Teacher Knowledge about Educating Children of African Descent in Urban Schools

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Abstract
Teacher Knowledge about Educating Children of African Descent in Urban Schools was a quantitative study that examined what a sample of teachers knew about effective teaching in urban schools in order to inform professional development in the urban district where this study was conducted. This research proceeded from the idea that having knowledge about African descent people is a requisite for teaching them, and that absence of this cultural knowledge has served as a barrier to effective education. A quantitative instrument, Teaching in Urban Schools Scale, was used to identify teachers’ knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools, and a demographic section allowed for statistical comparisons within groups. Mean scores for the total scale were low, with statistical significance found in categories such as gender, interest in urban teaching, and participation in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge. Statistical significance was not found in categories such as race/ethnicity, age, teaching special education, mentoring, and grade level. The study concluded that women's epistemology and intense learning experiences about African cultural knowledge explain statistically significant results, and the Eurocentric theories and practices commonly experienced at all levels of education, including professional development, explain the wide-ranging areas of non-significance. Recommendations include research on teachers’ use of Summer Institute content, and grounding all professional development initiatives in the cultural knowledge and systemic analysis needed for effective teaching in urban schools.

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Teacher Knowledge about Educating Children of African Descent in Urban Schools

By

Susan Goodwin

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Dr. Arthur Walton

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Biographical Sketch

Susan Goodwin is director of the Rochester Teacher Center. The Teacher Center plays a pivotal role in teacher learning and professional development. As a teacher union leader of the Rochester Teachers Association, Goodwin promotes the building of learner-centered schools, the development of a more genuine teaching profession, and the nurturing of a sense of community-wide shared accountability for students’ success. She is an African American teacher permanently certified in Social Studies K-12 and has earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from the State Universities of New York at Geneseo and Albany in African and African American Studies. She has also attained administrative certification in education from Brockport College in New York. Goodwin is the recipient of numerous recognitions including Teaching Excellence from the University of Rochester in 1988 and the Cheik Anta Diop Award for Pedagogical Excellence in 2009. Her published work focuses on multiculturality, emancipatory and culturally responsive practices, and teacher union reform. In 2010 she completed doctoral work in Executive Leadership from St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. Dr. Arthur Walton served as her dissertation chair.
Abstract

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

This study examines the knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools. This knowledge base is grounded in cultural knowledge and culturally-responsive theory and practice (Gay, 2000; Goodwin & Swartz, 2004, 2008; King, 2004a & b). Teaching and learning about children of African descent is one way to define the professional work and development needs of today’s urban teachers. Teacher educators, school boards, parents and families, community leaders, and legislators have all been engaged in discussions, studies, professional development activities, and legislation directed at articulating and implementing approaches for better educating children in urban school districts (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994a & b; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 2004; Perry, 2003). Thus, meeting the instructional needs of students of African descent is central to many discussions, symposiums, and professional development meetings convened by State and local school districts to address what is most currently being referred to as “closing the achievement gap.” However, there is little regard for how the gap has been created (Hilliard, 2003). The idea of learning about African descent people as a requisite for teaching them has been vigorously resisted, even though it has been advocated by many community leaders, parents, scholars, and legislators of African descent.

The lack of cultural knowledge about African descent populations, and the failure to center people of African descent in the conceptualization and design of their own
education, has served as a barrier to effectively educating children of African descent and all children (King, 2005). Centering Black people in this discussion about educating Black children and their community brings culture, history, worldview, and ontology from the margins of importance to the foreground of required learning for teacher educators, teachers, policy makers, and the Black community (Boykin, 1983; Dixon, 1971; Myers, 1988/1993; Nobles, 1991).

Effective teaching with students of color in urban schools has been conceptualized and studied (Gay, 2000; Goodwin, 1996, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 2004; Lee, 1995; LeMoine & Hollie, 2007). Yet, there are limited empirical findings available related to what practicing teachers specifically know about effective teaching in urban schools. Without these findings, planning professional learning experiences to lessen the knowledge deficiencies of teachers about teaching students of color is hampered.

This study took place in a mid-sized urban school district in New York State where students of African descent are the majority population (65%) being served. In fact students of color (88% of students) and their predominately White teachers (almost 80% of teachers) stand at close to the same percentage in this district. It would appear that the cultural grounding of these different populations would be considered central to teacher effectiveness and student learning. However, this has not been the case in this district or the dozens of other urban school districts throughout the United States mirroring this reality (Gay, 2000; Howard, 1999).

