content however the teaches used additional strategies.

The teachers frequently made connections between content areas and provided students with scaffolding to support their understanding. Dr. Sumner often connected the history content to writing. After students watched the first few minutes of a documentary, Dr. Sumner paused the film and connected those first few minutes to the introduction of an essay and asked students what they noticed. On a different day, Dr. Sumner had the students discuss the thesis of a political cartoon. On other days Dr. Sumner had students identify the topic sentences in a history reading, and used history focused sentences to help students' practice sentence combining. Dr. Sumner also occasionally connected new content to earlier content. He did this when he connected a discussion of pathos and ethos in their commercials to a Shaquille O'Neill ad the students had watched earlier in the year, and when he connected Progressive Era cities to the immigration unit the students completed earlier in the year.

The teachers provided the students with instructional scaffolding more frequently than they made connections within the content. When the teachers asked the students to take notes, they often gave them graphic organizers to use and guidance on ways to take notes. Before the

students began working on their Women's Day speeches, the teachers created a rich resource bank for students on Google classroom. The resource bank included step by step directions of how the students could complete the project. Coach Wilson saw providing students with a "step process" (Int, 2/1) as another important disability specific strategy. In class, he went over the steps of the Women's Day project and shared how much using a checklist helped him personally complete work. The teachers also gave visual, step by step directions when they presented Do Nows and other activities. The scaffolding that the teachers provided and the connections they helped students make were two of the instructional strategies that teachers used to make the content more accessible to students.

Pre-teaching, previewing and reviewing were three other strategies the teachers used to make the content more accessible. Dr. Sumner frequently pre-taught the Synthesis content to the students in his ESOL class. He would often teach the vocabulary words that they would be using in Synthesis or have the students practice reading and discussing the material. During Synthesis class, Dr. Sumner previewed almost all content. At the start of a week or a unit, he would preview what was going to be coming in the next week or few weeks. At the start of each PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Sumner would share objectives and agenda slides that described what would be covered in the presentation. Before showing even a short film clip, he would introduce it, highlighting what it was about and key points. At the end of class, Dr. Sumner would often preview what the students were going to do in the next class. This frequent previewing of content was paired by frequent reviewing of content, almost always done by Coach Wilson. The teachers included review in about half of the classes. While sometimes the review was a game like Kahoot! or an activity, more often it was an oral review. The following example shows a fairly typical review done by Coach Wilson at the end of the class. This review

lasted under four minutes. While only Coach Wilson's questions are included, students rapidly responded to each question:

> Coach Wilson asks, "It was after what war? Between who? What does reconstruction mean? What are they rebuilding technically? What three amendments were passed during the process? What was the 13th? What was the 14th? What was the 15? Why were voting rights such a big deal? What group was impacted by this? What were they allowed to do? What were they allowed to have a voice in now? Which means eventually African Americans would eventually be able to be a part of what?" A student responds about Black elected officials in Southern states and says, "But there hasn't been one for a long time." Coach Wilson asks, "Why?" (Obs, 2/4).

The teachers often structured the lightening paced review as a spiral review, bringing in elements from classes earlier in the month, from the same day, or from earlier in the week. The reviews built on the previews of content, as well as on the other instructional strategies, to solidify students' understanding of content that they needed to know for the states' high-stakes test and sometimes for future class projects. However, the most important, and most common instructional strategy that the teachers used to help make the content accessible to students was individual support.

As discussed in the co-teaching section, during almost every class the two teachers walked around the classroom, meeting with and supporting individual students. They gave students individual feedback, looked at what was on their computers or papers, commented on what they were saying, and asked students if they needed support. Often during these times, students would express a confusion that they had not admitted to in front of the whole class. Then the teachers would individually conference with the student, generally staying until the

student was actively participating in their group again or working independently. Providing students with individual supports was a powerful instructional strategy in the classroom. By combining multi-modal instruction and instructional strategies, including individual supports, the teachers supported the students' content mastery. However, those supports did not address students' underlying skill deficits.

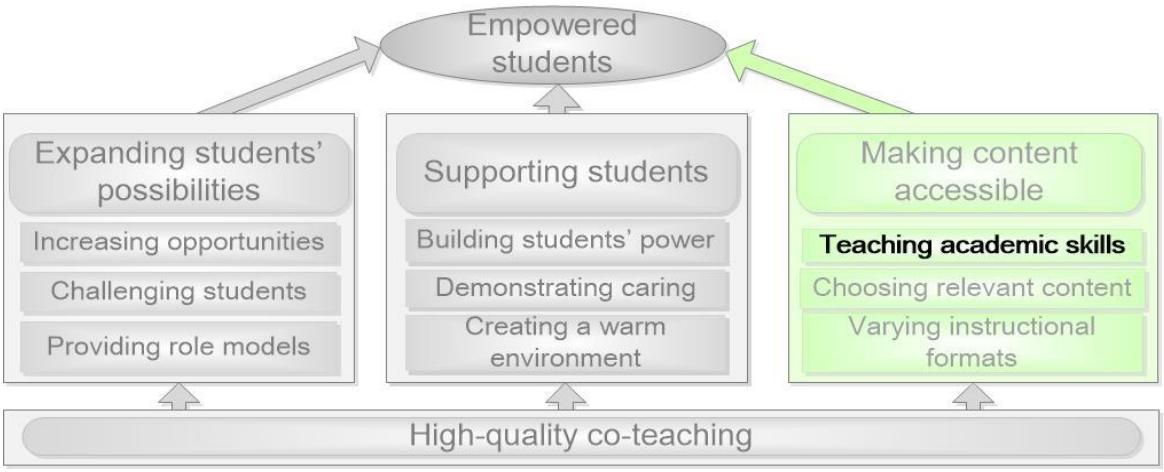

Figure 4.11. Teaching academic skills.

"What could you do to improve next time?": Skill building. The students came to Synthesis with widely varying academic skills and challenges. Coach Wilson said that part of their reason for combining the English and history courses this year was that, "we always felt like reading and writing was the really the area that we needed to get kids to improve in" (Int, 2/8). In order to address the varied academic preparation and backgrounds of the students in the classroom, the teachers explicitly taught writing, formal English, reading, and metacognitive skills (Figure 4.11).

Dr. Sumner described many students as "afraid of writing" (In, 2/13) at the beginning of the year. He saw writing as "very technical" and felt that by "breaking[ing] it down" students would learn that writing was just a skill that anyone could master. They broke down writing in

the classroom by providing explicit instruction on grammar, descriptive sentences, and essay writing. When students were working on paper revisions, Dr. Sumner provided a series of mini-lessons on grammar. These lessons included the purpose and use of semi-colons, the term "however", and other conjunctions. In addition to grammar, the students received direct instruction on sentence combining and using specific language. With each, Dr. Sumner would introduce why they were doing the activity, present an example, have students do an example with him, and then either have students complete an example on their own or have them apply the skill in their own writing. The class repeatedly went over topic sentences and thesis statements as well as grammar and word choice. The students identified topic sentences and theses in history readings, in cartoons, and in writing models. They also repeatedly reviewed what topic sentences and theses were and how to identify them. This direct instruction in writing skills was at times paired with showing students models of strong writing.

The teachers gathered writing models from three places. The first was from student work. After students wrote a response to a political cartoon, Dr. Sumner had a student come up and share her written response with the class. After she finished reading, Dr. Sumner asked the class, “What did she do well?” A student replied, “Everything,” and Dr. Sumner built on that response, highlighting how she answered the question, shared her opinion, and the sophisticated vocabulary she used. Dr. Sumner pointed out how she used the possessive “s” correctly as well (Obs, 1/25). The teachers used student models frequently on the day after quizzes or writing activities to give students ideas of what to do for the test or for how to revise their work.

The second type of writing models the teachers used were pre-created by them. When the students began to work on annotated bibliographies, the teachers put a model of one in a shared folder and briefly reviewed the model with the class, so students could use it to help them create

their own annotated bibliographies. They also used a pre-created model to show students what their writing about a political cartoon should look like. After assigning cartoons to students, Dr. Sumner pulled up a model response to a cartoon that he and Coach Wilson had created and went over the elements of it. The third type of writing model that the teachers used was a live write-aloud. The teachers only did this once, spending about twenty minutes of a class on the Woman's day speech modelling how to write the speech. The write aloud, discussed in the co-teaching section, was a chance for both teachers to show their writing process to students. As Coach Wilson was writing he said, "Do you see how we are talking as we write? I am like you in that I get stuck sometimes as we are writing. Talking about it helps me" (Obs, 1/30). He explicitly connected what he was doing to something that could help students in their own writing. By providing students with models of writing and direct instruction in writing, the teachers were building students' writing skills.

The teachers further built students' writing skills through explicit instruction in formal English. In class, the teachers paired providing students with first language supports with instruction in academic English. The combination made the content more accessible to students while providing students with skills that they needed to succeed on state exams. Dr. Sumner is a fluent Spanish speaker, which was the first language of a large majority of the ESOL students in his classes. Speaking was the lowest area on the ESOL students state test scores. As a result, Dr. Sumner and the ESOL students were working to increase the amount of English they spoke at school. However, in both ESOL and Synthesis Dr. Sumner also let the students socially and academically communicate in Spanish as needed. In addition, at times Dr. Sumner would also explain directions or clarify content in Spanish. Generally, he provided support by translating an individual word that was challenging, like strike or bravery. Sometimes he translated larger

chunks of the content. For example, at the end of one Synthesis class Dr. Sumner called over two of the ESOL students and said, “Can I have you really quick?” He explained the content again in Spanish and English to the students and asked follow up questions to ensure that they understood (Obs, 1/24).

Dr. Sumner also validated the students’ home language in class by using Spanish words in instruction and by connecting course concepts to Spanish sayings. During a class on Westward Expansion, Dr. Sumner described the original cowboys as Mexican and explained that the Mexican heritage is the reason that lasso, rodeo, and other cowboy words are Spanish words. In another class he explained how unions work by using the Spanish saying, “la union es la fuerza,” (Obs, 2/6) which means “in union there is strength.” When students had to complete independent work like quizzes or longer written assignments, Dr. Sumner would pass out bilingual dictionaries. By offering the students dictionaries, using Spanish in instruction, letting students speak in their home languages in the classroom, and providing first language support when needed, Dr. Sumner validated the Spanish speaking students’ home language and made the classroom and instruction more accessible for them. He and Coach Wilson paired that support with skill building of formal English.

Rather than denigrating the way that students spoke at home, the teachers distinguished between formal and informal language. When a student described something as stupid, Dr. Sumner asked, “How could we say that more formally?” (Obs, 1/23). He introduced however by saying that “But and however are the exact same. However is just more formal” (Obs, 1/16). Dr. Sumner often connected the term formal to employment and exams, as when he said, “When you are writing at your job or on the [state test] you want to use however” (Obs, 1/16). In individual conferences, the teachers commented on students' formal and informal use of words. During one

class, Dr. Sumner discussed the words "feats" and "accomplish" with a student, telling him that those words “bring it up to a different register in formality” (Obs, 1/17). After Coach Wilson helped a student with some words, Dr. Sumner came over and the student told him, “Yeah, I got all the formal” (Obs, 1/18). Coach Wilson also spoke to the whole class about the importance of formal language, saying; “You guys are also working on building your vocabulary and skills. It is easier to use words like "bad" and "things", but we want you to challenge yourselves, to take it to another level” (Obs, 1/17).

The teachers also used sentence frames to build students’ use of formal language. Students were encouraged to use sentence frames in their writing and in their discussions. During a discussion about the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, Coach Wilson prompted students to use the agree and disagree frames that were posted on the wall, giving a student the words, “I agree…. because” (Obs, 1/16). When students were writing about a historically significant woman, Dr. Sumner wrote sentence frames up on the board and prompted a student to “Try to use one of these to help you write your next sentence”. The frames included the words "also" and "additionally", as well as phrases like “I believe__ contributed to history because” (Obs, 1/30). Even when students were working on a group reading activity, they had sentence frames to use. A sentence frame for one of the roles in the activity was, “Let’s compare this to __” (Obs, 1/17). The sentence frames helped students contribute to discussions and write high quality pieces. The sentence frames were also a way that the teachers explicitly taught formal English. Without ever putting down students’ informal ways of speaking, the teachers pushed them to use more formal language and explicitly taught them the academic English that would help them on tests and in the workforce. To further build students’ academic skills, the teachers paired their explicit instruction in writing skills and formal English with reading strategies.

During content reading activities, the teachers explicitly asked students to use reading strategies such as summarizing, asking questions of the text, and key words. Dr. Sumner reported that few students in the class were reading at grade level and some, especially more recent immigrants, were reading at the elementary level in 11th grade, which made teaching reading skills an important component of making content accessible. One strategy the teachers asked students to use was partner reading. In partner reading, one student would read a paragraph out loud and then pause while the other person summarized the paragraph. A second strategy the teachers had students use was group reading. In this, students chose a questioner, a summarizer, a connector, and a vocabulary person in each group. At the end of each paragraph, each person would do their job before the next paragraph was read. While both of these strategies had been taught to the students earlier in the year, the teachers also re-explained them multiple times during my observations and even provided modelling of a group with a connector, questioner, and summarizer using the two of them and one student. While students used these strategies, the teachers would walk around and prompt them on what to do. When not prompted, many groups would just take turns reading and skip the summarizing and other steps, indicating that the students had not fully embraced the strategies.

The teachers also introduced one other reading strategy during class, presenting it to students as a game. After the students listened to a passage about Westward Expansion, the teachers told students to flip over their copy of the reading. The teachers gave one person in each group a sheet of paper. That person wrote down a key word from the passage and then passed the paper to the next person. The students in each group passed the paper around until there were no new key words. Then they counted the words, were given a few minutes to review the passage, and repeated the exercise. The number of words that students wrote down almost doubled in

most groups from round one to round two. When they finished, Teacher commented that; “A little bit of studying goes a long way, [you] only studied for 3 minutes, but your scores went way up” (Obs, 2/1). The activity of writing key words and studying the handout combined both a key word based comprehension strategy and a metacognitive strategy.

The final way that Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner helped students build skills was by including metacognitive strategies and discussions in the class, which they did about once a week. Dr. Sumner’s discussion above about the impact of studying connected to other discussions in class about how to effectively study and learn. When telling students about the extra credit they would get for on time homework on the test, Dr. Sumner said “Sometimes you don’t get motivated until you see the zero in Gradebook, and that isn’t how people learn… It is not good for your learning, so we are trying to reward you for doing the work ahead of time, before the assessment” (Obs, 2/4). In class, the teachers often encouraged students to draw in their notes. Dr. Sumner explained the drawings by saying “a lot of research shows that you remember what you draw better” (Obs, 2/1). Then he worked with students to identify helpful images that would help them remember content. In addition, both teachers used mnemonics with students. Coach Wilson came up with “Bell as when a phone rings” to help students remember Alexander Graham Bell while Dr. Sumner coined, “Booker got people to read books” to help students remember Booker T. Washington. The teachers also encouraged students to reflect on their quizzes and assignments. After one of their quizzes, part of the Do Now was for students to think about “What could you do to improve next time?” (Obs, 2/7). The teachers used the discussions of how students learn and the self-reflections as a way to help build students academic skills.

The teachers built students' academic skills by teaching them metacognitive skills and reading strategies as well as by providing students with direct instruction, sentence frames, and linguistic supports. By choosing relevant content, varying their instructional formats, and teaching academic skills the teachers made the content accessible for students, building their academic knowledge and their engagement.

"I like learning about this": Student responses to the curriculum. The relevant content the teachers chose, the varied instructional strategies that they used, and their focus on building students' skills supported student growth and understanding. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson spoke of the growth that they had seen in the class as a whole. After grading students' speeches, Dr. Sumner spoke to the class and said; "I want to say I am really impressed with this writing. When I think back to the beginning of the year and your first assignments and then I think about these, the progress is incredible" (Obs, 2/4). In an interview, Coach Wilson similarly spoke of seeing growth in students, saying, "seeing the progress in the kids and the writing and the confidence they have in talking… I would say this is probably the height of what this model has been able to do" (Int, 2/8). While Dr. Sumner did not view test scores as the only measure of success for the program, he did speak of the impact that Synthesis had made on students' test scores, saying, "If you look at our data, WHS data, prior to offering the Synthesis program and afterwards, there has been a significant impact and we have done much better on those [tests]" (Int, 1/24). The teachers saw growth in their students in their writing, in their speaking confidence, and in their test scores. During my observations, I saw the growth in the ESOL students' willingness to speak in class and the complexity of the language that they used. Beyond growth however, I also saw how students engaged with the content and curriculum.

After class ended on a day when students watched a video on the Suffrage movement, students continued to talk as they piled out of class, saying, “It isn’t even that long ago. Crazy!” (Obs, 1/17). During that same class, another student said the video hurt her. A classmate compared the arrests of the Suffragettes to “throwing my mom in jail for voting” (Obs, 1/17). When the class discussed the stock market in the 1920s, Tanya, a Black female 11th grader, raised her hand and connected it to something her dad told her; “[My dad] is a construction worker, and he was working for this rich guy and he was talking about how he does the stock market and he risks everything and he gets like millions and millions of dollars” (Obs, 2/15). Earlier in the same class, Tanya looked at a photo of a man selling apples during the depression and said that he was “hustling.” The students responded emotionally to the course content and made connections to it. The clearest impact of the curriculum and relevance on students however comes from Deandre.

Deandre was one of the two students described earlier who did not know the plural for woman. One day he came to class very frustrated and shut down because he was behind on an assignment due to an absence. He felt like he was in trouble and was angry about it. Coach Wilson talked with him and he moved on, but Deandre’s extreme frustration then and his lack of knowledge of the plural for woman earlier hinted at past educational challenges. In Synthesis however, Deandre was a star. When Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner spoke after school about who was struggling and who was excelling, Deandre was at the top of the list of excelling students. A few days after Deandre was upset about being behind on his assignment, Deandre told Dr. Sumner that it was frustrating to work on the speech at home because he did not know what to change. Deandre decided to stay after school with Dr. Sumner so that he could make the speech exceptional. In class, Deandre both sought out feedback from the teachers and was appreciative

of it, recognizing where his work was weak and saying, “Okay, I can do that” after receiving feedback. While Deandre was deeply engaged with the course in many ways, it was most evident in how he engaged with the content.

