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Chicago State University

From the Dean's Desk:

Chicago State University College of Education is one of the oldest professional schools in Illinois and has housed one of the oldest Illinois education journals, the *Illinois Schools Journal* (ISJ). *ISJ* is a peer-reviewed journal in the field of education which we hope will be attractive to our colleagues worldwide who care about issues in P-16 settings. We hope that ISJ will be a venue for research that addresses issues that plague our educational system. ISJ provides a useful forum where education professionals from around the world can share educational research, ideas and developments.

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ISJ continues to publish the latest research, policy and topics in education from an urban perspective. We publish a range of topics from a variety of authors nationally and internationally. ISJ focuses on urban issues, from across the globe.

We thank you for your continuous support of the journal and hope to continue to provide you with high quality articles.

Sincerely,

Satasha Green, Ph.D

A Note from the Editor:

Welcome to the Spring 2015 issue of *Illinois Schools Journal*, our 95th issue. As with all of our issues, this issue has three very interesting articles on a wide variety of topics. First is a study on antecedent-based intervention. Second is a study on providing supportive cultural environments, and third is a study on the use of rap music and elementary-level literacy.   These diverse topics fulfill one of the missions of this journal: To provide research, theory, and pedagogy to promote and enhance diversity in education. Over the past 95 years, we have published a wide variety of articles from the trials and rewards of teaching in an urban environment to literacy and special education topics. With all of our articles, they have been rigorously reviewed, so we publish the best that is submitted to us.

I also want to say that this issue will be my last one as Editor in Chief. In 2010, I was given the responsibility of being editor of this journal. In that time, I've had the support of Chicago State University, Dean Green and my colleagues in the College of Education, and the panel of peer reviewers, who have expertly assessed and evaluated each submission, so that we could publish the best manuscripts. To all of these entities, I truly thank you and appreciate all you have done for me and for *ISJ*.

If you or your colleagues would like to submit a manuscript, feel free to do so to bseo@csu.edu. I will gladly forward them to the new editor. We ask that you adhere to the guidelines that are explained on page 75.

Once again, thank you for your support during my tenure at *Illinois Schools Journal*.

Byung-In Seo, Editor in Chief

An Antecedent-Based Intervention Package for the Reduction of On-Task Behaviors of Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

Antecedent interventions have been used widely to improve various social behaviors of students with and without disabilities in school settings. In this study, we used a single-case, multielement research design combined with an extended reversal design to investigate the effects of an antecedent-based intervention package on the on-task behaviors of 3 elementary-aged students with mild to moderate disabilities. Results indicated that the intervention package designed based on the antecedent analysis findings, paired with a teacher-cued self-monitoring program, increased all participants' on-task behaviors during literacy instruction. Limitations and implications for future research are discussed.

Key Words: Antecedent analysis, antecedent intervention, self-monitoring, mild to moderate disabilities

Introduction

Classroom problem behaviors such as noncompliance, off-task behavior, or disruption can interfere with the learning of students with such behaviors and their peers (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Van, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2014; .Vo, Sutherland, & Conroy, 2012). Additionally, students' classroom problem behaviors often demand significant amount of teacher time and attention, and can

reduce the teacher's ability to provide effective instruction to all students (Loftin, Odom, & Lantz, 2008; Sprague, Sugai, Horner, & Walker, 1999). Identifying and adopting effective classroom behavioral interventions that can successfully reduce students' problem behaviors and improve their socially appropriate skills while allowing the teacher to focus on instruction is an important task for teachers.

One effective method of addressing challenging behavior is through the use of antecedent analysis and intervention. Antecedent analysis is a procedure used to manipulate antecedent environmental stimuli under which an individual exhibits challenging behavior (Meyer, 1999). When data patterns emerge that indicate a correlation between antecedent stimuli and challenging behavior, these stimuli can be modified as the focus of antecedent-based interventions to address the challenging behavior. Antecedent environmental events being modified or addressed may involve instructional factors (e.g., task preference, task presentation, choices, promoting, cue cards) or environmental factors (e.g., seating arrangement, teacher proximity, noise level) (Conroy & Stichter, 2003). According to Kern and Clemens (2007), antecedent-based interventions have advantages over consequence-based approaches in that they can (a) prevent challenging behavior from occurring, (b) result in quick reduction in problem behaviors, (c) correct the environmental conditions that contribute to the problem behavior occurrence, and (d) facilitate positive instructional environments and promote socially appropriate behavior.

Antecedent-based interventions have produced increases in on-task behavior and decreases in off-task or disruptive behaviors of students with and without disabilities (e.g., Park & Scott, 2009; Schilling & Schwartz, 2004; Schilling, Washington, Billingsley, & Deitz, 2003; Stichter, Randolph, Kay, & Gage, 2009). For example, Schilling and Schwartz (2004) used a single-case reversal design to examine the effects of modifying seating arrangement on the in-seat behavior and engagement of four male children with an autism spectrum disorder who had difficulty staying seated. During baseline, each student was observed using their typical seating (i.e., chair, bench, carpet square), whereas large therapy balls were used as seating during the intervention condition. Results indicated a marked increase in in-seat behavior and engagement for all participants when seated on therapy balls. In another study, Park and Scott (2009) used a single-case reversal design to examine the effects of antecedent-based strategies, including high-interest materials and/or adult proximity, on the disruptive behavior or on-task behavior of three preschool students in a Head Start program. The authors used descriptive functional assessment and structural analysis procedures to identify the antecedent

conditions that were found to be least predictive of the targeted problem behaviors. The results showed that all three participants improved their targeted behavior during the antecedent-based intervention implementation. Teachers of the participants also reported that the assessment and interventions were feasible and practical in the classrooms.

Although antecedent interventions are useful for creating opportunities for students to receive benefits of instruction, they typically rely on an adult's modifications of the instruction or environment and may not necessarily teach students important skills to be independent learners or to generalize skills across situations. Self-management is one such intervention with numerous advantages for both the individual who uses the self-management skills and the person who teach such skills, including improved behavior changes, enhanced self-independence, better generalization effects, and immediate or distance positive collateral effects (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007; Daly & Ranalli, 2003; Rhode, Morgan, & Young, 1983). Self-management refers to "the personal application of behavior change tactics that produces a desired change in behavior" (Cooper et al., p. 578); it has received well-documented effectiveness with a strong evidence base in decreasing classroom problem behaviors and increasing appropriate social or academic behaviors of students with and without disabilities in school settings (see Briesch & Chafouleas, 2009; Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008; Fantuzzo & Polite, 1990; Lee, Simpson, & Shogren, 2007; McDougall, 1998; Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005; Sheffield & Waller, 2010 for reviews). Although self-management consists of several variations (e.g., goal setting, self-reinforcement, self-evaluation, self-instruction), self-monitoring has been identified as the most commonly used strategy (Briesch & Chafouleas, 2009; McDougall, 1998; Özkan & Sönmez, 2011).Self-monitoring is a procedure that involves a person systematically observing own behavior and recording the occurrence or nonoccurrence of that behavior (Cooper et al., 2007);it has been found to be an effective procedure for addressing a wide range of classroom behaviors such as on-task behavior (Amato-Zech, Hoff, & Doepke, 2006; Ganz & Sigafoos, 2005; Levendoski & Cartledge, 2000; Mathes & Bender, 1997; Wolfe, Heron, & Goddard, 2000), task engagement (Dunlap et al., 1995), academic performance or productivity (Harris, Friedlander, Sadler, Frizzelle, & Graham, 2005; Rock, 2005), positive social interactions (Gumpel & David, 2000; Hughes et al., 2002), disruptive behavior (Dunlap et al., 1995; Hoff & DuPaul, 1998; Koegel, Koegel, Hurley, & Frea, 1992),and stereotypic behavior (Koegel & Koegel, 1990).There are specific benefits of self-monitoring in that it is cost effective, easy to teach and implement, applicable to

address a wide array of behaviors, provides clear visual feedback to students and teachers, frees teachers to focus on teaching, prompts students to be more aware of their own behavior, and can simultaneously accomplish the goal of teaching other important prerequisite skills such as counting, categorizing, interpreting, and reading (Daly & Ranalli, 2003; Vanderbilt, 2005).

Crum (2004) examined the effects of self-monitoring on the on-task behavior of an elementary school student with a behavioral disorder. During baseline, data were collected on the on-task behavior of the student. During intervention, the student was instructed to collect data on his on-task behavior. At the beginning of the study, his teacher provided verbal prompts to him to record his behavior. By the end of the study, the student was independently self-recording. Results indicated that the student's on-task behavior increased from 17.3% during baseline to 66.4% during intervention. In another study related to on-task behavior, Agran et al. (2005) determined the effects of a self-monitoring strategy on the following-direction skills of six middle school students with moderate to severe disabilities in a general education setting. Students were given instruction on how to respond to a given direction, complete the required task, and monitor their performance. Results showed that on average, students completed 70% of the steps correctly during intervention, compared to 15% during the baseline condition. In addition, maintenance of the targeted skills remained high upon termination of the intervention.

Despite existing research supporting the effects of antecedent-based strategies and self-monitoring interventions, current research is limited in that few studies included younger students with disabilities, and more studies are needed to involve teachers in the design and implementation of interventions based on an experimental analysis. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to determine the effects of an antecedent-based intervention package with self-monitoring as a component on the on-task behaviors of three, first- or second-grade students with mild to moderate disabilities. An analysis of antecedent variables was conducted with the participants during literacy instruction. Findings were then used to develop the antecedent-based intervention package that included a self-monitoring procedure.

Methodology

Participants

Participants included three students with mild to moderate disabilities whose behaviors impeded their ability to access the general academic curriculum. All three students received special education services in a resource setting in accordance to their individualized education programs (IEPs) 5 days a week for 2.5 hours daily.

Dee was a 6-year-old African American female in the first grade. Based on her most recent psychological evaluation using the *Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence – Third edition* (WPPSI-III; Wechsler, 1967/2002), her cognitive ability was in the low average range with a full scale IQ of 87. She had a medical diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and was served under the category of Other Health Impairment (OHI). Observations across various settings indicated that Dee often failed to follow instructions or to complete a given task independently because of her frequent behavior occurrences of touching objects not of hers or touching peers near her and playing with non-instructional materials on the table.

Jay was a 6-year-old African-American male in the first grade. Based on the WPPSI-III evaluation results, he had a full scale IQ of 58 and had a classification of developmental delay. A social history report reflected extended hospitalizations with a seizure disorder diagnosis. Classroom observations indicated that Jay had a difficulty completing work without constant verbal redirections from the teacher. He would talk aloud continuously while attempting to complete a task, which distracted other students from completing their work.

Rick was an 8-year-old African-American male in the second grade with an intellectual disability. He received a full scale IQ of 61 based on the most recent psychological evaluation using the *Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children – Fourth edition* (*WISC-IV*; Wechsler, 2003). Adaptive behavior reports from both his mother and general education teacher placed him in the "very delayed range." Using the *Behavior Assessment System for Children* (*BASC*; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1992), both his mother and teacher rated him to be clinically significant in the areas of *Attention Problems* and *Functional Communication*. Rick had a difficulty focusing on tasks, starting or completing an assignment, and processing receptive language. He often drummed on objects that were in his proximity, which created disruption to the ongoing instruction.

Setting

This study took place in a resource room in an urban elementary school, located in the southeastern region of the United States. The school received Title I funds with 78% of the population

receiving free or reduced lunch. At the time of the study, the school had approximately 1,040 students, pre-K through 5th grade, with the student population consisting of 68.0% as African American, 15.0% Hispanic, 5.2% multiracial, 4.8% Asian, 5.7% Caucasian, and 1.3% Native American. The school was in its fourth year of implementing school wide positive behavior support.

