Fostering Teacher-Student Relationships:

A Case Study Connecting Middle School Teachers, Authentic Local
History, and Empathetic Competence

Richard A. Buschard Jr.
M.A., Educational Administration, Lindenwood University, 2010
B.M.Ed., Music Education, Webster University, 2005

Diane Clark
Ed.S., Educational Administration, Lindenwood University, 2015
M.Ed., Educational Administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1994
B.S., Education (Special Education), University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1978

Lauren Cobb
Ed.S., Education Leadership, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2012
M.Ed., Educational Administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2010
M.Ed., Counseling, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2001
B.A., Education, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1997

Brian J. Esselman
M.Ed., Educational Administration, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2015
M.A., History, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2004
B.A., Philosophy and Religion, Truman State University, 1999

A Co-Authored Dissertation submitted to
The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Practice

August 2022

ABSTRACT

This co-authored qualitative case study explores the challenge of teachers connecting with their students at the middle school level, especially when White teachers serve predominantly African-American students in large urban metropolitan areas like St. Louis, Missouri. While research has established the need for teachers to better understand the background experiences of their students, more research is needed to explore the value of place-based professional development in promoting more effective teacher-student relationships (TSRs).

Using a psychological theory known as Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), we sought to examine the following research questions while also applying this theory to the field of education: What insights does RCT offer as teachers engage in challenging local history? How does a teacher's knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood of origin influence the teacher-student relationship? What impact does an immersive experience in local history have toward increasing teacher's empathetic competence?

This case study examined the impact of a place-based professional development experience, i.e., a two-hour bus tour offered by the Missouri History Museum that explores St. Louis' history of racial segregation and urban development, for middle school teachers at a small charter school in urban St. Louis. Through a series of in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group interview, data were collected to further study this phenomenon. We used reflexive thematic analysis (Terry & Hayfield, 2021) to derive themes and overall patterns of meaning.

The study yielded the following findings: Teachers want better connections to their students. They also see how local history and knowledge of place can help strengthen the teacher-student relationship by building reciprocity and shared knowledge. Teachers can use local history as an entry point or pathway to building a relationship with students and families. And, teachers see the value of adding local history to their professional development experiences, and advocate for student learning opportunities that incorporate authentic local history.

Keywords:

- empathetic competence
- place-based professional development
- authentic local history
- Relational-Cultural Theory
- public charter school

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

how systemic issues continue to play out has drastically changed my outlook and perceptions of the world for the better.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my research team Brian, Diane, and Lauren. We have had many meetings, made many writes and revisions, and had numerous discussions regarding our work. Together, we have created a dissertation that I am proud to have been a part of. You all have been an absolute joy to work with on this dissertation journey, and I can tell how much passion you bring (and brought) to the classrooms of our schools. Your students are truly blessed to have had the pleasure of being in your classrooms

Diane Clark

I had started and stopped doctorate programs several times but this time All But Dissertation (ABD) was no longer an option. Thanks to the incredible faculty and staff at UMSL who had enough faith and trust to see me through the doctoral journey.

First and foremost, to my heavenly parents, Lucille Harper, and Jesse Kedley, thank you for the firm foothold you gave me and other siblings in life instilling a hard work ethic and a good education. Although you both transitioned mid-way through my doctorate program, the seeds you sowed in me have come to fruition. I will forever cherish, love, and miss you both.

I am grateful to my immediate family, daughters, Senora, Rebecca, Jacqueline; grandkids, Sydney, Raymond III (Teddy), Caleb, Ava, Phoenix, sons-in-law, Bradley, and Raymond II. Thank you for your love and support always and forever. And a special thank you for the new computer laptop which enabled me to update in technology.

To my church family, I thank you for an abundance of prayers and sympathy cards. Your words of inspiration helped to sustain me during a difficult time of grief. To church member Dr. Mildred Wigfall, I appreciate you for your valuable resources and your guidance.

To my faithful friends, former teachers, and administrative co-workers, thank you for believing in me through the best and worst of times. You have all been the winds beneath my wings.

Much appreciation is granted to Dr. Theresa Coble, Chairman of my Dissertation committee, and including Laura Westhoff, Keith Miller, and Tucker Blythe for their guidance to trust the process. I am forever grateful for your professionalism, knowledge, and friendship.

Lastly, to my cohort and incredible team I am honored to work with a group of gifted professionals who each excel. We made lasting friendships and contributed to each other's success. I see many doors opening ahead.

Lauren Cobb

I give credit for completing this course of study to my grandmother, Myrna Louise Abernathy. I pursued my doctorate because you believed in me; I humbly honor and thank you for your unwavering encouragement. Your love was beautiful! I'd like to give special acknowledgment to my two sons for providing me with experiences that have strengthened my faith throughout my journey. I love you, Kenneth and Allen, with a love that never ceases and endures all things. Thank you immensely, Momma, Daddy, and Cynthia, as your complete and unconditional love continuously carries me through. To my anchor,

my person, what you have given me has been incredibly profound. You are my constant. Thank you (both) for filling my heart with love, laughter, and joy.

Lastly, I'd like to thank my dissertation committee chair, Theresa Coble, Ph.D., and committee members Dr. Kieth Miller, Dr. Laura Westoff, and Tucker Blythe. To my team, Rich Buschard, Diane Clark, and Brian Essleman, the fruits of our labor will continue in educational sectors and advocacy for improved connections between students and teachers serving urban students. Lastly, thank you to my fellow Heritage Leaders cohort members for sticking through our three-year journey. We did it! "With love, but if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:25).

Brian Esselman

Education is always a journey, but it is never a journey taken alone. Others are always along for the ride, even if they would prefer to drive or even exit the vehicle. It is to this "road crew" that I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation.

First and foremost, I must thank my intelligent and beautiful wife, for she is a person who always seems to see my strengths despite being acutely aware of my many weaknesses. She always believes that I can do something and never fails to push me towards goals that have regularly intimidated, frustrated, and even confounded me. She is always right in the end, and I would genuinely be lost without her guidance and support.

I also wish to thank my family, who are routinely subjected to my "oral dissertations" on this and that. Their good sense in telling me how I might express myself

more clearly has proved invaluable. Their time spent actively listening to what I have to say is a resource that makes me feel lucky indeed. They say you can only pick your friends in life but based on my experience, I would have tremendous difficulty not picking my family all over again if given the chance.

Finally, I must thank my professors, research team, and professional peers. They elevate everything I do, and through their constructive criticism, they always set me straight and propel me to learn. After all, that's what life is all about; learning, teaching, and trying to understand more than you did before. God willing, we will all do more of that into the future, a future which I choose to believe is always brighter than the past!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

In May of 2020, an African American man named George Floyd was held on the ground by a Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer whose knee was pressed against his neck. Bystanders captured the final moments of this man's life on camera as he pleaded for his life, repeatedly telling the officers, "I can't breathe!" The civil unrest that followed in Minneapolis, and similar policing instances across the country (Ferguson, Baltimore, and Charleston, to name a few), have affected race relations in the country and in our schools. Minority students are likely to feel the stress and effects of this unrest (Codding et al., 2020), but our school system is challenged to assist them as the majority of America's public-school teachers are White (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2019). This may put educators at a disadvantage in being able to form connections and empathize with the experiences that are shaping the continually increasing number of minority students.

History is all of us, but in the United States, it has been taught all too often for just some of us (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). History done right demands inclusion and representation, representation of all the relevant facts, representation of all the key events, and ultimately, representation of all the people (American Historical Association, 2016; King, 2005; Formwalt, 2002). The United States Declaration of Independence makes a statement regarding the equality of all men, but in our classrooms that same ideal of equality tends to get lost in the politics of how the past should be represented to youth (Harris & Reynolds, 2014). Is it any wonder that many of those same youths routinely see no purpose in studying history as a subject? Instead, their attitude is one of forced toleration (Milo, 2017; Strauss, 2017). Many students pass through our history classes but do not see themselves represented in the

curriculum (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Because of this type of misrepresentation, confidence tends to erode in our society and antagonisms are potentially created between educators and students that impact effective relationships focused on learning (Koch, 2017).

School is a place where students are taught to live in a democracy, yet knowledge of race and racism are critical aspects of the school curriculum (Bolgatz, 2005). New attention to what is taught in history class has sparked debate over the approach that schools should take (Mitchell, 2021). Consequently, social justice as a program of study prompted a major political and educational pushback in some sectors of society against teaching culturally appropriate subject matter. Critical Race Theory (CRT), a legal construct, examines the role of race and structural racism in the context of today's society. Critical Race Theory (CRT), as applied in the field of education, asserts a commitment to social justice focus on "People of Color" and "challenges the traditional paradigms, texts, and separate discourses on race, gender and class" (Perez-Huber et al., 2020). Students are impacted when educators fail to have important racial conversations about the country's culture and history (Epstein et al, 2018) When these conversations don't happen, our educators miss opportunities to empower youth to affect societal change (Epstein et al., 2018). Classrooms, however, are not the only place where race is discussed with students. Bolgatz (2005) noted the casual comments generated between students in the "cafeteria, hallways, and student social areas" create the opportunity for a variety of viewpoints to take hold and gain traction. Carter G. Woodson, the father of Negro history week now known as Black History Month, believed that if people knew the contributions of Black people, racial harmony and Black student self-esteem would be enhanced. Educators who examine social justice

issues in their professional development ensure "high quality and culturally appropriate instruction" (Culver, 2020). However, when teachers know but do not teach past injustice, this creates a false narrative fostering a cultural divide and lack of empathy in a classroom setting. Alternately, learning history can correct false narratives and lead us to make better choices (Costello, 2018). Additionally, educators who study social justice as a part of staff professional development can ensure high quality and culturally appropriate instruction (Culver, 2020).

How can the history that is taught be reconciled with the lived experiences of students? Outside of the textbook, teachers lack tools to teach history about a localized community or region. The Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC), formed in 2002, evaluates professional development that connects teachers to local history and community outside of the classroom setting with a focus on using the local community as a context for learning (Powers, 2004). A field-based study of local history better informs all content area teachers to motivate students to learn more about hard truths from the past and open the dialogue to discuss social justice issues with students. According to Kay (2018), "safe space" has been discussed as an environment in which students can share open and honest discussions. The mantra "You can't teach a child you don't know" could be interpreted "You can't teach a child's history if you don't know it." Knowledge about authentic local history requires more than a 2-day intensive coffee and bagel teacher professional development workshop. Training teachers outside of a school building and at a local history site or sites has the potential to improve teacher-student relationships that may yield higher content engagement and improved academic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

While the population of the nation's minority school-age children continues to increase, the percentage of White teachers remains disproportionately high (LaCroix & Kuehl, 2019). Before the 21st century, many researchers began predicting the need to prepare teachers to address cultural needs of our nation's diverse classrooms (Delpit, 1995). According to their predictions, approximately 40% of students in urban schools will be children of color with 83% of all elementary school teachers being White and female (Delpit, 1995; Kunjufu, 2002). As of 2020, White children make up less than fifty percent of the total number of children under age five. Despite this trend, the racial makeup of the nation's teachers continues to be largely White (NCES, 2020). The demographic difference between teachers and students remains starkly pronounced even in schools with a high concentration of minority students. Although demographics do not control the destiny of students, they do play a role in shaping perceptions of school (Chenoweth, 2017). Additionally, demographics could be one of the driving factors in, for example, the disproportionate use of disciplinary office referrals for African American males (Blake et al., 2010). In terms of student engagement, this may help explain why students withdraw from their education (Finn, 1989; Skinner et al., 2008).

Over time, scholars have created conceptual models that stress the need for teachers to comprehend the broader contextual factors that shape their students' learning, whether that be cognitive, emotional, or behavioral (Appleton et al., 2008; Assor, 2012; Fredericks et al., 2004). A vital aspect of this has to do with appreciating the cultural and historical framework students bring to the classroom including the local impact of the student's place of residence (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012).

While studies cite the benefits of place-based immersive experiences (Sheppard et al., 2019), research is limited in the impact of using these experiences to support professional development for teachers to foster better relationships in the classroom.

Student success depends on connections with their teachers; however, it does not dictate success. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Lia Sandilos (2015), those students who develop positive sustaining relationships with their teacher create stronger social bonds and a desire to achieve and "show more engagement in learning". Unfortunately, many students are not experiencing those connections in our nation's schools. According to the Digest of Education Statistics, over half a million high school students over the age of fifteen dropped out of school in 2016 alone (NCES, Digest of Education Statistics, 2018). According to Noble et al. (2020), teacher-student relationships are a significant factor in determining academic and social outcomes for students including the risk of students dropping out of school. Furthermore, 21st-century students feel teachers are disconnected from their culture and uninformed about their local history (Lippman, 2020).

The lack of cultural relevance influences student outcomes and contributes to the academic achievement gap between African American students and White students who receive the same instruction (Delpit, 1995). By building relationships with a student's family and community, educators equip themselves with a cultural understanding that can facilitate greater motivation and positive engagement in the learning environment (Lawson & Maysn, 2015; Quin, 2017). Constructing a framework that provides experiences that deepen social justice awareness leads to teachers who possess a culturally relevant understanding of the student population (Louie, 2020). Moreover, if teachers were to possess a greater knowledge and

perspective of a student's family, community, and local history, they could potentially build healthier, more empathetic relationships with their students and overcome student disengagement.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores the value of incorporating authentic local history as a place-based program into teacher professional development. We wonder whether giving teachers an opportunity to experience student neighborhoods and communities might help White teachers who primarily serve students of color. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact an immersive, place-based professional development experience has on strengthening teacher-student relationships and fostering empathetic competence in urban middle school teachers.

Research Questions

1. What insights does Relational-Cultural Theory offer in an exploration of how teachers engage challenging local history?

2. How does a teacher's knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood of origin influence the teacher-student relationship?

3. What impact does an immersive experience in a neighborhood's local history have toward increasing teacher's empathetic competence?

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL

Chapter Two presents Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007) , applying it to the field of education. Then we dive into the research literature to summarize RCT's "relational behavior processes" as they relate to teacher-student demographics and teacher-student mutual learning. We also explore the relational skill of empathetic competence and how it can be nurtured through teacher professional development, as well as the value of exploring place-based local history in school contexts. Finally, we examine the literature related to the concept of authenticity.

Relational-Cultural Theory

In public schools across the country there is a of majority White teachers working with a continually more diverse spectrum of students (NCES, 2019). The life experiences of the educators can be different from their students.   The educator is tasked with helping students achieve academic success and developing a relationship with them.

Growing out of the feminist scholarship in the 1970s, Jean Baker Miller developed an approach to understanding how relationships influence human psychology. Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) seeks to understand human relationships through lived experiences. RCT provides a concept for how to create a welcoming and mutually validating environment (Frey, 2013).   Moreover, RCT maintains that "all growth occurs in connection, that all people yearn for connection, and that growth-fostering relationships are created through mutual empathy and mutual empowerment" (Jordan & Hartling, 2002, p. 49). Growth-fostering relationships are driven and enhanced by what Miller labels "the five good things: increased vitality, increased empowerment, increased clarity of the

relationship, increased sense of worth, and increased desire for further

relationships" (Miller, 1986, p. 3). Further, the theory posits that most humans go

through life seeking connection and interdependence as opposed to autonomous

relationships.   These relationships can be impeded by a lack of mutuality and

authenticity that limits meaningful connections and may result in defensive strategies to

protect the self (Miller, 2008).

   While originally developed as a theory to address psychological interventions

in therapeutic contexts, RCT's tenets could prove applicable in the educational setting.

When using Relational-Cultural Theory as a framework, counselors must be aware of

"Power-Over" dynamics, including systemic issues that create a cognitive dissonance

when a marginalized person seeks to engage with someone from another culture

(Jordan, 2016). Dietz et al., (2016) notes that, "In response to, and appreciation for,

the great cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in the United States, counselor education

programs are required to prepare culturally-competent, ethical, and effective

professionals to serve the needs of diverse clients" (pp. 22-23).

   For clients to overcome a lack of mutuality and authenticity, counselors must be

willing to develop a growth-fostering relationship with their clients. RCT posits that

humans are inherently social by nature, but that external factors (i.e., race, ethnicity,

socio-economic status) help develop or reinforce positive or negative relational

perceptions known as connections or disconnections (Miller, 2008). For a client to

move from a negative perception to a positive perception, the counselor must be able to

step outside of themselves and be placed into the context of the client, along the way

developing an empathetic understanding of the circumstances and background of the

client (Duffey & Somody, 2011). This mutual understanding of the client, combined

with the client's adjusted relational perception of the counselor, allows for this

relationship to continue to mutually grow and sustain. Jordan's summary of

Relational-Cultural Theory is summarized by Frey: "(a) working with relational

connections and disconnections, including therapist commitment to working

through disruptions in the therapeutic relationship; (b) focusing on the development of

mutual empathy, including self-empathy; (c) working through and restructuring

negative relational images; (d) therapist responsiveness, authenticity, and

willingness to be impacted by the client; (e) fostering relationship resilience; and (f)

validating and incorporating clients' cultural and social contexts" (Frey, 2013, p. 179).

The applicability towards the educational setting is notable in that educators are

already challenged to develop relational skills with their students. Spencer et al. (2004)

conducted a qualitative study about the applicability of Relational-Cultural Theory to how

urban and suburban youth engaged with important adults in their lives. Their research

yielded several concepts that a growth-fostering relationship entail. The major themes

were authenticity, mutuality, respect, and active engagement. The researchers noted that

mutuality was significant in fostering relationships when there was a relationship power

differential between the youth and their adult mentors.

Teachers are facilitators of curriculum, but they also mentor and counsel their

students. As such, teachers strive to build meaningful relationships with their students.

Miller notes that "growth and development do not happen in isolation, but in relationship

with one another" (Miller, 2008). Further she notes that "meaningful change occurs when

we encounter new experiences, and these experiences happen in interaction with

others" (Miller, 2008).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Theory of Change Model

Note: Adapted from Fletcher & Ragins, 2007. Highlighted text indicates specific theoretical aspects focused on in this case study.

Relational Behaviors and Processes: Using Demographic Disconnection to Connect
Demographics

In order to better understand relationships in the classroom it is helpful to consider the demographics of the public school system as it is and as it is projected to be. As noted previously by Chenoweth (2017), although demographics do not control the destiny of students, they do play a role in shaping students' perceptions of school. United States Census data shows that in October of 2019 there were approximately 12.5 million students in middle school (grades 6-8) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019) . Broken up by gender there were 6,034,000 female students and 6,441,000 male students. When separated by ethnicity White students accounted for approximately 6.2 million of the students (approximately 49%), Black students accounted for just under two million (15%), Hispanic students of all descents around three million (24%), and Asian students of all descents of approximately 727,000 (6%). This also leaves approximately 6% of students who are of mixed race or not identified. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2019), "Between fall 2000 and fall 2015, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools who were White decreased from 61%-49%. The percentage of Black students also decreased during this period from 17 to 15 percent. In contrast, there was an increase in the percentage of students enrolled in public schools who were Hispanic (from 16 to 26 percent) and Asian/ Pacific Islander (4 to 5 percent) during this time period" (NCES, 2019, Indicator 6: Elementary and Secondary Enrollment).   The NCES also projects that by fall of 2027, the population of White students will dip to 45% of public-school enrollment, while minorities such as those of Hispanic origin, Asian/Pacific Islander, and mixed races will continue to climb. It is projected that the enrollment of Black students in public

schools will hold steady at around 15% of the total enrollment. While the numbers change gradually this presents a sharp change in the White student population in a short period of only twenty-seven years (i.e., 16%). It also shows that when combining all minorities, White students no longer make up the majority of students in the nation's public schools.

Though not as dramatic as the nationwide averages, the composition of students in the state of Missouri is changing as well according to data from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. From 2011 to 2020, the number of students in Missouri's public schools (both traditional public school and charter school) dropped from 889,653 to 879,659. The subset with the largest drop in the number of students were White students who now make up 70.1% of the population compared with 74.8% in 2011. The number of Black students shrank slightly from 17.1% to 15.5% between 2011 and 2020, while the number of Asian and Hispanic children has increased (from 1.8% to 2.1% and 4.5% to 7% respectively). Meanwhile, the number of children who are mixed race has nearly quadrupled in this time frame going from 1.2% in 2011 to 4.6% in 2020. When examining individual districts, the composition of the student body stands out, especially when the statistics show that the school district is largely skewed to one specific racial group. Data from the NCES indicate that minorities are more likely to attend a school where minorities comprise the majority student population, and Whites attend a school where White comprise 75% or more of the student population (NCES, 2019, Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools). Put simply, students are likely to attend a school where the student's ethnicity/race is a dominant factor. While White students continue to be in Missouri public schools, their numbers are shrinking in nearly every school district count from

2011 to 2020, while minority student numbers, especially Hispanic and mixed-race, continue to climb.

Educational data has shown that the overall face of the student body in the nation's public schools is changing quickly, but what about the faces of educators that will be guiding these students?   Research has already provided evidence of a significant positive impact on students who are taught by teachers of their own ethnic background (Gershenson et al., 2016). Although there are more and more educators of color, the difference in the number of White teachers and teachers of color remains stark. In the 2003-2004 school year 83% of teachers were White. In the 2015-2016 year the number of White teachers did decrease slightly to 80% of the total workforce, and in 2017-2018 Whites were 78% of the workforce (NCES, 2015-2016, Teacher Characteristics and Trends). Data from the NCES shows that across different subsets, only Hispanic teachers saw a sizeable increase from 6% to 9% of the workforce.   Statistically, the number of teachers of color in schools is noted by NCES as they state "Schools that had more racial/ethnic diversity in their student populations also tended to have more racial/ethnic diversity among teachers. The percentage of [teachers of color] was highest at schools that had 90 percent or more students [of color] (55 percent) and was lowest at schools that had less than 10 percent students [of color] (2 percent)" (NCES, 2019, Spotlight A: Characteristics of Public School Teachers by Race/ Ethnicity).   In 2018 the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education presented a report to the Missouri General Assembly regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers in the state. This report illustrates the demographic majority of teachers in Missouri are White which remains unchanged from the 2012-2013 school year to the 2017-2018 school year. The number of teachers

increased slightly from year to year, but the workforce continued to be represented by 93.2% White teaching staff of which 78% are female (DESE, 2018). The number ofBlack educators is 5% and trending downward. The remaining 1.8% of teachers in the 2017-2018 year are referred to as 'other' (non-White and non-Black minorities). The report also notes that over 30% of teachers are within their first ten years of classroom experience (DESE, 2018).