In class Deandre constantly asked questions and made connections. One day he looked at his friend and said, “I don’t know. I like learning about this content” (Obs, 2/6). That showed in class. During the unit on big business, Deandre talked to his friends, saying, “They paid them so low wages they couldn’t even get by… and you complain about your pay like, ‘Why’s he getting five an hour?’” When the class studied the income inequality of the 1920s, Deandre was the one who first connected the inequality to today, describing the extreme differences between rich and poor people that he sees. Dr. Sumner repeated his comment to the class saying, “[Deandre] says it still feels like that, really rich and poor people.” In that same unit, Deandre was the one who knew that Jeff Bezos is the richest man in the world and who pushed back when Dr. Sumner said that Amazon was getting to be a monopoly. Deandre’s response was, “It *is* a monopoly.” When they talked about children working in the coal mines, Deandre wanted to know about safety gear then and today and whether or not people died earlier in the mines then because of a lack of safety gear. He described capitalism as “an over time process” when it came to putting smaller companies out of business. Deandre was also one of the students who reacted the most to the video clip on the Suffrage movement and had the strongest comments on Reconstruction. While Deandre might have been drawing on knowledge gained from other classes and his life outside of school as well as what was taught in the classroom, his engagement in the classroom was based on the teachers’ choice of content and how they presented the content.

Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner supported his curiosity and interest. Coach Wilson told Deandre about a documentary he had watched on a depression era boxer and Deandre responded

by saying he would look it up. Deandre was engaged in class and in the content, seeing the threads of power and oppression throughout all of the units. The teachers made the content accessible for Deandre, building his skills and piquing his interest. They helped Deandre become an academically committed and engaged student in their classroom, building his personal skills for empowerment. By making the content accessible for him and the other students, the teachers' created the first pillar of empowerment in their classroom, a pillar that was strengthened by the strong partnership between the teachers. The teachers' interactions with Deandre, however, also demonstrated their commitment to supporting students.

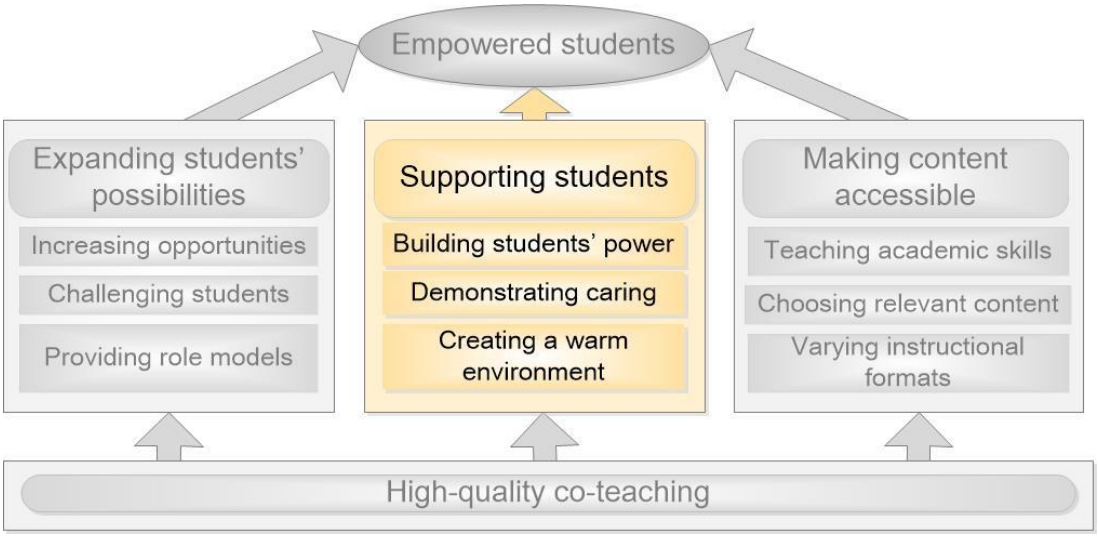

Figure 4.12. Supporting students.

Supporting Students

> I've tried to just spend more time with kids and talk to them and just hear their stories because sometimes those stories can lead you to other places in terms of … what you actually need to do to help them. If a kid is tired, if a kid is hungry… or if he has a little sister he has to watch every night and has to stay up until three in the morning. He's not quite worried about being in your class right on time, you know? So being able to be

> flexible, understanding what these kids are dealing with. So that they feel comfortable with you and so that they trust you and then you can kind of push them to their limits… or help them to be successful. (Coach Wilson, Int, 2/1).

In addition to striving to make the content accessible to students, in almost every class I observed that the teachers worked to support students. Support for students was the second pillar of empowerment in the classroom and consisted of the social and emotional supports the teachers provided that helped built students' comfort and their leadership (Figure 4.12). The first, and most common, way that the teachers supported students was by making the classroom warm and inviting for them. The second way the teachers supported students was by demonstrating caring for them. Finally, the teachers supported students by encouraging student leadership in the classroom. As with making content accessible, each of these actions was enhanced by the co-teaching in the classroom.

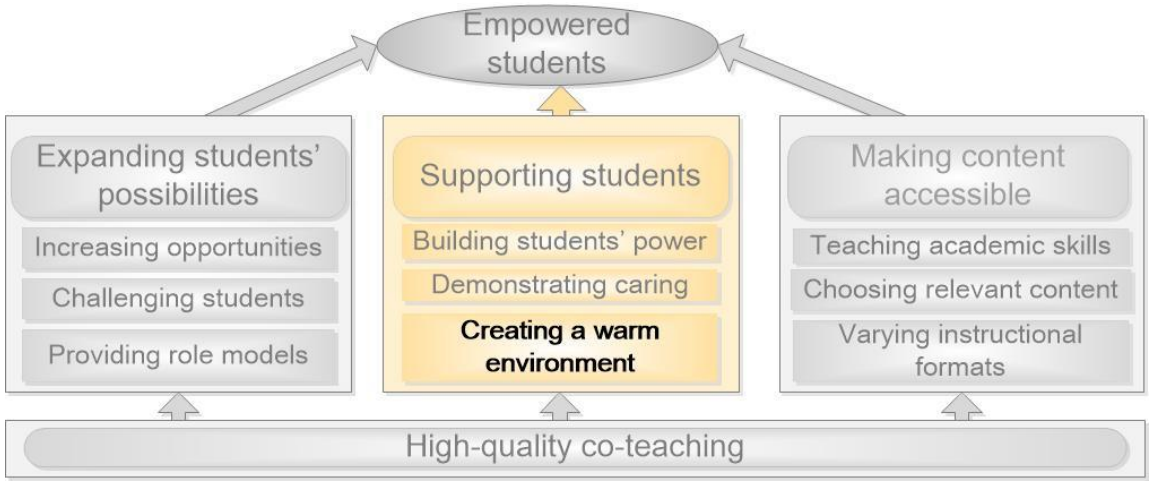

Figure 4.13. Creating a warm environment

"I am proud of you": Creating a warm environment. One of the teachers' goals was to create a warm classroom environment. Coach Wilson described his desire to create a classroom where students "are comfortable learning," "feel like they are at home," and "feel

comfortable being themselves" (Int, 1/25). The teachers created a warm classroom environment by maintaining a tranquil physical space, making the classroom fun and welcoming (Figure 4.13). They also greeted, positively reinforced, and built relationships with students.

The physical environment of the classroom was serene, and students frequently chose to come into the classroom before and after school and during their lunches just to work or be in the space. The classroom was organized, with everything put away, clear tables, and tidy work areas. The overhead lights were almost never turned on and instead warm toned floor lamps provided illumination. The seating consisted of a mixture of couches and group tables. The round tables were adjustable in height. The furniture and the rug were soothing shades of blue and green. The artwork on the walls and the books on display were multicultural. There was a poster of Sitting Bull in the back, a Japanese landscape on one wall, and a piece of African art hanging up front. Along the windowsill was a wall of books with books by Latinx and Black authors, among others. The biographies on display were primarily ones of strong women, often women of color. The class was generally quiet, with teachers speaking in low tones and students keeping their voices down. There was often music playing in the background, typically jazz, but sometimes salsa, rock, or Middle Eastern music. This calm and comfortable space set the stage for a warm and supportive classroom environment.

For these teachers, part of creating a warm and supportive environment was creating a space where students would enjoy themselves, a space that students would want to spend time in. Coach Wilson described his ideal classroom environment as one where, "kids feel comfortable speaking, they're challenged, and they enjoy themselves." He further connected that environment to the idea of making it fun, saying "I think that kids need to have fun" (Int, 2/8). The teachers worked to make the class fun for both the students and for themselves. The teachers and students

frequently laughed, smiled, high-fived, and joked in the classroom. It was rare for me to look around the room and not see several students smiling or to watch one of the teachers interact with a student and not see the teacher smile.

The teachers, especially Coach Wilson, often expressed enthusiasm in class, which helped create a fun environment. One day Coach Wilson looked at the students and said, "You all have made this a fun week. A great education week" (Obs, 2/8). When a student was walking up front to give a presentation, Coach Wilson loudly called, "Coming to the stageeeeeee…." (Obs, 1/27). In addition to showing enthusiasm, Coach Wilson also frequently clowned around in class. During one class, he walked over to a student and said, "Let's read." Then he clapped, and as music came on, he danced for a second. Then he looked at a student who was watching him and said, "You got to have fun sometime!" (Obs, 2/1). Another time Dr. Sumner asked a student how she was doing and she gave him a different answer than she had given Coach Wilson. Coach Wilson immediately walked over, made big eyes, and said, "What? How come when I went over you said…" The girl laughed and said, "Well, I needed him to get the full effect" (Obs, 2/7). By being enthusiastic and sometimes being silly, Coach Wilson helped make the classroom fun for him and for students.

The teachers also frequently gave high-fives and shook hands with students. Sometimes they did conventional handshakes or high-fives and sometimes they used intricate handshakes that appeared almost individualized. When Dan, a student with a one on one, finished a presentation Coach Wilson fist bumped him on his way back to his seat. Dan smiled. As Michael, another student, walked by Dr. Sumner on his way to grab his poster, he did a fancy handshake with him. One day Dan hit a student's hand on the way to the trash can. Coach Wilson was right there and said, "You didn't get me!" The student hit his hand too and smiled.

The students often responded to the teachers' fist bumps and high-fives with smiles or laughter. Not all students responded to the teachers' joke and efforts to make the class fun. There were students who frequently seemed sad, tired, or withdrawn, students whose behaviors Dr. Sumner described as "self destructive" (Int, 1/24). Yet even these students did not appear to resent the focus on fun and warmth and would occasionally respond with a smile. By joking around, being enthusiastic, and using high-fives, the teachers helped create a fun classroom environment. The teachers built on this fun environment by warmly greeting and welcoming students.

The teachers warmly greeted students when they entered the classroom, including students who walked in late or had missed school. Sometimes the teachers would greet the entire class, as when the teachers began class with a "Good morning!" or when Dr. Sumner said, "Thank you for braving the rain!" More often, the two teaches greeted students individually. Dr. Sumner often would say good morning to an individual student and then immediately follow up with a personal question or comment like, "It was great to see your mom" (Obs, 1/18). Coach Wilson generally greeted students enthusiastically, high fiving them or saying "What up? What up?"

Both Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson made a point to welcome students to class, including those who were walking in late or had been absent. Rather than commenting on their tardiness, when late students came in one of the teachers would greet them and catch them up on what the class was doing. Tardiness was a noticeable problem in the first period class where often only half of the students would be there when the bell rang. When I asked about students' tardiness, Coach Wilson talked about the differences in students' individual circumstances and the importance of understanding what was causing the tardiness. He said that his goal was to "try to have more real conversations instead of lecturing them" (Int, 2/1) and neither teacher lectured

any student about tardiness during my observations. Similarly, when students returned from an absence, the teachers would just catch them up on work. Like tardiness, attendance was an issue and typically about four students were absent each day. Sometimes, Coach Wilson would work with a student who had been absent individually for a few minutes while Dr. Sumner worked with another group. Other times, Coach Wilson would work with a group while Dr. Sumner talked to the student who had been absent. Both teachers used warm and supportive tones in greeting students and while working with late and absent students. The teachers paired the warmth of their greetings and welcoming of students with frequent positive reinforcement.

The teachers constantly complimented their students, sometimes pairing the verbal praise with physical affirmation. During every class I observed, except for ones where students spent the entire period meeting with guidance or taking a test, I saw the teachers positively affirm multiple students per class. While sometimes the positive reinforcement was a simple, "Good job," more often it was detailed and personal. After the test, Coach Wilson walked over to Antoine, a shy student, hit his hand and said, "Man, you banged that test out. I'm proud of you!" (Obs, 2/14). The student hit his hand back and smiled. During a different class, Dr. Sumner read a sentence Deandre wrote and said, "If you write like that, you are going to be blowing people's brains, including mine" (Obs, 1/18). When a student chose to stay after school for support, Dr. Sumner walked over and said, "The last few classes, you really understood things and were participating in a positive way" (Obs, 1/17). The next day, when another student commented on his grades being good, Dr. Sumner told him, "Your grades reflect the learning you have been doing. You must be doing something right. I am proud of you!" (Obs, 1/17). The students constantly received critical feedback on their work, but it was generally paired with a positive

comment as when Coach Wilson said to a student, “Boom! You got the hook, you got the thesis, now get the reasons” (Obs, 1/30).

While most of the reinforcement was verbal, sometimes it was paired with nonverbal reinforcement as well. When Coach Wilson finished reading something a student had written one day he made an impressed face and noise instead of saying something to the student (Obs, 1/18). The teachers, especially Coach Wilson, also patted students on their shoulders, gave them guy hugs, and touched the students as part of the positive reinforcement. After school one day, Coach Wilson put his hands on a student’s shoulders as he reviewed content with him and said, “Say it like you mean it!” (Obs, 1/15). Another day, Coach Wilson told Antoine that he was doing a great job and touched his head before walking away (Obs, 1/24). Sometimes the students were the ones seeking hugs or putting their hands on the teachers’ arms, but more often it was the teachers pairing verbal praise with a touch. By giving the students frequent positive reinforcement, greeting students, and welcoming late and absent students, the teachers began to create a warm environment. Coach Wilson however spoke about wanting to create an environment where students “feel comfortable being themselves” (Int, 1/25) and to accomplish that, the teachers also built relationships with individual students.

The teachers built relationships with students by engaging in real conversations with them and working to know them as individuals. For both teachers, this was one of the most important areas of their practice. For Coach Wilson, knowing students and talking to them was what would enable him to push the students to excel, as seen in the quote at the beginning of the section. Rather than judging students who were late or were struggling, what mattered to Coach Wilson was understanding the situation of the individual student. Dr. Sumner similarly focused on knowing about the lives of his students. He called home before the school year started and

found out that several of his students were living in a group home, a realization that impacted some of the supports that Dr. Sumner provided for those students.

The teachers' focus on knowing individual students was exemplified in a conversation that Dr. Sumner had with a student at the end of class. Everyone else had left, but she was still slowly packing up. Dr. Sumner asked her a question about how her brothers were doing. The student responded by talking about the situation at home. She spoke about how her dad was "not really in the picture, at least not for me." She talked about how her brother was "kicked out… he was doing some stuff." She described her hopes and worries for her brother saying, "Right now, he is not doing what he need to" (Obs, 2/7). Throughout the conversation, Dr. Sumner asked the student follow up questions and respectfully listened to what she had to say. In that brief conversation, Dr. Sumner showed an interest in the student's life outside of school, got to know her better as an individual, and built a stronger relationship with her.

These personal conversations sometimes happened during class as well. When Coach Wilson went over to give feedback to a student, the student told him about something happening in a friend's life. Coach Wilson acknowledged what the student said and helped him refocus on the content; "Man dog, I am feeling for you…Man, that is a lot. You all clear on what you are doing?" (Obs, 1/23). During one class, Sonya began to talk about her life as Dr. Sumner gave her feedback on her essay. As she finished, he responded, "That is intense. Well, that will carry you" (Obs, 2/6). Sonya was a student who worked 35 hours a week, working from 5pm to 11pm every night of the school week. She frequently looked tired in class and handed work in late, but she was also generally focused in class and often seemed determined to complete her work. By knowing her, the teachers were better able to support her.

At times the personal conversations focused more on shared interests. Coach Wilson talked to students about football, about movies and shows that he or they watched, and about food. When one student was in class early, he and Coach Wilson began a long conversation about baseball and being recruited for college. The two of them talked about their shared interest for over five minutes. Sometimes the teachers worked to research students' interests. Coach Wilson told a story during an interview about Dr. Sumner going above and beyond for a student:

> I remember probably a couple of weeks back, one of my players, a kid who works out after school just talking [to] Dr. Sumner about YouTube and video gaming and why do schooling. It was something to that nature. And Dr. Sumner went and researched, like the percentage of people who are successful at it… Instead of just saying, no, that's not going to happen for you, you need to work on becoming a student, you need to be educated, right? He kinda goes and finds these statistics about it (Int, 1/25).

What impressed Coach Wilson was that Dr. Sumner learned a student's interests, researched them, and engaged the student around them. In class, both teachers frequently engaged students around their interests, leading them to discuss El Chapo, odometers rolling over, and the cafeteria's pizza in class as well as the content. By talking to students and getting to know them as individuals, the teachers built relationships with their students. Those relationships became part of how the teachers demonstrated caring in the classroom.