All data collection and intervention sessions occurred during literacy instruction in the K-2 resource room, housing one special education teacher and seven students with OHI, intellectual disability, or visual impairment. All academic instruction in the resource room was in accordance to the state's standard course of study in conjunction with each student's IEP goals. The speech language pathologist co-taught literacy lessons with the special education teacher in the resource room.

Interventionist and Observers

The special education resource teacher served as the interventionist and primary data collector. She had 10 years of experience teaching students with a wide range of disabilities across kindergarten to eighth grade and was pursuing a Master of Education degree in special education at the time of the study. She had been trained to use functional behavioral assessment (FBA) procedures and implement function-based interventions as a part of her graduate coursework and in-service training. The second observer was the speech language pathologist, who was a former classroom teacher with over 30 years of experience in special education.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was the percent of intervals of on-task behaviors each participant exhibited during a 30-minute data collection session. The definition of the on-task behaviors was adapted from that provided by the Behavioral Observation of Students in Schools (BOSS; Shapiro, 1996). Specifically, on-task behaviors were operationally defined as: (a) having eyes on task/assignment or teacher, (b) having a writing device in hand, (c) being in designated geographical location, and (d) seeking help in a proper manner. Self-monitoring own behavior during the intervention phases was also considered as on-task behavior. All sessions were videotaped for data collection. The primary data collector used a 30 second whole interval recording method to document if a participant was on task for the entire 30 second interval for each of the 60 intervals over a 30-minute session. The number of intervals of on-task behaviors during each session was divided by 60

(i.e., total number of intervals) and multiplied by 100 to yield a percentage for graphing and data analysis.

Inter-observer Agreement

The speech language pathologist served as the inter-observer and watched 32% of the videotaped sessions across all experimental conditions simultaneously with the primary data collector. Using the same whole interval recording method, both observers recorded the presence of on-task behaviors for each interval and compared recordings using an interval-by-interval method. Inter-observer agreement was calculated by dividing the number of intervals both observers agreed upon the presence of on-task behavior by the total number of intervals (i.e., 60) and multiplying that figure by 100. The mean inter-observer agreement was 86.9% (range 80-93%) across all participants and all experimental conditions.

Experimental Design and Procedures

Using a single-case reversal design (Kazdin, 1982) after an experimental analysis phase in a multi-element design for each participant, at least three data points were collected to show stability and changes in behavioral occurrence level before introducing the next condition.

Immediately prior to the commencement of the study, the IEP team for each of the participants completed an FBA to determine the behavioral function of the participant's problem behavior as a part of the IEP documentation. For all participants, the FBA process involved interviews with teachers and parents, classroom observations, antecedent-behavior-consequence (ABC) recordings, and review of anecdotal records (e.g., medical history, referral data, academic assessments). During the FBA process, six major areas were identified based on the obtained information, including (a) the student's educational background, (b) concerns related to the behavior including the location, time, duration, and frequency, (c) antecedents and topography of the behaviors, (d) reinforcers/consequences including negative ramifications to peers, (e) perceived function of the behavior, and (f) summary statements or hypotheses about the behavioral function. The FBA results indicated that the hypothesized function for Dee's and Rick's problem behaviors was sensory (i.e., touching objects for Dee and drumming for Rick) whereas Jay's talking out and off-task behavior was maintained by tangibles (e.g., seeking recognition in the form of tokens). Based on the FBA results and the proposed hypotheses, an experimental analysis was then conducted for each participant in which "antecedents and consequences representing those

in the person's natural environment are arranged [through systematic experimental procedures] so that their separate effects on problem behavior can be observed and measured" (Cooper et al., 2007, p. 504).

Experimental analysis. For the experimental analysis, two conditions were arranged in which the special education teacher systematically manipulated the antecedent arrangements in order to test situations in which the on-task behavior was predicted to occur or not occur. The sequence of the conditions in an experimental analysis was randomly assigned every two days to control for sequence effects. Each condition was conducted for the entire 30-minute data collection period.

To address the sensory function of Dee's and Rick's problem behaviors, a rubber sensory therapy ball was given to Dee and Rick. During the "therapy ball" condition, the special education teacher gave the therapy ball to Dee for her to touch and squeeze instead of touching peers or objects, and to Rick for him to squeeze or tap the ball on the chair or table without making a loud noise. During the "no therapy ball" condition, both Dee and Rick did not have access to a therapy ball during the 30-min session. All problem behavior occurrences were verbally redirected during both "therapy ball" and "no therapy ball" conditions.

For Jay, the absence or presence of the tokens as visual reminders was the antecedent arrangement. The "token" condition consisted of placing five plastic coins on Jay's desk at the beginning of every 15-min period (for a total of 10 coins during the 30-min observational session). When Jay exhibited the targeted problem behavior by speaking out inappropriately or talking without permission, the special education teacher removed one coin with no verbal exchange. During the "no token" condition, no coins were provided and all talking out behaviors were verbally redirected.

Baseline. During baseline, the literacy instruction was conducted normally and consisted of vocabulary reviews, reading comprehension activity, and written expression exercise. The classroom management procedures remained as usual and included the use of a four-tiered progress system (i.e., purple, green, yellow, and red zones presented vertically from top down) to provide visual feedback to students regarding their behavior. Specifically, each day students' names were placed in the green color zone of a poster and occurrences of behavioral problems would result in placing the student's name in the yellow zone (warning), then red zone to indicate a need for behavioral improvement. With demonstration of appropriate behaviors, all students were able to rise through the color zones and to land on the

purple color for excellence. Verbal prompts and redirections (e.g., "pay attention," "get back to work") were provided when a classroom problem behavior was observed. Severe violations of classroom rules or procedures such as hitting, screaming or stealing resulted in a 5-minute time out. Self-monitoring skills were not taught to the participants, and no antecedent-based interventions were implemented.

Antecedent-based interventions. The antecedent-based interventions consisted of (a) the antecedent arrangement found to be predictive of on-task behavior as indicated during the experimental analysis phase and (b) a self-monitoring procedure. The antecedent arrangement involved the provision of a therapy ball for Dee and Rick, and the use of tokens as visual reminders for behavior performance for Jay. To increase practicality and feasibility of the antecedent-based intervention package, all students in the class were taught to self-monitor their own behavior and were participating in the class-wide self-monitoring program. Prior to the actual implementation of the class-wide self-monitoring program, training took place in two 10-minute sessions. During the training, the special education teacher provided the rationale for using the self-monitoring procedure, defined on-task behaviors in students' terms, explained the self-monitoring chart and procedures for self-monitoring their own behavior, modeled correct self-monitoring behaviors, and involved students in practicing the skill with performance feedback. The self-monitoring chart for all students listed four (for nonparticipants) or five (for participants) on-task skills to be checked for self-monitoring and were printed on a 5" by 8" paper. The on-task skills were consistent with the on-task definition and included: (a) I am looking in the right area, (b) I have my pencil in my hand, (c) I am sitting in my seat correctly, and (d) I am quiet or have my hand raised. For the three participants, the self-monitoring chart included one additional item of alternative replacement skill. Specifically, the fifth skill was "I have my ball in my hand" for Dee and Rick, and "I still have a chip" for Jay. Each skill listing was accompanied by a pictorial representation of the skill and a box for students to place tallies to indicate occurrence of the skills.

During each 30-minute session, the special education teacher provided a verbal prompt (i.e., "Check yourself") every five minutes and instructed students to place a tally on the self-monitoring chart for each of the listed behaviors that they were performing at the time of the verbal prompt. An electronic timer was used to alert the teacher to provide the verbal prompt every 5 minutes. Each verbal prompt was repeated twice to ensure students' attention to the prompt. No additional reinforcers or prompts were provided. The verbal prompts were used because Jay and Rick had difficulty using the self-

monitoring procedure independently with a timer. As a result, teacher-cued self-monitoring was implemented. During the antecedent-based intervention condition, the four-tiered color progress system remained constant.

Procedural Fidelity

Procedural fidelity was measured using a six-item intervention procedural fidelity checklist developed by the special education teacher. The speech language pathologist reviewed 32% of the videotaped intervention sessions and recorded if the special education teacher followed the intervention procedures accurately. The items included on the checklist were: (a) antecedent arrangement was present (i.e., therapy ball for Dee and Rick, tokens for Jay); (b) students were taught or received a review on how to use self-monitoring charts; (c) students were instructed to place their charts in proximity to their workspace;(d) self-monitoring lasted for 30 min of work time; (e) the teacher delivered verbal prompts every five minutes according to the electronic timer; and (f) verbal cues were repeated twice by saying, "Check yourself."Procedural fidelity was calculated by dividing the number of steps completed correctly by the total number of steps and multiplying that figure by 100. The average percentage of procedural fidelity was 86.7% (range 83-100%) due to inaudible verbal prompts on the videotapes during some sessions.

Social Validity

Social validity data were collected from two general education teachers, the reading specialist, and the speech language pathologist by completing a questionnaire at the end of the study. The questionnaire consisted of seven items that required the teachers and professionals to rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree) regarding the degree to which the antecedent-based intervention package was easy to implement in the classrooms (e.g., "The procedure to implement the interventions was easy to teach," "The verbal cue was easy for all students to understand"), was appropriate and nonintrusive (e.g., "Remembering to set the timer was not obtrusive to instructional time"), and was effective for the participants (e.g., "The interventions decreased the amount of time devoted to redirection due to off-task behaviors"). The general education teachers and the reading specialist watched a videotaped intervention session before completing the questionnaire.

Results

Figure 1 displays each participant's percentages of intervals of on-task behaviors across the experimental conditions. During the

experimental analysis condition, both Dee and Rick consistently showed a higher level of on-task behaviors when given a therapy ball (mean level 80.0% for Dee, 55.7% for Rick) than when not provided with a therapy ball (54.3% for Dee, 32.0% for Rick). For Jay, the experimental analysis result indicated that the use of tokens visible to Jay as visual reminders helped him stay on task. Specifically, Jay's mean level of on-task behavior was 66.7% during the token condition; whereas, his mean on-task level was 31.0% when tokens were not used.

Figure 1
Percentage of intervals of on-task behaviors across conditions for Dee, Jay, and Rick.
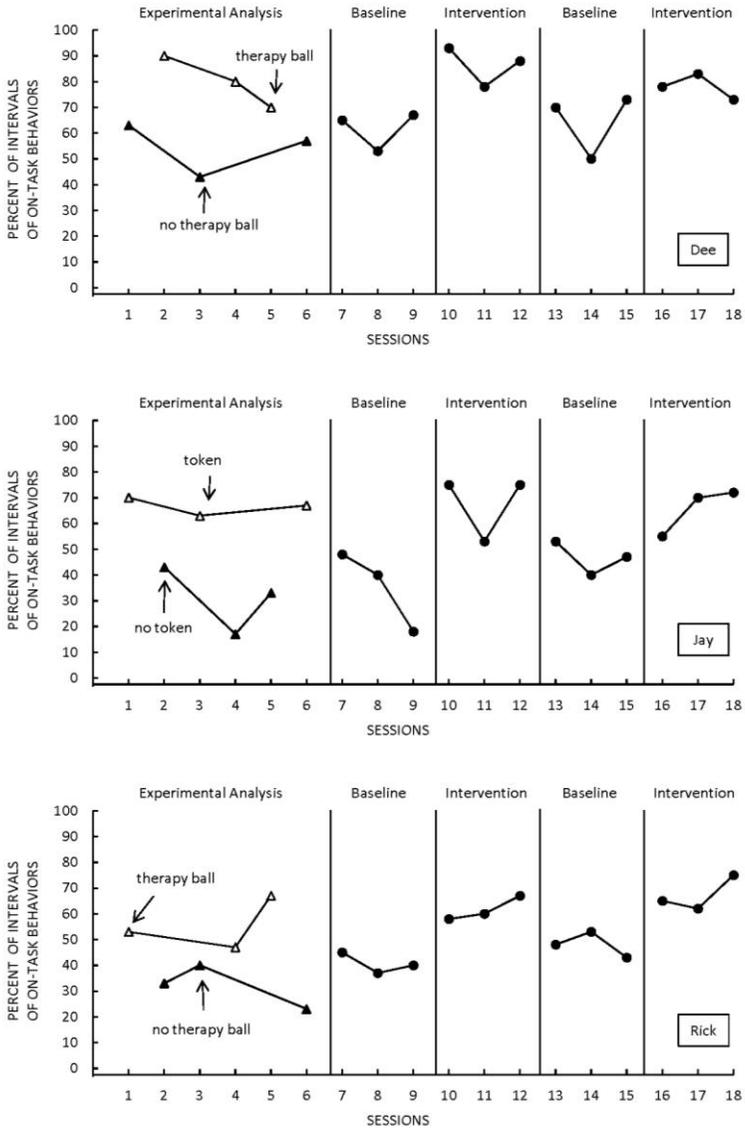
The comparison of the participants' on-task behavior level during baseline and intervention conditions indicated that all participants had a higher level of on-task behavior during the antecedent-based intervention phases, with clear separation in data paths from baseline phases to intervention phases. Dee's mean on-task behavior level was 63.0% (range 50% to 73%) during baseline and 82.2% (range 73% to 93%) during intervention; whereas, Jay exhibited an average level of on-task behavior at 41.0% (range 18% to 53%) during baseline compared to 66.7% (range 53% to 75%) during intervention. Rick displayed a mean level of on-task behavior at 44.3% (range 37% to 53%) during baseline and 64.5% (range 58% to 75%) during intervention.