Demographics play a role in shaping perceptions of the school environment for students (Chenoweth, 2017). According to an article in *Education Week*, The Center for American Progress notes that negative behavior of students of color is less likely considered disruptive when the classroom teacher is also a person of color. In practice, however, recruiting and retaining teachers of color is a challenge (Heubeck, 2020). Currently, the public schools of America continue to be staffed by mostly White, female teachers (DESE, 2018; NCES, 2020). The demographic trends of students combined with the continued trend of teachers being mostly white and female supports calls for a new professional development approach to foster relationships across seemingly different backgrounds. Training teachers to understand and adapt to the evolving landscape of the public schools will be critical as the demographic makeup continues to change.

Relational Behaviors and Processes: Teacher-Student Mutual Learning

Engagement

The "high-quality interactions" that Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) hopes to facilitate are greatly diminished in spaces where disengagement is high (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Based on the public polling conducted on the issue of student engagement, we know these spaces include our public-school classrooms especially at the secondary level (Hodges, 2018). Given the importance of engagement in producing

positive teacher-student relationships (TSRs), it is important to review how scholars have understood this issue over time.

For several decades, research has linked the issue of student engagement with a positive connection to the schools and the achievement of academic outcomes. This link is also understood as a process that develops over time for the student. This is reflected in the participation-identification model that measures a student's attachment to the educational environment (Finn, 1989). The more a student sees themselves as positively functioning within a school, the more likely they are to remain engaged with the curriculum that is provided by that institution.

Student engagement is a complex concept that researchers have sought to break down into its component parts. One of the most recognized ways of accomplishing this has been by qualifying the concept through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive perspectives (Fredericks et al., 2004). In this way, students are studied not only over time but through various modalities of attachment to school environments. In other words, what might appear to represent deficient engagement in one category might obscure or overshadow a positive identification or alignment in another.

Other researchers have sought to broaden the scope of what is included in a discussion of student engagement. Rather than simply focus on the individual student's perception or singular attachment to the school environment, these scholars have embraced a model of understanding that stresses how context shapes the self and leads to actions that produce distinct outcomes (Appleton et al., 2008). This context is best understood as involving factors outside of the school setting such as family and peer influence (Appleton, et al., 2008). Examining this context can yield clues as to how to produce more positive outcomes such as educational achievement or persistence to graduation.

Much of this context-self-action-outcome model has also been influenced by work that studies the relationship between student engagement and psychological motivation (Skinner et al., 2008). These two phenomena are related but distinct. This has led several scholars to develop frames of analysis that highlight the school's perspective versus the student's perspective (National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, 2004). Understanding the way that individual psychology is considered by the schools affects the viability of learning strategies that seek to engage all students behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively.

Understanding the individual psychological dispositions of students is one of the keys to creating an engaging classroom environment. Another is staffing the schools with qualified teachers. It is critical that teachers possess the skills to both monitor and enhance the engagement of their students (Reeve, 2012). According to Reeve (2012) and other scholars, this can be accomplished by promoting greater student autonomy in the classroom. By minimizing controls, supporting criticism, providing choice, and discussing values, teachers can implement a student autonomy model that correlates strongly with greater student engagement (Assor, 2012). The goal is to actively include students in the learning process which demonstrates a level of empathetic competence, defined as the ability to understand others' experience and perspectives (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

The active and sustained promotion of student autonomy signals that a foundation is in place for the development of more effective teacher-student relationships (TSRs). By analyzing forty-six published studies, including thirteen longitudinal, one researcher identified "better quality TSRs [as the common

factor] associated with higher levels of psychological engagement, academic achievement, and school attendance and reduced levels of disruptive behaviors, suspension, and dropout" (Quin, 2017, p. 359). An understanding of how different forms of student engagement align with student motivation is essential for teachers who seek to connect with their students.

In addition to this foundation, researchers consider the issue of student engagement through the larger concept of social context. By mapping teacher-student relationships (TSRs) on to the larger world of society, culture, and history, researchers have developed a stronger appreciation for how much social context matters. This is reflected in a conceptual model of school performance that links the individual factors of background, attitudes, behaviors, and performance with the institutional factors of families, schools, and communities (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Based on this body of research, it can be concluded that educators who are more cognizant of these factors are better positioned to engage their students in the classroom.

The connection of student engagement with larger social contexts is reinforced when one considers the research surrounding school-community partnerships or transformative school-community collaboration (TSCC) (Wheeler, et al., 2018; Kim, 2019). As Kim (2019) has noted, "school-community collaboration has become popular because of complex social conditions that lead to multifaceted needs of students." (Kim, 2019, p. 239) Explorations of TSCCs as a concept, follows decades of research on family and community engagement by Epstein et al. (2019), research that suggests that a critical nexus exists between teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Additionally, a decade of research has also produced practical strategies for applying "family-school

partnership intervention[s]" to the learning that takes place in the classroom. (Sheridan et al., 2016, p. 20). According to Kim et al. (2019), "although there is no unified definition of school-community collaboration, it can be broadly defined as an ongoing process of working together between schools, parents, and communities to accomplish mutual goals with a specific focus on student learning and development." (Kim et al., 2019, p. 2) Understanding what happens in a school as part of a larger social construct is an important factor to consider when issues such as student engagement are examined.

Within the specific academic setting of middle school, Elias et al. (1986) established that a primary way that students deal with multiple stressors is by developing social problem solving (SPS) skills that connect with the larger social context. These SPS skills coincide with the often-challenging transition children make from elementary education into the adolescent grade levels. Building off this foundation, Connell et al. (1994) additionally linked the engagement of African American students to the prevalence of their families' involvement in school. By studying 10- to 16-year-olds, these researchers found that student resilience was connected more to their families' support of school than to the economic conditions present in their neighborhoods. This factor, along with other caring adults who are connected to the school community allows for external assets to increase the effectiveness of internal assets such as students' individual strengths (Jennings, 2003).

When asked to provide their own assessment of history, 22 students at Brittney Woods Middle School, University City, Missouri, in Christina Sneed's AP English Language and Composition class ended the 2019-2020 school year with projects on racism and St. Louis History. Their projects focused on the New York Times 1619 Project, a

podcast on White privilege in a more affluent neighboring school district, and a video on colorism and hairstyles (Weiss, 2020). Sneed wanted to help her students understand how social context, language, and rhetoric have been used to shape culture and society. They conducted research, developed a survey, and identified people to interview.

As an example, Sneed's AP student project mirrors that of finding connection through disconnection as it relates to Relational-Cultural Theory (McCauley, 2013). Throughout the project, students from diverse backgrounds and neighborhoods demonstrated mutual empathy for each by sharing their experiences. At the end of the project students gave their own assessment of history, the 1619 Project, and race. Among their projects, they produced a podcast that compared white privilege in Clayton, MO and University City, MO. Another student produced a video addressing colorism or discriminatory acts against individuals based on skin-type and hair styles. Through their connection, the students demonstrated how they were more alike than different.

Based on this review of the literature concerning student engagement, an engaged student is the product of much more than what is simply taught inside of the classroom. Individual motivation is key but so too is an understanding and appreciation of larger social contexts which include the community, student families, and their peers.

Relational Skills: Empathetic Competence

Professional Development

Teacher effectiveness is influenced by the support they receive from their school and the level of confidence they hold regarding the intrinsic self-assurance needed to perform well in urban educational settings. Teachers' attrition rate has been of concern

for many years as the field continues to struggle with hiring, developing, and retaining

high-quality teachers. The quality of teacher preparation programs impacts teacher

confidence, student relationships, and classroom management, all of which may result

in teachers leaving the profession at high rates within their first five years (Mee &

Haverback, 2014). Though there is little research to validate why individuals are

motivated to teach middle school students, research points to teachers' continuing

inability to connect with this adolescent and pre-adolescent age group (Mee &

Haverback, 2014). Moreover, research contends that for middle school students to reach

their highest potential, they must have competent and caring teachers to nurture their

development (Yost & Vogel, 2007). In doing so, student achievement boosts authentic

professional development necessary for teachers to perform at high levels.

Effective professional development should consist of (Yost & Vogel, 2007):

- Requiring teachers to use action research to reflect over practices.
- Frame collaborative induction programs that allow new teachers and more experienced teachers to develop trustworthy relationships and ongoing mentorship.
- Individualize professional development sessions to the context of the school.
- Develop a school culture that allows for meaningful collegial interactions where feedback is offered for more reflection of practice and further competency development.
- Consistent facilitation of data review that examines student socio-emotional growth and academic progress.

Empathetic competence and professional development. Research supports

improving teachers' confidence with building positive student relationships through

professional development focused on the need to improve empathetic competence.

Juvonen et al. (2021) suggest building teacher capacity is best if received during pre-

service training and should continue after they enter the field through laser-focused professional development. To build capacity, middle school teachers must understand young adolescents' social and academic developmental needs (Juvonen et al., 2004). Building the capacity of teachers is initially developed during preservice training and further supported with on-going professional development throughout their teaching careers.   Whether or not middle school teachers get a content-specific certification depends on state requirements in teacher preparation programs. Having thorough subject-matter preparation improves student academic outcomes (Juvonen et al., 2004). Suppose, however, teacher preparation programs continue to produce ill-prepared teachers without overall quality level pre-service training. In that case, schools will continue to see ineffective teachers before students who are not prepared to engage appropriately with middle schoolers. Juvonen (2004) further states specialized training is needed in specific instruction of: greater capacity to engage students and families, understanding of middle schoolers' developmental characteristics and needs, and pedagogical knowledge and skills based in an understanding of human development and learning theory

In providing middle school teachers with quality professional development in both content matter and adolescent-centered pedagogical methodologies, students benefit rather than not. According to Radcliffe & Mandeville (2007), principals already find it challenging to recruit highly developed teachers in their content specialty. The has caused concern over how to recruit more qualified candidates. Research shows middle school grade teachers are very interested in working with this age group; students are mature and ready to learn (Radcliffe & Mandeville, 2007). However, recruiting and retaining good teachers is exceptionally difficult in urban schools (Shann, 1998). Many teacher training programs are reluctant to seek work in inner-city schools, and those who

come tend to leave at high rates. Shann (1998) found this is due to teachers not having a

sense of commitment to the organization and personal investment in education. Shann

(1998) cited seven statistical predictors of job satisfaction for teachers:

1. Interaction with students
2. Interactions with colleagues
3. Professional challenges
4. Professional autonomy
5. Working conditions
6. Salary
7. Opportunities for advancement and more significant contributions

    The impact of empathetic competence on teaching and learning. The

congruence of job satisfaction with urban middle school teachers is of concern due

to a decreasing retention rate (Shann, 1998). Teachers report that having satisfying

student relationships is as important as job satisfaction to the retention of teachers

in urban middle schools. Shann (1998) further asserts that effective teacher-student

relationships (TSRs) are the most important aspect of job satisfaction. Professional

development that promotes empathetic competence carries equal weight to building

effective relationships and subject-matter skill.

School climate is another factor in whether teachers can develop and maintain

positive student relationships. Schools that provide a supportive environment may

strengthen students' academic performance, result in less frequent misbehavior,

and foster a more optimistic outlook. With hands-on, engaging instruction, students

have a more positive view of the school. Even as schools use more and more

technology to engage learners, seasoned teachers lack engagement with their

students themselves, causing increased classroom management challenges. Netcoh et al. (2017) found that as far back as the 1920s, middle school advocates felt that teachers of middle schoolers needed to understood their students' developmental needs. Netcoh et al. (2017) suggest that addressing the needs of middle schoolers puts technology at the forefront. Developing and continually refining responsive strategies while teaching is essentially building the plane while flying it. Netcoh et al. (2017) used action research as the core component in a study to address the challenge of reaching 21st century learners. Similarly, our research emphasizes place-based professional development that facilitates the study of local history and immersion-in-place as a way for teachers to better understand their students. Here, immersion could be understood to mean a deep dive into place and the professional development experience. Netcoh et al. (2017) found that educators struggle with an emerging disconnect with students. As education evolves, teachers must enhance, motivate, and stimulate the curiosity of the student.

With growing concern regarding teaching and learning outcomes, professional development for middle school teachers should have a more focused, comprehensive approach to address students' needs (Clark & Clark, 2004). Tailored development sessions should be outlined in the school's improvement plan. Clark & Clark (2004) further state that in addition to gearing professional development to middle school teacher needs, it should develop a school culture of improvement and high student achievement. Clark & Clark (2004) conclude that traditional models of professional development have limited effectiveness with improving teacher-student relationships that strengthen student learning outcomes. By examining current professional development models, districts can determine whether the necessary skills for working effectively with middle schoolers are included.

Using Place-based Local History Experiences to Nurtue Teacher Empathetic Comeptence

Place-Based Local History

In this section we explore 1) place-based programs and 2) the value of local history. Alternative professional development programs are implemented to provide experiential and immersive teaching methods that enhance relationships between teacher and student in the classrooms (Sheppard et al., 2019).

Place-based education programs. "Place-based education" is not a new professional development process. Place-based education is grounded in the resources and values of the local community. It focuses on community engagement and learning for all stakeholders, and it provides community members with the opportunity to contribute their individual insights into issues that affect the community (Powers, 2004). According to Powers (2004), "place-based education is known as community-based learning, service learning, environmental and sustainability education" (p. 17). Powers analyzed four place-based programs using interview and observation data. The results of the study conclude that the use of local places and resources as well as interdisciplinary teaching had a consistent, positive impact on teacher instructional practice in the classroom (Powers, 2004).

The definition of place-based learning is unique to professional development experiences at specific locations. Sheppard et al. (2019) conducted a program evaluation of teacher professional development at the Ford Theatre in Washington, D.C. which was used as a model for the development of "historical empathy." (p. 187). This type of experiential learning actively engages teachers in a way that is comparable to how students feel when participating in a field trip experience (Sheppard et al., 2019).

Teachers who reflect upon their own site-based learning experience could potentially transform their students' learning and help develop mutual empathy, described as "an openness to being affected by and with another person and grow toward an increased capacity for respect" (McCauley, 2013, p. 3). Like place-based learning, valuable cultural history is situated within a local community.

The goal of professional development is to improve teacher effectiveness and classroom instruction. History teachers and other educators are often not provided with the autonomy to choose professional development that meets their individual needs. However, to gain a better insight into teacher perceptions and the knowledge gained attending historic sites, Baron et al. (2019) accompanied 29 educators at the Thomas Jefferson Monticello Teacher Institute. Their mixed methods study examined the impact of place-based professional development on teacher effectiveness. They identified space and place as instrumental to professional development which offers both significant and challenging opportunities. Regarding interpersonal elements, site-staff tour guides play a significant role engaging teachers at Monticello to emotionally invest in "planter versus the enslaved" distinctions and considerations (p. 99). The authors also discuss the significant role tour guides play in shaping how teachers perceive history tours.

Although the research of Baron et al. (2019) identifies what history teachers learn in historic site-based professional development, Marino (2012) expands the study of local history to: advance students' practice of historical inquiry through analysis of streets, buildings, and communities; encourage students to "think historically" (p. 108) and present evidence that can be read, interpreted, and used to draw conclusions. They use historical structures in New York City to illustrate how any community history can be used to better

understand how history was shaped. New York City is viewed as a place and historical resource. Neighborhoods, their inhabitants, buildings, and streets can be read as texts that have important stories to tell about the past (Marino, 2012). Similarly, Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshop uses oral history to provide middle and high school teachers an opportunity to interact with and listen to those who describe firsthand experiences about school desegregation in Virginia (Suh & Daugherity, 2018).

Prior to *Brown v. Board of Education* aspiring African American teachers attended Virginia State University, one of several segregated teaching institutions in the United States. Recently, pre-service teachers visited The Robert R. Moton Museum, formally R. R. Moton High School and now a Virginia historical landmark, to learn first-hand accounts from students who in 1951 protested segregation at the high school (Suh & Daugherity, 2018). The oral histories from former students were not something teachers had heard or read about in a textbook. Learning oral histories at a historical site, cultural museum, or historic markers encourages an immersive place-based experience (Suh & Daugherity, 2018).

What counts as local history. Danker (2005, as cited in Marino, 2012, p. 107) has defined local history as "the study of the past played out in individual communities, regions, and states". Additionally, local history can help develop student's historical empathy and make the past more relevant. Local history resources are not difficult to find at local libraries and research institutions (Danker, 2003). They are easily accessible and almost guaranteed to capture students' interest (Danker, 2003). Visual landmarks, such as those displayed in New York City, mark the historic sites and other famous neighborhoods. Marino (2012) posits we are all the product of history, and the

lives we live are a legacy of historical events. Local history can also be used to help

students develop cognitive and interpretative skills under the context of social studies

curriculum (Marino, 2012).

Consistent with Danker (2003), local history can be seen throughout the American

landscape as historical markers, historic homes, and local history museums (Elia,

2016). Elia, an English teacher at the State University of New York New Paltz,

explains how embedding local history into her class created curiosity and

eagerness with international students and an interest to learn about the places they were

visiting and living (Elia, 2016). Elia further asserts, history should not just remain in

books filled with facts and numbers and dates and names (Elia, 2016).   For the English

students, studying local history through actual visits allowed for an engaging process

to learn English and to strengthen the teacher-student relationship.

History is the study of the past, and yet, it is left to the interpretation of the

beholder. Whether it happened yesterday or 400 years ago, history has varied

interpretations across neighborhood, city, state, nation, or global lines. Historian Walter

Johnson (2020) chronicles historical events from the Lewis and Clark expedition to the

Michael Brown shooting/Ferguson uprisings, conceptualizing how history evolves. The

author's historical timeline describes how some of the ugly historical events of the past

permeate into patterns and practices today (Johnson, 2020). Using a timeline like Walter

Johnson's could be beneficial in creating a place-based teacher professional development

program.

Teacher tours at cultural sites. "Teacher professional development at historic

sites traditionally focuses on how educators can deepen and expand their content knowledge and develop a capacity to teach historical thinking skills" (Sheppard et al., 2019, p. 187). The authors equate this to "historic site field trips" (Sheppard et al., 2019, p. 188). The authors described how the Ford Theatre, a historic site where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, was doubled as an interactive venue to learn about the Civil War era. The professional development program at Ford Theatre helped to build community as an example of a reflective tool designed for teachers to cycle back into their classroom environments which is a far cry from routine sit and learn professional development environments.

The International Historic Environment Educational (HEE) program at the History Department, New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico, promotes a "think historically, act locally" process to assist teachers and museums in bringing history to life by immersing learners, kindergarten to the elderly, at historic sites, in classrooms, and at museums (Hunner, 2011). HEE prompts people to connect with the past through cultural, historical, and natural markers. Relative to the Ford place-based teacher professional development, HEE invokes "the power of place" enabling educators to focus on significant events, people significant to local history and heritage. An effective technique of HEE is time travel where adult interpreters and students role-play living in a specific past time focusing on nearby sites (Hunner, 2011). HEE oral history technique connects learners with elders from their community who are interviewed to obtain place and local knowledge. Oral history provides a hands-on method for conducting historical research. In addition, oral history highlights untold stories that would be otherwise lost (Hunner, 2011).

      Exploring hidden local history. Quincy Rose, a St. Louis 'On the Air' guest, discussed the importance for teachers to explore historical roots of a community eliminating gaps between home and school (Lippman, 2020). Rose recalls family stories about Annie Malone, a self-made billionaire, and the Delmar Divide not being discussed in school. Historically, the Delmar divide, a Black-White regional divide boundary was designed to concentrate and control African American families. In addition, Rob Good, a St. Louis 'On the Air' guest, described students that are curious about their local history and question "How did we get here?". A deep understanding of the history of systemic injustice toward marginalized peoples helps teachers engage students from marginalized cultures; unfortunately, many teachers have not had an opportunity to cultivate this knowledge and fine-tune their awareness. For new and beginning teachers, having knowledge and understanding about hard historical truths, and how the past shapes the future of students, helps to prepare teachers to become informed and empathetic about local culture especially during difficult conversations concerning students' racial identities. John Wright (2016) captures images of modernday African Americans in St. Louis. Wright's collection of memories of places, spaces, and sites portrays a visual guide which can be used by teachers to culturally connect with students and their parents. It is hoped that cultural connections to students will lead to enhanced teacher-student relations.

      Kavanaugh (2017) discusses the origin of the state of Missouri from early tribal or Native American communities prior to Lewis and Clark.

Kavanaugh researched the history of downtown St. Louis and discovered a city rooted in

the prosperity and wealth gained from its proximity to the Mississippi River. Often

historians like Kavanaugh (2017) and Johnson (2020) treat St. Louis as a representative

city. St. Louis is regarded as a place where various regional histories, north, south, east,

and west, of the United States converge. Positioned at the front of the St. Louis Old

Court House is a statue of Dred and Harriet Scott, a popular tourist attraction for local

and out of town visitors. The Dred-Scott Supreme Court decision of 1847 gave no rights

to a freed slave, declared him to be a non-citizen, while also protecting the rights of slave

owners. The ruling caused violent political controversy and indirectly contributed to the

beginning of the Civil War (Wright et al., 2016).

Based on the review of placed-based programs and local history, we maintain that

there is a growing need for educators to further explore the history of their student's local

community. For the educator who is tasked with helping students achieve academically,

socially, and emotionally, an exploration of a student's local community is essential to

developing a relationship with them. Within the scope of Relational Cultural Theory,

growth is fostered through making connections. Knowing more about local history, and

the communities in which students have lived experiences, offers one way for teachers to

increase clarity and develop authentic relationships.