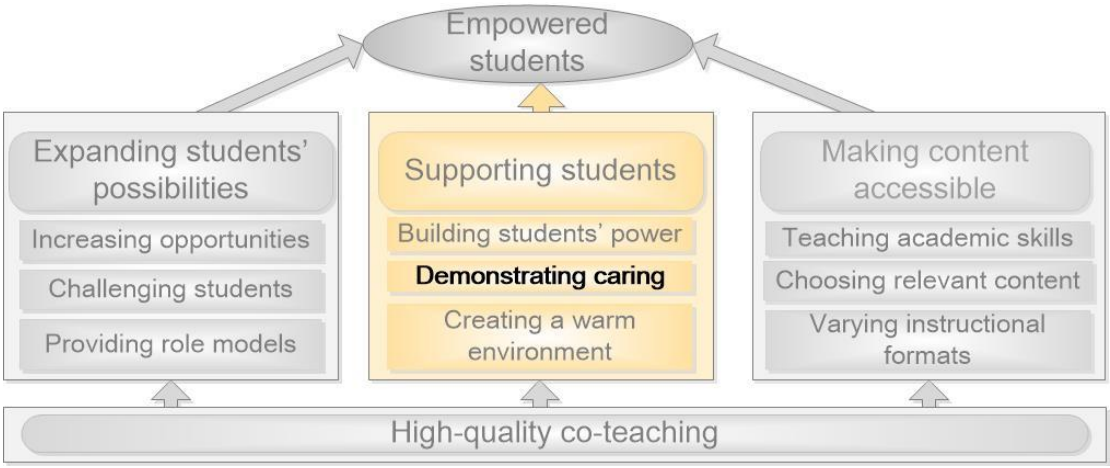

Figure 4.14. Demonstrating caring.

"What's up? You alright?": Demonstrating caring. In addition to creating a warm classroom environment, the teachers supported students by demonstrating caring, caring for and not just about their students (Gay, 2018). They demonstrated caring by counseling students who were experiencing challenges, providing social supports for students who needed them, and being available to students outside of school. They also demonstrated caring by treating students with respect and maintaining a focus on student growth even when students were engaged in challenging behavior (Figure 4.14). While less frequent than their actions to create a warm classroom, these were behaviors that I observed the teachers engaging in multiple times per week.

When students acted in ways that worried their teachers, the teachers would reach out and check in. Leila tended to sit at the middle table with a few friends. She sometimes engaged with them but often spent class looking down, hunched in on herself. Sometimes she looked pulled together, but often she appeared disheveled. One day, she looked particularly sad and was looking at her phone instead of her laptop. Dr. Sumner came over and asked if she had her essay on the phone. She pointed at her phone and said nothing. He asked if she was okay. She did not

respond. He walked away and then back over. He asked to talk to her in the hallway and said that he was worried about her. She walked out to the hallway slowly, with her head bowed low. They spoke in the hallway for a while and then she came back in, bit her nails, and began to work on her phone (Obs, 1/30). They did not go to the hallway for Dr. Sumner to lecture her, but rather for him to check on her.

Both teachers pulled students out into the hall that they wanted to talk to or that they were worried about. One day Coach Wilson greeted Antoine and got no response. He asked to talk to him out in the hall and I could hear him saying, "What's up? You alright?" Then they did a handshake and came back into the classroom (Obs, 1/23). It was common to see the teachers walking over to students, checking on them, and asking them if they were okay. Rather than ignoring students' emotions, they acknowledged and addressed students' emotions. That was not the same as resolving the students' problems, however, and Dr. Sumner expressed his concerns about providing effective supports for students; "I don't have a background in counseling… Sometimes I feel like I'm not making the right choices or the right decisions" (Int, 1/24). Despite his concerns, he still worked to address students' emotional needs in the classroom.

Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner also worked to address students' social needs and challenges. One day Dr. Sumner walked one of the ESOL students over to a group and told a student there, "She is very nervous about speaking English, but she can understand everything you say as long as you speak slowly" (Obs, 1/24). Rather than just leaving the student on her own, he provided an introduction and eased her entry into the group. The teachers' social support was most noticeable with Antoine. Antoine always chose to sit by himself and never spoke to any students unless told to. Both teachers worked to facilitate interactions between him and other students. During one group assignment, Dr. Sumner spoke to Antoine saying, "I know you are

shy, I will introduce you—they are really nice." He then introduced Antoine to the students he would be working with by saying, "I want you to meet Antoine, he is really shy—but really smart. He likes video games and you do too, so there is a connection. He is going to be in your group" (Obs, 1/17). Similarly, on a different day Coach Wilson went over to Antoine and said, "Let's find you a group." Coach Wilson found a group and asked, "Can Antoine join your group?" Then Coach Wilson went to Antoine and said, "Okay, come on let's go over. I'll go with you" (Obs, 2/4). While they let Antoine stay on his own for some group work assignments, for all major projects they helped find him a group, taking the time to introduce him as needed and then either staying with him for a bit or frequently coming back to the check on the group.

The teachers provided the students with counseling and with social support and their support did not stop when class ended. The students could call or text Dr. Sumner for help with assignments, get rides from him to events, and come early or stay late at school to get more support from him. When Deandre was frustrated by working at home on his assignment, the solution was that he would stay after school and get individual support. When Leila did not finish her essay, Dr. Sumner went through multiple support options with her. The one they decided on was having her mom drop her at school really early on her way to work. Dr. Sumner would come in and help Leila then. Sometimes students would ask Dr. Sumner if he could stay after school to help them. Sometimes he would tell the class that he was staying late and invite students to stay if they wanted support. On other occasions, Dr. Sumner would go directly to a student, like Leila, and ask them to stay for more help. While not every student took advantage of the outside of class support, Dr. Sumner estimated that about half of his students would stay late once during a year and about 5 to 10% would stay frequently. Coach Wilson talked about Dr. Sumner's willingness to stay "after school for… three, four hours to help kids" (Int, 2/8). Coach Wilson further said

that the work that they have been able to do with students happens “when we're not in class,” during those extra support times (Int, 1/25). While Coach Wilson stayed after school every day with students for weightlifting or practice, outside of class his focus was on supporting the students he coached. Dr. Sumner’s focus was on his ESOL students, the students that he taught in Synthesis, and the students that he had taught in previous years.

Dr. Sumner’s students from previous years frequently stopped by during or after school to check in with him. Two of the students described earlier who received mixed messages about course enrollment and graduation were former students. One of the students had been identified as being at risk for not graduating from high school. The same day that the school official told Dr. Sumner that the student was at risk, Dr. Sumner spoke with the student twice. He let the student know what was going on, sent him to check in with teachers, and created a plan with him. The support the teachers gave students did not end when class time ended or even when students graduated from the class. The teachers counseled their students, facilitated their social interactions when needed, and supported them outside of class. Their support for students continued even when students struggled with behavior.

When students struggled with behaviors, the teachers worked with them to understand what was going on and to find ways to help the student rejoin the group. Coach Wilson described their focus on growth rather than consequences when he said, “So, I think we are just constantly poking at that, like what is it, why, why are you doing this? And showing them that we are just not going to leave and let you just be in that space” (Int, 1/25). When Deandre, a student described earlier, struggled in class with his frustration about not being done with the assignment, Coach Wilson stayed and supported him until he was calm and ready to work again.

The teachers set behavioral norms for the class and handled behavioral challenges while maintaining respect for students. The most important classroom rules for Dr. Sumner were that students "be nice to each other… [and] be there for each other" (Int, 1/24). In class one day Dr. Sumner heard a student snap at another student. He looked over and said, "Be nice to each other. Sustain each other" (Obs, 1/30). This focus on kindness reflected Dr. Sumner's belief that "being a good person is probably more important in the long run than teaching people to be intelligent" (Int, 2/13). In addition to sustaining each other, both teachers expected students to listen to each other. In an interview, Dr. Sumner described listening "as a gift" (Int, 1/24). Coach Wilson gave a similar message to the class, telling them, "It is important that we listen to everybody talking" (Obs, 1/17). When Edwin, a student with behavioral challenges, spoke over Dr. Sumner, Dr. Sumner immediately went over and said that when anyone was speaking, Edwin needed to listen. During a discussion of the Suffrage movement, some students began comparing groups' negative experiences in history. Dr. Sumner walked over to the students and told them that it was important "not to compare [the traumatic experience], just listen with compassion. Just listen to their different experiences" (Obs, 1/18). Listening and kindness were the two most enforced norms with the classroom.

Beyond those norms, both teachers focused on treating the students with respect. A student told Coach Wilson that he was asking to go to the bathroom because that was respectful. Coach Wilson looked at him and said that they did not have the students ask first because "We also respect you guys as students" (Obs, 2/6). In an interview Coach Wilson spoke about his focus on "making sure kids feel respected" (Int, 2/1). Similarly, Dr. Sumner spoke about avoiding "overly controlling" the behavior of the students because "they're almost adults" (Int, 1/24). Rather than treating the students as children, he felt it was important to treat them people

developing autonomy. In class, Dr. Sumner emphasized respect, telling students "We don't want to stereotype each other…. When we come together, we are stronger" (Obs, 1/23). Those norms of kindness, listening, and respect influenced how the teachers handled off task or defiant behavior in the classroom.

Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner redirected students through asking curriculum based questions, using proximity, and being firm when needed. The first way that the teachers would redirect behavior was by asking an off task student about work. During one class, Coach Wilson walked over to a student who had the wrong website open and simply asked, "What feedback did you get?" (Obs, 2/4). The student toggled to the right screen as Coach Wilson walked away. During another class, Dr. Sumner walked over to a girl on her phone and asked, "Do you have your homework there?" (Obs, 2/8). Rather than assuming that the students were doing something negative, the teachers used the curriculum and activities to redirect the students. The teachers also frequently used proximity to redirect behavior. Both teachers constantly moved around the classroom and they would often go and stand next to students who were off task, which generally encouraged the students to resume doing their work. Antoine spent much of class on a video game website or sometimes reading a book hidden in his backpack. The teachers actively avoided redirecting Antoine who already struggled with being shy and withdrawn. Instead, they would go and stand next to him, ask him a question about his work, or sit next to him. Each of these served as a redirection and Antoine would switch back over to the assignment. With other students, the teachers combined curriculum questions and proximity with firm redirections when needed.

The teachers were explicit about the behaviors they wanted from students, but they paired that explicitness with relationship building. When a student was not listening in class, Dr.

Sumner paused and said "Are you with us J? We need your brain" (Obs, 2/4). After Coach Wilson went over and directly talked to a student who was hunched over and not participating, he immediately spoke to the student's peer and said, "I got to talk to him in a special way. We got a connection" (Obs, 1/16). After Dr. Sumner asked a student to repeat the Do Now, which he had not been listening to, Dr. Sumner went over and talked to the student about his upcoming birthday, saying that they were both Aquariuses and that is why they got along so well (Obs, 1/18). Coach Wilson would call a student out to the hall to talk to him if they were being rude and Dr. Sumner would censure students who swore in class, but they did so without disrespecting the students. In each of these cases, the teachers explicitly addressed behaviors while preserving their relationship with students. They also only rarely, maybe once a week, had to directly censure a student about anything other than being off task. When talking about handling students' challenging behaviors, Coach Wilson said that "You're going to have times where kids are going to say things that are going to make you feel the way but being able to work through those emotions… and really try[ing] to get to the bottom of what's going to help the kid [is the goal]" (Obs, 2/1). Coach Wilson acknowledged that students' behaviors could be emotionally challenging for the teachers. His focus however remained on working through those emotions and continuing to demonstrate caring for the student. This was evident in his interactions with Edwin.

Edwin had the most noticeable behavior challenges of students in either period. Edwin frequently missed school and often tried to sleep in class when he was there. When Edwin was engaged, he had brilliantly insightful answers, but he often struggled in class. During my first week of observations Edwin tried to sleep in class almost every day. The teachers took turns going over and encouraging him to be awake and to engage with the activity and telling him that

he could not sleep in class. During the second week of observations, Edwin's behaviors escalated. Coach Wilson came over to Edwin when he had his head down and eyes closed one day. Coach Wilson asked him to go to the bathroom and wash his face to wake up. The student refused. Coach Wilson walked away and then came back and asked the student to take a walk with him. The student refused and said, "Man, f@# this." Coach Wilson walked away. When Coach Wilson came back over, Edwin loudly said, "How about instead of bothering me you step over and help another student?" Coach Wilson stepped out of class and got another adult who spoke to Edwin in the hall. When Edwin came back, he sat up but did no work. During the next class, the only times that he engaged in class were when he discussed drug smuggling and cursed the homework the teachers assigned. Over the next few classes, he was on his phone in class, pulled other students be off task, and did little work. Yet, at no point did either teacher give up.

Both teachers constantly went over to him, offering to support him with his work and engaging with him personally. Dr. Sumner showed him a picture of his odometer and Coach Wilson lent the student his own computer to get work done. The teachers changed the student's seat and made a point of praising him in front of the class. When he gave Dr. Sumner a good definition of a term, Dr. Sumner had him repeat it for the class. Coach Wilson told the class that, "Edwin is probably the best in the class at making connections." Day by day, Edwin began to do more work and to be more on task. By the fourth week of my observation, Edwin was consistently on task and positively contributing to the class. While his behaviors could change again, what was clear throughout my observations was that the teachers would continue to work with him and to offer him support no matter what. They addressed his behaviors directly and treated him with courtesy even when he was being disruptive to the class or rude to the teachers. They continued to focus on addressing his needs and on supporting him. The teachers worked to

support all of their students and to treat them with respect which carried over into some of the peer interactions that I observed.

In general, the students in the classroom got along well, laughing and joking with each other and smiling and talking as they worked in groups. When their peers were sharing examples or presenting students were typically attentive and complimentary. At times, students were rude or unkind to each other, but these instances were not frequent enough to detract from the overall sense of the classroom as a place where students got along well. When Deandre struggled with frustration in class one day, his peers stepped in after Coach Wilson left, continuing to talk to and support him. However, the impact of the classroom environment and support for students was most evident in students' interactions with Dan.

Dan was a White student with a one on one. He had a noticeable speech fluency disorder. He words were halting, with long pauses in the middle of the word, and he had atypical social skills. Dan was deeply included in the class. Multiple students greeted him every day and high-fived him. He always had partners to work with in class. However, students' respect for him was most evident during a group presentation. Dan and two classmates went to the front to present their political cartoon. Dan did the entire presentation on his own, talking about the cartoon for multiple minutes. His speech was halting but the entire time that he spoke, not one student in the classroom looked away from him, looked at their phones, or made any noise. When other students were presenting some of the students looked down, whispered to neighbors, or checked their phones but not when Dan was presenting. When Dan was done, the students, and the teachers, applauded him and he walked back to his table with a big smile. In their demonstrations of respect and kindness to their students, the teachers created a model for behavior that the students took on when it came to interacting with Dan. The teachers created a supportive

environment for the students and, with Dan at least, the students created it for each other. However, the teachers did not stop with just supporting their students' emotional needs in the classroom. They also supported their students by building their power in the classroom.

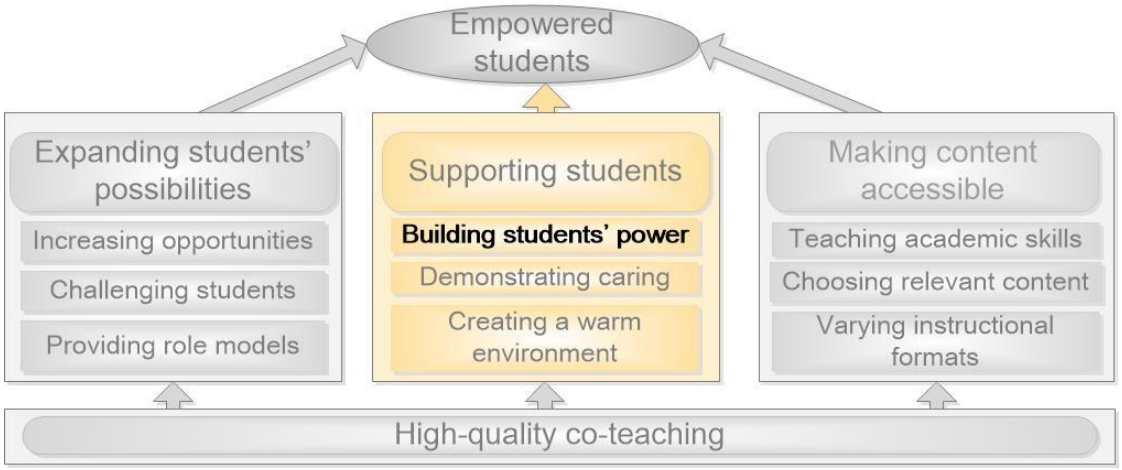

Figure 4.15. Build students' power

"Let others have power": Building students' power. While the teachers' ultimate goal was for students to be empowered outside of the classroom, the teachers began that work inside the classroom by building students' power (Figure 4.15). They shared power in the classroom by giving students freedom and choice in the classroom. They built on this by elevating students' voices within the classroom. They further shared power by following students' leads in discussions, by soliciting students' input on how to run class, and by using students as experts in discussions and presentations. Each of these built students' power in the classroom and each of these was enhanced by the teachers' collaboration.

Dr. Sumner believed that people with power had a responsibility "to step back to let others have power as well" (Int, 2/13). In the classroom that meant giving students "some sense of power" and letting them "identify what is important to them" (Int, 2/13). The most common way that the teachers did that was by giving students freedom in the classroom. Students almost

always had the freedom to eat in class, to move around the classroom, to go to the bathroom as needed, to keep their headphones in while working, to stand or sit for the pledge, and to work on their phone or laptop. Each of the freedoms was small but the cumulative effect was a classroom where students were able to, within limits, make decisions about what worked best for them and what they needed. The teachers paired these freedoms with giving students choice in activities.

Depending on the activity, students could choose the level of challenge of an assignment, the topic they focused on, who they worked with, how they worked, and what they created. While less common that giving the students freedom, the students were generally able to choose some aspect of about half of their activities. Dr. Sumner spoke about the importance of giving students choice and how, when you did, "kids surprise you" (Int, 2/13). The class was honors optional, meaning that students were able to choose whether or not to take the class for honors credit and to do that extra work. Students were able to choose their level of challenge both in whether or not they chose to do the extra honors work and in the level of textbook they chose to read. The class had three textbooks of varying levels of difficulty and students were able to choose which they used in class.

In addition to choosing their level of challenge, students were sometimes able to make choices based on their interests. In the Women's day speeches and in their revisions, students were able to pick what they focused on. They could focus on any historical American woman for their speeches. For their revisions, they were able to choose which assignment they wanted to revise and submit for a grade. During reading activities, the students were also often able to choose to work with someone else or to work on their own. In partner work students generally were able to choose their partners, which more rarely true in group work.