Social validity results showed that among the general education teachers, the reading specialist, and the speech language pathologist, average score across the seven items was 4.3 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "strongly agree." In general, the teachers and professionals perceived the antecedent-based intervention package to be easy to implement and was effective in decreasing time needed to redirect students and in increasing participants' time on task. However, both general education teachers commented on the verbal cues and the timer being somewhat obtrusive to students.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of an antecedent-based intervention package with self-monitoring as a component on the on-task behaviors of three elementary students with mild to moderate disabilities in primary grades. The antecedents addressed in the intervention package were based on the results of an FBA conducted on each of the participants and were verified through an experimental analysis. For two of the participants, the availability of a therapy ball was predictive of increased on-task behavior. The provision of tokens served as visual prompts for the third participant to display appropriate on-task behavior. The self-monitoring procedures allowed all participants to monitor their demonstration of on-task and replacement behavior. The findings of the study supported previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of using analysis and modifications of antecedent events to reduce off-task behavior and increase on-task or task engagement behaviors (Park & Scott, 2009; Schilling & Schwartz, 2004; Schilling et al., 2003; Stichter et al., 2009) and extended to younger participants with disabilities.

The improvement in the percentages of intervals of on-task behavior for all participants support the antecedent-based strategies as a viable addition to traditional classroom management approaches of teacher redirection and reprimands, which alone often fail to

appropriately address the students' behavioral function and/or problematic antecedent events. The modification of antecedent instructional and environmental stimuli such as visual prompts (e.g., tokens, self-monitoring chart), verbal cues, and access to reinforcers (i.e., tangibles and sensory)served to occasion the on-task behaviors for all participants, as evident in higher levels of on-task behavior during the presence of the targeted antecedent stimuli (experimental analysis) and the intervention condition. The focus on antecedent modifications allowed the special education teacher to not only decrease inappropriate behaviors associated with problematic antecedent events, therefore preventing problem behavior from occurring, but also facilitate positive environmental and/or instructional conditions predictive of appropriate behaviors (Conroy & Stichter, 2003; Kern & Clemens, 2007).

In addition to providing a visual prompt for the on-task and replacement behavior expectations, the integration of the self-monitoring component in the antecedent-based intervention package also offered a means for the participants to develop self-awareness and self-independence. In many cases, reliance on teachers to provide contingency or error correction as a way to teach students appropriate skills and to address students' inappropriate classroom behavior creates a challenge for teachers during ongoing instruction. Self-monitoring allows for regulation of one's own behavior where external controls maybe neither present nor feasible (Cooper et al., 2007; Roscoe, 2014). Additionally, self-monitoring can ultimately serve as the primary discriminative stimulus and/or contingency for appropriate behaviors where other contrived antecedent or consequent events can be faded, or it can eventually become unaided self-monitoring in the absence of adult mediation or prompting (Rafferty, 2010). In the current study, teacher-cued self-monitoring was implemented as a part of the antecedent-based intervention package due to the additional support Jay and Rick required in self-monitoring their own behavior. Interestingly, with the exception of Rick, the addition of the self-monitoring component produced negligible increases or no changes in the participants' on-task behavior levels when compared to the antecedent arrangement alone from the experimental analyses (i.e., "therapy ball" and "token" conditions). Specifically, Rick's mean level of on-task behavior during the antecedent-based intervention condition was 64.5%, compared to 55.7% during the "therapy ball" condition. Dee's mean level of on-task behavior was 82.2% during intervention and 80% during the "therapy ball" condition. The mean level of on-task behavior for Jay remained the same as 66.7% across both "token" and intervention conditions. Two reasons may be possible for the negligible changes. First, the antecedent modifications of the provision of therapy balls and tokens alone based on the FBA results might have

substantiated the improvement of the participants' on-task behavior. Consequently, the additional teacher cues for the participants to check self, the visual prompts from the self-monitoring chart on the behavioral expectations, and the actual recording of their own behaviors might have not resulted in noticeable behavioral increases for the participants in the study. Second, the teacher's verbal cues provided every 5 minutes for students to self-monitor their own behaviors might have become somewhat obtrusive during ongoing literacy instruction where the participants had to frequently transition between instructional tasks and self-monitoring. It may be that adaptations are needed for the self-monitoring procedure to be of a greater value for participants of younger ages with moderate intellectual disability.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations to the current study. First, the intervention was an antecedent-based intervention package consisting of modifications of antecedent events and the teacher-cued self-monitoring procedure. As a result, it is unclear about the respective effects of either component on the participants' on-task behavior. Further, the use of teacher cues in prompting the participants' self-monitoring of their own behavior and the lack of fading in teacher mediation made it difficult to determine the extent to which the participants were able to self-monitor their own behaviors unaided or the degree to which the teacher's verbal cues served as discriminative stimuli for the on-task behavior. Future studies may include component analyses or examine specific intervention components one at a time in a comparative experimental design (e.g., single-case multiple treatments design). Second, there were only three data points collected for each phase. This study was conducted in the last quarter of the school year, and the time constraint limited collection of more data. In order to be considered meeting evidence-based criteria set by the What Works Clearinghouse (Kratochwill et al., 2010), future research should document at least five data points per phase to demonstrate a strong experimental control. Third, generalization effects (e.g., response maintenance, setting generalization) were not documented in this study. In order to demonstrate the degree to which antecedent-based intervention package may produce generalizable outcomes, further research is warranted to include systemic data collection on generalization. Fourth, technology issues hindered more accurate data collection. Specifically, the quality of the audio sounds in the video recordings was inadequate at times that prevented the second observer from clearly determining the occurrence of all intervention steps during the procedural fidelity data collection. A combination of on-site and quality videotaped observations may be useful in future research.

Finally, the special education teacher served as both the interventionist and primary data collector, which may have presented observer bias. However, acceptable levels of inter-observer agreement support the appropriateness of the teacher serving as both interventionist and data collector, and demonstrate ecological and educational validity.

Implications for Practice

The study has two primary implications for practice. First, antecedent-based interventions designed based on antecedent analysis can prepare students to appropriately interact with the classroom environment. Modifying instructional and/or environmental factors associated with students' inappropriate behaviors allows teachers to provide an instructional setting constructive to student learning and to prevent problem behaviors from occurring. Antecedent modifications as proactive interventions are also less intrusive than consequence strategies and can be easily integrated within ongoing instruction. Second, the ecological and educational validity of an intervention can be greatly enhanced with the involvement of classroom teachers in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the interventions. In the current study, the special education teacher served as the interventionist and primary data collector and was involved in identifying the selection of the interventions. When teachers are involved in FBAs, antecedent analysis, intervention identification, and intervention implementation, it is likely that practicality and feasibility of the interventions increases. Furthermore, teachers who are responsible for delivering antecedent prompts identified through FBAs or experimental analysis to their students also can themselves become effective discriminative stimulus for students to engage in appropriate behavior.

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Principal as Diversity Leaders: Providing Supportive Learning Environments

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to promote second language acquisition and cultural awareness by connecting approximately 170 participating students from three large Chicago area high schools. Study participants engaged in motivating field-based learning experiences provided by an inspiring "Language & Culture Exchange" program. The activities provided students the opportunities to communicate meaningfully in a second language, to connect their lives with those of another culture and to build community while utilizing their second language beyond the classroom setting. The over-arching goal of this study is to assist principals and leadership teams in communicating the value of distributive leadership practice to effectively produce fundamental change and unite faculty in embracing the mission of advancing cultural diversity.

Key Words: Diversity leaders, language practice, inclusion

Introduction

Today, America's schools are serving a more culturally diverse student population than ever before including an increase in the number of English-Language Learners (ELLs) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Many of these ELLs are students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) who face great challenges especially at the secondary level because they lack the background knowledge and academic language proficiency to academically succeed. Nationwide, school districts are being impacted by the rapid growth in students of color from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Many of these students live in high poverty environments (Varela, 2010).

Diversity-enhanced schools can present rich opportunities for these students. However, cynics see school's increasing diverse student population as more problematic rather than as an opportunity (Bullock et.al, 2013). Fundamental to school success is the need for schools to examine how they teach these culturally diverse students.   Prominent educators Linda Darling-Hammond, Arthur Weis, and Paul Klein (1995) have stated, "If all students (every level) are to be effectively taught, educators must be prepared to address the substantial diversity in experiences that children bring to school. Their wide range of

languages, cultures, exceptionalities, learning styles, talents, and intelligences in turn requires a wide and varied repertoire of teaching strategies."

A paradigm shift from traditional standard educational models of curriculum is central to appropriately addressing the intricacies for this vast diverse school population. Educators must rethink, renegotiate and reassemble old models if they want positive outcomes. It is crucial for school boards and their administrative staff to employ "real life" practices that embrace systemic change required addressing the needs of culturally diverse students (Fullan, 2009; Giroux & Schmidt, 2004).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Diversity is a multidimensional, broadly inclusive concept that acknowledges and embraces the richness of human differences. Properly understood and used, the term "diversity" is not a code for race, ethnicity, or gender by themselves. It should be for more comprehensive, encompassing relevant attributes and experiences that can influence learning in and out of the classroom. This notion is seen to assist all students to extend effectively to a wider global society (Castro, Field, Baumi & Morowski, 2012).

Arguably, the critical first step to promoting an inclusive and culturally diverse environment is to identify its basic value and advantages for students. A supportive learning environment empowers students to feel a sense of "connection," enhancing a more meaningful learning experience. Learners tend to participate and persist when they "connect" with teachers, students, and program goals. When school staff affirms students' lived experiences, students tend to participate and persist in this "personal connection" (Sheared, 1999, p. 38). Within this supportive environment "students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social groups believe that they are heard, valued and encouraged" (Parks, 1999, p.4).

Since the dawn of American public education, schools have served an increasingly diverse student population (Grubb, 1995). Varied cultural groups have fought with mainstream educators for the curriculum and instruction they believed were the most appropriate for them (Katznelson, 1981; Ravitch, 1974; Spring, 1986). In practice, however, assimilation was the singular most used process to address cultural diversity in American schools. Equality of opportunity through homogenization was the goal (Adams, 1997; Baptiste, 1999). Multicultural differences were thought to be more easily addressed through acculturation or the "melting pot theory" (Foner, 2007).