Over 34,000 students attend public schools in the city where this study was conducted. Many of the providers of these families are unemployed or underemployed,
with 88% of students receiving free or reduced lunch and family median income at 63% of the New York State family median income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This city also has the highest poverty rate of the top big five New York State districts. Its economy is increasingly based on high tech businesses and services, and its blue and white collar corporate positions have never been held in significant numbers by the qualified people of color available—a source of community protest for many years (Buttino & Hare, 1984; FIGHT, 1962-1972; Wadhwani, 1997). Today’s students are increasingly unable to meet the entry requirements for either blue or white collar positions, as evidenced by the city school district’s graduation rate of 48% and drop out rate of 26% in 2008 compared to the 77%-97% graduation rates and 1%-13% drop out rate for surrounding suburbs (NYSED, 2009). The city’s continuing loss of manufacturing jobs only serves to exacerbate the downward socioeconomic spiral experienced by the African descent community. As in other urban centers, these educational and economic outcomes, along with the historical limitations placed on Black populations, exist in the context of urban districts’ failure to rethink the factory model of education. This model was historically designed for the goals and methods of a now almost defunct manufacturing economy (Gatto, 2003; Massey & Denton, 1993; Walters, 2003).

Theoretical Rationale

Afrocentricity is a theoretical framework that supports this study’s examination of the knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools. This framework speaks to the need for viewing people of African descent and their children in the context of their own reality (Asante, 1980, 1991/1992). Afrocentricity is a stance or approach to viewing phenomena that seeks to access African perspectives in all of the
humanities and social sciences. Afrocentricity utilizes a framework that “… revolves on an axis of African agency and asks questions concerning historical and cultural accuracy and interpretation based on its four basic categories of analysis: cosmology, epistemology, axiology, and aesthetics” (Rabaka, 2005, p. 74). African peoples become the subject of their own thinking, expressing their own ideas in relation to their classical and Diasporan cultural experiences and productions (Asante, 2003). According to Asante, Afrocentricity “place[s] African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (p. 38). Afrocentric analysis and interpretation of human phenomena is also a response to 500 years of cultural imperialism and what Reiland Rabaka refers to as “the progressive Europeanization of human consciousness” (2005, p. 73).

Afrocentric theory was developed by Molefi Kete Asante in 1980. It is an outgrowth of an intellectual movement that existed ever since the enslavement and colonization of African peoples. Numerous ideas consistent with Afrocentric thought have been articulated for generations by African descent educators, activists, and scholars who have advocated for practices, education, and movements that have spoken to the needs and interests of African peoples (Cooper, 1892/1969; Delany, 1972; Diop, 1967, 1974, 1959/1990; Du Bois, 1903, 1947, 1985; Walker, 1965/1829; Woodson, 1990/1933). Earlier theories such as Garveyism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Black Nationalism were espoused and supported by many Black thinkers and activists who sought to serve and strengthen Black communities throughout the world (Mazama, 2003). Garveyism and Negritude are two movements that can be seen as foundational to the development of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1980). Afrocentricity, however, is the first
comprehensive framework and perspective for viewing phenomena from an African perspective on African terms since the historic dislocation of African peoples (Mazama, 2003).

Afrocentricity moves conceptually beyond earlier theories that arose primarily as a remedy for or defense against Euro-American racial and cultural oppression and colonization. Whereas Marcus Garvey (1987a & b) proposed Black agency, an integral aspect of Afrocentric thought, and advocated economic independence, his methodology for its actualization relied on some European approaches and practices for economic growth. For example, Garvey’s entrepreneurial efforts with the Black Star shipping line moved ahead without being sufficiently grounded in African economic practices and expertise. So while many earlier theories are significant, it took Afrocentric thought to uncover the fundamental problem facing Africans and their descendants. Asante (2007a) describes this problem as a cultural crisis that has come about as a result of dislocation that is both physical and psychological. Due to the colonial and neo-colonial experience, peoples of African ancestry throughout the Diaspora and in many instances on the continent as well, have been moved from their location or from the center of their own world to the margins of who counts and what counts as knowledge worth knowing and values worth having. Thus, Afrocentricity examines how oppression works at the same time as it uncovers, preserves, and authenticates African heritage and memory. Afrocentricity seeks to return African descent people to the center of their own experience, where African and Diasporan worldview, values, history, and epistemology can be accessed, understood, and utilized as resources for creativity and problem solving (Asante, 1987/1998; Diop, 1981; Nkulu-N’Sengha, 2005).
**Connecting Afrocentric theory and educational practice.** The Afrocentric theory discussed above served as the theoretical framework for researching the topic under study and examining problems related to educating children of African descent. Teaching and learning about children of African descent requires knowledge about these children and their families—who they are, their educational goals, and the socio-political context in which they live. Afrocentric theorists recognize and seek to learn how African peoples have answered the questions of life through their living and ways of being. For example, how have African peoples on the continent and in the Diaspora educated their children? What is the purpose of education and who should it serve? And what are the curricular and pedagogical approaches that reflect the ontologies and epistemologies of children of African ancestry? Afrocentric theory provides direction for constructing educational approaches that are culturally connected and responsive to learners, their families, and communities. Afrocentric theory provides the constructs of cultural knowledge and cultural centering that inform the application of culturally responsive practice for students and teachers (Asante, 2007a; Mazama, 2003). Understanding the role of cultural knowledge in shaping curriculum and pedagogy provides teachers with a range of culturally responsive curricular and pedagogical choices. For example, teachers with ontological knowledge about African and Diasporan communities motivate students through collaboration and cooperation rather than competition. They develop classroom communities by building relationships among students, teachers, and families. In this type of classroom, instructional approaches are designed to support belonging, caring, reciprocal teaching and learning, and right relationship (Cajete, 1994; Goodwin, 2004; Noddings, 1991/1992, 2004; Smith, 2004). A teacher is “elder, family, and community
builder” (Tedla, 1998). Families and communities are viewed as knowers, and are invited to contribute to the instructional program as an essential part of classroom and school life (Moll & González, 1997, 2004; Sanford, 2004).