The students were also able at times to choose how they worked and the product they created. During one class, the students could choose whether to listen to a teacher read or whether to read on their own. During another class, students were able to choose to draw or to write their notes. Finally, during a third class students chose to either handwrite or type an assignment. In addition to this limited control over the process of work, at times students had control over the product they created. When students made commercials for inventions they could choose to do a poster or a skit. Similarly, on homework students could sometimes choose whether they wanted to write or draw to show their understanding. By providing students with freedom in the classroom and choice within lessons, the teachers were beginning to build students' power within the classroom. This process continued with the teachers' efforts to elevate students' voices in the classroom.

"I hear that chirping": Elevating students' voices. In Synthesis, part of building students' power was building their confidence in speaking which the teachers did through elevating students' voices. Many of the students in Synthesis were uncomfortable with public speaking and expressing their opinions. Some were uncomfortable speaking English or speaking to peers. Several ESOL students were afraid of being laughed at and afraid of saying the wrong thing. Several shy students and students with atypical social behaviors were uncomfortable speaking to other students or needed support in responding in appropriate ways. Antoine only spoke to peers with scaffolding from the teachers. I only heard another student speak once during all of my observations. Helping these students find their voice in small groups and in front of the class was a way that Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson worked to empower them.

The teachers worked to help students find their voices in the classroom by using a variety of participation strategies, revoicing and expanding what students said, using wait time, and by

asking students questions throughout class. The teachers used many different strategies to encourage participation. They used choral response techniques, called on student volunteers, drew popsicle sticks with students' names on them, had students talk in small groups, asked for someone who had not spoken before to share, gave time warnings before it was time to share, asked students to turn and talk, asked for volunteers from each group, and even had lower level English speakers repeat answers. The teachers also explicitly made it clear to students that they were supposed to talk. Coach Wilson told students one day, "[We] want to hear you talking!" Another day he said, "Now this sounds like a class! I hear that chirping!" (Obs, 2/1). On a different day, he introduced an activity by saying "This is an activity [where] you are going to have to communicate with each other. Can't just stare-- you will have to talk" (Obs, 1/17). One time, when no one answered a question Dr. Sumner asked, Coach Wilson said "Do you want to write six sentences instead of talking about it? No? So, we can talk about it" (Obs, 1/25). This combination of widely varying participation strategies with clear expectations about the teachers' desire to hear students talk was one way that the teachers got the students to speak.

The teachers also used wait time, rephrased questions, and asked frequent questions to encourage students to talk. The teachers would pause after questions and wait to see who would respond. One day, Coach Wilson asked a question and no one answered. He waited and said, "Crickets!" A student eventually answered (Obs, 1/17). Another time Dr. Sumner asked a question. No one answered, and he said, "You can hear a pin drop!" (Obs, 1/15). Again, a student eventually answered. If no one answered after a long pause, the teachers would frame the question differently. When Coach Wilson asked, "What are some significant things that happened?" no one answered. He changed the question to, "Why are they rebuilding?" and some students answered. The teachers also gave individual students wait time after calling on them,

giving them ample time to think of a response and cueing them as needed. One day Coach Wilson called on a student to answer a question. He waited, and the student said that he did not know. Dr. Sumner walked over to the board and pointed to something that was related to the question and the student was able to answer.

In addition to using wait time and rephrasing questions, both teachers also asked students questions almost incessantly. During most PowerPoint presentations and after most videos, the teachers asked students what they noticed and what they thought. When Coach Wilson did reviews, they were oral, consisting of many fast-paced questions for students. In small group discussions and in individual feedback the teachers constantly asked students questions ranging from "What was she wearing?" to "How do we know?" Wait time, asking and rephrasing questions, and using participation strategies were all ways that the teachers worked to increase the amount that students spoke in class. The teachers also worked to elevate students' voices when they did speak.

The teachers worked to ensure that the whole class could understand and hear what students said. To do that, the teachers expanded and clarified students' statements and revoiced and summarized things that they said. When a student shared why he was confused about a question on the quiz, Coach Wilson listened and then clarified what he said, "So it wasn't the question that was hard, but reading it and figuring out what was wanted?" (Obs, 2/7). The student agreed. Coach Wilson clarified what the student had said so that he understood and the rest of the class could as well. Because of their unusual speech patterns or English learner status, some students were challenging to understand, which made clarification by the teachers helpful. The teachers also frequently expanded on what students were saying. When a student defined activist as "active like in a political way" (Obs, 1/18), Dr. Sumner took that definition and

broadened it for the class. When students' comments were longer or confusing, the teachers also summarized what the students said, as when Dr. Sumner asked a student, "Can I summarize what you said?" (Obs, 1/16). Finally, the teachers frequently revoiced what students had said. Students would often say things in quiet voices, so the teachers would repeat almost exactly what the student said for the class to hear. The teachers would also repeat back to the class what they heard students say in small groups so that everyone could hear. These strategies helped ensure that everyone could hear and understand the ideas of their peers. Through these techniques the teachers were able to elevate students' voices in class and see student growth.

The teachers were able to see the impact of the constant emphasis on speaking on students. When students were working on presentations for their political cartoons, Dion was paired with an ESOL student who rarely spoke in class. As they worked together, the student shared in the writing and began to speak more. Dion appeared impressed and when Coach Wilson spoke about it later, he saw it as a breakthrough for the student. Coach Wilson said that Dion "was like, 'Wow,' like 'I didn't even know' because this kid spends much time presenting himself as he can't do it. But that was like a breakthrough for him with the other student" (Int, 2/8). By constantly encouraging the students to speak in class, the teachers built the confidence of newer English speakers and more shy students. However, there were students who remained silent in the classroom, who I did not hear speak. Some were students that the teachers worked to engage but other were students that the teachers seemed to allow to be quieter. Yet, despite these counter examples, on the whole the teachers worked to elevate the voices of their students. It was in what the teachers asked the students to speak about however that the teachers began to truly focus on empowerment.

The teachers constantly asked for students' perspectives on the content and on the activities. For Dr. Sumner, it was important that students learn, "Your voice matters, like we want to hear what your opinion is" (Int, 1/24). In class students were frequently asked to discuss or write about their opinions. They wrote about whether or not they thought the 13th was most important of reconstruction era amendments. The students talked about whose ideas they liked best between Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Dubois. They discussed whether or not they agreed with an artist's perspective in a political cartoon and what type of person should be honored with a holiday. The teachers asked what the students' reactions were to films and what they thought about the content. Throughout this, the teachers explicitly told students that they wanted to hear what they thought. One day Coach Wilson told the students, "There is no wrong or right, we just want to hear what you think" (Obs, 1/23), which was almost verbatim what he had told them less than a week before. While the teachers said this, they also expected the students to use evidence to back each of their statements. For example, when a student said that W.E.B. DuBois was the most important of the three activists, he used the connection to later work by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to justify his point. Similarly, students who said that the 13th was the most important amendment justified it by talking about how ending slavery set the stage for the other rights. The students were expected to share their opinions and to justify their opinions and beliefs with the content of course. By having students share their views and opinions, the teachers began to move away from being the sole authorities in the classroom.

"We need your feedback": Following students' leads. Rather than being the source of all power and decisions, the teachers built students' power by discussing topics of their choice and seeking their input on how to run class. The most striking example of the teachers following the

students' lead in discussions came during the government shut down. The shutdown had been going on for more than a month. A student raised her hand and said, "Can we talk about the government shut down? I don't know why it is shut down." Multiple students echoed her, saying, "Can we?" Rather than moving on with the lesson, Dr. Sumner spent the next twenty minutes explaining the shut down. He used it as a review of the branches of government and checks and balances, but primarily he was just answering students' questions. Students asked follow up questions about what it meant that it was a partial shut down, who was getting still being paid and why, and what protests were occurring. Dr. Sumner answered each of their questions. By pausing the instruction to answer a question that was important to the students, Dr. Sumner showed the students that he respected them and their interests.

The teachers also showed the students respect and shared power by seeking students' input in how to run the class. Students spent the first twenty minutes of class one day completing a midterm course evaluation. As they worked on it, Dr. Sumner told them, "Be honest. We want to hear the bad and the good, so we can change things next semester" (Obs, 1/17). Over the next few days, Dr. Sumner shared the feedback with the class as well as ways they were trying to respond to the feedback. Coach Wilson commented that, "Bad feedback is good for us because it helps us improve" (Obs, 1/24). The teachers decreased homework in response to feedback and began to include more current day video clips and more groupwork. They asked for the students' input and then they acted on it. Similarly, after the student viewed their quiz scores, the teachers gave them several minutes to reflect on the quiz. One of the reflection questions was about how the teachers could better help them. As they worked, Coach Wilson told them, "Please take this seriously guys. We need your feedback" (Obs, 2/7). As students shared their ideas and their criticisms, Coach Wilson responded to what they said. After one student commented on the

grading, Coach Wilson said, “Maybe that is something that we could improve on” (Obs, 2/7). Rather than holding all of the power in the class, the teachers shared their power with students by asking for and acting on their feedback.

“Learn from you”: Students as experts. The final way that the teachers built students’ power was by treating them as experts in classroom and having them teach their peers, and at times, the teachers. When the teachers shared models of writing, they frequently used the writing of students in the classroom, calling out all of the expert moves of the writers. During writing, the teachers would encourage students to ask each other for help and for ideas. While students generally went to the teachers first for support, they at times reached out to each other as when one of the girls asked a student near her, “Can I see how you ended your first paragraph?” Sometimes the teachers explicitly set peers up in supportive partnerships as when Dr. Sumner asked a student who had finished to help another student with a challenging question. In addition to presenting the peers as experts to each other, the teachers also spoke about learning from the students. Dr. Sumner went to one of the tables one day and sat down. When a student at the table asked him a question he said, “I’m back here to get some learning, to learn from you” (Obs, 2/8). The use of peers as experts however was most evident during student presentations.

When explaining one presentation activity, Dr. Sumner said, “You guys will be the teachers about your cartoon” (Obs, 2/8). When the students eventually came up to present, Dr. Sumner framed the presentations by saying, “Please give your attention to your peers. You can learn from them” (Obs, 2/8). For Dr. Sumner, success in the class was “When the kids are in charge and doing a good job and… running things. When Coach Wilson and I can stand back…. When they give presentations and… they’re listening to each other… and learning from each other” (Int, 2/13). For him, student presentations were a time when the students got to be the

teachers and to be in charge. Some presentations were brief as when groups of students looked at photos and then quickly presented their photos to their peers. Others were longer like the presentations on political cartoons. One presentation of a political cartoon in particular stood out. The students had called Dr. Sumner over and asked if they could do a rap instead of a skit. He agreed. The group's cartoon was of a giant fist with roots reaching down to workers who were holding signs. When they came to the stage, the first two students briefly presented context by saying, "We are going on strike for better wages and higher working conditions." Then Tanya, the third student, came up and rapped this:

> Painful thoughts, painful men attitudes on a thousand. New York, New York struggling in this disgust! Taking money from my beloved one isn't enough. Strike, strike pitchforks to the sky! Fist up to the sky! Men and women hearts to rise! Families and children are at risk! Let's march and stand up for our pride. Greed won't stop the strike! We can't have this for just one night! We should stand up for our rights! HAZAAAHHHHHHH!!!!!! (Obs, 2/8).

These students turned the activity into something meaningful for them and found a powerful way to share their knowledge with the other students. During that presentation, those students were truly running the class.

The teachers built Tanya and her classmate's power by sharing power with them. Tanya's presentation is also an example of differentiation in the classroom. An alternate way to organize the sharing of power with students would be through the framework of differentiation. However, the teachers framed these presentations and the choices given students as emblematic of student power and so the model reflects the view points of the teachers. The teachers' focus on building students' power combined with how they demonstrated care for their students and the warm

environment of the class to create a classroom where students were supported and given tools for empowerment. Working together, the teachers created the conditions for student empowerment by making the content accessible, supporting students, and also by expanding students' possibilities.

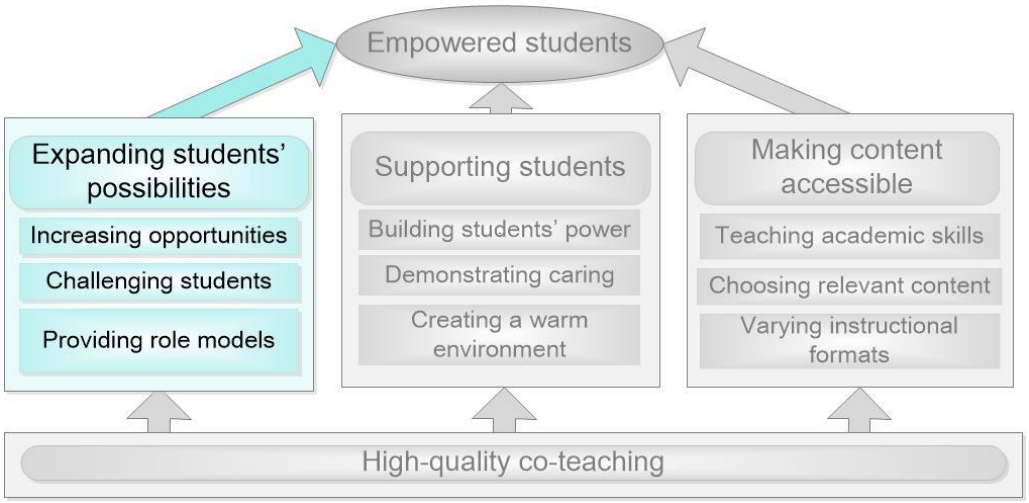

Figure 4.16. Expanding students' possibilities.

Expanding Students' Possibilities.

> It's not even just about graduating, but it's about achieving their sense of greatness in whatever avenue that they choose. Because once you get done with school, you know, if you don't have any goals, if you have no desire to be good at anything, what do you do when school is not the thing that's in your way anymore? So, I try to approach in the sense of, you know, what is it that you want to accomplish? Have you ever thought about trying to do more? … And then trying to progress and create a relationship with these kids so that at some point they say, "Okay, maybe I do think I can reach this goal. Maybe I can do better," Or, "Maybe I need to change my approach to things." (Coach Wilson, Int, 2/1)

The third pillar of student empowerment in Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom was expanding students' possibilities (Figure 4.16). The teachers gave the students role models from history and acted as role models themselves of people who pursued goals and created change. The teachers challenged students to excel and refused to accept the minimum from them. Finally, the teachers increased students' academic and action opportunities. They increased students' academic opportunities by providing them information about college and access to college level courses and increased their real world opportunities by having the students work on projects that addressed real world problems. While these teacher actions were less common than the actions in the other two pillars, they were still an important part of the teachers' practice.

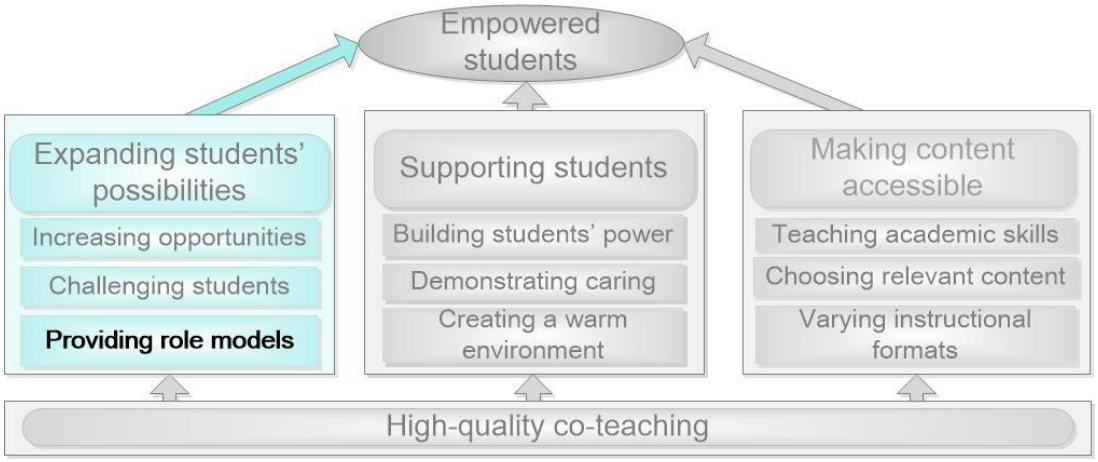

Figure 4.17. Providing role models.

"Do you think some fought back?": Providing role models. The teachers provided the students with role models of empowered people (Figure 4.17). They provided students with historical role models and also served as models to the students themselves. In addition to discussing narratives of oppression and power in history, during most units the teachers described one to three historical figures who resisted oppression. In addition, about once during

each unit the teachers more broadly presented examples of the ways in which groups of people had exerted agency and resisted oppression.

Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson talked not just about the oppression of the Jim Crow south but also about the agency of Black Americans who chose to leave, who moved North and West, and who became cowboys. The teachers also discussed the many ways that Black Americans resisted Jim Crow. Dr. Sumner introduced a lesson on Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, and W.E. DuBois by saying, "Today, we will be discussing fighting Jim Crow. We don't want you to think that nobody was doing anything about it" (Obs, 1/17). After a review lesson on Ida B. Wells, Coach Wilson described her as, "a person who had to find her own way to get her own mission" and as someone "willing to stand on her own" (Int, 2/8). Her agency and her willingness to fight for her vision of what was right stood out to Coach Wilson and were what he and Dr. Sumner emphasized in the classroom.

The teachers also presented the agency and resistance of Indigenous peoples. In a class discussion of Westward Expansion, Dr. Sumner discussed Sitting Bull and Indigenous resistance; "Do you think the Native American people just decided to move? Do you think some fought back?... Native Americans had been fighting a war with the American government for 250 years. That's important to understand" (Obs, 2/1). The teachers discussed both the oppression of Indigenous people and their active resistance to that oppression.

Similarly, the teachers brought in the experience and agency of women in history. They discussed the number of single women choosing to move West, expanded gender equality in the 1920s, and women's continuing quest for equality, including efforts to integrate the military. The students watched a video on the Suffrage movement that ended with a call for women today to vote in elections; "If you think that someone else should make your choices for you, maybe you

should look these women in the eye and tell them why" (Obs, 1/18). The class discussed the historic denial of rights to women and the persistence of gender biases, but they also focused on the ways in which women have fought for their rights, including the stories of individual Suffragettes who led the way.