Historically, administrators have tended to be more supportive of the "melting pot theory" simply because it protected institutional status quo. As a result, cultural differences were not deemed as valued

assets to be preserved, celebrated or woven into the tapestry of the school (Deal & Peterson, 2009). School leadership can better address diversity by promoting and celebrating those unique symbols that symbolize cultural values and beliefs. These symbols can signify that a school embraces inclusion of human differences. Incorporation of these practices must be accompanied by a transformational understanding, or they will not result in lasting change. Principals are key change agents in framing these new meanings.

Principals are the most visible and most influential person in a school setting. As the educational leader, they represent the actual and perceived leader within the learning institution. They can affirm as well as be the catalyst in developing a meaningful culture, goals and vision of the school. Simply, they set things in motion. Therefore, what they do and do not accomplish will certainly affect a school's effectiveness. As the instructional leader, a principal's responsibility is to meet the needs of all students and make those required changes (Stronge, 2013). Cultural symbols andartifacts can easily be displayed in the school's mission and improvement plans, classrooms and hallways. These adoptions will enrich the celebrations for Cinco de Mayo and Kwanza each year by validating its significance to the institution. It will symbolize what it embodies in practice. The pathway for innovating diversity change can be facilitated through distributed leadership practice more readily rather than traditional administrative practice. Cultural diversity cannot flourish where cultural differences are not valued. The essence of respecting all people does not solely stem from their commonalities but also for distinction of unique beauty or differences in language, culture, customs and religion.

Distributive leadership is a useful analytic framework for building leadership capacity. It will enable the principal to effectively address initiatives by engaging teachers and community in interactions that develop a school culture of empowerment, collegiality and transformation (Spillane &Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Camburn & Pareja, 2007). To be clear, distributive or share leadership is not just delegating responsibility, but rather empowering the expansion of leadership through opportunity, skill training and support. In contrast, traditional leadership focuses on a few designated leaders to maintain common practice and the "hidden curriculum" instead of engaging a unified staff (McCall, 1998; Leverett, 2002; Ritchie, 2013.).

Principal leadership must seek systemic change that provides appropriate educational policy and practice so that culturally and linguistically diverse students as well as mainstreamed student populations can succeed in school (Bodilly & Berends, 1999). Many school systems do not provide qualified teachers with second language endorsements or instructional programs that meet the educational

deficits of the (ELLs). Therefore, effective principals who develop inclusive learning environments provide supervisory oversight for implementing relevant diversity perspectives (Corley, 2003).

The Language & Culture Exchange Program (LCEP) was designed as a cultural project to break down barriers and general stereotypical attitudes. Guided learning opportunities were provided as real-world practice; offering distinct cultural perspectives to help develop a better appreciation of different cultures and languages other than their own. Another target goal was to challenge the student participants to reach beyond their accustomed "comfort zone" or "status quo" perspective reinforced by their traditional school curriculum. This format was designed to challenge the continuance of stereotyping of minority cultures. Also, a significant goal was to focus on distributive leadership practice or shared leadership in thinking more creatively towards responding to the needs of culturally diverse students. The success of the LCEP would require administrative, staff and school community support from each of the participating schools.

Student participants of LCEP in this study had limited exposure to meaningful opportunities to engage in authentic linguistic learning experiences in their respective schools. Such a dearth of authentic language practice resulted in a lack of knowledge, appreciation for culturally diverse learning perspectives and communication models. Students learn and comprehend as a result of effective teaching practices that can be monitored and routinely assessed. Participating LCEP schools in this study routinely voiced institutional commitments to develop and sustain inclusive diverse communities, but there is a significant distance between stated goals and reality (Gerstner, 2002; Murphy, 2010; Slater, 1999). The reality is that diversity strategies are often not embedded in the core educational curriculum framework, thus limiting exposure and meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

To truly promote an effective organizational culture, administrators must examine the inherent limitations of traditional administrative practice. Traditional or "top down management" facilitates compliant thinking, often eliminating critical reflection. Principals must have a conceptual and concrete understanding of how traditional leadership practice systematically preserves the "status quo" (Senge, 1990). Shared or distributive leadership practice is more effective for supporting an inclusive mission that is not based solely on preserving the "status quo" mentality (Cartledge & Lo, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Distributive leadership provides democratic discourse process that allows the school community to reflect on the value of inclusion. Continuing with the "status quo" will guarantee continued rates of failure or mediocrity for too many of our students, as the data

related to racial, cultural, linguistic, and economic achievement gaps demonstrate (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Under today's era of school reform, school districts are accountable for improving the quality of both instruction and achievement (NCLB, 2002). These initiatives will require insight, training and professional development in order to alter traditional practice that does not address the complexities of diversity (Fullan, 2002). The valuing of diversity in schools is no longer merely a social goal. Additional goals need to recognize the importance of the language, customs and cultural traditions to help diverse students feel more included within the fabric of the school culture (Moreno & Gaytán, 2013). Bennett (1999) argued that because schools are patterned after the predominant culture, it is essential to integrate other cultural perspectives in order to break down the stereotypes about groups. These stereotypes get in the way of improving academic achievement and positive race relations (Bennett, 1999; Gándara, 2010).

In light of rapidly changing student populations, administrators and staff must recognize the necessity of acquiring appropriate skills and promoting initiatives for motivating each individual student regardless of race, gender, religion or creed. As a nation of diverse populations and groups, a brighter future depends upon one's ability to effectively talk with
one another, to reach mutual understanding and to realize that in diversity there is strength (Banks, 1997; Bennett, 1995; NCLB, 2002). This reality was recognized as the tipping point in the enormous culturally diverse voter turnout in the 2012 Presidential election (Levs, 2012). Racial events in Missouri and New York have dramatized a national reality for better cultural diversity awareness and tolerance.

Offering a more diversity-enhancing initiative provides a supportive and meaningful learning experience for culturally diverse student populations. As the number of culturally diverse students rapidly increases**,** the need to provide culturally relevant practice will intensify (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). Specifically, this approach affirms the cultures and experiences of students as strengths, and reflects on the students' cultures in the practice of teaching. Although a review of literature shows that there exists a considerable number of student services (Groulx & Silva, 2010), activities and programs for culturally and linguistically diverse students, the study extends this body of research by highlighting a LCEP for high school students to engage in effective learning in and out of the classroom.

Purpose and Context of the Study

The purpose of the study was designed to give emphasis of the role of principals in transforming schools into diversity supportive learning environments. In addition, the study promoted second language acquisition, cultural awareness and acceptance by connecting 164 participating students from three large suburban Chicago area high schools, each with dissimilar social-economic communities.

Study participants had numerous opportunities to experience the culture of their mutual exchange partner or "intercambio" through activities such as face-to-face interactions and discussions. All LCEP activities are aligned with current state language teaching standards and cognitive strategies in the Common Core State Standards. The activities provided students the opportunities to communicate meaningfully in a second language, connect their lives with those of another culture, understand and experience different cultural practices, compare their own culture with another and to build community while utilizing their second language skills beyond the classroom setting (Gay, 2000; Murray, 2011).

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge by using a conceptual framework of shared cultural-diversity experiences that promote a vision of becoming a supportive learning community. The study embraces Banks' (1998) notion that multicultural education "is to help all students, including 'White' mainstream students, to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to survive and function effectively in a future U.S. society in which one out of every three people will be a person of color" (p. 23). Communities without sensitivity or any common ground seem to develop a wide gap of polarization as witnessed in Ferguson, Mo in 2014. This study highlights the importance of respecting different cultures, languages and customs and avoided preconceived notions of others by interacting to seek common solutions.

Studies may have investigated culturally relevant teaching practices and culturally supportive learning environments that promote quality instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. However, many of these diversity strategies were regarded as "add on activities" that were not embedded in the core structural language or multicultural curriculum (Wehmiller & Withers, 2007, p. 72-79). An effective diversity curriculum must be included within the required field of study so that it receives the evaluative and administrative supervisory monitoring to continually upgrade and maintain a high level of quality (Dolezalek, 2008).

According to Gándara and Hopkins (2009) and Tropp and Prenovost (2008), exposure to students of other racial groups in racially

integrated settings is associated with more highly developed critical thinking skills and reduced instances of stereotyping and prejudice. The exploration of the principal as the diversity leader within this study underscores the importance of distributive leadership practices that develop a supportive learning environment that cultivates, values and celebrates cultural diversity.

Methodology

Study Participants

The target population of 164 high school participants (Table 1) was drawn from three suburban high schools, about 20 miles southwest of Chicago**.**
Table 1
Demographic Data from Individual Schools

Respondents	Total # of Student Participants	# Female	# Male	#Caucasian	#Hispanic
School 1	77	50	27	73	2
School 2	65	35	30	-	65
School 3	22	15	7	-	22

To obtain the most comprehensive sample possible, study participants were recruited by the study's three cooperating teachers who taught Spanish/English as a Second Language (ESL) at the three participating high schools. All study participants were drawn from the Spanish or ESL classes from the respective three study high schools. English Language Learners (ELLs) students were drawn from two of the three participating schools. Native language Spanish and English speaking students were drawn from the Spanish as a Second language program from the third school. Selected participating ELLs students were enrolled in two of the designated high schools receiving bilingual/ESL services, and the remaining participating students were in enrolled in private high school and were studying Spanish as a second language. It is important to note that the ethnicity of the native Spanish-speaking students (ELLs) in the study was Mexican residing in a lower working class community. The study's English-speaking students were Caucasians attending a private high school located in a middle-class community.

Selection to participate in the Language & Cultural Exchange Program (LCEP) was on a volunteer basis and required parental permission for all participating students under the age of eighteen. Permission was required because LCEP activities would be held at

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alternating host school sites requiring bus transportation**.** Some of the incentives included learning different cultural dances (salsa, merengue), engaging in small and large group activities, role-playing, exploring diversity discussions relating to stereotyping, and misconceptions, including sampling a wide range of traditional ethnic foods.

Materials

Study participants were administered a pretest/posttest mixed-method survey questionnaire, which consisted of seven questions. Questions 1-4 (Table 2) employed a Likert Scale for responses, and Questions 5-6 (Tables 5 & 6) required open-ended responses. The survey was translated into Spanish for those ELLs who had limited English proficiency especially with academic and content language (Marzano, 2004; Payne, 2005). The English (Appendix A) and Spanish (Appendix B) survey questionnaires were distributed to ELLs and the ESL students in two of the high schools. Only the English survey questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed to native English speakers in the third (private) high school who were learning Spanish as a second language.

The current study extends the body of knowledge on cultural diversity training by examining participants' responses on a survey questionnaire after participating in the LCEP. In essence, the guiding research question was "Can a Cross-Community Cultural Exchange Program make a difference in student perceptions?" For the purposes of this study, James Banks' (2002) model of "Approaches to Multicultural Curriculum Reform" was used as a reference source and as a conceptual tool for designing the LCEP interactive program experiences. The LCEP is modeled after Banks' Level 4, "The Social Action Approach**."** Bank's model was helpful with developing introductory focused topics such as heroes, holiday then progressively scaffolding to the higher tiers helping students makes decisions on important social issues. The goal is to encourage social action, communicate meaningful discourse in a second language and develop decision-making skills.

Responses to the Survey Questionnaire provided descriptive displays for the most significant patterns and themes (Appendix A, B). Questions 1-4 employed a Likert four point rating scale; Questions 5-6 (Tables 5 & 6) were brief open-ended questions that required a coding system to evaluate responses. Participating students' responses were examined for patterns and trends, according to literature based themes and probes (sensitivity, cultural awareness, supportive nurturing systems, high expectations and teacher dedication) related to promoting cultural diverse environments.