When linked to practice, Afrocentric theory provides pathways and liberated intellectual space for knowledge to be gained about effective teaching. This theory makes no universalistic claims about standards and practices that should be used to measure all realms of human existence. Afrocentric theory recognizes the legitimacy of all peoples to experience themselves at the center of their own lives and education rather than at the periphery. In this way, the knowledge of the world’s cultures, of women, and other group identities becomes a resource available to all. In contrast, educational theories that have supported a Eurocentric framework for teaching and learning have used the European cultural framework, including its ontology, epistemology, history, and ultimately its worldview, in place of all others. This denial of cultural knowledge and value has been identified as an act of violence and domination, and has been maintained by the experiences of enslavement, Jim Crow, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and now globalization (King, 2005; King & Goodwin, 2006). While these phenomena have changed in form over centuries, the miseducation of people of African descent has been constant (Woodson, 1990/1933).

The refusal to include Afrocentric theorists as significant participants in responding to the failure of urban school districts to effectively educate Black children is a central part of the cultural denial, violence, and domination experienced by African descent communities. Afrocentric scholars such as Molefi Asante (1980, 2007) and Maulana Karenga (2003, 2006) have been steadily under attack by a number of social
scientists such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965), Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1992), and Dinesh D’Souza (1995) who advocate a deficit model that seeks to “fix” Black people. These social scientists have continuously sought to replace African social structures and knowledge with their ideas of what constitutes legitimate family structures (Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965) and what should be considered knowledge worth knowing (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Ravitch, 2000, Wood, 2003). Other social scientists attempt to discredit the obvious anteriority of African civilizations or deny the existence of institutionalized racism (D’Souza, 1995; Lefkowitz, 1996). In similar fashion, Schlesinger Jr. (1992) declared that Afrocentric thought and culturally-focused content and curriculum would “disunite America.” While Schlesinger purports to be concerned with balkanization, his claim could also be read as the disuniting of the “master from the slave.” This understanding speaks to the superior-subordinate conceptual and sociopolitical ordering of Black and White populations (Nobles, 1987; Wynter, 1992), which Schlesinger fails to acknowledge. It is clear that Schlesinger and others seeks to reserve center stage for Western authority and culture, thereby maintaining the status quo.

One constant in these Eurocentric treatments of knowledge and culture is the assumption that Western thought and perspectives are universal. Alkebulan (2007) describes this technique of hegemony:

The idea that Western philosophy is somehow not “limited by national, cultural, or historical boundaries” supposes that Western culture is universal to all peoples. This ideology, in typical Eurocentric fashion, attempts to push all “non-Western cultures” to the periphery of the “universally” accepted
European cultural center. This clearly assumes that Western culture serves as the foundation for all peoples. The rest of the world (the majority of the world) may play but a supporting role. (p. 419)

Connecting Afrocentric theory and professional development. Professional development models described in the literature as effective contain protocols and practices that are collaborative, interactive, job embedded, public, supportive, and contextualized (Desimone, Birman, Garet, Porter, & Suk Yoon, 2002; Wood, 2007; Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007). Professional development models such as learning circles, teacher research, lesson study, and peer review incorporate these protocols and practices. As such, they are contexts for incorporating African-centered cultural knowledge and cultural responsiveness. While not generally acknowledged in the literature, these professional development models reflect the communal and relational cultural orientations of an African worldview. More typically, learning circle models are theoretically grounded in constructivist theory (Bruner, 1986; Collay, Dunlop, Enloe & Gagnon Jr., 1998). These learning circle models also reflect elements of the theory of andragogy, which posits that adults need self-directed learning experiences that consider context relevant to problem solving in collaborative settings (Knowles, 1980).

Constructivist and andragogist theories are compatible in that both acknowledge the social construction of human action. Yet, these theories discuss culture as social phenomena disconnected from the worldview or cultural orientations that have produced them. For example, the Western ontological orientation of individualism has created the historical isolation and solitary character of traditional schooling in the United States (Boykin, 1986; Nobles, 1976). In other words, theorists of constructivism and andragogy are
proposing to change social practices without identifying the underlying dominant cultural assumptions that undergird such practices.