The teachers also focused on the perspectives and agency of lower-income workers. Dr. Sumner described the Progressive Era as "People coming together to get their rights" (Obs, 2/1). Within the Progressive Era, the teachers focused on economic oppression and the formation of unions. Dr. Sumner explained the power of unions to the class as; "If I have one bug I can step on it and kill it but what if there are 5,000 bugs? If you all work together, there is strength" (Obs, 2/4). The class discussed urban slums, economic inequality, and power imbalances but they also discussed the power that workers had when they came together and the impact of their agency. This continued even in a discussion of the Depression where Roosevelt's redistribution programs were framed as a response to the agency and demands of the poor majority of the country.

In each unit, the agency of individuals and the importance of their efforts to change the system were highlighted. Even in a brief discussion of Civil Rights, the role of youth as a "force for change in our country" (Obs, 1/23) was discussed. The teachers wove these threads of resistance and agency throughout their units and into class discussions, PowerPoints, and activities. In each of these examples, the teachers were providing students with historical role models of individuals who pursued their goals and created change.

The teachers also served as role models to students in the classroom. Coach Wilson pursued his dream of playing professional football and continued to coach and to focus on achieving his goals. Dr. Sumner shared a published article that he wrote with students. The students knew of his pursuit of a doctorate and his decision to return to the classroom. The

teachers were examples themselves of individuals who set ambitious goals and who had achieved those goals. In their open discussion of inequalities in society, of race, of power, and of resistance however the teachers also provided role models of how to resist inequality. In their willingness to discus issues and their encouragement of student created change, the teachers were modeling a way to confront oppression and to change society.

Neither teacher discussed their role as role models nor framed their discussion of historical figures through that lens. Role models were included in the model because of the connections I saw between the stories the teachers told students and the goals they described for the class. Both through the content they taught and the way that they taught it, the teachers provided the students with role models of empowerment to draw on. The teachers however did not stop there with expanding students' possibilities. They also challenged students to excel.

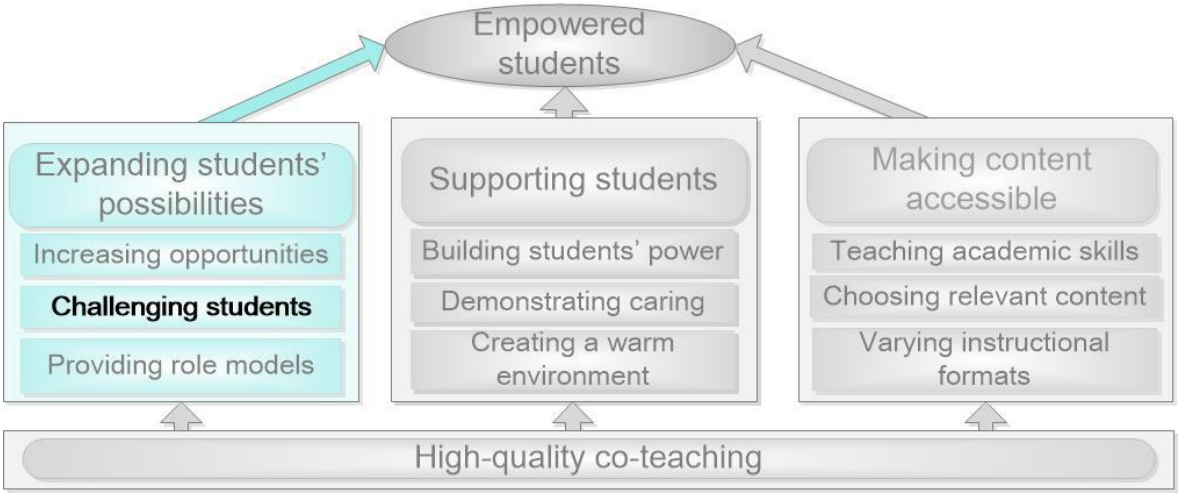

Figure 4.18. Challenging students.

"Achieving their sense of greatness": Challenging students. Challenging students was part of the teachers' commitment to help students in "achieving their sense of greatness in whatever avenue they choose" (Coach Wilson, Int, 2/1) and was the most common way the teachers expanded students' possibilities (Figure 4.18). Doing that meant never accepting the

minimum from students and encouraging students to excel. The teachers asked their students to dig deeper, held them to high expectations, and built bridges to their parents and communities.

The teachers encouraged the students to dig deeper by giving the students growth-oriented feedback, telling students to revise their work, asking them high-level questions, and pushing them to think more deeply about the content. The teachers worked to build students growth mindset by focusing on constructive feedback; "This is not about us evaluating you and seeing if you're dumb or you're smart. It's about us helping you get better in whatever you're trying to do" (Dr. Sumner, Int, 2/13). During class, when a student was frustrated with her peers correcting something that she was writing on the board, Dr. Sumner walked over and said, "Hey, critiques are good. They are how we get better, so don't be defensive" (Obs, 2/5). The teachers modeled an openness to critiques as well. When they engaged in the write aloud, the teachers gave each other frequent feedback on how to improve their writing and what to change. Similarly, in class one teacher would often modify something that the other teacher had said and the person whose comment was modified or clarified would nod and respond without defensiveness.

Critiques and feedbacks were an integral part of the class. When students worked on independent writing projects, the two teachers constantly walked around, offering students individual critiques. One day, Coach Wilson walked to a student and said, "Come up with another sentence that explains…" while Dr. Sumner said to a different student, "Yeah, you could say that she fought for everyone's rights, not just…" (Obs, 1/30). Both teachers gave the students detailed, growth oriented feedback on their writing.

In addition to feedback on their writing, teachers also gave students feedback on their presentations, their understanding of concepts, and on their quizzes and exams. After students

finished presenting their commercials for an invention, Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson provided positive feedback. Then Dr. Sumner provided additional constructive feedback. After one group finished presenting about the invention of phones, Dr. Sumner asked if there was any pathos in their presentation. Students replied, “Not really.” Dr. Sumner then said that the group could have played pathos up more with stories about disasters or connecting with loved ones (Obs, 2/5). Rather than just saying that the presentation was good, Dr. Sumner gave the students feedback on how to make it better. Similarly, the teachers also gave the students feedback on their understanding of concepts. When Houston said that the Bessemer process was for making steel, Dr. Sumner corrected him saying it was for, “Making steel cheaper” (Obs, 2/4). The teachers gave the students timely feedback on their quizzes and tests as well. The computer program instantly graded multiple choice questions and Dr. Sumner graded short answer questions overnight. The teachers gave students time in class to review their scores, to discuss what they struggled with, and to work with the teachers to answer any lingering questions. Rather than just accepting students’ work, the teachers gave the students feedback that pushed them to improve.

The teachers also encouraged the students to revise their writing of both long and short pieces. The whole writing grade for one of the quarters was for students’ revisions. Even when students did well on an assignment the teachers pushed them to revise and make it better. When a student told Dr. Sumner that he was done with revising a paper, Dr. Sumner replied, “There is always a way to make it better” (Obs, 1/17). After grading their speeches, Dr. Sumner put students’ grades in Google classroom but told students that their grades had not been entered into Gradebook yet because he wanted them to work on revisions. He told the students to make revisions “even if they got an A or a B” (Obs, 1/25). Both during individual conferences and during whole class instruction, the teachers emphasized the importance of revising and identified

ways students could make their work better. Dr. Sumner told a student, “Even a few changes here and there can make a big difference” (Obs, 1/17) and told the class, “If you don’t like your grade, talk to us and we will give you ideas on what you can do to make it better” (Obs, 1/24). Even once grades were in Gradebook, students could still revise their work and Dr. Sumner would update their grades.

Students generally responded positively to the teachers’ feedback, even sometimes going to the teachers to seek out more feedback. When Michael was working on finishing his speech, he would go to his table, write a few lines and then get up and bring his computer to Dr. Sumner for him to give feedback and ideas. Michael would sit back down, work for a bit, and then go right back over. Michael wanted feedback, not for someone to do the work for him. When a peer tutor offered to help him, he said that he wanted help, but did not want the student to write it for him. When the teachers gave individual students feedback the students would often nod their heads in agreement with the feedback. When Coach Wilson was giving Deandre feedback, he said to Coach Wilson, “I got you. So then you…” Coach Wilson continued to explain and Deandre said, “I got it… I was just confused” (Obs, 1/31). Other students told the teachers, “Thank you,” for their feedback or “Yeah, okay” or “I see it now.” Students seemed to make the changes the teachers suggested and frequently appeared to appreciate the support. The students also gave each other feedback, like when Michael looked at Sonya’s laptop as he walked by and said, “Say however—that sounds weird” (Obs, 1/31). Sonya made the change. Rather than letting students turn in low quality work, the teachers pushed the students to make their work better, teaching them that there were always ways to improve.

Just like they focused on depth and quality in presentations and in writing, the teachers also pushed depth in thinking through engaging with students around high-level questions and

material and through using follow up questions to push them deeper. Dr. Sumner frequently asked students to read primary sources from amendments to cartoons. Rather than wanting students to take his or a book's word on the content he wanted them to "go and read what it actually says" (Obs, 1/15). Students were encouraged to discuss historical events and their meaning, to make connections to today, and to articulate their own opinions. When a student gave a basic answer to a question, Coach Wilson walked over and said, "Let's go a bit deeper… you read about this" (Obs, 2/5). When students answered questions, the teachers often followed up with the student by saying, "But how?"; "By what?"; or "What do you think it means?" Each of these pushed the student to give more information and to delve deeper into the material. The teachers' emphasis on pushing the students' thinking paired with their use of feedback and revisions with written material to create a growth environment for students. The teachers then paired that growth environment with high expectations for students.

"Stop doing the minimum": High expectations. The teachers' goal was to create a safe space for students where the teachers could then "push them to their limits… [and] help them to be successful" (Int, 2/1). Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner showed students that they believed in them while constantly raising the bar for them and holding them accountable. The teachers showed students they believed in them through specific praise, recommending students for special classes, and encouraging them. Dr. Sumner showed Deandre he believed in him when he said that Deandre was "so close to being… college level" (Obs, 2/4). Dr. Sumner showed other students that he believed in them by encouraging them to enroll in Creative Writing the following year. When Leila, who was on the literary magazine, announced a writing contest and prize, Dr. Sumner told a student in the first period that he should enter his poetry. When students struggled, the teachers told them a variation on, "Yes, you can" (Obs, 1/30) and offered them

support. They asked them about their goals for after high school and helped them connect what they were doing in school to those goals (Dr. Sumner, Int, 1/24). In each of these instances, the teachers showed students that they believed in their potential.

In addition to believing in students, the teachers constantly pushed them to excel. When Coach Wilson saw a student slacking off in class one day he said, “Stop doing the minimum” (Obs, 1/18). When a student told Dr. Sumner she was okay with a C- grade he told her that her grades needed to be higher and that “it’s hard to have a college career as a C student” (Obs, 1/15). The teachers constantly raised the bar for their students. Coach Wilson said that one of their goals was to “challenge [students] to do things that are uncomfortable, just so they can see what they're capable of” (Int, 1/25). Dr. Sumner walked over to a student in class one day and said that he was going to give the student honors work because he was not challenged enough in the class. Later, Dr. Sumner walked to another student and said, “This is the honors level work. But since I recommended you for Dual Enrollment for next year, maybe you want to look through it and give a couple of them a try” (Obs, 2/6). Even the group presentations were a challenge activity that students disliked and were uncomfortable with at the beginning of the year but that the teachers forced them to do until students grew more comfortable. The teachers worked continuously to challenge students and they expected students to take on the challenges and to excel.

When students were not working to their potential, the teachers let them know. A few students that Dr. Sumner had recommended for DE courses did not turn in their speeches on time. Dr. Sumner directly spoke to them about the fact they needed to begin making the transition to college readiness by taking responsibility for their work. When a different student figured out an answer on her own Coach Wilson said, “So when you say you don’t know, and I

say, 'Yeah you do,' that's what I mean" (Obs, 1/31). One day Coach Wilson spoke to another student and the student sitting next to him about the student's tendency to "act like he doesn't know what is going on" (Obs, 1/16) when he does. Coach Wilson said that his philosophy was "to kind of just plant those seeds and hopefully one day they'll figure it out" (Int, 2/1). Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson closely monitored their students. They knew how students were doing on tests, what they had turned in or missed, and how they were doing in their other classes. They would at times intervene when they saw that students were struggling, as Coach Wilson did with Dion, a student on the football team, in class one day. Dion commented that his grades were poor. Coach Wilson replied, "At some point, you are going to have to look at them and figure out how to get them up…. They aren't gonna change from staring at them, dude…. Why don't you just do the work?" Coach Wilson had also reached out to Dion's family and said, "When you get home, Ms. B is gonna crack down too" (Obs, 2/8). Coach Wilson was holding Dion accountable for his decisions and working with Dion's family. Ms. B was not the only family member that the teachers reached out to help them hold students to high expectations either.

"Hey, I talked to your mom…": Building bridges. Like Coach Wilson with Dion, the two teachers built bridges to family and community members as a way to better support their students. Before the school year, Dr. Sumner researched his new students and then called home to ask the parents, "Well, what do you want me to know about your child before they come into the class?" (Int, 1/24). He also sent out fairly regularly information and newsletters to families, letting them know what is happening in this class. Dr. Sumner used that to help redirect students. He said that he would talk to students and say, "Hey, I talked to your mom and I know that she wants you to do well and I know you want to do well and how can we do this?" (Int, 1/24). One of the teachers would mention a student's parent in class about once a week, as when Dr. Sumner

talked to Leila's about her mom's work schedule, or when Coach Wilson warned Dion that Ms. B also knew about his grades. In addition to contacting and discussing parents, Dr. Sumner organized events that brought families to the school.

Dr. Sumner worked with local community organizations to help organize a series of events for Latino families about colleges. The first event in February featured a panel of Latino college students, college graduates, and one parent of a college student. The event was done entirely in Spanish with free food and child care for the parents. It was a snowy night and still over one hundred parents and students showed up. When the panelists spoke, the parents leaned in and appeared to intensely focus on what they were saying. The students too seemed focused, looking at the speakers without having their cell phones out or chatting with their neighbors. The first question was about why the panelists went to college. Several of the panelists spoke about the sacrifices of their parents and their support. The second question was about how having, or not having, documentation impacted the students in accessing college. One of the speakers was a former student of Dr. Sumner's who spoke about coming to the US with no papers. She discussed how laws change and how not having papers today does not mean never having them. Then the parent spoke about her experiences as a mom. She described the challenges she faced in helping her daughter get financial aid and how she grew to realize the importance of college. After that, the group broke up into smaller groups of parents and students. The panelists went and sat at tables with small groups of parents or students and answered individual questions.

A month later, Dr. Sumner helped organize a follow up event that focused on financial aid. Again, over a hundred parents and students came. While I did not attend, Dr. Sumner said that one of their goals was to help undocumented students understand that, while it would not be easy for them to attend college, it was possible. Another goal was to help undocumented parents

understand that their lack of papers did not keep the US born children from accessing financial aid. In order to organize these events, Dr. Sumner had to convince the school's administration to take a chance on working with community organizations and to open the school to these families. By organizing the events, Dr. Sumner was building connections between families and community members and building families' knowledge and power. Dr. Sumner built on that outreach in class, telling students that it was nice to see their parents or encouraging them to come with their families next time. By building strong bridges, Dr. Sumner expanded academic opportunities for his students. Expanding college opportunities for the Synthesis students, who have historically been under represented in advanced courses at the school and under enrolled in college was important for both teachers.

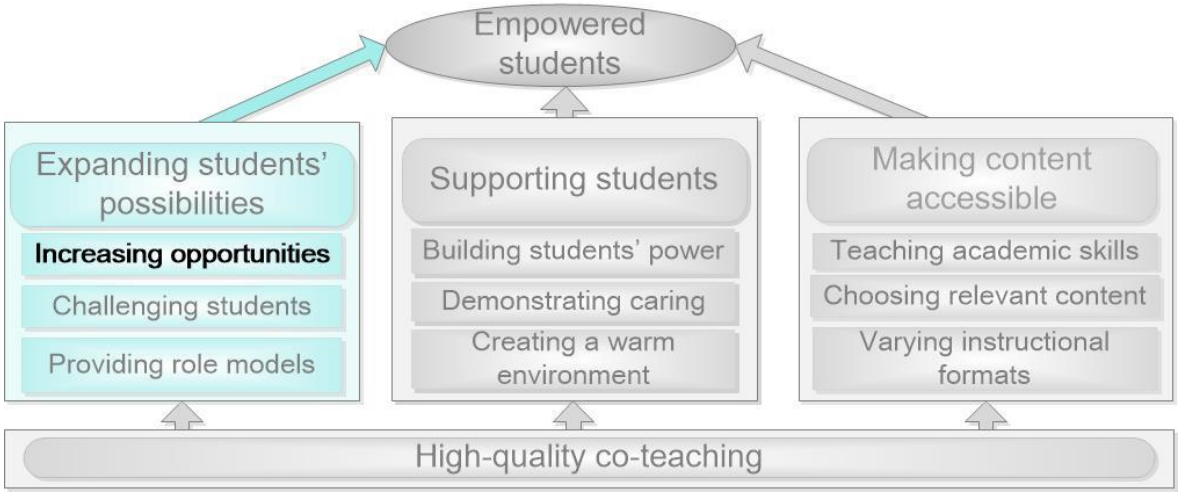

Figure 4.19. Increasing students' academic and action opportunities.

"We want you to have an impact": Increasing opportunities. The teachers further expanded students' possibilities by increasing their academic and action opportunities (Figure 4.19). They created academic opportunities for students through events like the college night and through recruiting students for and informing them about advanced level courses at the school.

The teachers increased students' opportunities for action by having them engage in classroom projects that addressed real world problems and had a real world impact.