Consistent with Relational-Cultural Theory, a study of local history and place-

based professional development could give voice to marginalized people, help build

ongoing relationships between teachers and students, facilitate mutual empathy, and help

teachers develop empathetic competence (McCauley, 2013). How to define local history

should be considered when designing new professional development programs for

teachers.

Relational Skills: Authenticity

Authenticity relates to a person, place, or thing. It denotes that something is real, not fake, and that a behavior or custom is appropriate to a given context. As an example, we examine a gemstone if we question its authenticity, especially if it is from an unknown source. A person displaying their true self is viewed as authentic. Curious museum seekers may assume that museum artifacts are authentic, but that may not always be true. Here we review the varied dimensions and interpretations of the term authentic.

To Wilkening & Donnis (2008), museum historians, authenticity "means everything." The authors conducted a visitor survey on authenticity and historical accuracy. One question on the survey, "Thinking about Outdoor History Museums, what does 'authenticity' mean to you?" brought about a myriad of responses related to outdoor history museums. Survey respondents characterized authentic as accurate, true, real, actual, original, genuine, honest, passionate, knowledgeable, and unsanitized. Some even equated authenticity as stepping back in time. The authors concluded "this sense of authenticity is tied to a wide desire for [an] immersion experience in which a site's interpretation engages all five senses..." (Wilkening & Donnis, 2008, p. 19). Alternately, survey respondents referred to inauthentic as fake, made in China, plastic, cheap, uninformed, politically correct, bored, rude, and sanitized. They also caution against dropping the word authentic from our lexicon because "the public expects history-based museums to be authentic- it is inherent" (Wilkening & Donnis, 2008, p. 22) They suggest that inherent authenticity may be likened to a trustworthiness between two individuals .

Characterization of authenticity in museum experience may describe that experience in terms of a particular place, but in the context of cooking or culinary literature, usage of the term instills different connotations and awareness of an historical orientation to food. Allen Weiss (2011) examined various discourses on authenticity, suggesting that authenticity is a descriptive value placed on something because it is authentic to a specific place, time, and culture. Within the culinary arts, the author posits there are geographical or regional differences that determine taste. Weiss (2011) concludes that "authenticity is not in the wine, but in its place." He shifts the paradigm from questioning whether a dish is authentic to "What does it mean for such a version of a dish to appear at this time and place?" (p. 77).

An exploration into deeper meaning of authenticity in food culture examines authenticity from another historical perspective citing how historians can be used to preserve the future of food studies. The discussion of authenticity becomes problematic when current food culture does not authentically represent the past or places of origin (Perelas, 2016). What scholars interpret as authentic may not include the use of original ingredients or reflect the racial background of the people serving the food; in some cases, the dish "celebrates a food past that never existed" (Perelas, 2016, p. 691). Furthermore, authenticity in food culture means that original recipes have not been altered or changed. Historians play a big part in capturing the narrative about food origins to maintain culinary authenticity.

Authenticity has been categorized in many ways. Gatchet (2012), through a series of oral interviews, examined how professional African American blues artists define authenticity through race, class, and identity. The blues music genre has its

historic roots in slavery. It is a symbolic style of music that unified oppressed Blacks in southern regions of the United States. Gatchet (2012) interviewed four blues musicians in Austin, Texas. Statements from the interviewees suggest that blues music is a natural form of raw talent that is deeply rooted within self and culture. Training under veteran blues artists leads to a bond of authenticity that is nevern questioned. As one interviewee expressed, "If you don't have a feel for it, you can't play." This was regarded as an accurate depiction of authenticity within this blues community.

The application of authenticity has relevancy in qualitative research. Grant & Lincoln (2021), through a series of conversations, expanded the criteria for assessing quality and trustworthiness, from an original assessment, within qualitative and interpretative research to include "ontological authenticity" referencing to one's own authentic feelings or beliefs. In addition, "educative authenticity" extending qualitative inquiry and individual interpretations to all stakeholders (p. 5). According to Grant and Lincoln trustworthiness is a quality in qualitative research which helps to define authenticity. Within the research, they describe how working collaboratively on a mathematics project led to authentic trustworthiness of each other. In their shared findings they describe how six high school Black mathematics students transition from being seen as "at risk" to becoming confident and productive in mathematics.

There are several dimensions to how the term authenticity is applied, depending on the genre or field of inquiry. As a criterion in qualitative research, authenticity is referred to as the outcome of a collaboration among researchers. To the outdoor museum world, it is categorized as the realness experienced in being outdoors in a physical place. Authenticity also has its own meaning within culinary and blues music. However, within

the scope of this research, authenticity is defined as one's lived experience within a local

community over time. How does a teacher feel when they become immersed, through a

historic bus tour, in their student's local neighborhood or community? Does the

experience help to strengthen authentic teacher-student relationships? Under the umbrella

of Relational-Cultural Theory, we suggest that authentic teacher-student relationships

will emerge when teachers' lived experience fosters empathy and mutual trust with their

students. Further, when teachers' lived experience includes immersion into place-based

local history, we anticipate that they will be more likely to engage in the relational

behaviors and processes that lead to greater empathetic competence in the classroom.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Place-based learning is grounded in resources and values of the local community with a focus on using the local community as an integral opportunity for learning at all levels. By fostering the growth of partnerships between schools and communities, place-based education works collectively to improve student achievement, a community's quality, and social and economic vitality (Powers, 2004). Given the opportunity in a school setting surrounded by various local history sites, could educators--and the students they serve--benefit from place-based professional development experiences?

The idea for this research emerged as a result of personal and professional experiences in providing teachers with a participatory field learning experience. In August 2021, as part of their back-to-school professional development, staff at La Salle Middle School, a St. Louis Charter school, took a Missouri History Museum-led bus tour of surrounding communities and were given the opportunity to reflect with pre- and post-tour feedback. The purpose of the La Salle Middle School professional development tour was to immerse the staff in the history of the neighborhoods where their students and families reside, to facilitate understanding and awareness of local history, and to hopefully strengthen teacher-student relationships. The research team took part in this bus tour as observers. Once the Internal Review Board (IRB) application was approved, the research team interviewed, observed, and held focus group interviews with participants. They were asked to share

their perspectives of the professional development history tour, and how their experiences

and insights influenced their teacher-student relationships.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact an

immersive, place-based professional development experience has on strengthening

teacher-student relationships and fostering empathetic competence in urban middle

school teachers. The research sought to explore the following questions:

1. What insights does Relational-Cultural Theory offer in an exploration of how
   teachers engage challenging local history?

2. How does a teacher's knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood of
   origin influence the teacher-student relationship?

3. What impact does an immersive experience in a neighborhood's local history
   have toward increasing teacher's empathetic competence?

Research Design

A qualitative single-case study has the potential to be both common and

revelatory (Yin, 2018). The common element is that this study speaks to the demographic

divide that defines public school education in the present-day United States; that is,

mostly White, female teachers teach an increasingly racially diverse student population.

The revelatory dynamic is best reflected in the focus of our research study: whether the

introduction of authentic local history is a significant pathway to strengthen student-

teacher relationships. We explored whether the revelatory dynamic of introducing

authentic local history into teacher professional development can successfully bridge the

demographic divide that is present in public schools in America.

Research Location/Community Partner Institution

La Salle Middle School is located at 1106 North Jefferson in the Carr Square community. La Salle Middle School is a public charter school in the city of St. Louis sponsored by the Missouri Public Charter School Commission with a governing elected board. The research team sought permission to conduct a single case study project at La Salle Middle School with Independent Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A). Approval to conduct the study at La Salle Middle School was provided by the school's Executive Director with the research facilitated through the principal (see Appendix B). The research team sought to have 3-12 middle school teachers voluntarily participate in the case study (see Appendix C and D). The case study included participants who had engaged in one off-site professional development history tour of surrounding communities in the north and south regions of the city of St. Louis.

The tour was facilitated by Amanda Clark of the Missouri History Museum. Amanda Clark is currently the Community Tours Manager for the Missouri Historical Society, a program she led the creation of in 2020. The program offers thematic and location-based walking, bus, and virtual tours to the public or to private groups. Prior to working with MHS, she founded the tour company Renegade STL, which was featured in both the *New York Times* and the *St. Louis Business Journal*. Renegade offered public tours as well as private tours and provided unique programming for Washington University, the Contemporary Art Museum, UMSL, SLU, the St. Louis Art Museum, Arch Grants, and many more. Outside of her work with MHS, Ms. Clark is active on the Landmarks Association Urbanites board and has served on multiple preservation and business development committees in

Webster Groves and in the City of St. Louis.

History of La Salle Middle School and Local History

A group of educators founded De La Salle as a private Catholic middle school in the Ville neighborhood of North St. Louis in 2001 with the goal that they would transform lives and the community. With zeal, love, and mutual respect, students, families, teachers, staff, donors, and friends worked together to prepare middle school students for academic success in high school and beyond. They were inspired by St. John Baptist de La Salle, a French priest and educational reformer who believed that education gave hope and opportunity for people to lead lives of dignity and freedom.

In 2017, De La Salle became a public charter school, La Salle Middle School, to serve children in North St. Louis. La Salle Middle School currently serves 125 middle school students and is committed to transforming children and community through innovative education. Students are challenged to achieve academic excellence, nurture caring relationships, understand the need for service in the community, and show respect for all.

Just about any facet of information about the history of the City of St. Louis, Missouri, can be found in Walter Johnson's *Broken Heart of America* (2020) with some good, bad, and ugly history reported in detail. In his book, Johnson expresses, *"I came to this book less as a professional historian than as a citizen taking the measure of a history that I had lived through but not yet fully understood"* (p. 12). However, relevant to this research, Johnson grants a clear picture of contextualized history of local areas. Some in the vicinity of La Salle Middle School (former and current locations) which is our research location.

Within a 2.0 mi radius of La Salle Middle are several historic locations that have footprints in the region's local history and neighborhoods. Although students migrate from various areas, much of the surrounding La Salle Middle School communities are areas where students and/or their families once resided or have cultural and familial ties. Like Johnson, John Wright (2002), displays photographs to chronicle local St. Louis history which includes locations such as the Pruitt Igoe Housing complex, the Ville neighborhood, the Annie Malone Children and Family Service Center, Sumner High School, Homer G. Phillips Hospital, the Griot Museum of Black History and Culture, and Harris Stowe University. All are important to this research because we want to unpack how a teacher's knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood of origin influence teacher-student relationships.

Over the past 50 years the local La Salle community has undergone urban development, revitalization, cleansing, and closure, yet the legacy and history of the community prevail. Pruitt Igoe, initially designed as a low-income housing project for Black and White, residents became *"one of the largest and best designed public housing projects of the post-World War II period"* (Wright, 2002, p. 88). In less than 20 years, the local pride imploded to local shame, primarily due to white flight, years of poor maintenance, crime, and other factors.

"The Ville" was once a thriving Black community encompassing an educational institution, hospital, entrepreneurs, university, and many famed and notable residents. From the time of its dedication in 1937, Homer G. Phillips Hospital for Colored, named after an attorney, was touted as the largest institution in the country serving the "indigent sick and Negro population" as well as one of few

institutions equipped to train black doctors (Wright, 2002, p. 66). The presence of a

hospital in a local neighborhood was a source of pride and medical professionalism

where most Black babies were born (Wright, 2002). Still at its original location,

Homer G. Phillips Hospital now serves as a nursing home facility and is listed in the

National Register of Historic Places.

Wright (2002) describes Charles H. Sumner High School, as the "cornerstone" of

the Ville neighborhood and that it holds the distinction of being the oldest Black high school

west of the Mississippi River (Wright, 2002, p. 68). Established in 1875, Sumner was

named after a former U.S. senator who opposed slavery. What started as a training

college for Black teachers evolved into an esteemed high school for Black students

boasting of famed graduates such as Arthur Ashe, Chuck Berry, Grace Bumbry, Dick

Gregory, Tina Turner, and Margaret Bush Wilson, to name just a few. The school is also

listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Recently, Sumner High School was threatened with closure due to

declining enrollment and other factors. Jerome Morris describes how the threat of

school closure threatens local neighborhood stability (Morris, 2021). After a recent

push back from the Black community and alumni, there are plans to restore historic

Charles H. Sumner High School as a museum school to learn about the school's

history, culture, heritage, and surrounding community with former students to serve as

docents.

Annie Turnbo Malone, known as the pioneer of the Black hair care

industry, founded the first hair care college which trained black women on the art of

hair care and beauty culture (The Annie Malone Historical Society, 2018). She went on

to establish 32 beauty schools across the United States. Annie Malone was not only an entrepreneur but a philanthropist as well. According to Linda Nance, founding president of the Annie Malone Historical Society, too many people are unaware who Annie Malone was. Her liberal contribution helped to fund the appropriately named Annie Malone Children's Home, formerly known as the St. Louis Colored Orphan's Home, located in "The Ville." Annually the Annie Malone May Day Parade is held in her honor featuring high school bands, cultural and children's performances, colorful floats, and businesses representing the culture and pride of the Black community.

The Griot Museum of Black History and Culture is another hidden cultural gem located in the vicinity of La Salle Middle School, the former Pruitt-Igoe site, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) currently under construction. Featured throughout the museum are life size wax figures of several past and present iconic African Americans within the St. Louis community. Additionally, Walter Johnson (2020) noted how "the museum represents the history of Black St. Louis, which is almost completely unmemorialized in the city" (p. 438).

Harris Stowe State University has a very complex history, and is highly significant to the Black and White cultural community. Founded in 1857, it was the first public teacher education institution (Harris Teachers College) west of the Mississippi. Originally for white students only, it was later enjoined with Stowe Teachers College for Black aspiring teachers, an extension of Sumner High School in the city of St. Louis. The two were merged by the Board of Education of the St. Louis Public Schools in 1954 to become Harris Teachers College to help integrate the public schools. After years of push from alumni and the state of Missouri through Senate

Bill 703, Harris Stowe College became Harris Stowe State College and in subsequent years Harris-Stowe State University.

Unless teachers are familiar with local St. Louis history, they may be unaware of significant facts, patterns, and trends that affect the lives of their students. When teachers understanding their students' history, culture, and traditions, they may build stronger teacher-student relationships. Exploring the local history of a community can be a potential benefit--even a launching pad--to building stronger relationships.

Historical Thinking

This study explores the benefit of thinking historically, especially when it involves educators tasked with engaging their students. Historical thinking is different than historical consciousness as it seeks to develop skills that promote critical thought as opposed to mastery of well-developed or well-worn narratives of the past (Seixas, 2017). An example of this critical perspective is offered by Wineburg (2001) who details the importance of sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and close reading as ways in which all people can come to grapple with the complexities of the past. As Wineburg (2001) notes, historical thinking is not a mere academic exercise but instead "begin[s] with the basic assumption that history teaches us a way to make choices, to balance opinions, to tell stories, and to become uneasy – when necessary – about the stories we tell" (Wineburg, 2001, p. ix). More a matter of unsettling one's assumptions about the past than mastering grand narratives, the critical aspect of historical thinking challenges all people to rethink and reevaluate the significance of history. Indeed, as exemplified in the work of Epstein (2009), historical thinking can reveal the differences in how people perceive history and encourage them to seek out new sources of information and experiences that demonstrate the systematic effects of political, economic, and cultural power structures we

collectively inherit from the past.

Local History Bus Tour Observations

All members of the teaching staff, as well as ancillary staff, took part in the bus tour on August 13, 2021. As the bus departed the school and traveled south, conversations between members of the staff began as the tour guide described the context and background of certain neighborhoods and focal points. Discussions amongst the staff showed how much background each of them had in the St. Louis area, allowing a breakdown into one of three generalities about their background: 1) Born and raised in the city, with a lot of connection to the City of St. Louis; 2) Born and raised in the region, but with only tourist/transient attachment to the City; and 3) Not born and raised in the region, new to the region, and/or with no knowledge or history of the City or region. The participants who were originally from the City were quick to point out to their colleagues spots of interest that were relevant to themselves. One of these members, who was originally from the South side, served as a de facto "go-to" person for those who fell into one of the latter categories of participants. The comradery among the staff was noted and none of the staff members on the tour appeared to be disengaged or distracted. The bus trip took them down Grand Avenue and through several notable neighborhoods in South St. Louis including Dutchtown, Fox Park, Tower Grove, and Soulard.

From there the tour proceeded up the interstate and exited just north of downtown St. Louis. As the bus moved from businesses situated near the interstate into the more residential areas, there was a notable change in the joviality of the trip. The conversations quickly diminished and the mood became more somber. The friendliness and familiarity of the conversations gave way to more pointed and direct questions such

as, "What happened here?" The aesthetics of the area were no longer as vibrant and alive

as they were on the South side. Here, the staff came face to face with themes of

economics, politics, racial segregation, and urban disinvestment as the tour guide talked

about the things that pushed white families out of the area. The issue of redlining,

discussed in Johnson (2020), was brought up. One of the participants was unaware of the

term and asked for clarification. As the tour continued back into the area surrounding the

school, participants heard more about the economic disinvestment in the area and how

real-estate developers and political policies continue to influence the neighborhood.

Details of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact an immersive,

place-based professional development experience has on strengthening teacher-student

relationships and fostering empathetic competence in urban middle school teachers. As part

of their on-going professional development efforts at La Salle Middle School, participants

took part in a professionally guided 2-hour bus tour of the neighborhoods and

communities where their middle school students lived.

In our research, we went through several steps to address our research questions. In

the first phase, researchers conducted interviews with participants and discussed the tour

and its impact (See Appendix E). At the conclusion of the interview, participants, in

collaboration with researchers, developed an action plan. These plans included teacher

driven statements that articulated goals and strategies to extend their tour experience into

the classroom (See Appendix F). For the second phase, researchers followed up with

classroom observations (See Appendix G). For the third and final phase, participants who

took part in a focus group interview were asked about their insights of the tour and their

understanding of how to build successful teacher-student relationships (See Appendix

H). The school also administered pre- and post-tour surveys that they kept for data

purposes; these records were shared with the researchers (See Appendix I).

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Our study sample constituted a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2019). The selection

of the (12) teachers was done so that we could better understand how a particular form of

professional development helps create connections between middle school teachers and

their students in an urban educational setting. Our study sample had the potential to

reveal whether place-based experiences of authentic local history strengthened teacher-

student interactions in the classroom space (Creswell, 2019). We also found our sampling

approach to be aligned with our theoretical framework. In this way, the study explores the

possibility of integrating Relational-Cultural Theory into school contexts (Creswell,

2019). Table 1 displays key demographic information for the (12) teachers at La Salle

Middle School during the 2021-22 school year.

Identification of Participants/Characteristics

Table 1

La Salle Middle School Teacher Demographics 2021-22

RACE	GENDER	Years in education through SY 2020-21	Years in urban education through SY 2020-21
White	Female	6	4
White	Female	1	1
White	Female	29	29
White	Female	18	18
White	Female	4	4
White	Female	14	14
White	Male	17	11
White	Female	15	10
Black	Male	4	4
Black	Female	7	6
Black	Female	9	9
Black	Female	24	8

The prospective participant list for our case study was drawn from the teachers and administrators at La Salle Middle School. Of the 12 staff members who were invited to participate in the case study, their demographic characteristics/ racial makeup differed from that of the student body, as demonstrated below.

Teacher Demographics 2021-22

- 12 teachers

- 4 Black, 33%

- 8 White, 66%

- 10 female; 3 Black or 30%, 7 White or 70%

- 2 male; 1 Black or 50%, 1 White or50%

Student Demographics 2021-22

- Total students 125

- Black 124, 99%

- Hispanic 1, 1%

Students frequently demonstrated one or more of these sub-categorical barriers

1. They were a person of color.

2. They would be a first-generation college student.

3. They were from a low income household.

4. They were from a household headed by a woman, in some cases, not their mother.

5. They experienced some form of trauma.

6. They were two-four academic levels behind.

7. They demonstrated stagnant socio-emotional development.

In October 2022, researchers presented the topic, title, and a description of the
case study to La Salle Middle School staff which comprised twelve (12) certified
teachers, some of whom were also school administrators. Following a series of email
communication with staff, six teachers from this population consented to participate in

the case study. Of the six participants five were female and one was a male teacher. They

each had varied teaching and occupational experiences. Their subjects ranged from

English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. Although not all

teachers agreed to participate in the study, these six participants allowed us to explore our

research questions.

Data Collection Methods

Through informed consent and approval from the school executive director,

the research team interviewed the six participants, observed five of their classrooms,

and met with three of the six participants in a focus group facilitated by the research

team. Individual virtual interviews were held via zoom during January and February

2022. The classroom observations, via Google Meet, were held during February and

March 2022, and a focus group session took place in April 2022. Each session lasted

approximately 60 minutes.

This single case study used several qualitative tools to explore the phenomena

under investigation (Yin, 2018). The first of these is the formal reflections of the

case study informants. The format of this reflection was structured as an in-take

interview where the teachers responded to questions posed by the EdD Dissertation

team (see Appendix E). The responses to the questions were subsequently coded and

analyzed to discern common themes amongst the participants (Saldaña, 2016). The

St. Louis City tour itself and the interview process also coincided with the

production of a statement of purpose/action plan (see Appendix F) to guide the

integration of local history knowledge into the teachers' inter-disciplinary classroom

spaces. This embedded unit of analysis allowed the research team to explore teacher

intentions as a result of the place-based historic bus tour they experienced (Yin, 2018). The results could also be used to assess the value of future field experiences, perhaps even involving students.

Beginning in February 2022, we conducted one hour-long classroom observation each for five of the participants (see Appendix G). These observations were guided by the researchers' mental agenda/conceptual model (Yin, 2018). Using Google Meet, without the record function activated, researchers, who were also muted, observed participants as they interacted with their students in their classrooms. Following a mental line of inquiry in keeping with the study purpose, researchers recorded observational field notes in keeping with a descriptive case study approach. Once five hours of observations were collected, they were added to the case study's database for coding and analysis.