Afrocentric theory brings the missing element of cultural knowledge to professional development. Built with the elements of location, centering, self/group definition, and agency, learning is located in the context of teachers’ everyday work. Their professional development is predicated on the needs of their own students. Learning is collegial not individually oriented, and it is active, which centers teachers by acknowledging and building on what they know. Ultimately, such professional development encourages teachers to define themselves and their profession (Urbanski, 1998, 2004). By experiencing the agency that comes with having and producing knowledge, teachers are enabled to act on behalf of themselves and their students, and make curricular decisions and instructional choices that are grounded in their learning about cultural knowledge and culturally responsive practices (Goodwin & Swartz, 2008; King & Goodwin, 2006). Increased consciousness and efficacy enable teacher learners to think on their own terms and act in the interests of themselves and their students and families. Such teachers become models and resources for the next generation of teachers and students.

*Significance of the Study*

Instruction that is culturally responsive is of particular significance to professional development programs in urban school districts. Although professional development departments are charged with supporting teachers in acquiring new knowledge, content related to knowing and centering students is typically omitted or framed in terms of demographics (e.g., income, readiness, family structure) and assumptions about culture
and language deficits. For example, professional development targeted to urban schools has sought to redefine culture with terms like “culture of poverty” (Payne, 2001). This attempt to decouple culture and education by declaring income the primary conduit of education trivializes the meaning and importance of culture by denying that education is culture’s transmitter (Goodwin, 1996). The suggestion that culture can be identified as poor rather than African, European, Indigenous American, Ibo, or other cultural identity—with their matrix of history, language, worldview, and cultural productions—renders Payne’s theorizing incoherent at best and racist at worst. This, along with her dismissal of numerous studies related to the effects of institutionalized inequalities identifies her professional development model as harmful practice (Gorski, 2006).

This dissertation study about teacher knowledge related to educating children of African descent in urban schools moves past deficit model programs and practices that deny students’ cultural identities and the centuries of knowledge to which they are linked. This study seeks to learn about and support teachers’ instructional needs informed by what they know about the basic constructs of effective teaching in urban schools (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). Studying teachers’ knowledge about African descent children is a systemically untested approach. This approach makes this study of potential interest to the profession, teachers’ professional development organizations, and urban school districts, including the district where this study was conducted. The timeliness of this topic is in direct proportion to the escalating disengagement of students of color from school, and serves to build on past and present work in this area (Bakari, 2003; Goodwin, 1996, 1998, 2003; Goodwin & Swartz, 2004, 2008). This study also builds upon and extends the work of many scholars, past and present, who have sought to contribute to
rereading and redesigning education that supports the liberation of African descent populations throughout the Diaspora.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what teachers in an urban school district specifically know about effective teaching in urban schools. The primary goal of the study was to discover and share new knowledge that informs professional development approaches in the school district where this study was conducted. Designing professional learning programs by building on what teachers know, and looking at professional development and cultural responsiveness within an Afrocentric theoretical framework, seek to advance understanding about the relationship between what teachers know and the nature of professional development they experience. By acknowledging the primacy of worldview and cultural knowledge, Afrocentric theory invites practices that center students by considering their identity, ancestral knowledge, and worldview as essential to learning. Cultural centering, location, agency, and self/group definition are fundamental elements of Afrocentric theory. When teachers have opportunities to learn about these elements, they are positioned to learn how to construct curriculum and pedagogy that are responsive and connected to their students. Thus, the theoretical framework for this study of teachers’ knowledge moves beyond past approaches that appear to be layered over standard conceptions and assumptions that have failed to center students of African descent, their families, and communities.

Research Questions

As stated above, the purpose of this study was to add to the empirical findings about what teachers know related to effective teaching in urban schools. This study
proceeded by examining a central research question: What is the current knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools? The following set of eleven secondary research questions was also explored:

1. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between male and female teachers?

2. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to age?

3. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between elementary and secondary teachers?

4. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools according to self-descriptions of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity)?

5. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between respondents who teach special education and those who do not?

6. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools for teachers whose first choice is an urban district compared to those whose first choice is a rural or suburban district?

7. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to years of teaching experience?

8. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have taken a course in African or African American history and teachers who have not?
9. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have a degree in African or African American history and teachers who do not?

10. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have participated in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge and those who have not?

11. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who are currently or have ever been a mentor?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are intended to clarify the meanings and use of terms within this study:

*African, African American, and Black*: There are numerous terms that have been used to refer to people whose ancestral land of origin is the African continent. The struggle for self-determination in the Diaspora has resulted in autochthonous agreement around group-identifiers that acknowledge this origin. For example, the term “African” was used in 18th century Black/African owned and operated newspapers and in the names of churches and mutual aid societies established by people of African descent such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the African Mutual Relief Society. “African” was never dropped from use and was/is used along with “Black” and “African American.” “African” indicates valued ancestral connection and the reframing of an exogenous, melanin-driven positioning of African peoples in the Americas as “others”—as the alter-ego opposite of White people (Wynter, 1992, 2005). Scholars interchangeably use such terms as “people of African descent,” “Black,” “African,” and
“African American” to describe Diasporan peoples, past and present (Banks, 2004; Fisher Fishkin, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2004; King, 2004a, 2005; Nobles, 1987; Swartz, 2007). Their meaning is made in context. To separate and distinguish between these terms runs the risk of epistemologically diminishing the whole they represent (Bohm, 1980; Capra, 1996). Group naming that is fluid and multifaceted counters the hegemony of being named and defined by others. Notwithstanding the above explanation and for the sake of clarity, an attempt was made to limit terms that refer to “people of African descent,” which was the preferred term in this study. The guidelines for selecting descriptors were as follows:

- The terms “People of African descent” and “African descent people” are slight inversions and will be used interchangeably to avoid repetition when group descriptors are in close proximity.

- The term “Black” is used in cases where biocentrism is relevant. Sylvia Wynter (1992, 2005) describes how this melanin-driven belief system positions Black people as the alter ego opposite of White people. Thus, in the sentence, “This understanding speaks to the superior-subordinate conceptual and sociopolitical ordering of Black and White populations…. ” on page 8 in chapter 1, the concept being discussed requires melanin descriptors for both groups. The inferred presence of dominance, for example, in the case of resistance (read White resistance) to Black people participating in the design of education for their children also calls for biocentric terminology. Of course, the terms used by historical figures, for example, by Marcus Garvey, were maintained.
• African people on the continent and in the Diaspora are of African ancestry. To ensure that the writing process reflects the cultural unity that exists between all peoples whose land of origin is Africa, the term “African peoples” is used when referring to both groups. An example of this can be seen in a question asked on page 6 in chapter 1, “For example, how have African peoples on the continent and in the Diaspora educated their children?”

Dysconscious: This is a term developed by Joyce E. King (1991) as a way to describe the acceptance of patterns of restriction as given and inevitable. King calls this state of mind “impaired consciousness” (p. 135) in that it distorts and misrepresents knowledge, thereby obviating challenges to dominant ideology and practice.

Urban School District: Refers to school districts with the following characteristics: a) The school is located in an urban area—a city, not a rural or suburban or small town area; b) The school has a high rate (as high as 70% or more) of students of color as reported by NYSED; c) The school has a high rate of poverty based on data about free and reduced lunch reported by NYSED; d) The school has a high proportion of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, using NYSED data; and e) NYSED has designated the school as a “high needs” school (NCES, 1990; Russo, 2004). While all urban school districts may not meet each of the five characteristics, and while populations vary from city to city, the conditions of schools and school districts in cities have many features in common. In the city where this study was conducted, the district meets all five characteristics, with “students of color” being 88% of students and students of African and Latino/a descent being 86% of students.
Summary of Remaining Chapters

Chapter two provides a survey of the literature about teaching students in urban schools, including both theoretical/conceptual and empirical literatures. Chapter three discusses the research context, including the population, sample, methodology, research questions, and instrument used to collect data. Chapter four presents the analysis of data and results in narrative, charts, and figures. Chapter five discusses the study’s meaning and significance and the implications of its findings. This chapter also presents the study’s limitations as well as research and professional development recommendations for teachers who work with children of African descent in urban schools.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This literature review investigates the knowledge teachers need to have about effective teaching in urban schools as one way to inform the professional work and development needs of teachers in today’s urban school districts. Meeting the instructional needs of students of African descent and other historically marginalized students is central to many community and professional discussions convened in response to the systemic failure of urban districts to effectively educate their students (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Shujaa, 1994). Yet, the resistance to meaningful inclusion of African-centered scholars and practitioners in this process has resulted in a lack of cultural knowledge about students and families of African descent. Teacher preparation programs are impacted by this paucity of empirical knowledge (Bakari, 2003; Kohn, 1999; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Zeichner, 1996). Thus, it remains largely up to professional development programs to bring this knowledge of effective teaching in urban schools to practicing teachers. Empirical research that examines the current knowledge base of teachers is needed to inform the planning of such professional development programs.

Theoretical/conceptual literature. A review of the theoretical/conceptual literature uncovers three distinct elements of the discourse on educating students of African descent: 1) deficit vs. culturally-connected education models (Boykin, 1983; King, 1994); 2) inequalities in schooling related to expenditures, policies, and programs (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 1992); and 3) miseducation resulting from the curricular
absence of cultural knowledge about people of African descent (Woodson, 1990/1933; Wynter, 1992). The assumptions, concepts, insights, and recommendations identified in the research conducted by these scholars provide the conceptual and contextual frameworks for the empirical research described later in this chapter.