Dr. Sumner organized an AP and DE recruitment session during one support period shortly before students were going to do course registration. Before the event, Dr. Sumner talked about DE courses in class. He spoke about the benefits of DE courses saying, "It saves you a lot of money." He compared the amount of money that students would save in college by taking two free DE courses the next year to the cost of a new car. Students who had spoken to Coach Wilson or to him previously about DE courses had their names on the board, but Dr. Sumner encouraged everyone to go to the event. Eighteen students, almost all from the Synthesis class, showed up for the event along with six DE and AP teachers and a guidance counselor. Each teacher explained their course, going over the difference between AP and DE courses, the varied work load of each individual class, the expectations for their course, and what made the course interesting. The AP Psychology teacher had students close their eyes and remember the doors in the place they live and then to try to count the number of words in a sentence. Then he explained the difference between the two activities. He described AP Psychology as a "user guide to yourself."

After the teachers spoke, Dr. Sumner put up a list of questions from students, including ones about paying for materials. The teachers went and sat at tables with students and answered their questions. The teachers asked about students' interests and their plans after college. The teachers spoke about how they found ways to give students free materials and gave the students concrete advice. One teacher told a student that he might like a DE Global Information Systems course because he was highly visual. Another teacher explained to a student that AP courses varied a lot in the amount of work students had to do. Then the guidance counselor spoke about

enrollment. By the end of the period, the students had been provided with extensive information about college level courses at the school (Obs, 2/1). As importantly, they had met the teachers and seen who else would be in their classes.

For Dr. Sumner, that social element was vital. When he had spoken to students who had tried advanced classes in the past, many had described being the only student of color in the class. The students spoke about feeling unwelcome and not knowing anyone in the advanced classes. Last year Dr. Sumner started recruiting students to enroll in cohorts. He had a group of girls and a group of boys who each enrolled in classes together. The students provided each other with a support network in the classes. Dr. Sumner hopes to get the same cohort effect this year. When the DE and AP information session began, Dr. Sumner introduced it by saying that part of the reason for the event was so that the students "can see that there are people that you know." He asked the students to look around and see who might be in their classes. Dr. Sumner also said that he wanted the students to see the teachers, "because sometimes people worry, 'I don't know who the teachers are, maybe they are mean, maybe I won't know anyone.'" This event was only one way that the teachers worked to recruit students to enroll in these advanced courses.

The teachers said they were "push[ing] the envelope" (Int, 2/1) at the school in encouraging students to enroll in DE and AP courses. During the class discussion of AP and DE courses, Coach Wilson looked at the students in the Synthesis class and said, "If we didn't think you could do it, we wouldn't talk to you about it… We had students from last year's class do the jump and they are doing well. Don't limit yourselves" (Obs, 1/31). Dr. Sumner told all of the students that he "highly encourages all students to take one class DE next year." Dr. Sumner officially recommended many of his students for DE history or English courses the following year on PowerSchool. During course enrollment a few weeks later, Dr. Sumner followed up with

a student, asking if she had signed up for DE courses. To the best of my knowledge however, Dr. Sumner did not recommend all of his students for advanced courses, illuminating the fact that there were still characteristics he was looking for in order to recommend students for advanced courses.

In the Synthesis class, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner taught students who were often excluded from AP and DE courses. They worked to create a cohort to support their students, to recruit them into the classes, and to ensure that they had access to all of the information that they needed to make informed decisions. While the DE event happened only once and the college night only two times during my observation they were still important ways that the teachers increased students' academic opportunities. Rather than just stopping with increased academic opportunities, the teachers also worked to increase students' opportunities to create change in the world.

Dr. Sumner described the course's pedagogy as project-based learning with a focus on "trying to connect the skills and the [state-tested] content they need to know to projects that have some kind of an impact in the world" (Int, 1/24). Last year, the Synthesis students wanted to respond to violence in their community. Over the course of the year they worked with local officials and community groups to get a mural painted on the street near the school. The students met with artists and city officials and helped create something lasting in their community. This year the students began in the fall by creating a podcast about a problem that exists today and tracing the historical roots of the problem. According to Dr. Sumner, "A lot of them picked immigration, some of them picked racism, [and] some of them picked, like college access or paying for college" (Int, 1/24). The projects focused on having students work and think beyond the confines of the classroom. The students seemed to engage in about one real world impact

project per quarter, meaning that while these projects were not part of every class they were a substantive part of the course.

During my observations, each student wrote a speech arguing why a woman of their choice deserved to be honored with a holiday. Some students picked national figures and wrote speeches for national politicians. Others picked state level figures and wrote to local representatives or the governor. Others still picked local women and wrote to the school board about getting an elementary school named after the woman. Throughout the project, the teachers' focus was on the real world value of the project. Dr. Sumner introduced the project by saying, "We want you to share your speeches with the people who make these decisions… We want you to have a real audience for this" (Obs, 1/18). When the students were done writing their speeches, they contacted at least one, often two, political figures of their choice explaining who they wanted honored and why. Dr. Sumner went over the people students could contact and shared contact information with the students while saying, "If your writing stays on your computer… it doesn't have an impact. We want you to have an impact. We want you to talk to the people with the power to make a national or local holiday" (Obs, 1/31).

The fact that they were writing to real politicians, that they were working on something real mattered to the students. Houston spoke in class to a one on one about not wanting to take classes next year so that he could work and that he was trying to get a job anywhere that would take him. Houston got almost a perfect grade on the speech and when Dr. Sumner talked to him about it, he said, "This is the best essay I've ever written…It is only this good because I have to send it to a policy maker... It matters" (Obs, 1/30). A girl finished her essay early and told Dr. Sumner that she had taken time out of class to read it over and edit it because "It is something I care about more" (Obs, 1/31). One day, Deandre told Dr. Sumner that he worked on his speech at

home the night before. Deandre also refused to send his message to a local school board about changing a school's name until his speech was done. Because his message was going to someone local who he, and the teachers, thought would read it, they decided to have him send his message later after he had completely polished the piece. The students cared about the writing because the assignment had a real audience.

When the students sent their message to politicians many were excited. When Sonya sent hers in, she said, "I did it! I sent it! I'm getting arrested." Dr. Sumner laughed and asked if it was her first time writing a politician. She said that it was, and he tapped her should and said, "You just contacted your senator! Good job." As he walked away, Sonya put her hand over her mouth and looked excited as the two girls at her table laughed (Obs, 1/31). Another student asked Dr. Sumner if he could email more than one person. When he found out he could, the student began sending his request to multiple politicians. A different student asked Dr. Sumner the next morning when they might get a response. Houston got a response to his email the very next day from someone in the Senator's office. He excitedly showed it to an aide seated near him and to Dr. Sumner. While the school's name might never be changed or the holiday created, the students had experienced political power and engagement. When they finished writing to their politicians, Dr. Sumner said, "Thank you all for participating in your democracy." While the teachers had spoken about how some of the students felt disempowered in society, at that moment, when they contacted their politicians, they instead were experiencing their power. The teachers both increased students' academic opportunities and their opportunities to have an impact on the world.

The teachers expanded students' possibilities by increasing their academic and action opportunities, by holding the students to high expectations, and by providing students with

examples and role models of individuals who achieved goals and created change. Expanding students' possibilities was the third pillar of empowerment in the classroom and, when combined with supporting students and making content accessible created an environment ripe for student empowerment. Dr. Sumner wanted students "to feel empowered in raising their voice…to get their opinions heard and their voices heard by people in power" and for students to feel ready to address "contemporary problems in their communities" (Int, 2/13). Coach Wilson hoped he could help students to see the "bigger picture of things" and "maybe trigger a kid who wants to work to change [persistent social problems]" (Int, 2/8). The teachers wanted the students to both create change in the world and to realize their own goals. They helped the students get there through these three pillars of teacher actions and through their high-quality co-teaching partnership.

While the long-term impact of the Synthesis program was not visible during the observations, the teachers spoke about long-term impact. Dr. Sumner described students who were in college who "may not have been [on that] trajectory" before (Int, 2/13). Coach Wilson gave an example of a student from the year before who had been challenging in class but became passionate about creating a monument for a local student who had integrated the schools. She sent a proposal to city council and spoke with county officials when they came to the school. She was passionate about the project and it changed her in the classroom. She became more "focused, and she did a lot of great work" (Int, 2/8). This fall, she came back to the Synthesis class and presented her project to the students there. Dr. Sumner said the spring was when they started to see changes in students, where they became "passionate about things, curious, [and started] learning for the sake of learning" (Int, 2/13). Coach Wilson knew that the impact of the class might be hard to measure but said, "I mean there's kids you've helped that you probably

will never know" (Int, 2/8). For Coach Wilson that meant the teachers needed to just keep caring about the kids and being open minded. By working together in a strong co-teaching partnership, the teachers were able to create a powerful, culturally relevant classroom. They helped their students excel, opened academic opportunities, and empowered their students both within the classroom and in the wider world.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I shared the findings from my research. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner had used their co-teaching to create a powerful, culturally relevant classroom focused on student empowerment. They created this classroom using the teacher actions described in my model of CRT in a co-taught classroom from Chapter Two. These actions included making content accessible, supporting students, and expanding students' opportunities. Each of these actions was enhanced and supported by the teachers' high-quality co-teaching partnership and occurred within the context of WHS, a racially divided school where the administration supports co-teaching.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

During the course of my observations, a new model of CRT in a co-taught classroom emerged. The model is fundamentally a model of equity, a representation of how two teachers offered educational opportunities and tools for empowerment to students, many of whom have historically been denied opportunities and power at their high school. The model is based on what I saw in one classroom. The teacher actions described in the findings section are specific to this one pair of co-teachers. Yet, the elements of the model and the teachers' practices also have grounding in studies of other teachers and other models of teaching. In this chapter, I discuss the key components and broader implications of the model. Then I offer specific recommendations to the teachers and for their school site before moving into limitations and final thoughts.

Discussion

Building on the theoretical grounding for the model presented in Chapter Two and the application of the model in Chapter Four, I begin this chapter by situating the model in the literature on CRT and co-teaching. I also look at how the model intersects with literature on inclusion and a measure of strong instructional practices. First, however I want to describe how my personal beliefs influenced the model. Because of my personal beliefs in equity, the role of schools in bridging opportunity gaps, and the importance of CRT in classrooms, I was attuned to notice these things and to develop this model of CRT in a co-taught classroom. While those beliefs helped me see the lines of power in the classroom and the use of CRT, they also limited

my awareness of alternative explanations for what I saw and shaped what I focused on in my observations and interviews.

School context. The model begins with the school context. The supports and particular conditions at WHS are both what enabled and what necessitated the teachers' collaborative work and their focus on equity. WHS's administration supported Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's partnership by keeping them together over time and providing co-planning time. The school's deep racial disparities and divisions led to the creation of the Synthesis program and fueled much of the teachers work on course access and equalizing opportunities within WHS. While the particular combination of challenges and strengths at WHS were unique, the school shares commonalities with other high schools. The challenges of racial divisions in discipline, course access, and graduation are common at many high schools in America (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016; Oakes, 2005; Skiba et al., 2008). The strengths of the administration in offering co-teaching and supporting it through co-planning time, while not common, also are found at other schools (Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007).

High-quality co-teaching. The next layer of the model is high-quality co-teaching, characterized by shared beliefs, frequent communication, a strong relationship, and fluidity in instructional roles. While Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner engaged in team teaching, researchers have found that one teach, one assist continues to be the most common model in special education (Scruggs et al., 2007). Although Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson both knew and cared for the content, researchers have found that shared knowledge is often missing in partnerships (Mastropieri et al., 2005). Even the teachers' willingness to share power and share turf is often missing in other classrooms (Scruggs et al., 2007). Yet, at the same time, the elements that made Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's co-teaching strong were the same elements that have been

found to be important in other schools. Other researchers have also found that common characteristics and beliefs, frequent communication, strong relationships, and role flexibility are important characteristics of strong co-teaching partnerships (Cramer & Nevin, 2006; Pratt, 2014; Scruggs et al., 2007). While strong co-teaching partnerships like Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's are rare, the elements that make their partnership strong are well grounded in the literature. There however were also tensions with the literature. The two teachers balanced power within the classroom, but they did not share material creation nor grading outside of the classroom, which is often considered an important element of strong team teaching (Friend et al., 2010; Weiss & Lloyd, 2003).

Researchers have examined both the practice of co-teaching and the impact of it on student perceptions and outcomes (Cook et al., 2011; Friend et al., 2010). Researchers have found that co-teaching is stronger in more dynamic, equitable, and student-focused classrooms (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007), but that does not mean that co-teaching leads to higher-quality, more student focused instruction. In the classroom I studied, the co-teaching partnership enhanced the student focused instruction. However, if Coach Wilson were not a part of the classroom at all, it seems likely that Dr. Sumner would still have run a high-quality, student focused classroom. Coach Wilson's presence did not, most likely, lead to the type of instruction in the classroom. At the same time, his presence clearly enhanced the instruction. When he was not in the classroom, the instruction was less dynamic. Students appeared less supported and less engaged. I found that co-teaching was essential both to the instruction that I saw, the supports students received, and to the focus on student empowerment. The relationship between co-teaching and empowerment that I found has not been as explored in the literature.

This finding is both a contribution to the literature on co-teaching and an area that needs further exploration.

Making content accessible. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's co-teaching supported their efforts to make the content accessible to their students, which is the first of the three pillars of teacher actions for student empowerment. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson worked to make the content accessible to students by using a variety of techniques, including varying instructional formats, choosing relevant content, and teaching academic skills. While what they did in their classroom was unique to them and their practice, the ways that they worked to make content accessible overlap in many ways with measures of high-quality instruction. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System ([CLASS] Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012) is one research-based measure of instructional quality. While CLASS was not used in this study to assess the teachers, many of the elements of making content accessible fit into the CLASS framework. The teachers' heavy reliance on group work during lessons and the meaningful activities that the students engaged in align with CLASS indicators of strong instruction. Similarly, the teachers' focus on providing real world connections, use of multiple and varied examples, attention to student misconceptions, and provision of frequent opportunities for student practice also align with CLASS. While the ways that the teachers chose to make the content accessible to students were unique to them, their efforts fit into a broader picture of strong instruction.

The varied and accessible instruction in Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom also fits into broader pictures of literature on co-teaching and CRT. Researchers have found that co-teaching is generally stronger in student-focused classrooms where the teachers use group work and varied instructional techniques (Cook et al., 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). CRT researchers have emphasized the importance of group work, linguistic supports, and multi-modal instruction

(Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). In addition, Ladson-Billings (1995a) titled one of her articles on CRT, *But that's just good teaching!* highlighting the similarities between many elements of CRT and indicators of good teaching. The strong, accessible instruction in Dr. Sumner's and Coach Wilson's classroom fits into broader pictures of high-quality instruction, co-teaching, and CRT.

Supporting students. The second pillar of the model is supporting students. As with co-teaching and making content accessible, the ways in which Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson supported students were both unique and similar to practices occurring in other classrooms. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner supported students by making their classroom warm, demonstrating caring for students, and building students' power. As with making content accessible, many of these practices aligned with CLASS's model of high-quality instruction (Pianta et al., 2012). The teachers built relationships with students and treated them with respect, which align with CLASS indicators of high-quality instruction. Similarly, the teachers were sensitive to the needs of individual students, which also aligns with CLASS. The teachers had their unique styles for implementing each of these actions in their classroom, but the pattern of their actions fits into a broader model of high-quality instruction seen in other classrooms and at other schools. Similarly, the teachers' creation of a warm climate and their focus on student empowerment in the classroom also resemble what researchers have seen in other CRT classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011; Morrison et al., 2008). The teachers' individual actions were unique, but they also fit into these broader patterns of CRT and CLASS.

In addition, the warm, welcoming, and respectful classroom that the teachers created through supporting students resembles the ideal discussed in inclusion literature. Advocates for the inclusion of students with disabilities describe inclusive classrooms where students with

disabilities are not just spending time, but are part of the classroom community (Falvey & Givner, 2005; Inclusive Schools Network, 2015). When Dan, a student in Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom with a one on one assistant, received high-fives and greetings from his peers and when his peers gave him complete respect and attention during his presentation, he was deeply a member of his classroom community. Co-teaching helped enable a supportive, inclusive environment in Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom.

Expanding students' possibilities. The third pillar of teacher actions for student empowerment is expanding students' possibilities. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner worked to expand students' possibilities by providing them with role models, challenging them, and increasing their academic and real-world opportunities. These actions helped create the conditions for student empowerment by increasing students' knowledge about and experience with creating change and reaching rigorous goals. As with the other two pillars, this one too relied on their co-teaching. This pillar is where however the instruction in the classroom began to diverge from just good teaching, and even from other models of CRT.

The first of the pillar's three elements, challenging students, is strongly grounded in CRT literature, but not in CLASS. CRT researchers often emphasize the importance of high expectations for historically underserved students (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Challenging students however is only tangentially discussed in CLASS while holding students to high expectations is not included at all in that model of strong instruction (Pianta et al., 2012). The teachers in this classroom held high expectations for students yet there were contradictions inherent in how they pushed students. Coach Wilson is a football coach who both believes in pushing students to their potential and in individual limitations. Therefore, for him pushing one student to their limit looks different than for another, which requires a

judgement call on abilities. Within these inherent contradictions however the two teachers encouraged students to excel.

The other two elements of the pillar, providing students with role models and increasing opportunities, diverge both from CLASS and from much of the research on CRT. The teachers' focus on providing the students with role models and being role models themselves is not an area often discussed in CRT literature and an area that is not included in the CLASS model. The importance of role models, and the ability of both teachers and historic figures to serve as role models, is discussed in other literature (e.g. Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1996; Yancey et al., 2002) but the idea of role models as part of a culturally relevant classroom is a potential contribution of this model to CRT literature. The attention to role models is also one of the ways that what is happening within the classroom is more than just good teaching.

The teachers' focus on increasing opportunities for students is another way that what is happening in this classroom is more than just good teaching and a way that the model diverges from CRT literature. Researchers studying tracking reforms have discussed the importance of expanding students' academic opportunities by recruiting students for high-level courses and helping students believe that they belong in those courses (Godley et al., 2014; Yonezawa et al., 2002). However, the importance of expanding academic opportunities and sharing academic information has not been as strongly emphasized in literature on CRT and co-teaching and is not included in CLASS at all. Given the inequitable enrollment patterns for students of color and for students with special needs, this element is a useful contribution to CRT and co-teaching literature.