As an extension to the interview process and the collective analysis of the teachers' action plans, these participant-observations were also conducted to gather information on the relational dynamic of the classroom spaces (Yin, 2018). Again, no direct engagement with students took place by the researchers, but their observations constituted an additional measure to be included in the case study database. Through the collection of field notes, we explored, indirectly, the student experience as case study participants engaged them in lessons (Yin, 2018).

A final component of the case study's data collection included field notes gathered during a focus group interview with three case study participants (Yin, 2018). Again, the questions featured from this focus group interview (see Appendix H) followed the researchers' mental line of inquiry which led to several verbal lines of inquiry

captured by members of the research team. The primary focus of this discussion, however, was the consideration of what kind of St. Louis history tours/immersive place-based experiences would strengthen the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. Focus group participant responses were recorded, transcribed, uploaded to the case study database, coded, and analyzed alongside other case study materials.

Data Analysis Procedures

Terry and Hayfield (2021) define themes as "meaning-based patterns constructed by researchers from raw data through a rigorous, systematic process to help tell the story of the data from a research project" (Terry & Hayfield, 2021, p. 13). The necessity of a rigorous process requires the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time revisiting the data looking for specific quotes to support themes and not jumping to thematic conclusions too quickly. What seems obvious is not necessarily what ultimately emerges from the data. An examination of the initial codes, categories, and prototype themes leads to the formulation of key findings in response to the research questions.

Ultimately, the case study featured a "collage" of data (Freeman, 2020) that derives from several different sources and researcher engagement with the case study participants (Yin, 2018). This allowed the research team to assess the strength of the case study data and to draw conclusions regarding the case study's purpose (i.e., the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact an immersive, place-based professional development experience has on strengthening teacher-student relationships and fostering empathetic competence in urban middle school teachers).

During the interviews, the researchers used journaling and memo writing to uncover emerging themes from participant to participant and formulate general meanings

about teacher-student relationships. During the process of analytic memo writing,

researchers wrote anecdotal notes, summarized observations, and documented reflections

(Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). This process allowed the researcher to listen closely to what

was being said and to ask follow-up questions of the data. Afterward, interview

transcripts and observation data were imported into Dedoose, a web-based qualitative

analysis program. The program tracked selected codes and the research team categorized

the data into themes.

We analyzed the observation protocols manually using a bottom-up coding

approach to pull out themes from the data. Becoming familiar with the data, examining

what participants were saying and how it related to our research questions, is an

important and necessary step which Terry and Hayfield (2021) describe as

"familiarization of data" (p. 29). We captured participants' actual voice in each

observation, using an "in Vivo" approach which gives an authentic voice to teacher

perceptions. This is important to our case study because we wanted to uncover those

attributes and meanings that give more insight into teacher engagement.

As a collaborative process we used the Pin-Up Sticky Note Board, a computer-

based shared bulletin board (http://www.pinup.com) and posted the codes generated

from each phase of our research. To prevent researcher bias, each researcher individually

coded the data and placed it on the bulletin board. As a team, we began the initial process

of brainstorming, collaborating, and grouping similarities in codes according to

relationships, characteristics, etc. This process led to reorganization, justifications,

agreement, disagreement, and consensus. From the discussion, five to six "chunks" of

codes began to emerge into initial themes or categories.

Continuing with the data familiarization process, chunks were then categorized and grouped as context or data codes describing teacher background or experience, what educators need, teacher-student relationships, local history, and professional development. Supportive of each chunk or emergent themes are descriptors taken directly from the data set. Terry and Hayfield (2021) define themes as "meaning-based patterns constructed by researchers from raw data through a rigorous, systematic process to help tell the story of the data from a research project" (Terry & Hayfield, 2021, p. 13). The necessity of a rigorous process requires the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time revisiting the data looking for specific quotes to support themes and not jumping to thematic conclusions too quickly. Again, what seems obvious does not necessarily constitute what emerges from the data.

Ethical Considerations - IRB

For this study, which included human subjects, the research team underwent a research ethics review process. In compliance with the Internal Review Board (IRB) ethical standards, participants were informed of the nature of the study and their level of involvement. Participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study without penalty or any risks or harm associated with the study.

Additionally, the proposed study included observations of teachers in an educational setting during a normal educational period with no direct contact with students and minimal risk or harm to subjects. Specific IRB guidelines were followed to ensure the confidentiality of subject identities and the privacy of study data; thus, we avoided disclosing subject identities and maintained study data in a password protected cloud database secured via double authentication. One of the researchers, Lauren Cobb,

served a dual role as both a member of the research team and as the full-time Principal of La Salle Middle School. In order to manage a conflict of interest and ensure that the study participants' identities were protected as the research progressed, the three other members of the research team engaged in the data collection process.

The three remaining researchers first sent recruitment letters to all teachers inviting them to take part in the study. All further communication with each individual teacher who wished to participate was done through e-mail sent individually to him/her. Interviews and observations were scheduled individually with teacher participants and were conducted via Zoom, a video conferencing software. Teachers were also given time by the Executive Director of La Salle Middle School to participate in the focus group interview, again conducted via Zoom. Communication with the Executive Director by the research team was made via e-mail directly to her. At no point did Lauren Cobb have access to the schedule of research interviews or observations, nor was she made aware of when the focus group interview occurred. She was also excluded from, and unaware of, any communication via e-mail to the participants.

The storage of raw data which included transcripts, audio recordings, and video recordings of the interviews, observations, and focus group were kept in a password protected cloud server that was secured by two-step verification. The master list of participants was also kept in this shared folder for reference. At no point in the research process did Lauren Cobb have access to the storage folder itself, the raw data in this folder, or access to the participant master list.

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, it is important to know who is conducting the research. The researchers in this case study offer their positionality and alignment of experiences as it relates to the central focus of this work.

Rich Buschard

My position as a researcher has been greatly influenced by my life experiences growing up in a middle-class family in the St. Louis area. The areas where I grew up were largely Caucasian during the 1980s, and it was a rarity to encounter someone of another race. I attended both private and public schools as a child and grew up with a tremendous amount of respect for educational systems and educational professionals which influenced my decision to become an educator. One of my earliest experiences with encountering the 'Us vs. Them' mentality was while I was attending a private religious grade school and would be told weekly to make sure we put our stuff away totally so the public school students don't take it. This stereotype of the public school student continues to this day. Having taught in both private and public schools, I am aware of differences in the expectations of students and perceptions that are held about students in both settings.

As a practicing Catholic who believes that all humans are created equal in a Divine image along with my beliefs in the purest form of our republic, I am motivated to challenge myself and my perceptions in this scope. How can a society that promotes the ideals of all men created equal under the law be a place in which marginalization still occurs? How is the taking of lives of one group considered an acceptable loss for our society? What motivates us to arbitrarily place more value on one person versus

another? As a husband and father of four, I am surrounded by individuals who, though

sharing molecular similarities to me, are different in their experiences, thoughts,

emotions, and attitudes. I am called to work with this group because they are in the group

in my care. I am confident that many in the United States share this sentiment about their

own families. But why can't this same sentiment be applicable to society as a whole?

Through my work as an educator in both private and public schools, I have seen how

intrinsic attitudes toward others who are different affect the atmosphere in a classroom.

This creates a mindset in which certain groups or individuals are viewed as lesser while

others are viewed more positively. To achieve the desired intent of the verbiage of

our founding documents, we must strive towards seeking a society in which no man's,

woman's, or child's life is considered less important than another's. We must continually

work towards equal justice for all: whereby no skin color, gender, creed, or orientation

can be held in higher esteem when it comes to our legal system and law enforcement.

This belief that we can see the value of everyone simply because they are a person drives

me to daily personal conversion. I hope that through my research, experience, and

example, more will be called to their own sense of personal conversion.

Diane Clark

My father, who lived 97 years, never knew his biological parents, yet he and my

mother, who lived 90 years of life, gave me and eight other siblings an eventful life. We

weren't rich or poor and certainly not classified as middle class. Often referred by my

father as "ten blockers" our livelihood and neighborhood experiences occurred with a 10-

block radius of home.

Born in a historic year, with Brown vs Board of Education, and in the historic

Homer G. Phillips Hospital located in the Ville, a historic Black community, my life

experiences have been shaped by the local community. I began my first year of college

during the summer months prior to the start of the official school year at the University of

Missouri- St. Louis, as an underachiever in math subjects. That same year, 18-year-olds

became eligible to vote in a presidential election per the 26th Amendment to the

Constitution. I am a retired educator and professional student, as Maya Angelou so

eloquently recited in her poem "And Still I Rise."

Early on I began to see myself as a walking historian. My siblings and I walked to

and from a neighborhood school first through eighth grade. In addition, our community

was filled with services, large close-knit families, cultural events, convenience stores, a

grocery store, drugstore, barbershop, shoe shop, beauty shop, cleaners, and a pipe shop to

name a few. For many years walking to and from school I could identify every architect

on buildings, milestones and even the Gotham apartment building in which it is alleged

famed Vincent Price once lived. The beautiful Forest Park, within our 10-block radius,

was essentially our backyard. Where else could you take nine siblings to roam free and

explore educational Museums?

Throughout my educational career my experiences included teacher, school

administrator, and central office administrator, primarily working with students and staff

that looked different than me. I am currently a retired educator, mother of three

daughters, grandmother of five, and professional student. A graduate of the St. Louis

Public school system, I am seeking my third degree from the University of Missouri-St.

Louis within fifty years. As a native St. Louisan, my lifelong experiences have been

shaped by local cultural events, people, places, and school. Some of the same racist

educational and discriminatory practices I experienced yesterday are still evident with tension,

policing, politics, privilege, and school governance contining to fragment our democracy.

My epistemological stance in my dissertation team is that of a critical historian,

eager to explore the past as it relates to now. In my own family I am the designated

historian especially on a quest to find my father's biological parents. Somehow, I believe

there is a connection with orphaned kids in Louisiana during the historic Mississippi

Flood of 1927. My childhood experiences may have been local, yet in my

professional career I was employed in school districts well beyond my 10-block radius

and I observed a disconnect when there was an influx of White teachers into public

schools primarily with students. The cultural divide between teacher and student places

limits on students effectively learning about their local history and cultural identity. St.

Louis has a rich history, that if explored could impact active engagement of students in

the classroom.

My dissertation team consists of four educators, two White male teachers, one

Black female administrator and one Black female retired educator. It is no surprise that I

find myself immersed with a group of professionals who in our various roles and

assignments are exploring alternate ways to bridge the cultural gap between teacher and

student. I duly respect their everyday challenges working with students especially during

the pandemic. I am more than honored to work with this group of dedicated professionals.

Despite our varied backgrounds and educational experience, we have collaborated with one

goal in mind. A qualitative case study will explore how knowledge about a student's

community and local history improves teacher-student relationships, self-esteem, and

opportunity gaps.

Lauren Cobb

As a member of the Authentic Local History dissertation team, it is essential to the integirty of the dissertation research to disclose my positionality and share my journey both personally and professionally that has me perfectly placed and not by happenstance for this line of research. My experiences affect the lens of my research from which I draw perspective and purpose and have sufficiently prepared me to participate in research centered on teachers building effective relationships with students that yield greater academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

I come from a multi-generational blue-collar, working-class family. My father was born in Canton, Mississippi, and migrated to St. Louis after graduating from high school in 1966. He came to St. Louis in hopes of better employment opportunities to care for himself and his family. He landed a job at the General Motors plant on Union Boulevard in north St. Louis city.   He worked at the plant until it closed the north city location in 1980 and then transferred to Wentzville, Missouri, where he retired after thirty years of service. Upon arrival to St. Louis, he lived where all Black people could live at the time, the city of St. Louis, north side, directly across the street from O'Fallon Park on Harris Avenue. My mother was born at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in the Ville neighborhood. She had a transient residential life for the first ten years; Belle Glade Avenue, Pruit Igoe Housing Development, Wabada Avenue, Lexington Avenue, to Harris Avenue. My parents met in 1973 coincidently, on Harris Avenue, where they both lived. My father moved to Harris Avenue upon his arrival in St. Louis. My mother graduated in 1971 from Beaumont High School. At the time, her

family was the only Black family on the street. To that end, her family encountered continual racial antagonization during her childhood. The demographic of the area slowly changed from predominantly White to all Black by the 1970s.   She and my father migrated to north county in 1976 near the 270 and Halls Ferry Road corridor to find that they were the only Blacks residents on their block. They remain in the home after nearly forty-five years. There is an adage that local Black residents of my parents' generation often use when referring to their move to north county; "you better not go past the circle" . This phrase is interpreted as there being an unspoken racially segregated divide that was in their best interest not to attempt to cross. As Blacks began to migrate from north St. Louis city in the 1970s, past the Riverview Boulevard circle, they resided in areas in the suburbs of north county; Hazelwood, Jennings, Ferguson, Florrissant, and Riverview.

I grew up in north county and attended an all-Black elementary school. When I got to middle and high school, this was my introduction to White people, with both schools equally populated with Black and White students. Over thirteen years as a student in the same school district, I had three Black administrators and nine Black teachers for my k-12 education. I attended a local predominately White university for my bachelorette, master's, and education specialist degrees. During my tenure at the university, I had limited Black professors and very few Black fellow students as associates. I entered education in 1998. I was a teacher for three years, a counselor for five years at my high school alma mater, a federal grant coordinator at my college alma mater, a professional development coordinator, a middle school assistant principal at a Black school district, and a building principal in the City of St. Louis.

Working in various education capacities has afforded me insight into the equity or lack thereof that permeates schools of color. During my tenure as a professional development coordinator, district-level administrators attended a bus tour of the district where they could visit each school, calibrate the instructional practices, and collaboratively provide feedback to principals for improvement. After seeing one of the buildings, a colleague was quite frustrated with what she continued to observe from classroom to classroom, building to building. She just did not understand the difficulty of providing students of color with the same standards and expectations as in White and predominately White districts. Through her disdain, I had my epiphany as to my focus in education; to serve students of color by being an advocate for ensuring equitable instructional practices, resources, and opportunities.

For this research study at La Salle Middle School, my current position as building principal will have no bearing on potential teacher participation as I recused myself from the process. Recognizing my potential influence over teachers, not being involved in the study presentation, selection phase, interviews, or focus group allows for data validity. Participants have a choice to opt into the research. Teachers were introduced to the Authentic Local History dissertation team and provided with the research purpose, and their potential participation is voluntary and has no bearing on the teacher evaluation process. It is not my intent to influence teacher-student interactions that could result in inauthentic data gathered. I have been excluded from viewing interviews conducted by team members so as to not skew participants' responses. My position is to allow the cohort to facilitate the case study in a neutral setting, free of my position as the school administrator. I participated in the initial introduction meeting

and bus tour field trip. I was not a part of the participant selection process, research

gathering phase, or data analysis. The participant list is coded to protect teachers'

identities to ensure the confidentiality of their responses.

Brian Esselman

Research, but especially qualitative research, requires that scholars actively engage

in the field of study. Unlike strict experimental designs concerning natural phenomena, the

qualitative researcher is embedded in a world that is "richly descriptive" and imbued with

human complexity (Merriam, 2009. p. 16). Because human beings are inherently meaning-

making creatures, this makes the topics of reflexivity and positionality of paramount

importance for the qualitative research design. With reflexivity, the researcher

acknowledges that the "interpretation of data [is an activity] through which meanings are

made rather than found" (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003. p. 414). Given that the researcher is

by definition directly involved in this process or exchange, their positionality, with respect

to their academic or personal biographies, also looms large in the sense that it affects their

reflexive disposition and openness to interpreting the phenomena as such (Mauthner &

Doucet, 2003. p. 420).

I am a researcher who is defined, first and foremost, by my role as a public educator

of now twenty years' experience. I have taught almost exclusively at the secondary level

but my responsibilities as an adjunct instructor have also brought me within close

proximity of the university on a regular basis. Additionally, my academic background as

a master's degree-level historian and undergraduate student of philosophy and religion,

has shaped my understanding of academics as a domain that is highly characterized by

both competing interpretations and ongoing revision. I also represent the first generation in

my family to earn degrees above an associate's level. This, combined with my White, heterosexual, and middle-class lifestyle, also affects my view of how knowledge is produced and the interests its serves in our multi-ethnic and multi-racial society.

For my dissertation research, I am working with a group of three other professional educators who, along with myself, constitute a research team that is balanced by both gender and race. While one team member is retired from the field, the other three, including myself, are still active as either teachers or as an administrator. We are focused on the role that a more authentic understanding of local history can play in the classroom. We hypothesize that a greater attention paid to this history will overcome student disengagement and create a context for more meaningful teacher-student relationships. We intended to test this hypothesis through a research design that studies how teachers can best incorporate this local history into their classrooms at a specific level of education and across all content areas. For this, we partnered with a local school that is situated in a culturally/historically rich, but publicly overlooked, area of St. Louis city.

Epistemologically, I am cautious when it comes to knowledge claims that assert objectivity. My background and experience have taught me that phenomena are complex and multi-dimensional. Because of this, I am drawn to Creswell's description of the postpositivist worldview because it is honest in its depiction of the limitations inherent to any truth claims in the sciences (Creswell, 2009, p. 6). I am not a skeptic of truth, but I do find it to be both elusive and even mysterious. As a direct result of this, I worry about the zealousness of the advocacy and participatory worldview because I think it tends to run off in directions that are often dubious in terms of foundations (Creswell.

2009, p. 9.). I readily admit that our program is predicated on the notion of activism, but I would like our research to be rooted and intellectually humble in its claims. In this way, I am also concerned about the pragmatist worldview because I do not believe that all thoughts are merely constructs of convenience (Creswell, 2009, p. 10). I do believe that our time calls out for research that points in the direction of truth whether that be in the consensus that can be achieved through dialogue, the lessons that need to be taught in terms of bringing us in touch with challenging history, or the necessity of protecting free speech in academic environments and/or public spaces. Perhaps the closest worldview that Creswell describes, in terms of my own orientation, is the social constructivist framework (Creswell. 2009, p. 8). Because I believe that each human being has the ability to ontologically speak the truth of being, I am strident about the need for each voice to inform our epistemology of the world we inhabit. Given my multi-faceted premise regarding truth stated earlier, I think that all individuals have something to share that can collectively construct our understanding. This is what I hope to see reflected in our research for my Ed.D dissertation group. I hope to see the construction of a shared local history to be one of the ways to overcome student disengagement in the classroom and perhaps also a more authentic way of forging teacher-student relationships.

Positionality is the practice of a researcher making known their relation to the study, with the implication that this position may influence aspects of the study (Creswell, 2009). Understanding positionality in the research is important as it addresses any unwanted influences of the researcher based on their own personal biases, beliefs, and opinion. This reinforces the validity of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

We interpreted data from teacher interviews, observations, and a focus group interview with consideration to our research questions. We also analyzed, but did not administer, pre and post professional development surveys offered to us courtesy of La Salle Middle School.

1. What insights does Relational-Cultural Theory offer in an exploration of how teachers engage challenging local history?

2. How does a teacher's knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood of origin influence the teacher-student relationship?

3. What impact does an immersive experience in a neighborhood's local history have toward increasing teacher's empathetic competence?

An examination of the initial codes, categories, or themes revealed several key aspects of our data that aligned with our research questions. From the six categories or themes we initially developed, we summarized our data as follows: 1) empathy and mutual respect are at the core of successful teacher and student relations 2) teacher and student inquiries into shared cultural background and experiences serve to bridge their cultural connections 3) teachers are convinced local history explorations can be developed with their students and 4) an expressed desire or need from teachers for more place-based professional development experiences of local history and neighborhoods. This summarization of data is also displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Conceptual Thematic Chart

Theory	Theory Component	Themes and Data Points
Relational Cultural Theory (RCT)	• Authenticity • Empathetic Competence	1. Teachers understand empathy/mutual exchange to be central
		Empathy
		Foundation of understanding
		Relationships with students is key
		Building trust
		Overcoming mistrust
		Sharing of teacher struggles
		"I have experienced . . ."
	• Mutual Teaching/Learning • Using Disconnection to Connect	2. Teachers see value of students' backgrounds and wish to share their own perspectives
		Education experience
		Sharing of personal trauma
		Varied backgrounds
		Family migration
		"What brought your family . . ."

Theory	Theory Component	Themes and Data Points
	• Mutual Teaching/Learning • Using Disconnection to Connect	3. Teachers are convinced local history explorations can be developed with their students
		Mutual learning
		Personal connection to history
		Relating history to present day
		"You're a part of that"
		"How much is under the surface?"
	• New Knowledge • Desire for More Connection	4. Teachers' desire/need for more PD experiences connected to local history are not to be ignored
		Power of immersion
		Bus tour
		Guest speakers
		Community resources
		Lack of funding
		Technology needs
		Involvement of Students

Thematic Analysis

Theme One: Teachers want better connections to their students.

"So of course, understanding. Oh, the more [I] understand . . . [I] want them to know [they]'re not alone." (Participant Interview 2-18-22)

Teachers understand empathy and mutual exchange to be central to their practice in the classroom. This theme identifies the idea that connection is the basis of all fruitful learning in a school. Teachers know that their ability to see and understand where their students are coming from provides the foundation for successful relationships with their students. This foundation must be based on trust between teacher and student, and this is a byproduct of understanding. Empathy or seeing classroom activity from the students' perspective is critical for teachers to do their job in an effective way. If a teacher does not understand what may be either obstructing or facilitating the learning process for their students, then they cannot teach. Trust is required to get students to be honest with their teachers. It also drives the mutual exchanges that teachers want to see in any classroom environment. Teachers need to listen to their students and ask them questions that guide them towards healthy exchanges of information.

Teachers expressed a variety of opinions on how they perceive students. As one participant remarked, "in order to in order to reach them, we have to first meet them where they are" (Participant Interview 1-10-22). Students are seen as having life experiences that shape how they present themselves to educators. In turn, it is understood that a teacher has the power to gain awareness of this and shift their approach in a more constructive direction.