Two distinct, uninterrupted, and parallel frameworks represent the first element of the discourse on educating children of African descent. These two frameworks reach back to the beginning of the period of enslavement and characterize the public and academic discourse about educating children of African descent. One framework is conceptualized within the dominant social system, using formulations and assumptions with a deficit orientation. This deficit orientation makes assumptions about who African descent people and their children are and what they can and should learn (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Hirsch, 1987). The other framework is a culturally-connected model that counters the dominant view. This framework has been advanced by people of African descent and others who define education in terms of self-determination and liberation from the status quo (Asante, 1980, 2007a; Karenga, 2006; Carruthers, 1994). The crisis in education for people of African descent throughout the Diaspora is viewed by this researcher as the consequence of the imposition and implementation of the dominant and deficit model and its concomitant education theories, views, policies, and practices.

A second element of the discourse on educating children of African descent pertains to the magnitude of historic inequities in urban schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Kozol (1992) describes these inequities in today’s urban school facilities, programs, policies, expenditures, materials, and staffing as extreme and “savage” in terms of their pervasive and destructive nature and impact on students and their
communities. These inequities have been consistently voiced by many African descent scholars and community workers (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Massey, 1993; Robinson, 2000). However, these voices are typically absent from or marginalized within institutionalized conversations about topics central to understanding and responding to the educational needs of African descent students. Bypassing this knowledge in deliberations and research about education is tantamount to ensuring the status quo through educational dispossession (Hilliard, 1997, 2003).

Miseducation is the third element of the discourse on educating children of African descent. This element is what African descent educators have described as the typical curricular experience of their children in schools in the United States and throughout the Diaspora (Woodson, 1990/1933; Wynter, 1992). Miseducation refers to not learning about historical accounts of African experiences in the Americas and other Diasporan communities. Miseducation also involves the absence of knowledge and education about African Nations of origin, African cultural concepts and deep thought, African and Diasporan resistance movements, Diasporan contributions to human knowledge, and the anteriority of African culture and civilization (Asante, 2007b; Diop, 1974; Du Bois, 1975; Hilliard, 1997; Karenga, 2004, 2006). In other words, children of African descent are not expected to know anything about themselves. Darling-Hammond (2004) suggests that this nearly complete absence of cultural knowledge may be a core reason why unacceptable numbers of African descent children disconnect from schooling as early as the primary level and, as a result, drop out or are pushed out of school before attaining high school graduation.
The implications of the three elements discussed above (i.e., deficit vs. culturally-connected education models, historic education inequalities, and miseducation) are clear in the theoretical/conceptual literature related to what teachers need to know in educating children of African descent. The literature suggests that it is vital for teachers to possess specific curricular and pedagogical knowledge to effectively educate African descent students (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2004). This needed teacher knowledge applies, of course, to any culture or group being taught. Without cultural knowledge of students and the worldview and historical achievements of their ancestors, teachers are unprepared to build relationships with students, their families, and communities. Teachers also need cultural knowledge to productively use their curricular and pedagogical knowledge in the interest of their students. This connection between cultural, pedagogical, and curricular knowledge can be seen in the well-documented effectiveness of the culturally-connected education model for African descent students in many of the last century’s rural segregated schools (Anderson, 1988; Asante, 1991/1992; Foster, 1997; Johnson, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000). In examining the culturally-connected model in the context of urban schools, there are several questions that should be considered: What do teachers need to know about effective teaching in urban schools, where the majority of students of African descent are now taught? Do teachers posses the pedagogical and curricular knowledge required to achieve educational equity and excellence for students in urban schools? Do teachers know how to counteract deficit model practices in order to interrupt miseducation of students in urban schools? And, how can assessing what teachers know inform professional learning experiences that support teachers in becoming culturally responsive educators?
Given centuries of documented inequalities, miseducation, and the imposition of the deficit education model discussed above, past efforts by African descent educators to more effectively educate children in their communities provide an historical context in which the Afrocentric theoretical orientation of this study is rooted. Understanding the historical context of the Afrocentric theoretical/conceptual literature is critical in designing a research study that seeks to contribute to the disruption and redirection of past hegemonic practices that have failed to prepare teachers to serve African descent students and communities. Ignoring the presence and meaning of this history is tantamount to endless repetition of these standard practices that, in each generation, have lead to increasingly harmful social, political, and economic outcomes (Duncan, 2007).