Presentation and Analysis of Data for Questions (1-4) and responses to Questions (5-6)

Disaggregated quantitative data from each of the individual schools can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Disaggregated Data from Individual Schools

	Question #1 Means		Question #2 Means		Questions #3 Means		Question #4 Means	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
School 1	8	10	7	9	11	13	19	21
School 2	9	11	8	9	12	13	21	23
School 3	7	9	8	9	9	10	21	23

The data displayed in Table 2 clearly indicates that the mean scores increased across all three schools after participating in the LCEP program. Overall, the increase of mean scores suggested that the authentic, open discourse and cooperative nature of the LCEP activities influenced a more positive response from participants' attitudes and perceptions towards cultural diversity. Question #1 data of mean scores for all schools reveal that all participants responded positively or somewhat positively to being more accepting to cultural diversity related issues. Question #2 data indicates a somewhat similar profile by all participants for having a much more positive to somewhat more positive perceptions relating to cultural diversity attitudes since entering high school. The data for Question #3 indicates a slightly lower overall mean score in comparison to Question #2 but still in the same range of positively to somewhat positive accepting of responses towards comprehending the significance relating to cultural diversity dynamics. Also, the data for Question #4 reveals all participants agreed to have a positive attitude towards cultural diversity related issues.

The data suggests that the study participants progressively developed a level of comfort with each LCEP session. Since each participating school was required to host a full day of culturally related activities, it appeared that most participants became acclimated and enjoyed the interactive sessions. Additionally, the data seems to suggest that increased familiarity among the participants allowed them to respond more naturally. The LCEP supportive learning environment nurtured a non-threatening climate that signaled to each participant they were safe to freely explore beyond their usual "comfort zone". Data appears to suggest the some previously held biases, preconceived notions and overall attitudes towards culturally diverse students gradually dissipated as reflected with each mean score per school.

Responses to the Open-Ended Questions for (5-6)

The open-ended questions permitted the respondents, at the very least, to expand upon their rationale for their answers in the Likert-scale questions discussed previously. In general, the responses to the open-ended questions suggested a consistent pattern that emerged from the responses across all three schools. Based on the data for Question #5, all respondents selected the identical three top best ways for learning about cultural diversity issues. The data displayed in Table 3 reveals a moderate increase between pretest and posttest survey scores by respondents across all three schools. The top three choices chosen across all three schools were: a) working with students different from me, b) watching television, c) movies or video games and interacting with others outside of class / in the community.

Table 3
Response Items to Question #5

Three top best ways you learn best about cultural diversity issues.	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
a. working with students different from	21%	24%	18%	21%	23%	24%
b. watching television	17%	19%	18%	21%	16%	20%
c. movies or video games and interacting with others outside of class / in the community	19%	23%	17%	19%	20%	22%

Table 4 shows the data for Question #6. There was an overall significant increase between pretest and posttest survey scores by all respondents across all three schools. The top three choices selected by respondents across all three schools were: a) my knowledge has increased, b) no different than before, and c) I now understand what diversity means.

Table 4
Response Items to Question #6

Three top best ways you learn best about cultural diversity issues.	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
a. my knowledge has increased	42%	48%	25%	38%	45%	51%
b. no different than before	52%	21%	19%	12%	5%	0%
c. I now understand what diversity means	13%	15%	8%	15%	7%	14%

Discussion

In general, the data, from the open-ended questions supported the responses from the Likert-scale questions. The responses indicated a more favorable response towards attitudes, comprehension and perspectives by respondents towards cultural diversity/linguistically issues. A general and consistent picture emerged from the data. While not always explicitly stated, the increase of positive mean scores and higher post-survey scores suggest that the LCEP program had a positive influence across all three schools.

Study participants appeared to feel more comfortable with each LCEP session and activity. For many participants, it was their first full interactive contact or exchange on a mutual project. In many communities, students do not have daily contact with other culturally or linguistically different students in a meaningful manner. Often, students acquire inappropriate perceptions or stereotypical attitudes towards others that are baseless. Not surprisingly, many students develop their attitudes from institutions, communities and family members (Ganong& Coleman, 2014). These conditions warrant major shifts of how school boards and principals must think with respect to diversity issues. Diversity or cultural diversity is not a code for race, ethnicity or gender by themselves.

Educational school leaders can facilitate these recommended changes by modeling distributive leadership practices towards shifting the "status quo" culture into a more positive culturally diverse school environment by involving a wider range of individuals. The apparent administrative and community support for the LCEP gave the faculty and student participants the freedom to explore and challenge their own perceptions and attitudes. Principals are the change agents, and they must explore their own preconceived notions towards diversity so to

properly engineer core instructional activities that embrace cultural and linguistic diversity (Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014).

These findings also correlate with the research (sensitivity, cultural awareness, supportive nurturing systems, high expectations and teacher dedication) related to promoting cultural diverse environments (Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010). Diversity training can be viewed as not only as an outcome but also as a process. This process can be framed with the desired school's vision which then can applied within a mission perspective that will require serious strategic planning. Systematic and incremental changes can only be made after acquiring a needs assessment from the current diversity policy. Resulting initiatives will produce positive outcomes since it will exist within the core institutional instructional goals. Furthermore, the responses also appeared to confirm that those same dispositions were embodied within the LCEP program activities, which simulated an inclusive learning environment. As previously mentioned, the LCEP is modeled after Banks' Level 4, "The Social Action Approach**."** The goal is to encourage social action, communicate meaningful discourse in a second language and develop decision-making skills. Therefore, the total responses to the Likert and open-ended questions support the guiding research question "Can a Cross-Community Cultural Exchange Program make a difference in student perceptions?"

Recommendations

Based on data for the study, recommendations can be offered in three areas: future research, leader preparation and distributive leadership.

Future Research

This study should be replicated by incorporating high schools from District 299 Chicago Public Schools and area high schools in suburban areas within 20 miles of Chicago. The suggested demographics can replicate the current study's demographical, racial and ethnicity composition. It would serve as an exploration in the application of providing additional inspiring and engaging effective field based experiences. Throughout this country and throughout its communities, there is a need for improved racial and cultural awareness understanding. Many school districts are entrenched in high stake testing leaving them little time or resources for unique cultural diverse activities. Educators would benefit from the overarching goal of establishing grounded information that broadens their understanding of the importance of providing supportive learning experiences for culturally diverse student populations. Simply from the immigration perspective alone would further advance cultural diverse issues and

expectations. The incidents of confrontations in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, demonstrated the importance of reaching out past individuals' comfort zones to foster better cultural harmony. Emphasis of using the distributive or supportive leadership model can broaden the agency for principal effectiveness by equipping them with a multi-dimensional lens for examining and developing cultural supportive environments, which would include providing new perspectives and opportunities to further advance better harmonious cultural awareness.

Leader Preparation

This study provides insight that can be useful to schools and school practitioners. These effective perspectives and initiatives can assist principal leadership training and preparation programs by demonstrating to future and current principals, through cultural relevant literature and multicultural educational courses how to better understand the needs of culturally diverse student populations. Principals have the most influence in setting the cultural climate within schools (Seashore & Wahlstrom, 2011). Accordingly, effective decision making based on a more comprehensive cultural perspective by the principal will support a more inclusive mission that is not based solely on preserving the "status quo" mentality. The new principal leadership programs in Illinois have mandated course training for new principals to better skilled towards serving the educational and social-emotional needs of the ELLs and other culturally diverse student populations. For those practicing administrators and principals, a revised diversity professional development seminar must be instituted as an ongoing process.

In light of the projected Hispanic student population for 2020 it would be prudent for national school districts to be proactive in this area.

Distributive Leadership

Educational leaders and principals must examine the ineffectiveness of traditional leadership practice when genuinely promoting and embracing an inclusive mission of diversity. This examination can reveal to current and future principals how traditional leadership falls short of producing the systemic and meaningful reform that is necessary to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. The Inherent dynamics of traditional leadership practices do not possess the capacity required to transform and meet the needs of diverse students when they are compared to the distributive leadership design. Traditional leadership is designed as a top-down design not to question but merely to follow directions. It is rooted from the old scientific management style associated with Frederic Taylor (Dersksen, 2014).

The dynamics within distributive leadership practices employs and seeks a vision of reform and a focus on institutional changes that employs shared leadership where people take responsibility for working with and through others. To be clear, sharing leadership is not delegating responsibility, but rather empowering the expansion of leadership through opportunity, skill and training and support (Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014).

Summary

This study offers a means to gain further insight into addressing the complexities of the vast diverse school population. School systems must employ "real life" practices that embrace the systemic and meaningful change that is necessary to address the needs of culturally diverse students. Today's reality is that all teachers and administrators will encounter students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural and language, and religious backgrounds. Regardless if the educational setting is public, private, urban or suburban, educators need to acquire new skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enhance or prepare them to effectively relate and educate all students, especially culturally diverse student populations. It is the responsibility of school leaders and administrators for providing culturally diverse student populations supportive and meaningful learning experiences.

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Appendix A
Please enter a check mark in the box of your choice

1. **Please check the box that best indicates what you thought and how you felt before you started high school:**

	Positively / accepting	Somewhat positive / accepting	Generally negative and not accepting	Indifferent
People in the U.S. who are different from you in terms of race or ethnicity				
People with disabilities				
People with a different economic/social class than your own				

2. **Since entering high school, rate how much your attitudes and perceptions have changed regarding the following:**

	Much more positive	Somewhat more positive	A little more positive	No change
People in the U.S. who are different from you in terms of race and ethnicity				
People with disabilities				
People with a different economic/social class than your own				

3. **Rate how well you think you understand each of the following:**

	Thorough understanding	Some understanding	Little understanding	No understanding
Causes of inequalities in society before I entered high school				
Effects of inequalities in society before I entered high school				
Causes of inequalities in society now				
Effects of inequalities in society now				

4. **Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My own background (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) often influences how I view myself and others.				
I find it difficult to understand/empathize with people different from myself.				
I find it difficult to distinguish facts from opinions when it comes to cultural diversity.				
I communicate effectively with others from backgrounds different from my own.				
I work effectively with others from backgrounds different				

from my own.				
With regard to high school courses, it is important that schools teach students about diversity in the U.S.				
It is important to teach students about global diversity.				
It is important to encourage acceptance of cultural differences.				

5. **Please indicate what you think are the three top ways you learn best about cultural diversity issues. (Please check no more than three answers)**

   ☐ working by myself

   ☐ working with students similar to myself

   ☐ working with students different from myself

   ☐ participating in or listening to instructor-led class discussions

   ☐ watching television, movies or video programs

   ☐ listening to guest speakers

   ☐ interacting with others outside of class/in the community

   ☐ other (please describe)

   _____

6. **After studying new cultures and learning another language, I feel (Please check no more than three answers)**

   ___ my knowledge has increased
   ___ I want to learn more
   ___ no different than before the class
   ___ I now understand what diversity means
   ___ etc.

Appendix B

<u>**Por favor introduce enunamarca de verificacion en el cuadro de tu eleccion.**</u>

7. **Por favor marque el cuadro que major indique que es su pensamiento y como se sintio antes de que empesara la secundaria:**

	Acepto Positiva mente	**Aceptar Algo positiva mente**	**General mente negativo y no aceptan do**	**Indiferente**
Personas en los E.U. que son diferentes que usted enterminos de raza o etnia				
Personas con disabilidades				
Personas con una clase diferente economica y social de la suya				

8. **Desde que comenzo la secundaria, taza de cuanto han cambiado sus actividades y percepciones sobre el siguente:**

	Mucho mas positivo	**Algo mas positivo**	**Un poco mas positivo**	**No hay cambio**
Personas en los E.U. que son diferentes que usted enterminos de raza o etnia				
Personas con disabilidades				
Personas con una clase diferente economica y social de la suya				

9. Tazade lo bien que entienden cadauno de lo siguente:

	Comprension profunda	Algo de comprension	Poco comprension	Nada de comprension
Causas de las desigualidad es en la sociedad antes de entraren la secundaria				
Efectos de la desigualidad es en la sociedad antes de entrar a la secundaria				
Causas de desigualidad es en la sociedad hoy				
Efectos de desigualidad es en la sociedad hoy				

10. Por favor indicarcuanto esta de acuerdo con cadauna de las siguentes afirmaciones:

	De acuerdoen total	Acepto	No acepto	Firme no acepto
Mi propia experiencia enterminos de edad, etnia de generosuel eninfluir en como yo me miro a mi ya otros.				
Me resulta dificil comprender y empatizar con la gente diferente a mi culturales.				