I think the biggest challenge is just behavior I think. I touched on it a little bit earlier and because our students are just going through so much we need to be having some balance. Redirection but at the same time still having a foundation of love there that if I'm correcting you it's because I love you. I'm not here to hurt you. I'm here, I'm not here to hurt you. I'm here to help you and making sure that that's that love is at the foundation of every single thing that we do. You know? And not to be afraid. Of showing that love and showing that humanity as an adult. Children need to see that. You know? And I believe eventually it may not be today. It may not be tomorrow. It may not even be while they're in our building, but at some point they're gonna remember that love that you showed to them and they're gonna be like I get it now. You know? (Participant Interview 1-10-22)

Acknowledgement of personal growth also informs the educational process according to teachers. One participant communicated this idea very clearly when speaking of the potential that exists for middle school students.

Part of the reason that middle school is appealing is that you do have a chance to still mold kids with what's what? What a good person or a kind person or an honest person is. Or you know a polite person or a caring person. What they look like. I think that's a lot harder to do in the high school. And uhm, I think in middle school you still have their ear. They're still very malleable and not, and hopefully for most of them, not too many traumatic things have occurred already, so they can. Right? They can make the changes if they want. So you know, still trying. To just keep pushing that. (Participant Interview 1-11-22)

Assessing trauma is a key skill that teachers also suggested was at the core of their work. Because this can manifest differently for each student, it was also expressed that one could not judge the school population as a whole.

Our kids do come from disparate backgrounds. I think it's hard to generalize exactly like put them under all one umbrella. 'cause then you're just kind of like downplaying what growth there has been. I mean we have kids that come from families that are very active in their education and very assertive and very active in their lives. And then we have kids whose parents literally tell them, don't come home. I don't want you. Right, right? You know, uhm? It really spans the gamut where I have kids that have had parents died. This school year I've kicked that. I've had siblings murdered. Yeah, it's definitely, it's hard to just say like it's, you know, broken Black home family, you know families. Because it's not all like that. But there are definitely like tragic cases within this school. Uhm, those kids,

I feel do not receive the type of mental health care, uhm, that I would prescribe, and that's something that I have definitely felt some type of way about if you will. (Participant Interview 1-27-22)

Engaging students in the classroom is a challenge nationwide and La Salle Middle School is no exception. The teachers interviewed during the focus group shared their thoughts on what an idealized perception of students learning in a classroom would entail. The three educators' insights show that today's educators value the ability for students to be able to work collaboratively, provide their own differing perspectives, connect with the content, and learn from each other.

I see students working together, just showing engagement in different ways. Asking a question that that come from their curiosity or piquing their curiosity and just learning together and more of a collaborative like.... all the senses are engaged in the things that you might hear, things you might see visualizing information and articulating their thoughts freely. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Still, because some students are in real need of support and other services, many teachers stated that the school must play that role. Repeatedly, participants either described efforts currently underway at La Salle Middle School or actions that should be taken to better serve the students they teach. One participant keyed in on the idea that the school fosters a strong sense of family almost as if this were the core mission of the institution.

We're here for them with the connection, and I think they need that. You know, there are some kids, unfortunately, that don't have parents or maybe a single parent, and it's hard. It's hard . . . on that child. I think . . . really what we're trying to, I think help here, and instill these children's morals and values, and knowing that we are a family, you know. And we're La Salle family. We're helping you. We're going to help you if you're hurting. We're going to help you if you need something, we're going to help you. We help the family I think with like Electric Bill utilities or with clothes or food. So we help. And I, and I think it's important

to ask. Some people don't want to, but it's OK to ask. (Participant Interview 2-9-22)

Providing students with support is also seen by several educators as the most effective way to break through to them academically. Because the school exists as an institution of education, students are presented daily with an instructional curriculum that is a challenge in terms of skill development and knowledge acquisition. Considering this, many students claim that they cannot do certain things that teachers want them to accomplish. In speaking of an activity that they would like to bring back to the classroom, one teacher acknowledged the persistence of an "I can't" attitude that can undermine classroom culture.

> I used to start out [each year] with an activity where they listed everything they could not do, or they thought they could not do, and then we sealed it in an envelope. Yeah, I told them they were not allowed to say I can't the rest of the year. Wow, you say! And if we brought that, we brought that envelope back out at the end of the year to see how many they could scratch off. I think I'm going to bring that back. (Participant Interview 2-22-22)

For the lessons observed, teachers demonstrated support for student learning and positive reinforcement. The lessons planned were relevant, easy for students to follow, and encouraged active student engagement. Participants engaged students through question-and-answer sessions, encouraging dialogue as input into the subject matter. There was evidence that teachers took the time to plan well-thought-prepared lessons and teachers provided a flawless presentation with relevant lessons.

There was evidence that teachers shared a passion for helping students to succeed as they worked independently, one-to-one with students who needed additional assistance. The care, concern, and nurturing to see students succeed was obvious

Some teachers routinely worked with other students with their backs facing the class with no incidence of misbehavior.

Classroom Observation on March 15, 2022

Strikingly, middle school students still lack decoding and word attack skills. Although they are middle schoolers, it's never too late. In this observation another teacher presents a 1:1 approach and works independently with students to improve their reading fluency, build vocabulary, and decoding skill. Reading from the selected text "*Digging for Gold*" the teacher actively listens and elicits encouraging words *("good" "go ahead" "awesome" "you did a good job").* Working in proximity with student, the teacher offers feel-good and encouraging prompts to students *("I'm proud of you")* *("yes), ("almost finished").*

Noted were the positive affirmations generated from teacher to student encouraging and motivating students to read more. Due to the 1:1 structure of the lesson, no interaction occurred with other students. The teacher expressed pride and noted reading improvements students made August – March. *("making great progress").* Although there was no presence of a historical or local history connection, the teacher presented a calm demeanor, positive and active listening as the student read aloud during hallway distractions.

Of course, confronting students with difficult issues whether they be of a personal nature, or regarding a lack of social or academic preparedness, is not an easy task for an educator to undertake. Care must be taken to ensure that students are both open and

listening to the support being offered. As one participant explained, this rests on a

foundation of understanding.

> So of course, understanding. Oh, the more we understand, but I gotta tell you,
> middle schoolers, it's hard to extract that information. You want them to know
> you're not alone. Oftentimes they feel defensive talking about themselves or their
> home lives, so you know you don't want to pry or make them feel uncomfortable.
> And you have to realize lot even how you ask things to be sensitive in asking
> things. (Participant Interview 2-18-22)

Being "sensitive" to students about asking them what they are going through or

experiencing is one of the ways teachers professed the importance of developing positive

relationships with students. Although some acknowledged issues regarding "learning

gaps" and "learning loss", none focused exclusively on the academic program as their

sole concern when working with middle school students. Instead, many spoke of the need

to break through to students so as to build foundations of trust that could foster better

relationships.

> Well, I think with building that connection, you know, you also build the trust.
> You don't know a child, you know, the first couple of weeks. I know that there
> wasn't [the trust]. You know they didn't know me and I didn't know them, so
> we're trying to build the relations. You know? That, that's August. Here we are in
> February. I really feel that those have been established. I think that's the trust.
> Now you trust. I feel that that need is met. So now we're working on the academic
> need. Getting what they need. You know, it's a Chromebook, you know, helping
> after school, getting so that they can so they can be successful. Giving them the
> resources and the tools that are needed so they're able to be successful not only in
> school but also in life. (Participant Interview 2-9-22)

Throughout the interview process, teachers expressed in different ways, their

desire to connect more with their students, to build relationships that were more

meaningful and fulfilling. One participant spoke of this in terms of promoting a greater

sense of student ownership in the classroom.

Yeah, what I want to try to build in the actual classroom itself, is I want to get them to have a part of it. A part of ownership of it. When I was building my rules and expectations, I'm asking them what are your thoughts about expectations and rules. So I really had to get them involved, wanting them to have that piece. So that they can have some kind of ownership. I just don't want them to come in, and I'm dictating to them what they're doing. It doesn't work. I want them to be involved in what we're doing. (Participant Interview 2-9-22)

Classroom Observation on March 29, 2022

As with any subject, the researchers find that students either like it or not. But what if students like the subject but are not good at it? Somehow that special teacher is one gem that can bridge the knowledge gap. The teacher, in this observation, engaged students by modeling a lesson demonstrating examples of a critical analytical skill, formulas circumference and diameter on the White board. She employs question-and-answer sequences during the lessons. *("What happens if they tell you to use diameter?")* *("What's the formula for finding diameter?").* The teacher further extends support and assistance rotating the room working 1:1 with students as needed. *("Raise your hand and ask for help").* ("Let me know if you need help"). While another student raises their hand *("I'll be right there")* the teacher proceeds to assist the student with a calm demeanor.

Although there is no evidence of a historical connection embedding community and/or local history in the lesson, the teacher engaged by assisting students as needed. She has her back turned while working independently 1:1 with another student. This is still an important characteristic observed in several observations because building trust is a tenant of RCT.

Giving students more control over the curriculum and the content of daily lessons was also a strategy that several teachers suggested would help connect them with those in their classes. In response to a question about the value of local history, one participant even went so far as to promote the idea of teachers working with students to solve real-world problems that their students are facing daily.

> It would allow us and allow me to build a better, deeper relationship with them maybe. Help allow me to try to brainstorm with them to find solutions to some of the things that they can control and help them deal. Find ways to deal with the stuff that they cannot. (Participant Interview 2-22-22)

Cultivating relationships and taking the time to build trust is not a quick process for any educator. In the end, as one participant eloquently explained, it is a job whose description involves keeping the faith that one can connect with their students and make a difference in their lives.

> So it's kind of like we plant the seed right? We may not see the flower bloom. We may not even see it sprout up. In our time with them. We have to know we have to have faith. That eventually it makes a difference. (Participant Interview 1-10-22)

Theme Two: Teachers see how local history and knowledge of place can help build a relationship through reciprocity and shared knowledge.

"I think it's an imperative for new teachers to immerse themselves in the culture and the community of our students . . . and learn from them and their experiences." (Focus Group Participant 4-7-22)

Teachers' needs are not to be ignored, especially when they exhibit an interest in more experiential professional development. This theme identifies various signals that teachers send about what they believe is valuable for their own learning. When teachers

respond positively to programs of development or understanding they need to be

acknowledged and validated by offering more opportunities. The idea of teacher "buy-in"

is paramount here. If teachers support a program of professional development, it should

be seized upon because such reactions are rarely manifested. Positive experiences tend to

promote more positive attitudes which only benefits the students if teachers feel refreshed

or reinvigorated by what they have learned or experienced first-hand.

Revealing personal experiences is also something that many teachers see as a tool

for connecting with their students. While much of their life experiences and personal

history might be disconnected from the social worlds that their students inhabit, many

participants saw the sharing of their struggles and even trauma to be one of the ways they

could effectively bond with the students in their classrooms. As one teacher stated in ~~in~~

the midst of describing the tragic loss of a family member,

> And you know, I don't hide. Some people [say] oh well, you tell the kids too
> much. It's like no. I want them to know that. Ah, big things that I've experienced .
> . . You know, if I can fuss at them and save one of their lives from not doing
> something stupid. (Participant Interview 2-22-22)

Another way that teachers bring their own perspective into the classroom for

students is by sharing their own background histories. Covering topics regarding where

they have lived and what they have experienced with their families is another way in

which teachers create shared understanding with their students. This also helps them

bridge a connection with their students by stressing common human elements such as

having a family, working, and maintaining a home.

> Well, I love my hometown. I'm very proud of being, uh, part of East Saint Louis.
> And I went to East Saint Louis schools with Pre-K through 9th grade, 'cause back
> then 9th grade was a part of junior high. And then after that I went through. But a

big part of just who I am, is just wrapped around the heart of the City of
Champions in East Saint Louis. And just seeing people in my environment, from
my mom, who was an educator in East Saint Louis, and it was full of tradition,
excuse me, tradition and just the culture of that family environment in that small
town. Feel kind of like everybody knows one another and that kind of thing and it
was, it was pride. It was a lot of Black pride because our area was then, and still
today, is predominantly African American. (Participant Interview 1-10-22)

Shared trauma is another way that personal experience and background can

inform the work that teachers do with students in the classroom. In many ways, teachers'

experiences are quite different from those of the students they teach. But in other ways,

some educators have found a way to stress commonalities with the pain that many of

their students encounter in life. One teacher sees this as a important way in which they

have developed the skill of empathy and used it to connect with their students.

So when these kids, when I hear about these kids' home lives and kind of how
disastrous some of them are, it does breed a lot of empathy within me because,
you know, obviously we didn't dabble in poverty. We were middle class, lower
middle class. But in terms of the type of emotional abuse and physical and mental
abuse that occurred in my home, a lot of it is analogous with what happens to our
kids, when they go home. (Participant Interview 1-27-22)

Participants were asked to recall their experience on the bus tour that took place

as part of the August professional development at La Salle Middle School. The

participants were willing to describe their impressions they had as they were on the bus

going through certain neighborhoods of both South and North St. Louis city. Participants

describe a mix of feelings stemming from a sense of empathy to an appreciation for the

diversity of the area.

I think that my impression of the bus tour was just appreciation for the rich
history and cultural dynamics and traditions that are apparent in Saint Louis and
then also being from the area there were a lot of connections for me of how our
histories overlap so it was exciting and informative. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Relational-Cultural Theory posits that when a counselor is immersed into the culture of the person in their care, they will develop deeper empathy for the person. Through their employment at the school, teachers serve multiple roles such as facilitator of learning, manager of classroom/school expectations, and trusted adult counselor. These teachers agree that being able to empathize with students' realities by seeing them on the tour makes the ability to build a report with them easier. But as humans they also fall prey to the fact that poverty and inner-city violence is an abstract concept even to them as they are not first-hand participants in its reality. By being immersed in the environment of the students they serve, further empathy was fostered towards their students.

> It gave me a chance to see firsthand what some of our kids are dealing with on a daily basis as far as their neighborhoods and what they may have to go through and encounter and just the difference in the areas like from on the north side of the South side. You know, you know it exists, but to actually see it, it was.....It's kind of eye opening and makes me kind of understand a little more some of our kids struggles. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Overall, the educators walked away with a very positive recollection of the tour and were able to see the value of being immersed in the environment of their students. The educators believe that this type of immersion into the student environment would be beneficial for teachers entering the profession for the first time.

> I think it's an imperative for new teachers to immerse themselves in the culture and the community of our students and be willing to be the teacher and learn from them and their experiences. And I think that will lend itself to building stronger relationships with our students and their families. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Theme Three: Teachers can use local history as a tool to build a relationship with students and their families.

" . . . the family connection . . . that human environment interaction . . . that to me makes history alive for them and they see where they fit."
(Focus Group Participant 4-7-22)

Teachers see the value of inquiring into the backgrounds of their students and wish to share their perspectives as well. This theme identifies a curiosity that teachers express about the students they teach. Teachers are aware of the diversity of their students in a general sense but wish to have more connection to them by way of their lived experience. By sharing their own personal histories, it is thought that students can be prompted to exchange their own stories about family and community. This mutual exchange can be the basis of lessons within the classroom itself. It can also be a way in which teachers can expressly make their attempts to connect with students visible to others. This could involve other students, administrators, or even community members depending on the nature of the classroom-based activity.

Teachers are convinced that local history explorations can be further developed with their students. This theme identifies interest in involving students directly in learning experiences tied to increasing understanding of the local community and its history. Teachers validated the notion of learning more about places outside of the school by suggesting that students be given some measure of control over how that learning functions. Place-based opportunities transcend the four walls of the school by not only taking students out of that environment but also assigning responsibility to them to shape that experience. Students teaching teachers is suggested by this theme and is endorsed by a general belief that educators have a lot more to learn from their students and where they come from.

The participants in this study reflected an extensive background in education. Several have worked in other school environments before coming to La Salle Middle School. Also, some teachers shared that their previous work in other fields helped to drive their passion for education. One teacher spoke of the formative experiences serving customers that a previous career in retail gave them (Participant Interview 1-11-22). Another teacher remarked on how their talents would be better served in the schools than in the music editorial business of a local newspaper (Participant Interview 1-27-22). All teachers express a passion for education and serving students daily. One even positively contrasts their job in education with those of others they know in their life.

> I kind of teased with some of my other colleagues. You know that they're in the workforce. They dread it. I look like I'm on vacation. I mean, I look forward to coming to work. They don't. (Participant Interview 2-9-22)

The task of serving students, however, does remain a looming challenge for even the most well-intentioned educators as evidenced by several of our participants admitting to the difficulty of engaging with middle school students. Alongside comments about building foundations of trust and love, teachers also spoke about the problem of interacting with students in a meaningful way.

> But there are some that you can just tell by watching their facial expressions. They don't care what I have to say because they don't, you know. Right? The I really don't care about it type is what I'm getting from them. And that bothers me because you wonder if some of that is instilled through from home. Because of the distrust that that's going on over time, or if it's something that they've personally experienced and they're just not willing to let those walls down or those barriers down. I try to make an effort and I keep trying to tell them I see a lot of potential that's not being used. And yet, I don't know how to get through to some of them. (Participant Interview 2-22-22)

Another teacher commented on the reluctance of students to verbalize what they

are experiencing, thinking, or feeling.

A lot of kids don't talk much. They'll use the Internet, they'll use the Instagram, Snapchat and I find that as a big challenge because I want to talk to you and they don't. (Participant Interview 2-9-22)

According to the observational data, there was evidence of at least three teachers

incorporating local history or lessons that covered topics of historical relevance.

One participant established a place-based external tour of the school building that

provided students with a walking historical tour to learn more about the school,

community, and local history which embodies this research. This is important because in

this case study we want to find out whether the exploration of local history enhanced

teacher-student relations and applied Relational-Cultural Theory which hinges on

building relationships, increasing empathy, and making connections.

Classroom Observation on March 30, 2022

Traditionally, the study of Black History includes well-known historical figures

such as Harriet Tubman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, and Frederick Douglas. One

participant teacher, however, presents a historical connection in her choice of selected

readings. The teacher engaged students to read selected portions of text and explains the

difference between empathy and sympathy. The teacher displays Frederick Douglas: *Last

Days of Slavery,* text, which is a children's book. Students engaged by reading selected

portions of the text. *("You're reading well").* The teacher encourages conversation

through Q&A *("What is the central idea of the text?") ("The central idea of the text is

how people in bondage used the Underground Railroad to escape").* The teacher for

most of the observation directed her lesson in front of the camera with no view of

interaction with students. Afterwards, the teacher divides students into two groups and

works 1:1 independently with student. The teacher stated the purpose of our research was

("to understand the culture of school and how we interact with students"). Unlike the

other observations, because the researcher was unable to see teacher student interactions

this placed limits on the observation.

Teachers are fully cognizant of the need to connect to students from different

backgrounds than their own. Although they already do this through cultivating empathy,

sharing background experience, or simply talking with them, there is an expressed need

for more tools to bridge the divides that exist in their classrooms. Some clearly believe

that this can be done by reaching out to their families on a routine basis. One teacher

specifically homed in on the point that they believed they quite possibly had the most

parent phone calls at the school.

> I have lots of contact. I call a lot. I've done that from the start. I think I had the
> most communication log entries. I mean, like I had 20 pages. (Participant
> Interview 2-18-22)

Other teachers stressed the idea of being visible in the community. This could

take the form of frequenting local business, but it was also suggested that taking up

residence in the area is another effective way to connect to the students one teaches.

> This is another thing that kind of unites me with the kids is that I like I live here.
> Not a lot of our teachers . . . live in the city. You know, a lot live in the county, so
> they don't know you, know you. As far as I'm concerned, you don't know. And
> they've grown up in the county. That's what you know. OK. (Participant 1-27-22)

Several of the interviews turned even more positive when the idea of bringing

local history into the classroom was raised. This was specifically addressed in the context

of designing an instructional activity around the history and culture of the area. One

participant explained how effective this can be with students when they referred to a

recent lesson in which they included a video of a local politician bringing money and

other resources to the area.

> That was pivotal, I think for the students to actually see that's the one [local leader] I was describing about, where they actually saw someone of either their community or maybe their family members' community and it makes sense. It's kind of like the history became alive to them in that that moment because a lot of times in history you're talking about things from thousands of years ago or whatnot, and not the beauty of local history or things going on in the community. And you can integrate that. It's like, oh OK, well this is something I can use. This is something that that makes sense to me, uh, as a student. (Participant Interview 1-10-22)

Classroom Observation on February 9, 2022

Social studies and history are normally dull topics for students primarily due to

how the teacher teaches the subject or student interest. Yet, one teacher presents a

"*Geography and Me: My Neighborhood"* power point lesson which demonstrates a

personal local history connection which generates interest between the students. In

addition, a video of the Great Migration 1910-1970 aided the discussion and dialogue

with students of local history as it relates to the present. *("What are some things you see*

in your neighborhood"). ("You will create your own power point showing important

points in your own neighborhood"). ("What brought your family to the local

neighborhood"). Q&A became an important segue as it serves to engage student

interests.

One teacher presents a well-prepared lesson and students are fully focused and

engaged. Assisting students 1:1 and modeling a personal neighborhood family story

migrating to East St. Louis, Illinois modeled great historical relevance and

encouragement for students to develop their own independent assigned project. Assigning

students to interview family members was a strategy that modeled after the historical

tour.

Another teacher expressed the view that delving into the history of St. Louis could

be done in a variety of exciting ways and that this could really get students excited to

share what they learned with other students and their teachers.