The teachers also offered students' real-world opportunities to create change from designing murals to emailing politicians. Some CRT researchers have discussed projects with a

real-world impact (Morrison et al., 2008), but many researchers have focused more on how teachers help students see power than on how they help students challenge power (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Young, 2010). Similarly, CLASS includes open ended tasks and the investigation of student questions in analysis and inequity, but there is no focus on manifesting change. While other models and theories such as multicultural education might include some of these elements (Banks, 2008), CLASS and CRT do not. In Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom, meaningful project based learning provided the bridge between an awareness of power and taking action to address the power imbalance. This use of project based learning has not been discussed often in CRT literature. The focus on meaningful projects presents a different way to think about how to build empowerment into culturally relevant classrooms and to answer concerns of researchers such as Paris (2012) and Young (2010) about the watering down of CRT in classrooms.

Empowerment. Empowerment is what sets this model apart from just good teaching. The goal of the teachers' instruction, and the culmination of the model, is student empowerment. Through the actions already discussed, the teachers helped create the conditions for student empowerment in their lives and in the world. Empowerment is at the heart of CRT and multicultural education (Banks, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009). While these theories focus on empowerment, CLASS, and other measures of good teaching, do not. In the model, student empowerment is defined as both their ability to create change in the world and their ability to set and achieve personal goals. This definition is different than how the concept is often presented in CRT literature and is another way that the model can contribute to the literature.

Overall, one of the most unique elements in the classroom was the use of co-teaching to support student empowerment. The presence of two teachers and the powerful way that they

team taught impacted every aspect of their classroom and every element of the model. Yet, at the same time there were some contradictions within the classroom. For example the teachers described the importance of student goal setting but did not often engage in it in the classroom. Similarly, students control within the classroom was highly limited. The teachers selected almost all activities and strongly directed the class and students' discussion. The teachers focus on student empowerment contained contradictions yet, despite these, their overall focus remained clear. Further, in this classroom, co-teaching enhanced CRT and the educational opportunities offered to students. This model and the findings of this paper have several potential implications for CRT, special education, and detracking.

Implications

The model of CRT in a co-taught classroom discussed above has deep implications for students in Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom and for other teachers focused on student empowerment. The first implication is that co-teaching has the capacity to improve CRT. The second implication of the model is that CRT has the potential to improve special education. The third implication is that the combination of CRT and co-teaching has the potential to serve as one model of instruction in a detracked, heterogeneous classroom.

Implication 1: Co-teaching and CRT. The first implication of this model is that co-teaching has the potential to enhance the practice of CRT. Co-teaching between a special and general education teacher is a newer model of service delivery that is growing in popularity (Friend et al., 2010). Despite the popularity of the model, strong examples of it in practice and evidence on its impact are lacking (Cook et al., 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). In many classrooms, co-teaching looks like one teacher teaching and one assisting, with ambiguous or no impact on the students with special needs in the classroom (Cook et al., 2011). In Coach Wilson and Dr.

Sumner's classroom however, the teachers engaged in team teaching, where both delivered lessons and worked with all students. This model of co-teaching strengthened CRT in the classroom.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) described three components of CRT. These were academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Co-teaching enhanced each of these elements in the classroom. Co-teaching supported students' academic success by facilitating individual support and feedback in the classroom as well as enhancing the varied instructional modalities and formats that the teachers used in the classroom. Co-teaching also supported cultural competence. The varied lived experiences and knowledge of the two teachers inherently increased the perspectives that the students were exposed to in the classroom. Coach Wilson contributed deep knowledge of sports and popular culture including music while Dr. Sumner contributed rich historical knowledge and fluency in and respect for the Spanish language. Both teachers however were united in their desire to impact students' futures and in their awareness of structural inequalities. This combination of similar beliefs and different lived experiences strengthened the instruction in the classroom and highlights the importance of pairing compatible teachers together.

The two teachers' differing styles also provided more ways to engage students. Dr. Sumner spoke slowly and often asked deep questions. Coach Wilson spoke quickly and used his whole body to engage students. Their differing styles gave the students two different points of entry into the classroom and into class discussions. While each teacher on his own could build bridges between students and the curriculum, their differences made those bridges stronger. Finally, co-teaching also supported critical consciousness in the classroom. The two teachers were able to bring their lived experiences and thoughts on power and change into the classroom.

Both of them spoke to students about stereotypes, about the untold story in history, and about individuals' resistance to inequalities. By having two teachers address these issues, the messages that the teachers were communicating were reinforced. The presence of the second teacher also allowed for more personal conversations in the classroom, conversations that sometimes focused on developing students' socio-political consciousness. Co-teaching made CRT stronger.

In many articles on CRT in classrooms, researchers have discussed the lack of socio-political consciousness in the classrooms and a lack of focus on empowerment beyond the classroom (Paris, 2012; Young, 2010). In this classroom however, a focus on socio-political consciousness was clear from the content of course to the discussions and assignments in the class. Similarly, the focus on empowerment was also evident throughout the instruction and content. While co-teaching did not create this focus in the classroom, it enhanced and supported that focus, creating a classroom that was distinct from many others studied in CRT literature. In this classroom co-teaching strengthened CRT.

Implication 2: CRT and special education. The second implication is that CRT has the potential to improve the practice of special education. Multiple researchers have discussed the importance of CRT in special education for meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities and preventing the overidentification of those students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2002; Sciuchetti, 2017). However, the focus in this classroom on empowering students to set and meet their own goals and to create change in the world has the potential to impact all students with disabilities in the classroom, not just those that are culturally and linguistically diverse.

By age 16 at the latest, students with special needs are required to attend their IEP meetings to become a part of their own IEP team (IDEIA, 2004). Students are expected to

become active agents in their own futures, sharing their goals and shaping their educational plans. Yet, special education programs are often criticized for failing to support students' self-determination and their self-agency (Algozzine et al., 2001; Test et al., 2005; Wehmeyer, 1996). In their framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities, Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) identified four key elements. These were knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership. Within each area, the authors identified elements that overlap with empowerment in my model and with CRT more broadly. In knowledge of self, students are expected to learn their own goals. Knowledge of rights focuses both on students' knowledge of their legal rights and their knowledge of how to advocate for change. Assertiveness and persuasion are part of communication and political action and advocating for others is part of leadership.

Each of these is represented in my model and in the findings. Students learn their rights and about how people throughout history have advocated for change. The teachers work on elevating students' voices in a wide variety of different ways and ask students to share their opinions and to persuade others of their opinions. The students in this classroom worked to create change and advocate for others by writing to politicians to get a holiday named after a woman of their choice. The CRT practices in this co-taught classroom align with Test and colleagues' (2005) model of self-advocacy for students with special needs.

While the framing is different than in the sociopolitical consciousness of Ladson-Billings's (2009a) CRT framework, the similarities are significant enough that CRT needs to be thought of more broadly in special education than just as a way to improve the outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. The methods and strategies used in CRT have the potential to also impact the self-advocacy and self-determination of students with

special needs. Using CRT strategies could be one way to answer advocates and researchers call to foster self-advocacy and empowerment in student with special needs.

Implication 3: Detracking, CRT, and coteaching. Detracking or dismantling a school's tracking system is often framed as one solution to the inequities of tracking. The challenge becomes envisioning what classrooms look like once the tracking system is gone. How can teachers make mixed ability classrooms work? While there can be different answers to that question, the combination of CRT and co-teaching in Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom is one possible answer. While Synthesis is powerful for the historically underserved students in the classroom, it is also powerful for the other students as well. Every student in the classroom received individual support from the teachers, feedback, and follow up questions that pushed them deeper. They all had the opportunity to participate in engaging and meaningful activities. Every student was part of a warm and supportive classroom environment. The classroom I studied offers one way to think about the possibilities for and constraints of detracked classrooms.

First, co-teaching was at the heart of Synthesis. The teachers were able to give students individualized supports because there were two teachers and a lower student to teacher ratio. When only one teacher was in the room, students received less individualized support. Researchers studying detracking have emphasized the importance of providing students with individualized supports as a way to ensure students' academic success and to make classrooms work (Bavis, 2017; Burris, 2014). While often this is discussed in detracking literature as extra periods of academic support or tutoring, the extensive supports that Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson were able to give because of the presence of a second teacher is another option.

Second, teacher beliefs underpin the classroom I studied, CRT, and detracking. Researchers studying detracking have found that just changing the number of levels at a school does not change equity (Abu El-Haj & Rubin, 2009; Modica, 2015). Teachers need to believe in the malleability of intelligence and their ability to impact the lives and outcomes of their students (Abu El-Haj & Rubin, 2009). CRT researchers repeatedly describe teacher beliefs as the basis for the model. Teachers need to avoid deficit views of their students and to feel a responsibility to care for their students (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRT however brings in an element often missing in detracking literature. In addition to avoiding deficit views of students, CRT calls for teachers to understand systemic inequalities and their impact on students (Gay, 2018). That knowledge was essential to the program run by Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson. That knowledge could be a way to help teachers in tracking reforms move past deficit views of students and communities. Rather than just wanting their students to do well, Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner strove to understand the individual and systemic challenges that their students were facing and used that knowledge to inform their teaching and supports for students.

Third, engaging and relevant instruction are integral to Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's practice, CRT, and detracking. The strongest examples of detracked classrooms are ones where instruction itself has changed, where students are taught in small groups and whole group instruction is minimized (Boaler & Staples, 2008). These are classrooms where teachers have made the content relevant and engaging for students (Watanabe et al., 2007). These classrooms are similar in many ways to those described in CRT literature (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009) and in CLASS (Pianta et al., 2012). In Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom rather than being offered whole group instruction, a white washed view of history, and a selection of

meaningless activities, their students learned through multiple modalities in small groups, heard challenging and empowering historical narratives, and engaged in meaningful activities.

Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom is one model for how heterogeneous instruction can work. However, this model is inherently limited. I did not have information on the academic achievement of students. While ESOL students, students with special needs, and traditional academic track students were represented in the class, it is unclear whether traditionally high achieving students were also included in the classroom. Therefore, while the class was intentionally diverse in many ways it presents a potentially limited model for a detracked classroom.

Despite this, the teachers' classroom also begins to offer a new way to think of detracking. Rather than just relying on teacher beliefs about intelligence, in Synthesis those beliefs were accompanied by a strong knowledge of systemic injustices and individual student circumstances. Rather than offering business as usual instruction, the teachers focused on delivering relevant content in ways that were accessible to all learners, regardless of levels. Finally, the teachers relied on the presence of a strong partner teacher to make the individualized supports at the heart of their instruction work. They used co-teaching to help meet the needs of all learners in their classroom. The powerful education in the Synthesis classroom was not being offered to just one group of students but to all. The teachers' focus on academic excellence, on building skills and setting expectations high, mattered for all students in their classroom and provides a model for what a detracked, co-taught, culturally relevant classroom could look like.

Recommendations

WHS has an opportunity to build on the strengths of Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom and to use their practices to increase equity at the school. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson also have an opportunity to further strengthen the practices in their classroom. My recommendations fall into the domains of co-teaching and equity for the school and goal setting and role modelling for the teachers.

WHS: Co-teaching. My first recommendation is that WHS build on its co-teaching strengths. In pairing Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner together to co-teach in a subject both enjoyed, the administration showed strong support for co-teaching. Researchers studying co-teaching have found that when co-teachers share a knowledge about and passion for a subject, their partnership is stronger (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Scruggs et al., 2007; Weiss & Lloyd, 2007). Based on Coach Wilson's previous history at the school, where he was asked to co-teach a subject he disliked, this practice of placing teachers in subject areas they care about does not appear uniform at WHS. Therefore, I recommend that WHS build on its strengths and, when possible, take the interests and preferences of the co-teachers into consideration when developing a master schedule. In addition to factoring content interest into the partnerships, the school should look at fit between the teachers. Researchers have found that this alignment is important in co-teaching partnerships (Mastropieri et al., 2005; Pratt, 2014) and both Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson have described their commonalities as important for the strength of their partnership.

Third, the administration has kept these two teachers together for the past three years. Researchers have found that co-teaching relationships grow over time (Pratt, 2014) and by keeping the teachers together, the administration helped create a strong partnership. I recommend

that, when possible, WHS build on this strength by keeping compatible co-teachers together over time. Finally, the school should take advantage of the strong partnership in Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom. The fluidity in roles between the teachers and the collaborative way they run the classroom is relatively rare in co-teaching (Scruggs et al., 2007) and their classroom could be used as a model for newer or less comfortable co-teachers to come and see what the model can look like.

WHS: Equity. As a school, WHS continues to struggle with offering equitable educational opportunities to all students, as seen in the school's achievement, graduation, and discipline gaps. There are multiple ways that the school can build on the success of Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom to improve equity. The first relates to making content accessible. WHS widely uses co-teaching in content area classes. The strength of the co-teaching in Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom comes in part from their focus on running a student-centered classroom. Rather than relying on whole group instruction and lectures, the teachers had students work in small groups and on meaningful activities. In addition, they used a wide variety of modalities and strategies to help students access the curriculum. This coupling of co-teaching with student-focused instruction created a rich classroom experience for students. Rather than just telling teachers to work together, the staff at WHS instead can support co-teaching teams with developing student centered classrooms. By doing that, the school can leverage the potential of co-teaching and build on the strength of Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's practice.

My second recommendation relates to student supports. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson supported their students emotionally, socially, and behaviorally, as well as academically. The school continues to struggle with disparities in discipline. The practices of these two teachers and the constant support they provided to students presents an alternative to the traditional structure

of classroom discipline. Again, by leveraging the expertise and practices of these teachers, and other strong teachers in the building, the school has an opportunity to reframe discipline and student supports.

My final recommendation for the school draws from enhancing students' opportunities. Currently, Black and Latinx students at WHS are under represented in DE and AP courses. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson developed a unique approach to addressing this issue. By actively recruiting students into these courses, by hosting special seminars on the courses, and by encouraging students to enroll in classes as a cohort, they began to change the status quo. The school has an opportunity to build on and generalize these strong practices.

When Yonezawa and colleagues (2002) studied theoretically open enrollment high schools they found that informal barriers kept the status quo of enrollment in place. Historically underrepresented students weren't given the same access to information about courses or the same encouragement to enroll and were even, at times, actively discouraged from enrolling. This maintained the status quo. In Pittsburgh however school officials worked to actively recruit Black students into advanced courses and saw a tripling in enrollment (Godley et al., 2015). Similarly, when guidance counselors at another school actively worked to recruit underrepresented students into advanced courses, the enrollment gap shrunk (Davis et al., 2013). Recruiting students into high-level courses works, and the school has a model of how to do it already in Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner's classroom. By building on the model of what the teachers have already created in each of these areas, WHS can begin to address systemic problems and to create equity for all students. In addition to these recommendations for the school, I also have two sets of recommendations for the teachers to build on their strengths.

Teachers: Role models and empowerment. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson have created a strong and powerful classroom experience for students. Based on the model however, they could make the experience even more powerful by emphasizing role models and including goal setting. Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson were role models for their students and also offered students historical role models such as Ida B. Wells and Booker T. Washington. While I observed that the teachers were role models for their students, neither discussed their role as a role model in their interviews or classroom discussions. The teachers discussed mentoring but not the extent to which their actions, interactions, and stories in the classroom provided the students with models of how to be in relationship with others and in the world. By more explicitly sharing their own experiences with creating change, and with setting and achieving goals, the teachers could become even stronger role models of empowerment for their students. Similarly, while Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner are already providing their students with historical role models, thinking of the figures they present in that light and working to find even more figures to include as cultural heroes could strengthen that practice. Both teachers and historical figures are role models that students draw on in learning how and who to be in the world (Milner, 2011; Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995; Yancey et al., 2002). Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson are already presenting students with role models. My recommendation is simply that they strengthen this practice.

Both teachers were also already working to support student empowerment in the classroom. The teachers spoke about the importance of students being able to set and achieve ambitious goals in their lives. While both teachers frequently spoke about the importance of setting goals with their students, goal setting was rarely included in activities and class. CRT researchers recommend explicitly setting goals with students (Hammond, 2015) and possibly

even posting goals for students (Santamaria, 2009). Given their broader goals of helping students set and achieve ambitious personal goals, building more goal setting into instruction could be a powerful way to help students reach those bigger and more ambitious goals later on. Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner have already crated a strong, empowering classroom for students. By making these few small tweaks, they could make the classroom experience even stronger for students.

Conclusion

Limitations. The model, teacher strengths, and recommendations presented above rest on my observations, interviews, and analysis. While I strove the increase the credibility and validity of each, this study has several weaknesses that impact the model, my findings, and the discussion. The first set of weaknesses are methodological and were weaknesses that I attempted to address during the study. The second set points to the need for future research and highlights questions that I was not able to answer during the study due to the data that I did, and did not, collect.

The first set of weaknesses concern my role as the sole researcher and the time available for the study. As a sole researcher, my biases and beliefs shaped what I found and the model that I made. I worked to address this concern by keeping a detailed journal, sharing preliminary findings with critical friends, checking findings against the literature, and reflecting on my biases. However, my lens as a former special education teacher and my beliefs in the importance of equity and student empowerment continue to be a potential concern for the study. Second, while I worked to collect data until saturation, the short time frame for data collection means that there are nuances that I likely missed in my observations and findings. I worked to address this

by gathering data from multiple sources and in multiple ways, but still there are nuances of the teachers' practices that are missing from the findings and the model that I created.

The second set of weaknesses highlights questions that I was not able to fully answer in this study. While I observed Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner teaching for over forty hours, I was not able to see many of the projects that they described nor to watch the progression of students over the course of the year. Therefore, while I was able to observe aspects of student empowerment in the classroom and to hear from teachers about long term impacts, I did not get the longitudinal perspectives on projects and student growth. Second, while I included comments from students in the classroom, I did not interview current or past students nor collect student outcome data and achievement information. As with the first limitation, this impacts my understanding and discussion of the longitudinal impact of the program. In my model, I discuss how the teachers worked to build students' skills for empowerment and how students responded in class. By not seeing students over the course of the year and by not talking with them, I was unable to observe changes in students over long periods of time, unable to learn their perspectives on empowerment and their instruction, and unable the gauge the impact of instruction on student achievement. This set of weaknesses points to the need for future research.