Me resulta dificil distinguir hechos de opinion escuando se trata de la diversidad cultural.				
Comunico eficazmente con otras personas de origenes diferentes de mi propia.				
Yo trabajo eficazmente con otros de origenes diferentes de mi propia.				
Con respeto a los cursos de la escuelas ecundaria es importante que las escuelas enseñena estudiantes abuit diversidad en los Estados Unidos.				
Es importante enseñar a los estudiantes acerca de la diversidad mundial.				
Es importante fomentar la aceptacion de las diferencias culturales.				

11. **Por favor indicar que piensaque son las tres formas principales que aprende mejor a cerca de los problemas de la diversidad cultural.**
(Comprebe no mas de tresrespuestas.)

☐ Trabajando solo

☐ Trabajando con estudiantes comparables a mi.

☐ Trabajando con estudiantes diferentes a mi.

☐ Participando o escuchando discusion es en clase presencial.

☐ Escuchar conferencias por el instructor.

☐ Mirando la television, peliculas o programas de video.

☐ Escuchando a oradores invitados.

☐ Interactuar con otras personas fuera de clase y en la comunidad

☐ Otros (Por favor describe)

_____

12. **Como se siente acerca de culturas ahora despues de estudiar y aprender otro idioma? Comprebe no mas de tresrespuestas.) Comprebe no mas de tresrespuestas.)**
__trabajando por mi cuenta
__quiero aprender mas
__no esdierente de antes de la clase
__ahora entiendo lo quesignifica la diversidad
__etcetera

Dr Flores has been a professor at Governors State University. His interest in multicultural awareness for linguistically diverse student populations stemmed from his experiences at a teacher and principal in Chicago Public School District.

Rap Music in Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction for African American Vernacular Speakers

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of a research project which involved rap music within culturally responsive reading instruction to improve achievement in urban classrooms. A quantitative quasi-experimental design was used to test if rap music could be used as an effective tool in reading instruction to African American children who use African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The sample consisted of 105 African American 2nd grade male and female students from two different elementary schools. Students received eight sessions using either rap music or a traditional narrative text in the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL). Fluency was analyzed with pre- and post-tests on the fluency section of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Comprehension gains were measured after analyzing missed comprehension scores on two comprehension exams. Findings suggest there is evidence that rap music used in the FDL improved the fluency and comprehension skills of African American students at the schools used in this study. As one of the few quantitative studies to justify the use of rap music in the curriculum, it bolsters the argument that teaching methods should match students' backgrounds.

Key Words: African American Vernacular English, rap music, literacy, elementary-level students

Introduction

Over the past three decades, American educators and policy makers have been on a quest to find effective strategies to raise students' academic achievement levels. More specifically, practitioners, activists, educational leaders, and policy makers are engaged in a national conversation about African American students' school achievement. This challenge of educating African American students has been ongoing (Carter, Hawkins & Natesan, 2008; Harris & Graham, 2007; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). More recently, the academic debate has shifted to the implementation of Common Core State Standards [CCSS]. CCSS were established to provide consistent standards nationwide which will indicate appropriate benchmarks for all students regardless of where they live. The highly debatable CCSS mission is to reflect on the relevant knowledge and skills required for students to be successful in college and careers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014; Gipe, 2014).

Despite these new educational mandates and policies, a sundry of African American students are still struggling in reading. Poor performance of African American students on standardized reading tests is attributed to their low mastery of academic language and literacy activities. Consequently, there are heightened discussions on language diversity because of the varying linguistic skills and competencies of students (Bergmann, Hall & Ross, 2007; Harris & Schroeder, 2013; Lee et al., 2007). Culturally and linguistically different students are defined as individuals whose ethnicity, language, and social class differ from their mainstream peers (Alim & Smitherman, 2012). Unfortunately, low performance on standardized literacy assignments and activities of African American students is also associated with a perceived deficient speech and language pattern of African American students. As schools and communities continue to change in response to language practices and ethnic differences, literacy educators invested in increasing academic achievement must continue to address pertinent issues focused on the language and literacy performance of linguistically diverse African American students (Harris & Schroeder, 2013; Paris, 2009).

Although educational environments should represent the plurality of cultures, races, religions, ethnicities, and languages, linguistic diversity remains a critical issue in an aggregate number of classrooms. Standard American English (SAE), also referred to as mainstream English, is considered to be the language used by those who have acquired power, prestige, and money in educational and social settings. Students who use different language codes at home

compared to the mainstream SAE mandated at school are considered to be incapable of completing critical tasks in classroom environments that challenge their cognitive abilities (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Bergman, Hall, & Ross, 2007; Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006; Strange, 2013). In fact, some African American students come to literacy environments with remarkable linguistic abilities to style-shift in and out of African American and Caucasian social and academic environments, while others will use African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a highly stigmatized version of English that differs in sounds, word, and syntactic patterns from English expected in academic contexts. AAVE has historically been defined as a deficient language (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Harris & Schoeder, 2013; Wheeler, Cartwright & Swords, 2012; Whitney, 2005).

AAVE Speakers: Home and School Communities

The usage of AAVE often adversely affects the literacy performance of African American children because many African American students speak AAVE as their home language without mastery of the mainstream English required in their classrooms (Harris & Graham, 2007; Wheeler et al, 2012). Similarly, in some cases, it is also evident that African American students who use AAVE speakers are more likely to have difficulties learning to read compared to their Caucasian counterparts, based on the concept that AAVE speakers' home language differs from mainstream English used in schools. As a result, many AAVE speakers are categorized as underperformers in classroom activities and standardized tasks due to their non-mastery of language and literacy skills mandated in school (Harris & Schroder, 2013; Lee et al., 2007). Some AAVE speakers are often wrongly assessed as having speech and language deficits and placed into remedial courses at school. The culturally diverse dialect used by AAVE students may oftentimes determine not only students' current reading placement, but can also be a factor in the students' future academic trajectory, and even later in their adult lives (Wheeler et al., 2012).With the increasing number of students entering schools speaking AAVE, there may be a continued mismatch between how students speak at home and the language used in school which can negatively affect students' performance in classroom settings as well as teachers' perceptions of their students' performance (Alvermann & Xu, 2003).

Now more than ever, educators are advocating for AAVE speakers to no longer be penalized for using their home language in educational environments and to encourage teachers to build on home language to teach mainstream English. Although there is a recent push for scholars to make a conscious shift from the mindset that AAVE as a

deficient language performance to an interpretation of AAVE as a different speech pattern, not a deficit one, there must be a paradigm shift that acknowledges AAVE usage in classrooms in addition to teaching mainstream English (Harris & Schroder, 2013; Stockman, 2010; Strange, 2013). It is also salient that students with linguistic differences have "opportunities to be engaged in authentic tasks" academically (Whitney, 2005, p. 68). Consequently, it is eminent for educators to discuss culturally responsive strategies for students who use AAVE and determine how these strategies could be used as a bridge to affirm students' home culture and language to school culture.

Culturally Responsive Instruction – Teachers and Students

Culturally responsive instruction applies to/focuses on students' culture in order to maintain it and to transcend any negative effects of the mainstream dominant culture. Cultural responsiveness is the acknowledgement that students are similar in some ways, but also different from each other. It involves employing the cultural uniqueness, experiences, and perspectives of diverse students as channels for effective teaching. Also, culturally relevant teaching has had a positive impact on students' academic achievement when students are exposed to activities and lessons which allow them to explore, appreciate, and comprehend classroom assignments and literature based on their cultural backgrounds and school experiences (Ford & Kea, 2009; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Whitney, 2005). As educators continue to investigate and enhance teaching and learning of literacy skills in culturally relevant environments, it is essential for educators to have a heightened awareness of how to better serve African American students as a means to provide strong support for implementing effective instruction through a cultural lens, to increase students' self-esteem and to employ pedagogy centered on differences across cultures (Carter, Hawkins, & Natesan, 2008; Irvine, 2010).

The educational environment is essentially about building relationships, communication, and expectations as it directly impacts the students' authentic self (Ford & Kea, 2009). Teachers who are successful with African American students utilize an array of approaches including culturally responsive instruction (Carter et. al., 2008). Culturally responsive teachers must modify classroom instructional strategies for students in an effort to promote academic gains by incorporating responsive classroom practices focusing on students' values, interests, needs, and cultural norms. It is also requisite for culturally responsive teachers to have expectations and standards of excellence for all students. In the classroom setting, culturally

responsive teachers cultivate social collaboration that respects individuality of that student amongst the group, while caring about all of their students, African American students and students of the dominant culture (Ford & Kea, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Shealy, 2007). Culturally relevant pedagogy also entails teaching high standards mandated in content areas to all students, while contrasting the differences between using AAVE as a home language and the dominant language, mainstream English (Irvine, 2010; Whitney, 2005). Currently, there is a didactical disconnection between students' personal backgrounds and classroom instruction. This disconnection is based on the fact there are a myriad of classroom settings in which instructors teach with academic rigor but do not respect home language while teaching (Kelly, 2013; Whitney, 2005). Despite an augmented number of linguistically diverse students entering classrooms each year, teachers continue to use teaching strategies and activities that lack diversity related to culture and language (Ford & Kea, 2009). Culturally responsive literacy activities are not prevalent in everyday classroom activities for a number of reasons including the recent demand to follow prescribed curricular related to testing standards (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011; Thompson, 2004), some teachers' devaluation of student's use of their home language in the classroom (Delpit, 2006), and/or their lack of acknowledgement that the minority student's personal background and culture is equally as important as the traditional cultural backgrounds represented in classrooms (Kelly, 2013). As more and more students who use AAVE enter classrooms globally, rap music may be one effective tool used to promote culturally responsive instruction (Cooks, 2004).

Rap Music in Literacy Classrooms

Hip-hop culture is the foundation of today's popular culture. Rap music, the axis of hip-hop culture, has taken prominence in venues and social settings exclusive of traditional learning environments to embrace pertinent social issues (Alexander-Smith, 2004; Biggs-El, 2012). Its origins derived within the African American community of the south Bronx during the 1970s, with it being played at discos, dances, and block parties (Chang, 2003; Sullivan, 2003). Although rap music can be heard in an assortment of movies, commercials, and venues in today's digital society, it also has been used in education arenas to bridge a cultural divide between students' home and academic communities. In the past decade, hip-hop pedagogy has expanded as scholars and researchers have investigated and examined the use of hip-hop music and culture to improve students' empowerment, cultural responsiveness and competencies of literary analysis, and critical literacy (Au, 2005; Petchauer, 2009).

Kelly (2013) affirmed that hip-hop literature is now introduced into English language arts classrooms as a bridge to discuss literary works, to convey a message to students that their personal background and culture are as equally important as the traditional culture represented in classrooms and to give relevant voice to students who are often silenced. Cooks (2004) emphasized the ethos of hip-hop music in educational environments:

> (1) hip-hop music is culturally relevant to the lives of the students because they listen to rap music, write rap songs and imitate hip-hop artists; (2) the issues discussed in most rap songs could be used to talk about a variety of topics, and determine how these issues affect the students and increase student engagement; and (3) students need illustrations of how to master a variety of styles for academic success (p. 72).

Using of hip-hop culture and rap music can be a channel to develop critical thinking. One essential facet of hip-hop is the gift of rap music to document experiences and disclose personal stories that connect to the reader (Hill, 2009; Stovall, 2006).