> I guess I look at Saint Louis and I first see that there's so much history. And I
> think, what I think would help the students tremendously, is maybe we could have
> a guest speaker come in. Or maybe a video? Or maybe if we could even go on a
> tour. Maybe some of the tour operators can go on the tour to see this is where or
> this is how the courthouse in St. Louis was originated. This is how it is or
> something like that, I think. More hands on for the students. It could be audio. It
> could be visual, actually could be a guest speaker to come in and talk. I think that
> would help them out, 'cause I think we need that connection. (Participant
> Interview 2-9-22)

Classroom Observation on March 16, 2022

LaSalle Middle School is situated in the middle of historical landmarks and

several new community developments. Using knowledge and awareness of the new

developments, one teacher presented a lesson which focused on the environment, science,

urban development, and local history. With the assistance of Director of Operations,

students viewed old city maps and engaged in a walking tour of the perimeter of LaSalle

Middle School. Discussions about the impact of changes in the community ensued. Post

tour assignment generated statements *("What happens to old houses and buildings?").*

("Indicate details of what you saw on the tour"). (Did you notice the effect of urban

development").

This teacher created a lesson which embodied the focus of our research. First, the teacher employed an alternative learning experience, a cultural building tour, external to the school building exploring the history of the school and discussion of old city landmarks, i.e., old streetcar tracks, location of City Museum, once a factory, old Pruitt Igoe housing complex, including a school now known as "KIPP Academy", and architects of old buildings and churches and authentically engaging students in the discussion. *("There's a lot of history here").* Students in general maintained respect for each other as they toured the perimeter of the school. Second, the teacher assigned an action plan for students to generate knowledge and reflections about the local history. This assignment captured the outcome of place-based learning experience and teacher engagement that gained student awareness of local history and the community.

Finding relevant topics that tie back to the curriculum and allow for students to explore more of their world and the role they have in it is an essential part of engaging lessons. Increased student engagement is a key all participants would like to see unlock their students' potential. In this way, all the teachers sought to play a greater role as both mentor and guide in their students' development.

> But again, it's just building that relationship with people that they can trust you and tell you things that are unexpected or that are on their mind and not, you know, not always easy conversations. And also not expecting every kid to be able to get there with you because . . . you just have to realize that that's OK, that's OK. I just need to show them, as well as I can, that I'm here for them. (Participant Interview 1-11-22)

As part of the research process, all six participants were guided during their interview to develop an activity to incorporate a facet of local history into their respective curriculum and present the activity to the students. This lended itself easier to some

curriculum as opposed to others. One teacher shared her feedback on the classroom

activity 'Geography and Me.'

> And so there there's an intersection between like what their world is. In my case
> we were talking about 'geography and me'. And how so many experiences that
> we have in our neighborhoods and with our local history may, you know, be very
> very common. Or we can find commonalities between our experiences and then
> use that as a springboard to other conversations; so it just really allows for a lot of
> building of relationships and connections across the journey together. (Focus
> Group 4-7-22)

Another teacher, however, took an alternative approach and incorporate aspects of

transportation along with impact on the environment. Though admitting the novelty of a

walking field trip piqued students' interest, she recalls how students reacted when they

discovered a piece of streetcar track uncovered on the street near the school.

> That streetcar track was a big thing, and they had like no idea what streetcars were
> or the history of when we went from trains to automobiles and buses, so we had a
> lot of that which is like with science to the development of, you know, vehicles
> and transportation. So that did open up to a lot of discussion. (Focus Group 4-7-
> 22)

This opened the potential for a discussion about environmental concerns and its

impact on their communities which made the discussion more 'real' for the students.

> I think, like I say, when we're dealing with human impacts on the environment to
> not be so just vague and broad and world just look at the whole world view of it.
> I think it was important to bring it down to that and that they feel empowered that
> what they do that they are a part of this, and by making it local and that we could
> bring it down. To one point, what are we doing to our environment? What have
> we done? How have things evolved in our little bit of the world here? I think that
> also makes it more real. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

This teacher also pointed out the curiosity of the students about certain sections of the building which, at one point, housed corpses.

> They were really interested too with the history of the school and the basements. Everybody is fascinated by the basements 'cause they don't get to go there, right? And they had carried, you know, bodies there from when they had the cholera outbreak. And so there's like arsenic that's been seeping down and yeah, anyway, yeah, they they did get, you know it was fun, right? I could definitely tell they it sparked an interest. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

The impact on the student environment could also be detailed in a subject such as mathematics.

> I think it would give the students a chance to see how they're that content like math, especially 'cause they're 'Well, when are we going to use this?' Well, this is how it's being used right now. You know the especially with it, the construction across the street. You know the measurements and all that gives them a chance to see their content in in real life and not just from our mouth saying, oh, this is what it could be like. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

The educators agree that having a connection to local history, local environment, or landscape engages students far better than presenting abstract concepts with pre-defined meaning. Connections to the past are made more relevant when looked at under the microscope of familial connection. When the students learn something about a locality and are able to create a personal connection to it through the lense of their own families, they take ownership over it, such as the teachers of La Salle did when they learned of the history of 'The Bells' featured in common areas of the school. One researcher asked about the importance of being able to effectively marry the familial connection piece into a discussion of local history. The participants unanimously agreed that its significance cannot be understated.

Well, I think the part of our project that the students responded the most favorably to was being able to go home and ask their family members or their parents or grandparents or what have you. What brought them to this area? And it was a part of their presentation was our story. Like what brought us here and so just hearing the history there just from their families was fascinating for me as a teacher and for each other just to hear. For example, there's one student that that talked about how his great grandparents came to Saint Louis to for an opportunity to work in a factory. And there was another student who actually had the mother had come here for a better opportunity as far as work. And then I have two students and that are cousins, and their parents are siblings. So, they went back to their grandmother of buying, uh, the house that they live in. So, and when she was 37 years old, so they you know they had the details about kind of the hard work that went into buying this family home where they all lived together. So, it was just really nice to to see that that pride, that family pride come into the discussions that we were having as a class in telling their stories and being really it just feeling good. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

In addition to serving as a bridge to a classroom activity, the teachers were asked

about how they envisioned a similar tour experience for their students.

It would be wonderful to be able to include their neighborhoods in such a tour and allow them to be the tour guides and be able to share through their lands of how they see their world in their neighborhood and share that.with those that are, you know, taking   part in the tour a lot of times. They're the ones that are taking in the information, but it would be so interesting to see, you know, through their eyes on such a tour. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Theme Four: Teachers see the value of local history and would like more professional development and learning opportunities for students.

". . . my favorite professional development day ever!"

(Participant Interview 1-11-22)

Teachers have a desire for more professional development experiences connected

to local history. This theme identifies an expressed interest on behalf of the teachers to

engage with more place-based opportunities to develop their knowledge base and

increase their cultural awareness. An understanding of local history provides a greater

foundation for teachers to contextualize their practice. It also creates opportunities to

situate their work within an institution that is tied to the community and possesses a

unique history in and of itself. Many teachers have a general sense of history but lack the

ability to tie this into their work with students inside the structured confines of school.

Professional development tied to exploration of the local environment, both at present

and across time, is thought to be both a refresh of that well-worn concept and a way to

creatively engage students based on a new understanding of community.

Staff members completed a tour pre-survey to provide data regarding their

outcome expectations for the bus tour. Participants also completed a post-tour reflection.

The questions and disaggregated responses are listed in the Professional Development

Surveys Courtesy of La Salle Middle School (see Appendix I).

Prior to the cultural bus tour, La Salle staff participated in a pre-activity survey to

gauge interest and capture their expected outcomes. Teachers were asked seven

questions ranging from providing their role at the school, years of experience in

education, and years of experience with urban students. All teachers completed the

questionnaire. Emerging themes in the pre-activity survey were immersed in teachers

having a consistent drive to "help students become successful, to guide students, to

develop students, better prepare, and to provide a greater opportunity for youth." Staff

reported this as the main factor when asked to describe what they believe to be their

purpose as a teacher in education. Teachers also reported the importance of "building

relationships with students and their families through empathy and to teach

kindness." When asked to provide insight as to what their hope is to gain as a result of

participation in the tour, teachers had an overwhelming desire to better understand the

students in which they serve. Teachers reported hopes to "learn about the areas students

are from to better serve, understand daily struggles of families, areas that have culturally

developed students, and more insight into the community's background." A poignant

remark made in hopes of the tour was "my eyes, ears, and heart are open." Another

teacher had hopes of "increasing knowledge of local history to incorporate it into lessons

and activities with students" (Professional Development Surveys, Appendix I).

All the teachers recognized, through their interviews, that La Salle Middle School

is a unique educational environment. For many, this was the reason they chose to work

there. One aspect of the school's uniqueness clearly stems from the designation as a

public charter school. Another owes to its presence in St. Louis city as opposed to county.

Finally, all teachers acknowledged that La Salle Middle School is situated in North St.

Louis and thereby possesses an exceptional historical and cultural legacy.

Historical inquiry about a place or region may explore the legacies of decisions

made in the past that have altered the physical landscape, infrastructure, and mobility of

generations who have come after. Such decisions play out today in discussions of equity

and availability of resources including educational opportunities. Likewise, the decisions

made today will likely shape the future of a particular society or region. The participants

spoke of the importance of such inquiry when they were asked about the impact a

conversation on local history would have for a teacher and student.

> Well, I think it allows students to bring their world into the classroom and it
> allows teachers to be able to just [be] engaged students and a very personal way
> that you normally would not be able to do if you don't take those moments to
> make room for those types of discussions. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

When asked about one thing that the tour brought to the forefront, one participant

made specific reference to a pause in the tour where participants were invited off the bus

in North St. Louis. The residential area in one of the zip codes with many of La Salle's

students stood in stark contrast to the business of the downtown St. Louis visible from the

school. There the tour guide then referenced the dilapidated properties they were seeing

which were owned by a wealthy real estate investor.

> I remember when we were outside of the bus...It was quite a lively discussion and
> I remember one of our colleagues. That connection to that it was sharing so that
> that stood up to me as well. Which impacts, you know you have an individual
> who has such power, you know, over the environment... the economics, the
> infrastructures and so yeah, I can see. And that in itself leads to the future, which
> is where our kids are. (Focus Group 4-7-22)

Several participants spoke to the original Catholic School that operated on the site

of the school. One teacher noted the architectural and design commitments that serve as

reminders to the students that they are in a historic location.

> I know it started as a small Catholic school. Uhm, which I like that they kept it
> small when they when they moved from Catholic to Charter. I love the smaller
> class sizes which do allow us some advantages . . . I like that they kept some of
> the original features of this original building. You know, like the the bells from
> the church are still represented in the in the gym and just some of the history is
> still kept in the building so that kids can see it and experience it. (Participant
> Interview 2-22-22)

Numerous participants noted the proximity of the school to the old Pruitt and Igoe

Housing Complex that was finally cleared in 1976. As a historical site that gained

national attention while in operation as well as when it was partially demolished on

television in 1972, Pruit-Igoe is an immediate referent for the educators at the school.

I mean, I'm really aware of our proximity to the old Pruitt-Igoe site. That's usually what resonates with me the most, 'cause you travel around here, you drive around here. . . I mean, I would definitely still venture to call it rough a rough area. (Participant Interview 1-27-22)

While other references to the area existed especially when considering the purchase of land by developers and the new National Geospatial Agency being built across the street, every participant expressed positive sentiments when referring to professional development designed to give them greater awareness of the local history and the neighborhood from which their students come. One teacher stated, "Oh my God, my favorite professional development day ever." (Participant Interview 1-11-22)

The purpose of the bus tour was to immerse teachers in a place-based field experience of touring neighborhoods in which their students come from in order to better serve them. Respondents were asked to explain what they knew about the culture and local history of the students served at La Salle Middle School. Some consistent responses indicate teachers "knew nothing of the microcosm that exist and that though a member of the culture served, there are generational gaps". Another respondent stated, "My knowledge of the culture of students is strong, yet my knowledge of local history is limited." Several teachers indicated that they "know our students are inner-city, from low-income homes, poverty, and two or more academic levels behind" (Professional Development Surveys, Appendix I).

Following the tour, teachers completed a post-tour survey to share reflections relative to their individual experiences. All thirteen teachers completed the survey agreeing that the tour provided a culturally relevant local history that broadened their scope of St. Louis communities and neighborhoods. Most respondents felt the tour guide

facilitated meaningful dialogue and conversation. Teachers unanimously agreed they feel

more informed about the communities from which their families come and their

awareness of the historical aspect of inner cities increased as a result of the

tour. Participants were asked to describe how the tour will impact their culturally

relevant approach to students.   Teachers responded to the statement to describe how

information gained from their participation on the tour will impact their culturally

relevant approach to students. Emerging themes in this regard included teachers stating,

"We can now hold each other accountable for continued growth, consider trying to

understand our students, their family, community challenges, and equity that they have

been denied and are entitled to." One teacher was hopeful that the tour provided "insight

into their (students') living environments." Another salient point was a feeling of

connectedness as a result of the tour, "I feel more connected and appreciative of the

culture that our students bring." Another teacher reported on the survey "as a result of

the tour, I would like to see our students participate in a similar tour" (Professional

Development Surveys, Appendix I).

The additional feedback provided by teachers regarding the tour was indicative of

their interest and motivation in building effective relationships with students and

families. Similar sentiments were expressed that include "we should do this every year,

awesome tour, thought it was great, loved this, and great tour!" One participant provided

an insightful closing to the survey by stating "the professional development really

resonated with me and I would like to continue to develop in this area, exploring the

historical contexts of St. Louis communities would make for an incredibly engaging,

authentic, and impactful cross-curricular study with our students!" (Professional

Development Surveys, Appendix I).

Chapter Four Summary

Our themes indicate that it is possible to apply Relational-Cultural Theory

(RCT) structures to a school environment when accompanied by teachers

incorporating the study of local history in lesson planning regardless of the

subject. We also found that an immersive experience, such as a local historical

tour, may increase a teacher's empathy because awareness gains acceptance and

helps to build trust. Finally, awareness of a student's neighborhood exists when

teachers explore alternatives to learn more about the students they are charged with

teaching. This is especially true as it relates to their local surroundings and

communities.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Surely relationships develop over time. Collaborating between a philosophy/ history teacher, a music teacher/maestro, charter school head principal, and a retired educator/grandma is no exception. We are all so familiar with beginning of the school year nostalgia. The shiny hallway, sparking clean restrooms, welcome back to school signage, smartly dressed students, and smiles from an unfamiliar staff member called Teacher. Building relationships does not come without risk. Within this research, we explored the applicability of Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) to an immersive, place-based teacher professional development program that leveraged local history to foster positive and sustaining relationships between teachers and middle school students.

Discussion

The theory of research focus is Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) which seeks to understand relationships between people through lived experiences (Frey, 2013). RCT maintains that individuals yearn for human connection, and this is achieved through people having mutual empathy and understanding of one's background and circumstances (Jordan & Hartling, 2002). Humans' interconnectedness can be impeded by a lack of mutual authenticity, which inhibits meaningful relationships. Vitality, clarification of the relationship, value, desire to further foster, and empower, aid in developing sustaining kinship between individuals. RCT is a framework counselors use to engage their clients, build trust and increase cultural competence (Miller, 1986). The

theory further suggests that in order to be effective in building relationships with clients, the counselor must be able to step into the shoes of the client to grow in their understanding of the client's lived experiences (Duffey & Somody, 2011). Relational-Cultural Theory could transfer to the educational setting for teachers and students to build growth-fostering relationships. Major themes in doing so include authenticity, mutuality, respect, and active engagement. Teachers are often met with many challenges that impede the development of positive relationships with students.

In an effort to combat the growing disconnect, especially between White teachers and Black students, and improve academic outcomes, educators have employed innovative ways to transform their relationships with students. These changes can positively impact the socioemotional well-being of themselves and their students, creating conductive learning environments. Our Theory of Change Model focused on a subset of concepts embedded in RCT. The model helped us understand and interpret our case study outcomes, pinpointing how teachers developed their empathy skills through immersive, place-based local history experiences and authentic in-class interactions. Authentic teacher-student interactions emerged as teachers' understanding of their students and the communities where they lived grew.

From the perspective of the researcher who was recused from data collection, the presentation of data collected from the interviews, classroom observations, and the focus group was genuine with straight-forward responses that provided insight into teachers' opinions regarding relationships with students and families. Drawing from the data presented, there was a sense that participation was worthwhile, and staff did not feel that it was "just one more thing" they had to do. From the responses provided, teachers felt

their participation was meaningful to the work of building effective relationships with

students and families. The school and larger community are more than a place to

work, therefore, getting to know students and where they are from allows teachers to

build necessary empathy to foster such relationships.

It is clear from the data that teachers are optimistic about meeting students where

they are and learning more about their culture to better understand how to reach them in

educational spaces. Teachers are cognizant that the genuineness of each individual

teacher serves as the foundation for an effective relationship with students and families.

Teachers remarked on the importance of having an empathic approach coupled with

authentic cultural awareness to build healthy relationships that yield productive social

outcomes and academic gains. Education is tricky in that sense. If teachers do not take it

upon themselves to invest in what is necessary to forge critical relationships with

students and families first, their curricular objectives will be difficult to meet (Juvonen et

al., 2004). Students are keen on their teachers' authenticity and genuineness. Moreover,

when teachers are transparent, students come to know who really cares about them and

which teachers have trepidation (Netcoh et al., 2017). Teachers provided candid remarks

to support the notion that they cannot know the students they serve until they learn about

where the students they serve come from. The bus tour provided staff with an immersive

experience that sheds light on community, culture, and the local history of the

surrounding area.

Respondents felt that it was equally important to not only gain more knowledge

about the communities from which students come, but to also have the ability to assess

trauma and evaluate individual personal growth. More and more teachers are recognizing

that teaching involves more than the skill of presenting content. Teaching is a multi-faceted, complex profession that requires teachers to extend themselves beyond simply being proficient in their content area to generate academic gains and build positive relationships (Yost & Vogel, 2007). Teachers want to connect with students and families and they want the connections to be genuine, not pretentious. More and more, teachers are required to engage students in relevant ways in order to keep their attention academically focused. Thus, relationship-building becomes as essential as skill in implementing curriculum and assessing outcomes.

Teachers expressed an overwhelmingly consistent feeling regarding the impact of the immersive, place-based professional development program. Their participation allowed them to immerse themselves in the culture and history of St. Louis. It further motivated some teachers to apply what they gained from the tour to their instructional lessons. Participants expressed the need to continually engage students in the history of their school and surrounding community in order to have common dialogue, pique interest, and build relationships. Teachers want to give students more autonomy with the curriculum, working with them to engage local history and solve relevant problems.

Phase two of data collection involved researchers observing classrooms for authentic engagement. Through these observations, they glimpsed teaching and learning processes and how teachers make connections with students to facilitate meaningful instruction. They noted that teachers had a sense of pride in their work and in student achievements. Students continued to engage in lessons even when faced with distractions. One teacher created a lesson centered in local history to further engage students with their city and surrounding community. This teacher's efforts, and the observed classroom

interactions, supports the premise of our research.

All that being said, teachers continue to formulate ways to better reach students in order to teach them more effectively. This demonstrates much-needed tenacity and perseverance in the work of educating children in the face of social adversity. In thinking about what teachers need in order to be successful at their craft, I, as an administrator, had to step back and review the summarized data. It confirms the importance of providing teachers with more than "sit and get" professional development (Clark & Clark, 2004). As teachers develop their ability to think outside the box of standard teaching, engage students more, be creative, think like a student, and many other techniques that keep the student centered in the education process, those who provide teacher professional development must do so as well.

It took courage to participate in the study. I applaud those willing to give their time and lend their expertise to such important work. Not only did participants provide feedback relative to their views of students and what they think makes for a productive educational space, they graciously opened the doors to their classrooms and allowed observations to occur as a witness to the how of student engagement and the why of fostering relationships. I appreciated the remarks around empathy. Having empathy for one another, allows one to understand the thoughts and feelings of another person with care and compassion according to RCT, as shown in Figure 1.

After teachers were immersed in a historical tour, or when they facilitated lessons in local history, they could better understand historical dynamics and how they affected the demographic served. They drew upon the reality of a tangible experience, embedding that realism into their instruction. Additionally, teachers recommended the tour to new

teachers to prepare them for the reality of urban education before they entered

the classroom.

Response to the Research Questions

The research for this case study sought to establish through our research questions

possible implications of applying Relational-Cultural Theory structures to the exploration

of challenging local history by teachers, what impact an immersive experience in a

neighborhood's local history has towards increasing teacher's emphatic competence, and

in what ways does teacher knowledge and awareness of a student's neighborhood impact

the student teacher relationship.

In a democracy like that of the United States, all things are considered possible

but historically, the attainment of equality and equity has proven to be nearly impossible.

Equality is connected to mutual respect, empathy and building relationships. Relational-

Cultural Theory (RCT), a theory native to the discipline of human psychology, stipulates

that all relational growth occurs through building connections (Miller, 1986).

Translating RCT to education, as shown in Figure 2, we applied the theory to La Salle

Middle School participants. Following the interviews, observations, and focus group

session we recognized the tenants of RCT being applied and associated with the
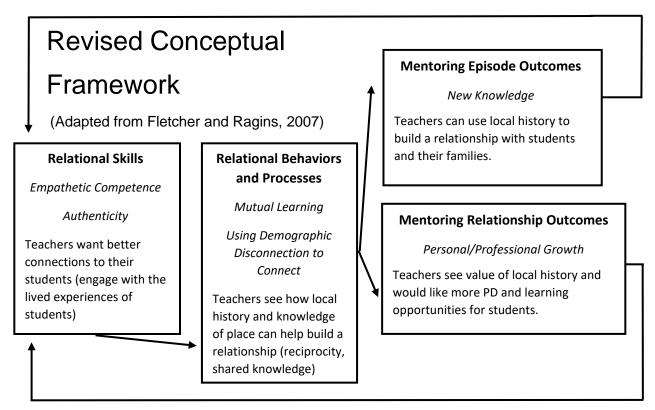
incorporation of local history knowledge.

We discovered in this research that a local history place-based tour has its

limitations because all schools or school districts are not positioned in either historical or

new development areas like La Salle Middle School, and all eligible staff are not

compelled to participate in the study that follows this professional development.