**Topic Analysis**

Education reform related to meeting the needs of disenfranchised and marginalized populations can be organized into three broad, interrelated, and ongoing fields of study: Afrocentricity, multicultural education, and culturally relevant/responsive education. While some proponents have dissenting views on the differences and commonalities across the various fields of study, all three fields place culture at the center of their theoretical and practical work. Afrocentricity is a theoretical framework developed by Asante (1980, 1987/1998) that is grounded in the work of Diop (1967, 1974) and further articulated by other African-centered scholars, such as Karenga (2003, 2006), Hilliard (1997, 2001), Mazama (2003), and Shujaa (1994). These scholars place significance on concepts of historical, self, and cultural knowledge. Centering students in the instructional program places education in the service of student and community actualization, which provides access to African ways of being and doing as a birthright,
legacy, and resource. Afrocentric scholars suggest ways in which conscious familiarity with an African worldview can improve and empower Africans throughout the Diaspora at the same time as being a benefit to the well being of all humanity.

Multicultural education, notably articulated by James Banks (2004) and Carl Grant and Christine Sleeter (2001, 2007), is a conceptual framework that seeks to incorporate all cultures and groups as equally valuable and legitimate foci for teaching and learning. Education and instructional frameworks are viewed as permeable, with educators being enabled to select curriculum and pedagogy connected to and supportive of specific student populations. Earlier versions of multicultural education constructed western civilization and culture as the container in which other cultures were to be integrated. This field, however, has evolved over the past six decades to include multiple genres of research (Banks, 2004; Bennett, 2001), with a recent and new direction being informed by critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). When compared to culturally responsive and Afrocentric education, multicultural researchers have produced the largest body of empirical research examining the salience of culture in effectively educating diverse groups of students.

Culturally relevant/responsive practice (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 1995a) is a conceptual framework that concurrently assumes the significance of relevant curriculum and pedagogy, the development of critical consciousness in teachers and students, and the building of connections to family and community as essential to student engagement and academic success. Gay (2000) is worth quoting at length on this point:

… culturally responsive pedagogy simultaneously develops, along with academic achievement, social consciousness and critique, cultural affirmation, competence,
and exchange; community building and personal connections; individual self-worth and abilities; and an ethic of caring. It uses ways of knowing, understanding, and representing various ethnic and cultural groups in teaching academic subjects, processes, and skills. It cultivates cooperation, collaboration, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility for learning among students and between students and teachers. It incorporates high-status, accurate cultural knowledge about different ethnic groups in all subjects and skills taught. (p. 43)

This approach can be seen, for example, in the work of LeMoine (1999) and Secret (1998), who have produced and implemented English language arts (ELA) programs informed by knowledge of indigenous African languages. These programs teach ELA to African descent and other students who are Standard English Learners (SELS) (LeMoine & Hollie, 2007). Language is conceptualized and taught in these programs as a purveyor of cultural knowledge that includes students’ identities in the content of the curriculum and the pedagogy used to present it. Culturally relevant/responsive teaching is also referred to as emancipatory by some educators, since it seeks to ensure that students become critical thinkers who learn how to learn (Gordon, 1985; Goodwin, 2004; Swartz, 1996). Students who think critically produce knowledge and create solutions that demonstrate academic and cultural excellence.

The above three fields of study are well developed in the literature, with more attention given to theoretical/conceptual studies than empirical ones. While empirical studies exist, this imbalance results in a somewhat skewed literature base. The culturally-connected education model is exemplified in all three fields, but it is Afrocentricity that provides the leading conceptual lens and framework for this study’s exploration of the
knowledge of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools. As described in chapter 1, this framework seeks to access African perspectives in all disciplines and speaks to the need for locating people of African descent and their children as the subject of their own thinking, values, and lived experiences (Asante, 1980, 2003; Rabaka, 2005). Using this theoretical orientation is supported by empirical research that is identified as part of the fields of multicultural education and culturally relevant/responsive education. For example, the research study of Allen and Boykin (1991) described below is cited as relevant to these two fields (Bennett, 2001), but Allen and Boykin’s investigations of cultural knowledge related to pedagogy are consistent with this study’s Afrocentric theoretical orientation.

It should be noted that Afrocentricity has been opposed through misinterpretations that claim essentialization, because it centers people of African descent as a people with identifiable ontological and epistemological orientations (Dixon, 1971; Myers, 1988/1993; Nobles, 1976, 1991). Afrocentric theory names Africanity as a primary, not an exclusionary identity, and it does not dismiss the intersectionality of multiple identities as discussed in chapter 1. This theoretical framework views all African descent people as one, but not as essentially the same.

Empirical literature. The empirical literature related to conducting a research study about teacher knowledge of effective teaching in urban schools and its relationship to professional development can be reviewed under six categories. These categories are Professional Development (ongoing learning about teaching), Cultural Integrity (group knowledge and characteristics), Student Achievement (academic performance), Learning Climate (school and classroom environments), Curriculum Reform (content and
pedagogy), and Refutation (deficit model research). The Cultural Integrity, Student Achievement, Learning Climate, and Curriculum Reform categories bring together the empirical research on the ways in which culture is relevant to effective teaching, and consequently, how this research is relevant to the first category, Professional Development. Refutation, the sixth category, stands in opposition to education research that positions cultural knowledge as essential to effective teaching in urban schools.