Future research. This study began to explore important questions of the relationship between CRT and co-teaching and the ways in which the two can combine to support student empowerment. However, the study focused on only one set of teachers and did not have a longitudinal view or students' perspectives. When I asked Dr. Sumner if the program and model were unique, he replied, "I really, really hope not" (Int, 2/13). He said that he and Coach Wilson enjoy teaching the program and students as well seem to like it and benefit from it and he hopes "that that's a common experience in the American education system" (Int, 2/13).

We need more research to learn how unique classrooms like that of Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner really are. Do other pairs of co-teachers also work towards student empowerment? If so, how? Does their classroom share elements with this one or is the model I observed unique only to this classroom? Furthermore, what do students think of the model when they are in the class and, equally importantly, after they have left the program. Do they feel empowered or see an impact from the class? Many of the students in the Synthesis class are ones who have historically been denied a powerful education at their high school. Co-teaching is a model that is growing in popularity but does not have a strong evidentiary base. Can co-teaching help students in other classrooms gain a more powerful education? We need research to answer these pivotal questions.

Final thoughts. During my years teaching special education, I became an expert at knowing my students and helping them access the content, but I never became an expert at empowering my students. My goal was for them to become confident students capable of setting and achieving their own goals and making a change in the world, but I never found a strong model for how to do that. In Dr. Sumner and Coach Wilson's classroom, I found one model of that, a model of student empowerment created by two teachers for the students in their individual classroom. This is a qualitative case study, a study of only one classroom and one pair of co-teachers. Yet, in these teachers' actions, I found ideas, strategies, and a framework that I believe might have helped me find the missing pieces in my own classroom. Just as Coach Wilson and Dr. Sumner were models of empowerment in their classroom for their students, their instruction also became a model for me of how to support diverse students in becoming empowered. Hopefully, aspects of what they did in their classroom will also resonate with other teachers grappling with the same challenges I faced.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I situated the model of Culturally Relevant Teaching in a co-taught classroom within the literature on CRT and co-teaching. I explored three implications of the model. The first was the potential of co-teaching to enhance CRT. The second was the potential for CRT to enhance special education. The third was the possibility for a co-taught, CRT focused classroom to serve as one model of a detracked classroom. After the implications, I articulated a series of specific recommendations for WHS and for the co-teachers in this study. The recommendations built off of existing strengths within the high school and in the classroom and included pairing compatible teachers as co-teachers and incorporating more goal setting into classes. Finally, the chapter ended with limitations and final thoughts.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Protocols for Coach

Interview 1

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and this research project. This is the first of three interviews we will do over the next few weeks. The goal of the interviews is to learn your perspective on tracking, inclusion, and equity, as well as more about the classes you teach.
- Before we begin, I wanted to let you know that you can end the interview at any point. If any of the questions or discussion makes you feel uncomfortable or you want to stop for any reason, please let me know.
- I will be audio-recording this interview in order to ensure accuracy in my write up of the interview. If you would like me to stop recording at any point or have any concerns about being recorded, please let me know. After transcribing the interview, I will delete the recording.
- This interview will be about 45 minutes long. If you need me to stop or pause it at any point before then, just let me know.
- Background
    - What made you decide to become a teacher?
    - Tell me about your teaching career.
        - What and where have you taught?
        - How long have you taught here?
        - How did you come to teach here?
        - What subjects have you taught here?
        - What levels?
        - Where else have you taught?
        - How were those schools different from this one?
        - How were they similar?
    - Tell me about your background and education
        - Where did you grow up?
        - How long have you been in this area?
        - Can you tell me about your educational background?
        - Describe a typical day for you
- Current teaching
    - Can you tell me a bit about special education at the high school?
        - What are the different course levels?
        - How flexible are students' schedules?
        - What are the service models?
        - How common are paraprofessionals and how are they typically used?
    - Tell me about your caseload
        - How large is it?
        - How many of the students in the co-taught room with IEPs are on your caseload?

        - How many are not?
        - What are the range of disabilities of students on it and the range of hours of service?
        - What about in the co-taught class? What is the range of disabilities and hours of service in there?
    - What do you teach besides the co-taught class?
    - I would love to hear more about your co-teaching arrangement
        - Besides this class, what experiences have you had with co-teaching?
            - What similarities and differences have you noticed?
    - I also want to hear your thoughts on the co-taught class.
        - Describe your approach to building classroom community?
            - How many students in the class have known behavioral challenges? How do you approach those challenges?
            - What is your approach to building student motivation and engagement?
            - What is your approach if students are not engaged in the task you have set out?
            - Attendance
                - How many students are enrolled in each class?
                - How is their attendance?
                - What is your approach to addressing attendance?

Interview 2

- Equity
    - You've spoken in class about stereotypes and about elevating students' voices and stereotypes so I wanted to start there. First, what does educational equity mean to you?
      What do you see as the responsibility and role of the school in helping achieve equity? Of teachers?
    - What are some strengths that you see at this school? Class?
        - If you had ultimate control over the school, what changes would you make to improve equity? (if teacher identified equity as a concern)
    - What are some challenges you see?
    - You talked in class about stereotypes that students have about kids in DE classes. What stereotypes do you think your students in the Synthesis classes in general face? Disabilities?
    - How do you work to challenge negative stereotypes about __ in class??
    - How would you define tracking?
    - What are some strengths you see of tracked systems? Weaknesses?
    - In your ideal world, what would a typical high school classroom look like?
- Success
    - What do you see as the most important factors in student achievement?
    - You spoke last time about your goal for the class being for students to see what they are capable of. Can you tell me more about that?
        - In your co-taught class, what does student success look like?
    - How do you help students be successful?

        - What are your goals for individual students?
        - How do you know when students have reached those goals?
        - In general, how important is student motivation to their success?
        - How do you define/identify motivation?
    - Special education
        - What are some strengths of the school in special education? Challenges?
        - In the classroom, are there any strategies that you use that you feel are disability specific?
            - How do one on ones play into that vision? What do you think of as their roles?
        - In your co-taught class, how socially included do you feel students are?
        - Besides the academic content, what are the skills that you want students to take away from the class?
            - How do you build those skills?
        - In the district as a whole, how does race and special education interact?
        - What about SES and special education?
        - For each of those, how is it similar or different at the high school?
            - In special education, in looking at the district numbers it appears that a disproportionate number of White students in the district are labelled Autistic and a disproportionate number of Black students are labelled Emotionally Disturbed—what are you thoughts on this?
    - Co-teaching
        - I've noticed that the two of you check in frequently during the day. Could you tell me more about how the two of you plan together, both during formal planning periods and during these more informal times?
        - What training did you receive about co-teaching either at the district level or in grad school?
        - You guys often trade off who is running a lesson. How does that work?
        - Last time, you mentioned that you majored in sociology at [school]. Has that knowledge helped you in these classes?
        - You spoke last time about how the course evolves over time based on the needs of students. How do you do that?
        - How do you get to know the students in your classroom?
        - Where did the class themes, class assignments, and videos come from?
        - What is your approach if students are not engaged in the task you have set out?
        - How do you bring students culture into the classroom? How do students' cultures and the school cultures of the school impact the classroom?
    - What does tracking currently look like at your school?
- Role
    - How do you perceive your role at the school/ in the department/ in the co-taught classroom?
    - What capacity do teachers at your department/school/district have to create change?
    - What capacity to create change do you have at the school site?
    - How would you change that if you could?
- Making plans

- Your district is looking at revising the tracking structure for next year. What would you like to see happen?
- What reforms would you like to see?
- What is needed to make a tracking (or equity) reform work?
- Your classroom model is unique. How successful has it been for students?
- What would it take for the instruction in your classroom to become more common in other classrooms?
    - What types of supports do teachers need?
    - Students?
    - Parents?
    - What is missing?

Interview 3

- Excellence and Academics:
    - Academic excellence: How do you build academic excellence in the classroom?
    - In terms of the history content, what are some of the biggest things that you want students to walk away from class knowing? What about from English?
    - You spoke in class a few days ago about respect for students. What does that mean to you?
    - How much responsibility do you feel that you have for student success?
    - In general, how important is student motivation to their success?
    - How do you define/identify motivation?
    - Your classroom model is unique. How successful has it been for students?
    - What would it take for the instruction in your classroom to become more common in other classrooms?
    - In your ideal world, what would a typical high school classroom look like?
    - How much capacity do you feel you have to create change at the school if you wanted to?
    - What do you see as your role in the co-taught classroom? The department? School?
- Race and Equity:
    - You mentioned that you were told that there was a need for Black male special education teachers. Why do you think that is?
    - To what extent do you think the stories of historically marginalized peoples need to be brought in the classroom?
    - We talked last time about the challenges you have seen with making sure that all students at the school have a plan for success and access to the same opportunities. How do you see race as impacting students' opportunities at the school? Class? What other factors have you seen impacting students' opportunities?
        - What do you see at the relationship between race and special education at the school?
        - In your experience at the high school, what are some racial equity challenges that you see?
        - If you had ultimate control over the school, what changes would you make to improve equity? (if teacher identified equity as a concern)

- Special Education:
  - How does your coaching influence your teaching? Your interactions with students?
  - You've talked about the lack of mentorship that you received when you were starting out. Could you talk more about that?
  - How do you define inclusion?
    - What would you think of as a fully included classroom?
    - To you, what are the primary goals of inclusion?
  - In your co-taught class, how socially included do you feel students are?
    - What is going well with that?
    - What challenges do you still see?
    - How do you help students gain social status?
  - What do you see as the role of one on ones in the classroom?
    - I've noticed that the number of aides in the A block class seems to change a lot. Why is that?
  - How often do you get PD or meeting time with other special education teachers at the school?

Interview Protocol for Dr. Sumner

Interview 1

- Background
  - What made you decide to become a teacher?
  - What made you come back to the classroom after leaving it for school?
  - Tell me about your teaching career.
    - What and where have you taught?
    - How long have you taught here?
    - How did you come to teach here?
    - What subjects have you taught here?
    - What levels?
    - Where else have you taught?
    - How were those schools different from this one?
    - How were they similar?
  - Tell me about your background and education
    - Where did you grow up?
    - How long have you been in this area?
    - Can you tell me about your educational background?
    - Describe a typical day for you
- Current teaching
  - Tell me about the classes that you teach, starting with…
    - Tell me about the students in the co-taught class
      - What are the grades of students in the classroom?
      - How are students placed into the course?
      - What percentage have special needs?
      - What is the range of special needs within the room?

                - Do any of those students have one on one support?
                - What percentage speak a language other than English at home?
                - How many currently receive ESOL services at school and what levels are they at?
                - How do these students typically do on state tests?
                - Where would this course fall within the school's tracking system?
            - I would love to hear about the adults in the combined class.
                - Who are the adults in the room?
                - What are their roles?
                - How does the process of assigning their duties and responsibilities, or supervising them if needed, unfold?
            - Tell me about the curriculum of the co-taught class
                - What are your broad instructional goals?
                - Whose voices are elevated?
                - How do you choose the assignments and activities for the course?
            - How did this curriculum evolve?
                - Where did the class themes, class assignments, and videos come from?
            - Describe your approach to building classroom community?
                - How many students in the class have known behavioral challenges? How do you approach those challenges?
                - What is your approach to building student motivation and engagement?
                - What is your approach is students are not engaged in the task you have set out?
                - Attendance
                    - How many students are enrolled in each class?
                    - How is their attendance?
                    - What is your approach to addressing attendance?
        - Now, I would love to hear about the ESOL class
            - How many students are enrolled in the class?
            - What their ESOL levels and time in the US?
            - How many speak Spanish as opposed to other languages?
            - Of ESOL students in local schools, about what percentage are undocumented?
            - Attendance: Challenges, approach
            - What is your goal in the class?
        - I know that you have other roles at the school and in the community other than just as a classroom teacher. Could you speak about those?
- About co-teaching
    - How did the arrangement begin?
    - How has it evolved over time?
    - How do you divide up responsibilities?
    - How does course planning work?
    - How much overlap is there in your behavior management styles? In your vision of

success for students?
    - What are some factors that you feel have contributed to the success of your co-teaching model?
- Definition of success
    - In your co-taught class, what does student success look like?
    - What are your goals for individual students?
    - How do you know when students have reached those goals?
    - In general, how important is student motivation to their success?
        - How do you define/identify motivation?
- What does tracking currently look like at your school?
    - How are students sorted into classes?
    - How many levels of courses are offered?
    - How do the different levels of courses vary?
    - How many students change course levels during the school year?
    - How many students change levels between school years?
    - Are students moving from a higher-track to a lower-track or from a lower- to a higher-track?
    - How do you see race shaping the tracking system (student opportunities) at the school?
- For Black and Latinx students?
    - What does special education currently look like?
    - What are some strengths of your department/school/district in terms of equity?

Interview 2

- Co-teaching
    - How did the arrangement begin? (volunteerism)
    - How has it evolved over time?
    - How do you divide up responsibilities?
    - How does course planning work?
        - I've noticed that the two of you check in frequently during the day. Could you tell me more about how the two of you plan together, both during formal planning periods and during these more informal times?
    - How much overlap is there in your vision of success for students? (questions about compatibility)
    - Differences?
    - What are some factors that you feel have contributed to the success of your co-teaching model?
    - What have been some challenges?
    - What training did you receive about co-teaching either at the district level or in grad school?
- Tracking
    - How would you define tracking?
    - What are some strengths you see of tracked systems? Weaknesses?
    - You mentioned at the end of the last interview that your friends from your

community were in different tracks than you. Can you tell me more about that?
    - Why?
    - We spoke last time about how the tracking structure at the school. I wanted to hear your thoughts on tracking at the school currently
        - How easy is it for students to move up course levels, like to DE?
        - How much effort is there to recruit students into higher level courses or support them?
        - When students change levels, is it typically up or down?
        - How common is that?
        - How does race impact the system at the school?

- Equity
    - What does educational equity mean to you?
    - How do you define intelligence?
    - What is the role of individual teachers in ensuring students' success? Of the school system?
    - What stereotypes do your students face? How do you work to challenge negative stereotypes about __ in class??
    - Thank you for sending the district's equity report.
        - How would you describe the status quo right now in the district for students with special needs?
        - For English learners?
        - For Black and Latinx students?
    - What are some strengths of your department/school/district in terms of equity? Special education?
    - What are some weaknesses of your department/school/district in terms of equity? Special education?
    - How diverse currently are the high-level courses?
    - How welcoming is the school/department/curriculum to students of different cultures and backgrounds?
        - What could be done to make the curriculum more accommodating?
        - What are some strengths of the curriculum in terms of accommodating diversity?
    - In looking at the school's numbers, Latino students seem to drop out at much higher rates than other groups of students. What do you think is behind that?
        - What do you think can be done to address the problem?
    - How did SES shaped the system?
    - How were students with special needs served at the school? Differentiate between mild and more significant disabilities—
    - add question about college going, about college ambition, peer dynamic question and peer effects
    - Who gains college access? What are some strengths and weaknesses that you see?

Interview 3

- Classroom
    - What is the honors work that some students are receiving?

    - How did that come about?
- Inclusion
    - What does inclusion mean to you?
    - What would you think of as a fully included classroom?
    - In your ideal world, what would a typical high school classroom look like?
    - In your ideal world, would there by tracking at high schools? Why or why not?
    - How heterogeneous would it be?
    - Who would be in the school?
    - What are your beliefs about student intelligence?
        - In your opinion, how do students' backgrounds and families determine their intelligence?
    - About student motivation?
- Creating change
    - Tell me more about the creation process for the course
    - Do you see your and Coach's classes as unique? If so, in what ways do you see it being unique?
    - You had described the goals of the class as graduation and civic engagement. Did I miss anything? Could you tell me a bit more about those goals?
    - I wanted to circle back to something we talked about in the first interview. For you, what does success look like in the class?
    - What are some of the metrics that you personally use to measure success in the Synthesis class?
    - How successful do you feel the course has been for students?
    - How well aligned are the norms and values of the classroom with the rest of the school?
    - How does the broader school culture impact the classroom?
    - What would it take for the instruction in your classroom to become more common in other classrooms?
        - What types of supports do teachers need?
        - Students?
        - Parents?
        - What is missing?
    - More broadly, what is needed to make an equity reform work at a school?
    - Where do you think equity reforms should come from?
    - What equity focused reforms would you like? School, district, state…
    - What can schools do to better support students who are facing challenges at home and in the community?
    - How do you perceive your role at the school/ in the department/ in the co-taught classroom?
    - What capacity do teachers at your department/school/district have to create change?
    - What capacity to create change do you have at the school site?
    - How would you change that if you could?
    - What was your role in the equity report?
- Theories
    - In your own work, you've drawn on Paul Freire. How does his writing influence

the work that you are doing in the class?
    - What about Jane Addams?
    - How does your work connect to culturally relevant teaching?
- Planning
    - At this point, how often do you and Coach formally plan together for an extended period of time?
    - About how often do you guys check in about lessons and ideas?
    - How much do you communicate after school?
- Roles
    - I know you are also the school's ESOL coordinator. Can you tell me a bit about what that entails?
    - What other roles do you have at the school site?
    - What about in the community?
- Your district is looking at revising the tracking structure for next year. What would you like to see happen?

Appendix B

Observation Protocol

Describe the classroom

- Physical space
- Resources
- Class configuration, ratio of adults/children, demographics, schedule

Describe the classroom community

- How are students greeted on entry to class?
- How are students being called on/contributing to discussion?
- What routines or rituals are evident?
- How are student differences affirmed/ignored?
- How are strengths/successes celebrated or ignored?
- What evidence is there of classroom community?
- What is the role of the teacher?

Describe the instructional activities

- What are the activities?
- How are the activities organized? What themes are evident?
- How is assessment used?
- What types of student groupings are used? How do they change over the course of the class?
- What types of teacher-student interactions are observed? Of student-student interactions?
- What evidence is there of rigor? Of student support?

What evidence is there of differentiation?

- Of content (reading levels of materials, interest, etc)
- Of process (tiering, homework, choices, scaffolding)
- Of products (multiple modes of expression, variety of assessment tasks)