However, we gleaned from those that did participate a unique and productive effort to

transfer their knowledge about student local communities and history into classroom

learning. Within the scope of this research and participant responses we find the value

of having knowledge of student local community and history impactful in terms of

fostering student teacher relationships.

Figure 2

Revised Theory of Change

Revised Conceptual Framework

(Adapted from Fletcher and Ragins, 2007)

Relational Skills

Empathetic Competence

Authenticity

Teachers want better connections to their students (engage with the lived experiences of students)

Relational Behaviors and Processes

Mutual Learning

Using Demographic Disconnection to Connect

Teachers see how local history and knowledge of place can help build a relationship (reciprocity, shared knowledge)

Mentoring Episode Outcomes

New Knowledge

Teachers can use local history to build a relationship with students and their families.

Mentoring Relationship Outcomes

Personal/Professional Growth

Teachers see value of local history and would like more PD and learning opportunities for students.

Future Recommendations

Teachers at La Salle Middle School are mission-driven in their approach to

students and families. Analyzing the data allowed me, as the building principal, to receive

validation of effective professional development provided to teachers thus far, regarding

cultural responsiveness. Moving forward, I would recommend another immersive tour(s),

and perhaps opportunities for teachers to visit the homes of the families served (see

Appendix J). The professional development would also benefit from a session unpacking

the implicit biases exposed by the tour. An extension to the session might include

teachers welcoming students back to school in August by going to their homes to do so.

This activity would give teachers an opportunity to set the tone for the school year in a welcoming manner. To further develop teachers' ability to effectively reach students from adverse backgrounds who have been affected by trauma, teachers could also participate in additional sessions on trauma- informed culturally responsive teaching approaches.

Limitations and Implications

We recognize the psychological approach embedded in Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) is far removed from theories that resonate with most educators. By using RCT, we took a risk and applied the tenents of this theory, including relationship building, growth fostering connectivity through mutual empowerment and empathy to educational practice and teacher professional development (Miller, 1986). RCT posits all growth occurs through connection and that people yearn for connection (Miller, 2008). To replace RCT terminology with educational terminology, one might say that all growth occurs through teacher-student relationship building and students yearn for this connection of empathy and warmth with their teacher. In essence, through this research, the La Salle Middle School professional development tour with staff provided rich data with the following limitations.

1. Sample size of participants in relationship to teacher population.

2. Virtual data collection (interviews, observation, focus group) due to Covid protocols.

3. Charter school v. public school

4. Fear of trustworthiness due to administrator on dissertation team, although recused from data collection.

1)   All certified and support staff were eligible to participate in the August professional development to explore a novel historical bus tour experience. However, after two recruitment efforts from the research team, only six out of twelve certified staff consented to participate in the study limiting the population size of the study. In our findings, teachers expressed the desire to positively connect with students, yet a limited number demonstrated an interest to participate in the study.

2)   All interviews, observations and a focus group interview were conducted virtually due to Covid restrictions and personal decisions. Teachers gave authentic face to face Zoom interviews. Yet with classroom observations via Google Meet, there were challenges with technology and in one classroom a camera positioned away from teacher-student interactions limiting observation data. Three of the six participants showed up for the virtual focus group which also placed limits on data collection.

3)   The local history bus tour surveyed communities that surround a historic charter middle school. In our findings, the tool gave teachers a better appreciation of neighborhoods where students reside, and they expressed a desire for more professional development and learning opportunities for students. What is unknown are the effects this type of place-based professional development may have on elementary, high school, or larger public-school staff populations to improve teacher-student relationships.

4)   The presence of the school administrator may have caused participants to hold back on being vulnerable with the research team, although the administrator remained recused from knowledge of participants and data collection. Although unable to measure, trust due to administrative presence could potentially limit authentic discussions for fear of retaliation.

There are so many ways to achieve teacher-student positive relationships, some internal and some external. Extending extra time to help students before or after school, showing up at a weekend sporting event, cutting slack on an assignment or grade, etc. These experiences, and many others, generate sparks in kids' eyes, an expression of mutual bonding. Yet, even with one's best efforts, it's impossible to reach all students, especially in disadvantaged classrooms. Although the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the impact an immersive, place-based professional development experience has on strengthening teacher-student relationships and fostering empathetic competence in urban middle school teachers, students may resist teachers knowing about their neighborhood or local history due to lack of self-esteem or cultural pride. The challenges of implementing a focus on authentic local history in disadvantaged urban environments represents an area for future study.

Although research is limited at this time, there is some evidence in our findings that suggests that teachers do see how local history and knowledge of place can help build reciprocal relationships. Teachers can use local history as a tool to build relationships with students and their families.

Further Recommendations

1. Clearly define local history and how it can help strengthen relationships (TSRs).

2. Build in financial resources to conduct historical tours during 1st and 2nd semester.

3. Expand participant recruitment efforts to include students and support staff.

4. Develop a survey to collect data from the entire school population including

   support staff.

5. Expand the scope of the professional development historical bus tour to include

   geographical areas aligned with specific school topics/interest areas.

Conclusion

Our school communities are continuously changing. Teachers desire effective

relationships with their students to increase their own professional enjoyment and to

strengthen socio-emotional and academic outcomes. This research shows teacher-

student relationships (TSRs) may be enhanced through a professional development

program exploring local history in an area where teacher demographics/

backgrounds differ from the students being served. Though potentially applicable in

other regions, whenever this approach is implemented, leaders must conduct a

critical analysis of the local history, engaging differing perspectives to ensure that

minority stakeholders are not marginalized and to prevent the creation of a false or

sanitized narrative. As researchers, we conclude that schools (and the students they

serve) may benefit by providing immersive, place-based professional development

opportunities for teachers that improve their empathetic competence and foster positive

teacher-student relationships (TSRs)..

REFERENCES

American Historical Association. (2016). *AHA History Tuning Project: 2016 History Discipline Core.* https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/tuning-the-history-discipline/2016-history-discipline-core.

Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., & Furlong, M. J. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, *45*(5), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20303

Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(1), 163–206.

Assor, A. (2012). Allowing choice and nurturing an inner compass: Educational practices supporting students' need for autonomy. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 421–439). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_20

Baron, C., Sklarwitz, S., Bang, H., & Shatara, H. (2019). Understanding what teachers gain from professional development at historic sites. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *47*(1), 76–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2018.1489927

Blake, J.J., Darensbourg, A.D., Perez, E. (2010). Overrepresentation of African American males in exclusionary discipline: The role of school-based mental health in dismantling the school to prison pipeline. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 1*(3).

Bolgatz, J. (2005). *Talking race in the classroom.* Teachers College.

Chenoweth, K. (2017, July 19). For school improvement, demographics aren't destiny.

   Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/07/19/for-schools-

   improvement-demographics-arent-destiny.html

Clark, S., & Clark, D. (2004). Middle school leadership: Expert leadership and

   comprehensive professional development: A key to quality educators in middle

   schools. *Middle School Journal*, 35(4), 47-53.

   http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/23044098

Codding, R. S., Collier-Meek, M., Jimerson, S., Klingbeil, D. A., Mayer, M. J., & Miller,

   F. (2020). School psychology reflections on COVID-19, antiracism, and gender and

   racial disparities in publishing. *School Psychology, 35*(4), 227-232.

   http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000399

Connell, J. P., Spencer, M. B., & Aber, J. L. (1994). Educational risk and resilience in

   African American youth: Context, self, action, and outcomes in school. *Child

   Development*, *65*(2), 493–506. https://doi.org/10.2307/1131398

Costello, M. (2018). Teaching hard history [Editorial]. *Teaching Tolerance,* Spring (58),

   5.

Creswell, J. W. (2019). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating

   Quantitative and Qualitative Research, 6th Edition*. (n.d.). Retrieved June 11,

   2021, from /content/one-dotcom/one-dotcom/us/en/higher

   education/program.html

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed*

Methods Approaches, 3rd Edition. Sage Publications, Inc.

Culver, A. R. (2020, June 18 – 24). Social justice must be modeled in our schools. [Editorial]. *The St. Louis American,* C3.

Danker, A. C. (2003). Multicultural social studies: The local history connection. *The Social-Studies*, *94*(3), 111–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377990309600192

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other People's Children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* The New Press.

DESE – Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2018). January 2019 Report on Teacher Workforce in Missouri. Retrieved from https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/january-2019-report-teacher-workforce-missouri

Dietz, et al. (2016). An international learning experience: Looking at multicultural competence development through the lens of relational-cultural theory. *Journal of Counselor Practice*, 8(1):22–44. DOI: 10.22229/thg802643

Duffey, T.H., & Somody, C. (2011). The role of relational-cultural theory in mental health counseling. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 33*, 223-242.

Elia, S. E. (2016). International students encounter local history. *History News*, *71*(1), 24–26.

Elias, M. J., Gara, M., Ubriaco, M., Rothbaum, P. A., Clabby, J. F., & Schuyler, T. (1986). Impact of a preventive social problem-solving intervention on children's coping with middle-school stressors. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *14*(3), 259–275. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00911174

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., VanVoorhis, F. L., Martin, C. S., Thomas, B. G., Greenfield, M. D., Hutchins, D. J., & Williams, K. J. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (4th ed). Corwin.

Epstein, T. (2009). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities*. Routledge.

Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, *59*(2), 117–142. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170412

Fletcher, J. K., & Ragins, B. R. (2007) Stone center relational-cultural theory: A window on relational mentoring. In B. R. Ragins & K. E. Kram (Eds.), *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 373-399). Sage Publications, Inc.

Formwalt, L. W. (2002). Seven rules for effective history teaching or bringing life to the history class. *OAH Magazine of History*, *17*(1), 65–67.

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(1), 59–109. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059

Freeman, C. (2020). Multiple methods beyond triangulation: Collage as a methodological framework in geography. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, *102*(4), 328–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2020.1807383

Frey, L. L. (2013). Relational-cultural therapy: Theory, research, and application to

counseling competencies. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 44*(3), 177–185. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033121

Gatchet, R. D. (2012). "I've got some antique in me": The discourse of authenticity and identity in the African American blues community in Austin, Texas. *The Oral History Review*, *39*(2), 207–229.

Gershenson, S., Holt, S.B., Papageorge, N. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economic of Education Review*, 52, 209-224.

Grant, M. R., & Lincoln, Y. (2021). A conversation about rethinking criteria for qualitative and interpretive research: Quality as trustworthiness. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, *14*(2), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.21423/jume-v14i2a403

Harris, R., & Reynolds, R. (2014). The history curriculum and its personal connection to students from minority ethnic backgrounds. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46(4), 464–486. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2014.881925

Heubeck, E. (2020). Recruiting and retaining teachers of color: Why it matters, ways to do it. *Education Week.* http://www.edweek.org.

Hodges, T. (2018, October 25). School engagement is more than just talk. *Gallup*. https://www.gallup.com/education/244022/school-engagement-talk.aspx

Hunner, J. (2011). Historic environment education: Using nearby history in classrooms and museums. *The Public Historian*, *33*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2011.33.1.33

Jennings, G. (2003). An exploration of meaningful participation and caring relationships as contexts for school engagement. *California School Psychologist*, *8*, 43–52.

Johnson, W. (2020). *The broken heart of America: St. Louis and the violent history of the United States* (First edition.). Basic Books.

Jordan, J. V. (2016). Relational–cultural theory: The power of connection to transform our lives. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, *56*(3), 228–243. https://doi.org/10.1002/johc.12055

Jordan, J. V., & Hartling, L. M. (2002). New developments in relational-cultural theory. In M. Ballou & L. S. Brown (Eds.), *Rethinking mental health and disorder: Feminist perspectives* . Guilford Press.

Juvonen, J., Le, V., Kaganoff, T., Augustine, C., & Constant, L. (2004). Promoting teacher competence through training. In focus on the wonder years: Challenges facing the American middle school (pp. 73-83). Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation.

http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/10.7249/mg139edu.16

Kavanaugh, M. (2017). *Hidden history of downtown St. Louis*. History Press.

Kay, M. R., 1983. (2018). *Not light, but fire: How to lead meaningful race conversations in the classroom*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Kim, J. (2019). Exploring the multidimensional constructs of transformative school–community collaboration from a critical paradigm. *Child & Family Social Work*, *24*(2), 238–246. https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12608

King, J. E. (Ed.). (2005). *Black education: A transformative research and action agenda*

    for the new century. American Educational Research Association.

Koch, A. K. (2017, May 1). Many thousands failed: A wakeup call to history. American

    Historical Association. https://www.historians.org/publications-and-

    directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2017/many-thousands-failed-a-wakeup-

    call-to-history-educators

Kunjufu, J. (2002). *Black students: middle class teachers* (1st ed). African American

    Images.

LaCroix, T. J., & Kuehl, R. (2019). Working toward equity: A framework for exploring

    racial and ethnic diversity in teacher education programs. *Teacher*

    Educators' Journal, *12*, 25–49.

Lawson, M. A., & Lawson, H. A. (2013). New conceptual frameworks for student

    engagement research, policy, and practice. *Review of Educational Research*, *83*(3),

    432–479. JSTOR.

Lawson, M. A., & Masyn, K. E. (2015). Analyzing profiles, predictors, and consequences

    of student engagement dispositions. *Journal of School Psychology*, *53*(1), 63–86.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2014.11.004

Lippman, R. (2020, July 13). Host. [Audio Podcast]. How educators are rethinking

    history curriculum.

    https://www.npr.org/podcast/show/howeducatorsarerethinkinghistorycurriculum.

Marino, M. P. (2012). Urban space as a primary source: Local history and historical

    thinking in New York City. *The Social Studies*, *103*(3), 107–116.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2011.592166

Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in

    qualitative data analysis. *Sociology,* _37(3), _413–431.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373002

McCauley, M. (2013). Relational-Cultural Theory: Fostering healthy coexistence through

    a relational lens. *Beyond Intractability*. Conflict Information

    Consortium,University of Colorado, Boulder. http://www.beyondintractability.

    org/essay/relational-cultural-theory

Mee, M., & Haverback, H. (2014). Commitment, preparation, and early career

    frustrations: Examining future attrition of middle school teachers. *American*

    Secondary Education, 42(3), 39-51.

    http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/43694933

Merriam, S. B. (2009) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*.

    Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J. B. (1986). What do we mean by relationships? (Work in Progress No. 22).

    Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, Working Paper Series.

Miller, J.B. (2008). Telling the truth about power. *Women & Therapy*, 31(2-4), 145-161.

    DOI: 10.1080/02703140802146282

Milo, G. (2017). *Rebooting social studies: Strategies for reimagining history classes*.

Rowman & Littlefield.

Mitchell, C. (2021, January 20). The violent history of White supremacy is rarely taught

in schools. It should be. Ed week. https://www.edweek.org/teaching-

learning/insurgency-refocuses-need-for-history-of-White-mob-violence-to-be-

taught-in-classroom/2021/01

Morris, J. (2021). Closures of Black K-12 schools across the nation threaten

neighborhood stability. *The Conversation*. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from

http://theconversation.com/closures-of-black-k-12-schools-across-the-nation-

threaten-neighborhood-stability-162072

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. 2004. Engaging schools: Fostering

high school students' motivation to learn. Washington, DC: The National

Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/10421.

NCES – National Center for Education Statistics (2018) *Digest of Education Statistics,*

Retrieved August 1, 2020, from

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_219.57.asp

NCES – National Center for Education Statistics (2019). Retrieved September 30, 2020,

from https://nces.ed.gov

Netcoh, S., Olofson, M., Downes, J., & Bishop, P. (2017). Professional learning with

action research in innovative middle schools. *Middle School Journal*, 48(3), 25-

33. http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/44320368

Noble, R., Heath, N., Krause, A., & Rogers, M. (2020). Teacher-student relationships and

    high school drop-out: Applying a working alliance framework. *Canadian Journal*

    of School Psychology, *36*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573520972558

Perales, M. (2016). The food historian's dilemma: Reconsidering the role of authenticity

    in food scholarship. *The Journal of American History*, *103*(3), 690–693.

Pérez-Huber, L., Camargo-Gonzalez, L., & Solórzano, D. G. (2020). Theorizing a critical

    race content analysis for children's literature about people of color. *Urban*

    Education, 0042085920963713. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920963713

Powers, A. L. (2004). An evaluation of four place-based education programs. *The*

    Journal of Environmental Education, *35*(4), 17–32.

Quin, D. (2017). Longitudinal and contextual associations between teacher–student

    relationships and student engagement: A systematic review. *Review of*

    Educational Research, *87*(2), 345–387.

    https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669434

Radcliffe, R., & Mandeville, T. (2007). Teacher preferences for middle grades: Insights

    into attracting teacher candidates. *The Clearing House*, 80(6), 261-266.

    http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/30189934

Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. L.

    Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student*

    Engagement (pp. 149–172). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-

    2018-7_7

Rimm-Kaufman, S., Sandilos, L. (2015). *Improving students' relationships with teachers*.

Retrieved June 8, 2022, from https://www.apa.org/education-

career/k12/relationships

Rumberger, R. W., & Rotermund, S. (2012). The relationship between engagement and

high school dropout. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.),

Handbook of Research on Student Engagement (pp. 491–513). Springer US.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_24

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. SAGE Publications

Inc. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-

researchers/book243616

Seixas, P. (2017). Historical consciousness and historical thinking. In M. Carretero, S.

Berger, & M. Grever (Eds.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical*

Culture and Education (pp. 59–72). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52908-4_3

Shann, M. (1998). Professional commitment and satisfaction among teachers in urban

middle schools. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92(2), 67-73.

http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.umsl.edu/stable/27542193

Sheppard, M., Kortecamp, K., Jencks, S., Flack, J., & Wood, A. (2019). Connecting

theory and practice: Using place-based learning in teacher professional

development. *Journal of Museum Education, 44*(2), 187–200.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2019.1597598

Sheridan, S. M., Holmes, S. R., Smith, T. E., & Moen, A. L. (2016). Complexities in field-based partnership research: Exemplars, challenges, and an agenda for the field. In S. M. Sheridan & E. M. Kim (Eds.) *Family-School Partnerships in Context*. (pp. 1-24). https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-19228-4

Skinner, E., Furrer, C., Marchand, G., & Kindermann, T. (2008). Engagement and disaffection in the classroom: Part of a larger motivational dynamic? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *100*(4), 765–781. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012840

Spencer, R., Jordan, J., & Sazama, J. (2004). Growth promoting relationships between youth and adults: A focus group study. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *85*(3), 354-362. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F104438940408500313

Strauss, V. (2017, May 17). Why so many students hate history—and what to do about it. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/05/17/why-so-many-students-hate-history-and-what-to-do-about-it/

Suh, Y., & Daugherity, B. J. (2018). Oral history as inquiry: Using digital oral history collections to teach school desegregation. *The History Teacher*, *51*(4), 697–709.

The Annie Malone Historical Society (2018). *Reviving The Legacy of Annie Malone (Paperback)*. Left Bank Books. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from https://www.left-bank.com/book/9781631103568

Terry, G., & Hayfield, N. (2021). *Essentials of thematic analysis*. American Psychological Association.

U.S. Census Bureau (2019) Census Bureau Reports Nearly 77 Million Students Enrolled in

    U.S. Schools. The Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases

    /2019/school-enrollment.html

Weiss, A. S. (2011). Authenticity. Gastronomica, V11(4), V74–77.

    https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2012.11.4.74

Weiss, R. H. (2020, August). UCHS AP class partners with gateway journalism review to

    publish projects on racism and St. Louis history. U City Pride.

    https://ucityschools.org.

Wheeler, L., Guevara, J. R., & Smith, J.-A. (2018). School-community learning

    partnerships for sustainability: Recommended best practice and reality.

    *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für

    Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education*, *64*(3), 313–337.

Wiggan, G., & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2019). Urban school success: Lessons from a

    high-achieving urban school, and students' reactions to Ferguson, Missouri.

    Education and Urban Society, 51(8), 1074–1105.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517751721

Wilkening, S., & Donnis, E. (2008). Authenticity? It means everything. *History News*,

    63(4), 18–23.

Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical Thinking*. Temple University Press.

Wright, J. A. (2002). *Discovering African American St. Louis: A guide to historic sites*

    (2nd ed). Missouri Historical Society Press.

Wright, J. A. (2003). *African Americans in downtown St. Louis*. Arcadia Publishing.

Wright, J. A. (2004). *St. Louis: Disappearing Black communities*. Arcadia Publishing.

Wright, J. A., Wright, J. A., & Wright, C. A. (2016). *African American St. Louis*. Arcadia
Publishing.

Yin, R.K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications*. SAGE Publications Inc.
https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/case-study-research-and-
applications/book250150

Yost, D.S. & Vogel, R. (2007). Urban professional development working to create
successful teachers and achieving students, *Middle School Journal*, *38*(3), 34-
40. DOI: 10.1080/00940771.2007.11461581

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

UMSL | Research
University of Missouri–St. Louis

December 14, 2021

Principal Investigator: Diane Clark
Department: Education EDD-Doctorate

Your Exempt Amendment Form to project entitled Fostering Teacher-Student Relationships: A Case Study Connecting Authentic Local History and Middle School Teachers was reviewed and approved by the UMSL Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2066184
IRB Review Number	358321
Funding Source	University of Missouri-St. Louis
Initial Application Approval Date	October 19, 2021
Approval Date of this Review	December 14, 2021
IRB Expiration Date	October 19, 2022
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Approved Documents	Amended Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities (Appendix H) of the Initial Approved IRB

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. Enrollment and study related procedures must remain in compliance with the University of Missouri regulations related to interaction with human participants following guidance at http://www.umsl.edu/recd/compliance/umsl-guidance-covid19-policy-7.2021.pdf.
2. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
4. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
5. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the UM Policy: https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/policies/finance/payments_to_research_study_participants

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the UMSL IRB Office at 314-516-5972 or email to irb@umsl.edu.