Rap music, a popular form of expression of youth culture, captures the attention of students through the music and the rhythm (Borgia & Owles, 2010). In literacy environments, rap music, songs, and rhythm create opportunities for students to link literature with and learn to value the sounds, structure, cadence, pitch, and tempo of the English language while socializing and exploring patterns of words. The strong rap beats may serve as a mnemonic device to assist students with recalling information. Also, having students create rap lyrics to describe a specific character from a novel, allows teachers to assess whether students understand the key literary elements of the story. By studying hip-hop and analyzing the language used, students are capable of associating the links between the cultures in which they engage and the global impact of their culture in the world (Alim, 2011; Borgia & Owles, 2010; Bullion-Mears, McCauley,& McWhorter, 2007; Richards, 2010).

Hip-hop literature is beneficial for classroom teachers who are different from those of their students and struggle to find space for honest conversation surrounding identity development (Petchauer, 2009). Elementary-level teachers have a desire to utilize hip-hop culture in the classroom, but are often unaware of how to plan effective lessons related to this culture. Teachers can be trained to incorporate rap music, song and rhythm with stories which can promote students' literacy development in a positive, risk-free environment (Irby & Hall, 2011; Richards, 2010).

This present study examined how rap music was used in culturally responsive reading instruction in order to increase the fluency

and comprehension skills of African American 2nd graders. It is hypothesized that an instructional procedure that employs a culturally responsive strategy will facilitate the reading rate of students within that culture.

Methodology

Setting

This study took place at two schools in one of the largest school districts in the southeastern region of the United States. This district has 392 schools and serves 345,000 students. With a global and vibrant community, its students speak 56 different languages and represent 160 countries. Of the entire student population, almost 90% of the students are from ethnic and racial minorities. From this population, two different elementary schools, Atlantic and Collins, were selected to participate in the study. Atlantic has pre-kindergarten through fifth grade classes, and Collins has pre-kindergarten through eighth grade classes. Seventy-six percent of Atlantic's student population is identified as African American, while 91% of Collin's student population is identified as African American (Great Schools, 2014). Each school serves disadvantaged families in the community: Atlantic has 99%, and Collins has 95% of its students on reduced or free lunch (Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2014), causing them to be classified as Title 1 schools. Title 1 schools receive extra funds from the state to help increase the academic achievement of their lowest performing students (FDOE, 2014).

Participants

The participants in this study were 105 African American 2nd graders from Atlantic and Collins Elementary School. Atlantic and Collins Elementary schools were selected because of their high population of African American students and the need to provide effective instructional strategies in literacy that would increase test scores on state standardized assessments. Students at the 2nd grade level were chosen as 2nd grade is a critical period for progressing from word calling to fluent reading (Temple, Ogle, Crawford, & Freppon, 2008). This vital phase is an appropriate time to employ the most effective instructional practices for influencing reading fluency and comprehension. One of the researchers, Januszka, contacted each school's administrator and literacy coach, and requested permission for the second grade students to participate in this study. There were four 2nd grade classrooms that participated in this study at Atlantic Elementary and four 2nd grade classrooms that participated at Collins Elementary. Two teachers, not employed with the schools,

implemented the lessons in the classrooms; one teacher worked with the four classes at Atlantic Elementary, and the other worked with the four classes at Collins Elementary.

Procedures

      In the initial step of this study, the researchers observed each teacher during their 90-minute daily reading block and decided to utilize the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) as the foundation to implement rap music as a culturally responsive instructional strategy. Rasinski, Padak, Linek, and Sturtevant (1994), as cited in Rasinski, Homan, and Biggs (2009), developed classroom instruction based on the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL). Figure 1 outlines the six steps of the FDL.

Figure 1. Fluency Developmental Lesson Six Steps

Fluency Developmental Lesson Six Steps
1. Make predictions about the text from the title
2. Read it to the class
3. Discuss the text
4. Read the text chorally
5. Read it with a partner
6. Perform the text

As cited in Rasinski, Homan & Biggs (2009), classroom instruction based on the Fluency Development Lesson (FDL) was developed by Rasinski, Padak, Linek and Sturtevant in 1994.

      In the original FDL, the teacher modeled to a class accurate oral reading of a brief text (50-150 words) from poems, narrative stories, and song lyrics (Rasinski et al., 2009). In this study, the researchers transposed the FDL with rap music in the treatment group and used a traditional narrative text with the control group. The two teachers, not employed with the schools, participated in the training, provided by the researchers, to ensure their knowledge and capabilities to implement the FDL in the eight classrooms. The researchers were also available for the duration of the study to answer questions from the training and to provide the two teachers with supplemental resources if needed. The objective was to make certain that all students in the treatment and control group completed the steps of the FDL.

      Each school had two control groups (non-rappers) that used traditional narrative texts within the FDL model and two treatment groups (rappers) that used rap music in the FDL model. The two teachers were randomly assigned to instruct the treatment and control

groups at the selected schools. There were four classes that were randomly selected at each school and assigned to the treatment group (rappers) or the control group (non-rappers). Hence, there were eight classes total, with four at each school.

This study was conducted over a 3-month time frame. At the beginning of the school year in September, students were initially administered the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) portion of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Test (DIBELS; Plake, Impara, & Spies, 2003) as a pre-test to assess fluency. In November, both teachers began implementing the FDL. Each week, during an eight week period, both teachers introduced students to a new text during reading instruction while utilizing the six steps of the FDL. Teachers divided students into pairs to participate in repeated readings. The pairs repeatedly read the text three times to each other. Then, students performed the text in front of the class. The treatment group (rappers) used rap music as the text during the FDL whereas the control group (non-rappers) completed each step of the FDL using traditional narrative texts.

During the eight weeks of the FDL implementation, there were two comprehension and two fluency measures administered to the students to monitor their progress. In this study, fluency is defined as the ability to decode words quickly, which permits a smooth flow of text (Gipe, 2014). Comprehension is defined as making meaning from a text through an interaction between the reader, the text, the activity, and the context (Irwin & Baker, 2005). Two comprehension exams, created by the researchers, were given to the students. Their scores were analyzed to assess comprehension. Each comprehension exam included questions centered on the areas of vocabulary, factual information, inferential information, and main ideas. The first comprehension exam given during week 1, and the final comprehension exam given during week 8 were analyzed. In January, all students were administered the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) portion of the DIBELS as a post-test to assess any increases in fluency. Literacy coaches who have had extensive training in administering the DIBELS administered the DIBELS pre- and post-tests. The two teachers who participated in this study reported the results of the comprehension exams. The researchers gathered all testing results and began to analyze the data from each assessment: comprehension exams and Oral Reading Fluency tests.

Data Analysis

The study design was quasi-experimental (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This design attempted to control for variability due to potential school and teacher differences. The independent variables were

condition (rap vs. narrative text), teacher (teacher A vs. teacher B), and school (Atlantic vs. Collins) and the dependent variables were fluency and comprehension. Fluency was analyzed with a 2 (condition) x 2 (teacher) x 2 (school) x 2 (time of testing: pre and post) repeated measures ANOVA with time of testing as the repeated subjects factor. Similarly, comprehension scores (Test 1 and 2) were analyzed with a 2 (condition) x 2 (teacher) x 2 (school) x 2 (time of testing: pre- and post) repeated measures ANOVA with time of testing as the repeated subjects factor. A one-tailed test of significance was used with the expectation that the scores would be hedged in one direction. The level of significance was set at .05. Mixed ANOVAs were used to check for main effects and interactions. Significant interactions were further tested with *t* tests.

Results

The quantitative results of this study revealed several interactions that begin to show the importance of using rap music as a cultural responsive instructional strategy with the FDL.

Oral Fluency

Table 1 shows the results from an ANOVA conducted with fluency as the dependent variable and condition, teacher, and school as the independent variables. In the between subjects analysis, results showed a significant main effect for condition, $F(1, 96) = 5.18$, $p<.05$. Results also showed a significant interaction for condition x teacher, $F(1, 96) = 30.87$, $p<.05$, and a significant interaction for school x teacher, $F(1, 96) = 23.95$, $p<.05$. The within subjects analysis is based on the differences between the pretest and posttest scores. In the within subjects analysis, results yielded a significant main effect for time, $F(1, 96) = 291.19$, $p<.05$, with post-test fluency scores significantly higher than pre-test scores.

Table 1

Significant Findings for Analysis of Variance of Fluency Scores
on the DIBELS

Variable	df	MS	F		η^2
	Between Subjects				
Instructional Strategy	1	6241.71	5.18*		.05
Condition x Teacher	1	37168.05	30.87*		.24
School x Teacher	1	28840.02	23.95*		.20
Error	96	1204.01			
	Within Subjects				
Time	1		35013.47	291.19*	.75
Time x Condition x School	1		1038.36	8.64*	.08
Time x Condition x Teacher	1		603.78	5.02*	.05
Error	96		120.24		

Note: $*p<.05$

        The means and standard deviations for each variable are reported in Table 2. According to the results, the gain scores for the rappers were higher than non-rappers. However, one must be careful when interpreting these gain scores as interaction existed. Therefore, *t* tests were calculated to see the simple main effects.
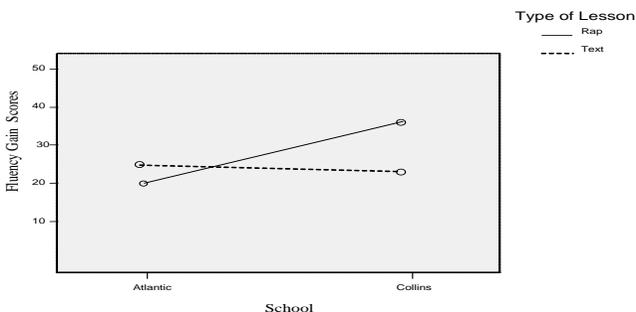
Table 2

Means (Standard Deviations) for Fluency Measures on the DIBELS

Variable	Pre-test	Post Test
Overview	44.67 (28.86)	71.38(35.23)
Rap Music	52.77 (29.32)	81.72(34.94)
Atlantic School	51.55(24.83)	72.50 (30.90)
Collins School	53.67 (32.68)	88.56(36.71)
Traditional Narrative Text	38.00 (26.95)	62.86 (33.42)
Atlantic School	37.38(29.15)	64.21 (39.75)
Collins School	38.45 (25.68)	61.88(28.58)

   The independent sample *t* test, shown in Figure 2, indicates where the differences lie between the time x condition x school interaction. In the *t* test, fluency pretest to posttest gain scores were used as the time measure, thereby condensing the interaction to two variables, condition x school. Results yielded a significantly higher gain score for rappers at Collins than the rappers at Atlantic, *t*(45) = 2.69, *p*<.05. Results also showed that rappers at Collins had a significantly higher gain score than the non-rappers at that same school, *t*(58) = 2.48, *p*<.05. These results indicate that rap had more influence on fluency gains on the DIBELS at Collins Elementary. Overall, rap used in the six steps of the FDL has shown some effectiveness as a culturally responsive strategy.

Figure 2.Fluency Gain Scores by School.

Comprehension

   Table 3 shows the results from an ANOVA conducted with comprehension as the dependent variable and condition, teacher, and school as the independent variables. Within the subjects analysis, results yielded a significant main effect for time, F(2, 97)=8.67, *p*<.05,*with*post-test*comprehension scores being significantly higher than pre-test scores. Other main effects cannot be interpreted because of non-significant results. The simple effects showed a significant interaction for time x condition, F(2, 97)=25.48, *p*<.05,* and a significant interaction for time x condition x teacher, F(2, 97)=4.81, *p*<.05*.

Table 3

Significant Findings for Analysis of Variance of Comprehension Scores on the Comprehension Examination

Variable	df	MS	F	η^2
Between Subjects				
Condition	1	6.01	9.02*	.09
Condition x Teacher	1	6.83	10.25*	.10
Error	97	.67		
Within Subjects				
Time	2	3.99	8.67*	.08
Time x Condition x School	2	11.73	25.48*	.21
Time x Condition x Teacher	2	2.22	4.81*	.05
Error	97	.46		

*Note. *p< .05

       The comprehension scores showed significantly higher results at the beginning of the study for students in the treatment group (rappers) when compared to the control group (non-rappers). In the first test, the rappers answered 3.5 questions correctly; whereas, the narrative text group answered 2.5 questions correctly. In the final exam, the rappers answered 3.4 questions correctly as compared to 3.3 with non-rappers. Additionally, Table 4 shows that the average comprehension means were higher for the rapper group than for the non-rappers.

Table 4

Means (Standard Deviations) for Comprehension Measures

Variable	Pre-test	Post Test
Overview	2.96 (.89)	3.38 (.81)
Rap	3.55 (.61)	3.41 (.76)
Teacher A	3.71 (.55)	3.54 (.66)
Teacher B	3.40 (.65)	3.28 (.84)
Text	2.45 (.76)	3.36 (.86)
Teacher A	2.23 (.76)	3.03 (.98)

Teacher B	2.72 (.68)	3.76 (.44)

An item analysis of missed comprehension questions is shown in Table 5. The most frequently missed comprehension questions were the vocabulary questions with a total of 56 questions. The second most frequently missed comprehension questions were the inferential and main idea questions with a total of 54 questions each.

Table 5

Item Analysis of Missed Comprehension Questions for Exam 1 and Exam 2 (non-rappers vs. rappers)

	Vocabulary	Factual	Inferential	Main Idea
Exam 1				
Non-rappers	8	2	47	37
Rappers	11	3	5	3
Exam 2				
Non-rappers	18	4	1	12
Rappers	19	11	1	2
Total	56	20	54	54

Discussion

This current exploratory study has shown some support for the hypothesis: an instructional procedure that employs a culturally responsive strategy will facilitate the reading rate of students within that culture. When interpreting the results of this study, one needs to consider several interactions and confounding factors. For example, the fluency results showed that the rap group had significantly higher fluency gain scores at Collins than at Atlantic. Collins used an additional reading fluency program (Voyager, 2004) on a biweekly basis; whereas, Atlantic had no such additional program. This difference suggests that the length of time of fluency instruction was a

factor. This study only lasted 8 weeks with approximately 4 hours of actual implementation time. However, the Collins students had more than the 4 hours of fluency instruction provided within this study since they were also using Voyager Passport both before and after the completion of the study. The length of time of instruction at Collins is similar to Rasinski, Homan and Biggs (1994). FDL study which lasted for 7 months with a total of 35 hours of instruction. Rasinski et al. also found that the students in the experimental group made greater gains in oral reading rate than students in the control group. In addition, this study and the Rasinski, Homan, and Biggs' (1994) FDL study both revealed that fluency instruction lasting longer than 4 hours helps to improve students' oral reading rates. Hence, a more intense treatment may have shown more positive results in this study.

The fluency results also showed that the rap group did better than the text group at Collins. Even though both groups had explicit fluency training by Voyager Passport, the effects of rap were evident. One class at Atlantic, that had approximately the same number of Hispanic and African American students, showed that the African American students did better
than the Hispanic students with the rap lesson. These results suggest that the rap text was more culturally familiar to the African American students; thus, they did better with it on fluency measures than when using a traditional text that had no cultural connection. This finding is similar to what other researchers have found in regards to using culturally responsive instruction in the classroom (Ladson-Billings 2009; Petchauer, 2009). The closer students' culture is to the material being used, the better it is for the students.

The comprehension scores showed significantly higher results at the beginning of the study for students in the rap group but the results were not sustained over time. The positive result for the rappers (treatment) over non-rappers in week one may be attributed to student motivation as connected to literacy instruction. Performing a text engages students within classroom contexts as they actively communicate and collaborate with their peers in the preparation and practicing of the story (Bullion-Mears et al., 2007). Merging good literature with diverse musical genres for students enhances both their literacy development and the motivation to read (Borgia & Owles, 2010).

The question remains as to why the results were not sustained over time. One explanation for this question could be that the tests were not at the same difficulty level since there were no reliability or validity estimates for the comprehension quizzes. The second rap quiz may

have been considerably harder than the narrative text quiz, so the comprehension scores went down for the rap group.

Overall, there was positive impact on the fluency and comprehension skills of these African American 2nd graders. The rap music enabled the teacher to connect both students' home culture and music in the classroom. Educators can still teach conventional practices with mainstream English; however, it is galvanizing to utilize more engaging and motivational strategies in instructional delivery. Consequently, teaching and learning can be perceived as more enjoyable for students.

A strength of the study was the power level for the fluency tests. According to Cohen (2013), for a small, medium, and large effect size (i.e., $f^2=.02$, $f^2=.15$, and $f^2= .3$) at a .05 level of significance and an N=105, the power was estimated at approximately .14, .80, and .99 respectively. Therefore, for a medium effect size, approximately 80% of the time, the results support the hypothesis.

A limitation of the study is that students were not randomly assigned to a control or an experimental group. The study was conducted within regular classroom settings and only classrooms could be randomly assigned to a control and experimental group. In addition, the study took place during the months of November through January. The students were on a
2-week hiatus from school in December during the winter break, hence no students received instruction during that time period.

An area of future research involves having students create their own rap songs, thereby integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is also relevant to examine the cultural identity of these students. Non-African American students would also benefit using rap music in their instruction. Students of color spend an enormous amount of time learning and studying other cultures, yet Caucasian students can also be introduced to rap music to expand their cultural views of their peers (Kelly, 2013). It is most appropriate that race, culture and language are addressed in teaching reading (Shealy, 2007), which can make teaching and learning enjoyable for both the teacher and students.

There needs to be more research on the interaction between teaching methods, materials, and students from other diverse cultural backgrounds. Teachers need to be prepared in the area of literacy instruction to dig deeper and to acknowledge ethnically diverse students in their teaching practices. More research must be initiated on teachers' willingness to make changes on their perceptions of AAVE speakers and to provide more interactive activities that connect to their lives. Future research on culturally responsive lessons incorporating

music that connects to other cultures (e.g., Hispanic students) and culturally sensitive assessments must also be examined.

Conclusion

Multitudes of students entering schools with limited use of mainstream English and poor academic achievement have been challenged by unjustly labeling them as underachievers (Strange, 2013). It is time for teachers to respect and value students' home language and use it to assist students in becoming more expressive (Whitney, 2005). "Teachers need to support the language that students bring to school, provide them input from an additional code, and give them the opportunity to use the new code in a non-threatening, real communicative context" (Delpit, 2006, p. 53). In addition, teachers should provide educational practices that are responsive to students and their values, interests, needs, and cultural norms (Ford & Kea, 2009). AAVE speakers must also have a keen awareness of their identity as they journey globally within a diverse population. By taking a closer look at rap through hip-hop culture as culturally responsive strategies in literacy classrooms, AA students will be empowered with an opportunity to welcome their individuality while achieving academic success (Kelly, 2013). Consequently, our society will be one step closer to closing the achievement gap.

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For Our Contributors:

Since 1902, *Illinois Schools Journal* (*ISJ*) has published articles on issues that transcend all levels of education. Originally in print form, the next issue of *ISJ* will be published from the College of Education at Chicago State University in both print and electronic format.

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- Social Justice
- School and Community
- Achievement Testing and Accountability Systems
- Cultural Issues in Literacy Education

ISJ also includes a "Fostering the Dialogue/In Response To" and "News and Reviews" sections, containing news and commentaries on developments and issues in learning and teaching at all education levels.

Manuscripts are being accepted for review. Submission deadlines are:
- Fall Issue: July 31.
- Spring Issue: November 30.

If you miss a deadline, your manuscript will be considered for the next issue.

Types of Manuscript Submissions:
- Feature Articles:
  - Pedagogy/Application—This peer-reviewed section includes practical and descriptive articles that are evaluated on the basis of their innovation, quality of scholarship, and contribution to the field of education. Consideration will be made to manuscripts that focus on diverse populations and settings (i.e. non-school settings, ethnic groups, etc.). Manuscripts should not exceed 5000 words, excluding references.
  - Theory/Research—This peer-reviewed section includes empirical and action research, case studies, qualitative research, and mixed-methods design articles. They will be

evaluated on the basis of their innovation, quality of scholarship, and contribution to the field of education. Consideration will be made to manuscripts that focus on diverse populations and settings (i.e. non-school settings, ethnic groups, etc.). Manuscripts should not exceed 5000 words, excluding references.

- Fostering the Dialogue/In Response To: This peer-reviewed section will feature commentaries or articles describing research-supported perspectives related to the field of education. For example, they can include, but are not limited to, first-person accounts of theory and practice, and policy and legislative issues. Manuscripts should be between 1000-3000 words, excluding references.

- News and Reviews
  o Reviews—This section is for reviews of media (books, websites, films, etc.) related to the field of education. Manuscripts should not exceed 1000 words.
  o Letters to the Editor—This section is open to anyone who would like to respond to previously published articles in *Illinois Schools Journal*. Letters should not exceed 1000 words.

Submission Process:
1. *Illinois Schools Journal* is published in the Fall and Spring semesters. Manuscripts may be submitted for review at any time.
2. Each author will send 3 documents to the editor, Dr. Byung-In Seo, bseo@csu.edu:

   A. Document 1: Cover page: The cover page will have the title of the manuscript, author(s) name(s), address(es), telephone number(s) (home and work), e-mail address(es), and school affiliation(s). Also, please state to whom all correspondence will be made.
   B. Document 2: Abstract of 250-500 words, a 3-4 sentences biography of all author(s), and a statement that states this manuscript has not been published and/or not currently under review elsewhere.
   C. Document 3: Manuscript: Don't forget to include appropriate headers and page numbers.
3. Documents will be presented in .doc, .docx, or .pdf file. Articles should be typed in 12-point font, Times New Roman, and double spaced, with 1 inch margin settings.

4. Manuscripts must be written in English and will adhere to APA format (6th edition).
5. All figures, diagrams, and charts are to be embedded within the text of the manuscript. If your manuscript is accepted, additional information will be provided regarding figures, diagrams, and charts.
6. The manuscript, itself, must not have any identifying information. However, authors can leave their names in the references section or throughout the paper, when quoting themselves. In other words, do not use (Author, 2011).
7. All submissions are double blind reviewed, and since reviewers do not know the authors' identities, they cannot be identified within the manuscript.
8. Upon submission, the author will receive an acknowledgement via e-mail. All manuscripts are initially screened by the managing editor. Manuscripts that are clearly inappropriate for *Illinois Schools Journal*, or fail to follow the submission guidelines, will be promptly returned.
9. Manuscripts will be given to two reviewers on our Peer Review Board. They will determine if the manuscript is suitable for publication.
10. In the case that there is a disagreement with the two reviewers, a third reader will be assigned to the manuscript. The decision of the third reader will determine the status of the manuscript.
11. Reviewers will provide comments on the review and will recommend: 1) acceptance, 2) acceptance with specified revisions, 3) revision and resubmission, or 4) rejection. Decisions to accept or reject a manuscript will be based on the quality of the article and its relevance to the field of education.

If your manuscript is accepted for publication in *Illinois Schools Journal*, you may not simultaneously publish the same article in another journal. *Illinois Schools Journal* retains the rights for publication of all articles published in this journal.

Papers should be no more than 5000 words, Fostering the Dialogue/In Response To items should be 1000-3000 words, and News and Reviews items should be no more than 1000 words. All manuscripts need to follow the *ISJ* Submission Guidelines.

Articles for publication in *ISJ* must follow the submission process should be e-mailed as attachments to Dr. Byung-In Seo (bseo@csu.edu).

Chicago State University

Type of review: Blind peer review
No. of external reviewers: 2-3
No. of in-house reviewers: 1
Time for review: 4-6 months
Acceptance rate: 25%
Reviewers' comments are returned to the author.