Thank you,
UMSL Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Letter from Executive Director

October 5, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Diane Clark, a doctoral student at the University of Missouri-St Louis, has permission with her research team to conduct a study entitled 'Fostering Student-Teacher Relationships: A Case Study Connecting Authentic Local History and Middle School Teachers' using La Salle Charter Schools staff members. The study will focus on the impact of student-teacher relationships from having a deeper understanding of the community in which students and families reside through participating in interviews, focus groups, and a local bus tour. This research will contribute to the body of information supporting the theory of the importance of student-teacher relationships and how they directly contribute to improved academic engagement.

Diane Clark and her team have permission to solicit teachers for participation in the identified case study at La Salle. Diane Clark will follow Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines concerning student and teacher identifiable data published in the dissertation.

The principal of La Salle, Lauren Cobb, is a member of the dissertation cohort and will be recused from teacher interviews, classroom observations, action plan development, and data gathering. Upon completing the research, I ask that Diane Clark share the results with appropriate colleagues at La Salle. I appreciate the intent and the scope of the study.

Regards,

LaShanda R. Boone
Executive Director

1106 N. Jefferson Avenue | St. Louis, MO 63106 | Phone: 314.531.9820 | Fax: 314.531.4820
Transforming children and our community through innovative education.
www.lasallemiddleschool.org

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Participate

Dear Invitee,

My name is Diane Clark and I am a doctoral student enrolled in the University of Missouri – St. Louis College of Education. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I, along with other three other doctoral students, am conducting entitled *Fostering Teacher-Student Relationships: A Case Study Connecting Authentic Local History and Middle School Students*. The purpose of the study is to explore impact an immersive, place-based professional development has on fostering empathetic competence in urban middle-school teachers.

Your participation in the research will encompass completing an entrance questionnaire, participation in a facilitated tour of sites of historical significance during normal working hours which may include guided questions, development of an action plan to incorporate new knowledge into your curriculum, participating in a follow-up focus group interview, and allowing a classroom observation by myself or one of my doctoral researchers. During this observation no interactions will occur between the researcher and the students.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your responses to questions on our research instruments and questionnaires will be coded and transcribed with all identifying information kept confidential and separate from the instruments themselves.

If you would like to participate in the study please read the Informed Consent letter provided. Your participation in the research will be helpful in determining whether a new type of professional development could potentially lead to more effective relationships in the classroom.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Diane Clark, Ed.S.

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri – St. Louis

UMSL *Appendix D: Informed Consent for Particpation in Research Activities*

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Fostering Relationships: Teacher-Student:
A Case Study Connecting Authentic Local History and Urban Middle School Teachers.

Participant _____   HSC Approval Number _____

Principal Investigator: Diane Clark   PI's Phone Number: 314-602-0741

Summary of the Study

This is a brief description of the project

> School administrators routinely plan professional development for staff to improve curricular instruction and teaching techniques. The purpose of this research is to explore what impact a professional development local history bus tour, which you have already experienced as part of your back-to-school PD, has on fostering empathetic competence in urban middle-school teachers. We anticipate beginning our research Fall of 2021, during first quarter.

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Clark, University of Missouri-St. Louis graduate student and Dr. Theresa Coble, University of Missouri-St. Louis professor and graduate advisor. The purpose of this research, as previously stated above, is to explore what impact a professional development local history bus tour has on fostering empathetic competence in urban middle-school teachers.

2. a) Your participation will involve

> ➢ Completing a questionnaire developed by the research team, co-development of an action plan, classroom observation with students, and participation in a follow-up focus group interview. To protect the participants' confidentiality, your building administrator will be recused from interviews, focus group participation, and action plan development.

Approximately 3-12 teachers may be involved in this research with the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The site of this research will take place at LaSalle Middle School located in north St. Louis city.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 45-60 minutes to interview and collaboratively develop an action plan (in-person or via Zoom), 75 minutes of classroom observation time (in-person or virtual), and 75 minutes for focus group participation (in-person or via Zoom). You will receive a gift card of $50 value for your time.

3. There are no known risks associated with this research. However, please note that there is a loss of confidentiality risk. See no. 7 below.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the body of educational knowledge used to determine whether a new type of professional development could potentially lead to more effective relationships in the classroom.

6. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw.

7. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher. However, your name will not remain linked with your responses, a pseudonym will be assigned, and will be stored in a separate file so we can verify you have participated.

8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, (Diane Clark 314-602-0741 or the Faculty Advisor, (Dr. Theresa Coble (314) 516-5951). You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research, at 516-5897.

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Please describe what you believe to be your role as an educator.

2. What do you know about the local history of the school in which you teach?

3. What do you know about the culture and history of the families whose children you teach?

4. Could you describe the culture and history of your own family?

5. In your opinion, what would be the value of learning more about the history of your school and your students?

6. In thinking of the demographic served, why do you feel there is a critical emphasis on relationship development with students and families?

7. How might the development or not, of such relationships, impact social and academic outcomes?

8. Talk about what you see as attributing factors that may impeded the process.

9. Talk about what you see as attributing factors that may aid the process.

10. What is or some of the biggest challenges that inhibit successful teacher student relationships?

Appendix F: Local History Action Plan Template

University of Missouri – St. Louis EdD Dissertation Group

Action Plan Worksheet

Local History Action Plan

What is your learning experience?

- *Describe a place you visited, your experience, positive or negative, relevant, or irrelevant information, etc.*

What aspect of the tour would you integrate into your classroom instruction?

- *Explain the rationale for this choice?*

Identify tentative goals for a classroom project?

- *What do you hope to accomplish? Goals should be clear, measurable, realistic, and important to student outcomes (relationships)*

What are your challenges or roadblocks?

Forces that are favorable to achieving your goal.

- *Relationship with students, school improvement goals, time, collaboration with peers and external support.*

Forces that are unfavorable to achieving your goal

- *Lack of time, resources, staff and external support, power struggles among staff, student disengagement.*

Action Steps	Target Dates
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Milestones or indicators of progress

- *What are the indicators that show you are moving toward achieving your goal? Dialogue with students, tour experience, peer interaction and feedback, etc.*

Resources needed.

- *External*

- *Internal*

Resource: Champion, R (2001). *Planning for action, step by step.* National Staff Development Council. Journal of Staff Development, Fall 2001.

Appendix G: Teacher Observation Protocol

University of Missouri – St. Louis EdD Dissertation Group   Classroom Observation

Classroom Observation Form

This form is used to gather classroom observation data of teacher and student interaction for the case study research project for the Authentic Local History Group dissertation cohort September 2021-December 2021.

1   Grade level

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) 6th grade
- ( ) 7th grade
- ( ) 8th grade

2   Subject

Mark only one oval.

- ( ) Math
- ( ) ELA
- ( ) Social Studies
- ( ) Science
- ( ) PE/Health
- ( ) Math Intervention
- ( ) Reading Intervention
- ( ) Enrichment 1
- ( ) Enrichment 2
- ( ) Art

3. Number of students

_____

4. Time of observation

_____

Example: 8:30 AM

5. To what extent did the teacher and students focus on the lesson and actively

participate in learning?

6. To what degree did the teacher appear to authentically engage students in dialogue?

7. To what degree did the teacher interactive positively with students.

To what degree did students interacted positively with each other.

9. How did the teacher make a connection to the students through the use of intentionally embedding community and or historical relevance.

10. Other observation evidence

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix H: Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Script

Focus Group Script

Welcome and thank you for being here today. The purpose of this gathering is to get your feedback about how we can better serve students by understanding more about the local history of St. Louis city. Specifically, we want to understand what the discussion of local history in your classrooms can do to better connect you with your students and their world. Once we understand what works and what does not, we will have a better understanding of how historical context influences the engagement of students in the middle school classroom. That is why we are talking with you.

Let me introduce myself. I am_____and I will be the moderator in today's discussion. The format we are using is a focus group. A focus group is a conversation that focuses on specific questions in a safe and confidential environment. I will guide the conversation by asking questions that each of you can respond to. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Just be honest. If you wish, you can also respond to each other's comments, like you would in an ordinary conversation. It is my job to make sure that everyone here gets to participate and that we stay on track._ are here to record and summarize your comments.

Before we get started, I want to let you know two things. First, the information we learn today will be compiled into a final dissertation. That dissertation will include a summary of your comments and some conclusions based on them. It will be shared with the advisory panel connected with this EdD Dissertation team and will be published through the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Secondly, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with. This focus group today is anonymous and confidential. "Anonymous" means that we will not be using your names and you will not be identified as an individual in our dissertation. "Confidential" means that what we say in this room should not be repeated outside of this room.

Obviously, I cannot control what you do when you leave, but I ask each of you to respect each other's privacy and not tell anyone what was said by others here today. Although we hope everyone here honors this confidentiality, please remember that what you say here today could be repeated by another focus group member. So please, do not say anything that you absolutely need to keep private.

As you can see, we will be tape recording this focus group. The recording will only be used to make sure our notes are correct and will not be heard by anyone outside of this study.

Let's begin with introductions.

Q #1. Please share with us your name and something you love to do in your free time.

(Insert remaining questions)

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

<u>Opening Question</u>: Please share with us your name and something you love to do in your free time.

<u>Transition Question</u>: When you think of students learning in your classroom, what comes to mind?

<u>Transition Question</u>: Think back to when you took the first tour of the city. What was your first impression?

Key Question: What do you think a conversation about local history does for both teachers and students?

Follow up: What were the reactions of your students when discussing local history?

Probing Question (if necessary): Did anyone else have a similar experience?

Follow up: What did you learn from your students about their understanding of local history?

Probing Question (if necessary): Did anyone else have similar experience?

<u>Key Question</u>: How likely will you be to incorporate conversations about local history in the future?

Probing Question (if necessary): Did anyone hear something from your colleagues that made an impression on you?

<u>Key Question</u>: Would you be willing to work with the Missouri History Museum to develop a tour experience for your students as a field trip experience?

Follow up: What would you like your students to take away from such an experience?

<u>Ending Question</u>: What is your overall impression of this immersive place-based professional development?

<u>Ending Question</u>: What advice would you give to a new teacher coming to work in your school?

Appendix I: Pre/Post Tour Survey

Pre survey

Staff members completed a pre-survey tour to provide data regarding their outcome expectations

for the bus tour. The questions and disaggregated responses are listed below.

1. Your role

    a. 67% (13 respondents) teachers

    b. 27% (4 respondents) administration

    c. 6.7% (1 respondent) special education

2. How many years have you served students and families at La Salle?

    .   0-2 school years 80%, 12 respondents

        3-5 school years 14%, 2 respondents

        6 or more school years 16.7%, 1 respondent

3. How many years have you been in education?

    .   0-5 school years

        6-10 school years

        10 or more school years

4. How many years have you been in urban education?

    .   0-5 school years

        6-10 school years

        10 or more school years

5. Describe what you believe to be your purpose in
    education?

This is a deep question. There are so many purposes. In a nutshell, it is to give kids as much as you can to give them the best chance at a healthy, purposeful future.
Empower kids to be their best selves, so they can reach their own idiosyncratic potential.

I believe that my purpose is not only to educate but make lifelong learners and help in making productive citizens.
I want to help the students become successful in their adult lives
To guide children into their true selves
Develop students to become outstanding citizens
Access to science education
Breaking down barriers
My purpose in education is to minimize the barriers of underrepresented populations of students and pave the way for greater opportunity and resources for youth.
To hopefully better prepare the future generation.
try to provide equity in opportunity in education, build self-esteem, encourage individual aspirations and dreams, provide truth in historical challenges and perspectives, and reinforce personal responsibility to help learn and achieve; teach kindness
My purpose in education is to build relationships with students and their families, teach students with love, empathy and excellence empowering them to discover, develop, and demonstrate their unique destiny.
My purpose in education is to instill confidence in students' individualized skill sets, increase self-efficacy through growth mindsets, and foster positive citizenship through empathy and relationship-building.
My purpose in education is to minimize the barriers of underrepresented populations of students and pave the way for greater opportunity and resources for youth.

6.   Explain what you know about the culture and local history of the students you serve.

I know some, but not much. Although I grew up in Florida, my great-great parents emigrated from Germany to St. Louis. This is where they met. That's old history but not relevant or recent.

I know I know nothing and that microcosms exist within the whole and I will better serve my babies by learning about them.
Students coming to our school are behind maybe two or more years in education, and there is poverty. We as a community need to uplift and close the gap and make our students lifelong learners.
They are inner-city
Not much, it has changed a lot since I was in school around the area
what I have experienced in the decades of experience I have had with the students I have served
I am a member of the culture but there are generational gaps.
I have done extensive research on both our area and racial inequities in our city
Many of the students that I serve live in low-income homes, first-generation, and single-parent households.
An underserved population with historical wrongdoings influencing the present.
i feel like i know a lot through 16 years of teaching in urban education, and especially what i have learned the past three years. i have also immersed myself in much sociological and historical reading and documentary viewing to get perspective - I do, however, realize I have very much more to learn!
My knowledge of the culture of the students is strong, yet my knowledge of local history is limited. However, I was afforded the opportunity to learn valuable information about the local history from my participation in Cultural Leadership parent sessions.
As a result of systemic racism, the students we serve face more obstacles and are provided with fewer opportunities than their counterparts in suburban school districts. There are many students who come from single-parent households and must take on household responsibilities, such as monitoring and caring for younger relatives.
Many of the students that I serve live in low-income homes, first-generation, and single-parent households.

7.   Provide insight as to what you hope to gain as a result of the tour.

I do not know St. Louis very well. I actually planned to tour the area on my own. However a tour with people who know the area is even better! I am very interested in learning about the area my students are from, so I can better serve them.
More intuitive decision-making/restorative practices.
I am hoping to gain insight to how students live and the struggles that occur daily. I want to know how they live so I am better able to instruct them not only in education but also in life and make them a productive individual.
I like to learn so just anything about the area that will be useful
how the history of the areas we are visiting has developed the culture of the students served
N/a
Further information on our area
N/A
A realistic view of everyday life for this underserved population, influenced from the past.
Eyes and ears and heart are open!
I hope to increase my knowledge of local history and incorporate it in my lessons and activities with my students.
I hope to gain insight into the community's background to learn more about how the La Salle organization can continue to open its doors and find new ways to service its neighbors and families.
N/A
N/A

Tour

La Salle Middle School is a public charter school in the city of St. Louis. Families enroll from multiple areas within the city boundaries because La Salle has no direct feeder school. The collaboration between Amanda and cohort members occurred to determine the best route for the bus tour. Cohort members thought it best to choose neighboring communities in the area as well

as areas with the largest zip code area in which the students reside, from La Salle Middle

School. A zip code map of neighborhoods was provided to Amanda for planning purposes

Tour Survey Reflections

Following the bus tour, participants completed the post-tour survey to provide reflections relative

to their individual perspectives.

Tour Participants

- Dr. Coble

- Authentic Local History cohort members; Richard Buschard, Diane Clark, Lauren Cobb,

  Brian Esselman

- La Salle Middle School Staff; six administrators, two administrative support staff, twelve

  teachers, one counselor

Survey Questions and Responses (13 respondents)

1. The tour provided me with culturally relevant local history that broadened my scope of

   knowledge of St. Louis communities and neighborhoods.

   13 agree, 100% agree

2. The tour guide facilitated meaningful dialogue and conversation throughout the tour.

   12 agree, 92.3%

   1 neutral, 7.7%

3. As a result of the tour, I feel more informed of the communities from which my students

   and families come.

   13 agree, 100%

4. Participating in the tour increased my awareness of the historical aspect of the inner cities

   of St. Louis.

13 agree, 100%

5. Describe how information gained from participating will have an impact on your

culturally relevant approach with students.

Kids live in my neighborhood
Unsure
I've never reflected on how developers can impact a community in a way that was brought up today. I've also never lived in an area with so many vacated houses. I appreciate the insight I gained today.
Learning about "developer" Paul McKee made me angry to my core. All that potential squandered for greed sickens me. I just think about all our kids, their families and the legacy of environmental racism has in our city and country.
n/a
N/A
Having the bus tour gave me a better insight to our students and their living environment.
I am looking forward to strengthening my relationships with students by integrating the history of their neighborhoods into our lessons. In this way, I hope to empower them with a deeper understanding of their culture and local history so they will be proud of who they are and the city in which they live. When we connect to the power of our past, it enables us to carve out an even better future for ourselves, our families and our world.
It is important to have these shared experiences with our staff as a whole. We can now hold each other accountable for continued growth.
just more information to absorb and consider when trying to understand our students and their family and community challenges and the equity that they have been denied and are entitled to.
n/a
I feel more connected and appreciative of the culture that our students bring into the building. It has opened up my mind to new information that I wish to expand upon with my own research. I intend to incorporate this background into lessons concerning perspective, point of view, and throughout content-specific units in which applicable parallels can be drawn.

As a result of participating in the tour, I would like to see our students participate in a similar tour. It's important that they understand the history and significance of their neighborhoods/community.

6.   Provide any additional feedback that you may have.

We should do this every year
None at this time
This was an awesome tour.
I'd be very interested to do more tours as a group, or at least have educational outings like that.
n/a
N/A
For me, being born and raised in St. Louis and understanding the changes that have occurred, I found interesting to how students learn and live in St. Louis
N/A
I thought it was great.
loved this!!!
n/a
Today's PD is one that really resonated with me and one that I would like to continue developing. I think that exploring the historical contexts of St. Louis city communities would make for an incredibly engaging, authentic, and impactful cross-curricular study that we could facilitate for our students!
Great tour.

Appendix J: 2022-2023 Professional Development Action Plan

Professional Development Action Plan 2022-23

Continuing in the Work of Building Effective Teacher-Student Relationships

FINDINGS FROM DATA

1. Teachers want better connections to their students.

2. Teachers see how local history and knowledge of place can help build a relationship (reciprocity, shared knowledge).

3. Teachers can use local history as a tool to build a relationship with students and their families.

4. Teachers see the value of local history and would like more PD and learning opportunities for students.

1st Quarter August - October 2022

- Professional development thematic focus shared with staff on continuing the work of building effective teacher-student relationships.

  - Session on Breaking Your Implicit Bias

  - What Does it *Really* Mean to be Culturally Responsive?

  - My Student is Somebody! Understanding the Culture Served

  - How to Embed Local History into Classroom Engagement

- Teachers are provided with an opportunity to model ice-breakers and team-building relationships by facilitating interactive activities with staff. Teacher facilitation of such is infused throughout all professional development sessions and staff meetings.

- Teachers will facilitate a building tour for new staff and apprise them of the history of the school and surrounding area.

- Teachers will be tasked with completing a "find and seek" team building scavenger hunt in groups of three. The purpose of the activity is to allow teachers to connect with colleagues, support each other, and immerse themselves in local history. Within walking distance of the school, no more than a 1-mile radius, teachers are to locate places and spaces in the local community and share back with the group what they gained from the experience.

- Teachers will welcome families back by making annual house visits to students' homes. The purpose of the house visits is to aid in the relationship-building component. Teachers take students with a "welcome kit" to includes school spirit paraphernalia. Photos are taken of visits and shared on school social media outlets to promote positive teacher-student relationships.

- Teachers will craft welcome emails to their cohort groups of students and send to them on the first day of school.

- Teachers will craft a welcome family email in teams to send to families thanking them for choosing La Salle.

- Students engage in a walking tour of the school to learn the history of La Salle and De La Salle.

- Family engagement; coffee donuts at AM drop-off to welcome them back to school.

2nd Quarter October - December 2022

- Professional development thematic focus shared with staff on continuing the work of building effective teacher-student relationships.

  - Deep Dive into Multi-Tiered Systems of Support; meeting the needs of diverse learners

- ○ Review of quarter 1 climate culture survey data; What does the data tell us? How can we improve?

- ○ Weekly Professional Learning Collaboration (PLCs) focus on classroom culture & climate and effective strategies for building student-teacher relationships.

- ○ Bi-monthly share of lesson facilitation that included promoting student awareness of the surrounding community and how their contributions as a citizen aid in making their neighborhoods viable. The content lesson promotes curriculum engagement in tandem with promoting self-esteem, positive community, and the belief that each student... Is Somebody!

- ○ Family engagement; Parents receive holiday cookies on the last day of winter break at pick-up.

3rd Quarter January - March 2023

- ● Professional development thematic focus shared with staff on continuing the work of building effective teacher-student relationships.

  - ○ Review Multi-Tiered Systems of Support; meeting the needs of diverse learners

  - ○ Review of quarter 2 climate culture survey data; What does the data tell us? How can we improve?

  - ○ Weekly Professional Learning Collaboration (PLCs) focus on classroom culture & climate and effective strategies for building student-teacher relationships.

  - ○ Bi-monthly share of lesson facilitation that included promoting student awareness of the surrounding community and how their contributions as a citizen aid in making their neighborhoods viable. The content lesson promotes curriculum engagement in tandem with promoting self-esteem, positive community, and the

belief that each student... Is Somebody! Lesson share is to include Dr. King, Black History Month, and Women's History Month feature.

- ○ Teachers collaborate on 4th quarter instructional unit to include a walking tour of no more than a 1-mile radius from the school. Instructional units should be a culminating activity to engage students in local history of the surrounding area and school.

- ○ Family engagement; families bottled water and snack on the last day before spring break.

4th Quarter March - May 2023

- ● Professional development thematic focus shared with staff on continuing the work of building effective teacher-student relationships.

   - ○ Review Multi-Tiered Systems of Support; meeting the needs of diverse learners

   - ○ Review of quarter 3 climate culture survey data; What does the data tell us? How can we improve? Suggestions for next school year.

   - ○ Weekly Professional Learning Collaboration (PLCs) focus on classroom culture & climate and effective strategies for building student-teacher relationships.

   - ○ Bi-monthly share of lesson facilitation that included promoting student awareness of the surrounding community and how their contributions as a citizen aid in making their neighborhoods viable. The content lesson promotes curriculum engagement in tandem with promoting self-esteem, positive community, and the belief that each student... Is Somebody! Teachers will report on local history student tours and the impact on building effective relationships.

- ○ Family engagement; families are given thank you grab bags with school spirit

  paraphernalia and student thank you cards to their parents for the support this

  school year.