Reviewed studies range from 1991-2008 and were drawn from the literature during this period for two reasons: 1) seminal studies that clearly define key research understandings of three of the five categories occurred in the 1990s; and 2) representing the empirical scholarship of almost two decades avoids the possible myopia of a shorter period of research that could misrepresent what is occurring, especially in the trend-driven field of education. Studies were selected for the first five categories based on their capacity to put cultural knowledge at the center of their investigations. While many studies were reviewed and cited in all six categories, one study that represents the central features of each research category was fully examined in this review. Other criteria used for determining selected studies, such as validity and reliability, were discussed in the review of each study. These criteria are not fixed and universal concepts (quantitative claims notwithstanding), and a combination of criteria or ways to assess validity and reliability were discussed in this review (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Winter, 2000). Together, the studies reviewed below sharpened the focus of this study by uncovering the connections between the self- and instructional knowledge teachers need in order to create culturally responsive learning environments.
The Professional Development literature has identified principles of effective practice for teachers’ ongoing learning (Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998). There is an apodictic connection between identifying and broadening teachers’ knowledge through professional development and the curricular and pedagogical practices they use in the classroom. There are national and longitudinal studies that show the connection between professional development on specific instructional practices and their subsequent use in classrooms (Desimone, Birman, Garet, Porter, & Suk Yoon, 2002; Garet, et al., 1999; Garet, Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Suk Yoon, 2001). However, only limited attention has been given to investigating professional development informed by cultural knowledge (Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007).

A professional development study that considered the concept of culture and gender inclusion in science, math, and technology was conducted by Zozakiewicz and Rodriguez (2007). This qualitative research intervention, entitled Maxima, was a three-year study in a U.S. Southwest school district. Maxima involved two researchers and all fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade teachers from three elementary and two middle schools with a 70% Latino/a student population. This ethnographic study of the project’s first year involved 20 teachers (nine Latinas, one Latino, one African American woman, and nine Anglo women) in a range of professional learning experiences. There were weekly classroom visits by researchers who team taught, led inquiry-based learning centers, delivered and set up equipment, and conducted two-week summer institutes and monthly meetings. Researchers modeled the integration of science and learning technologies using inclusive instructional approaches.
Maxima, theoretically framed by socio-transformative constructivism, sought to answer two research questions about how participants responded to this intervention and how their classroom practices were affected. Methods of data collection provided multiple data sets, including open-ended interviews and surveys, ongoing classroom observations, conversations, video clips, field notes, and district documents. From the triangulation and analysis of these data sets, researchers found that 70% of teachers felt heard and supported and 65% thought the interaction with other professionals was valuable. Eighty percent (80%) viewed personal growth as coming from sharing and observing the implementation of ideas with colleagues. In terms of affect on classroom practices, all teachers (100%) implemented one or more inclusive and inquiry based practice in their classrooms, 60% stated that Maxima facilitated a more critical approach to instruction, and 80% became more conscientious about implementing inclusive and inquiry practices. Fifty percent (50%) of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers displayed posters of scientists who were female and from diverse cultures, and teachers were using numerous references to scientists who were female and from underrepresented cultural groups. Limited affect on three of the 20 teachers was found in this study. These veteran teachers either thought they were already using inquiry-based science and engaging in inclusive instructional practices, or that rote approaches to teaching math and science were preferable.

This study established validity through triangulation of multiple data sets and through face validity, which in a qualitative study refers to the recognition of something as true: an affirmative “yes” response (Creswell, 2007). Face validity in this study was seen in the response of teachers to the support and direction provided to them by
researchers over a three-year period. Teachers clearly viewed the researchers as a valuable asset in their professional lives.

The *Cultural Integrity* literature examines the match between students’ cultural experiences and school learning environments. In the case of students of African and Indigenous descent, this match has historically been absent (Grande, 2004; King, 2004b, 2005). In the late 1970s, the theoretical foundation for empirically testing the connection between cultural context and cognition came from the work of Vygotsky (1962, 1978). Tharp et al. (1984) studied Native Hawaiian children, finding that academic achievement increased when practices called “culturally responsive” were present (e.g., interdependence, responsibility toward others, sharing of work and resources, cooperation). Cognitive performance has remained one focus for Cultural Integrity research with African American students. Boykin (1983) identified nine interconnected dimensions of African and African American experience (i.e., spirituality, harmony, movement expressiveness, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, orality, and social time perspective). Boykin and others have conducted empirical studies of several of these dimensions, finding that when instructional settings are congruent with students’ socio-cultural experiences, their cognitive competence increases (Allen & Boykin, 1992).

Allen and Boykin (1991) conducted a quantitative study involving 72 low-income African American and European American children, ages 6-8 years old, from a large Northeastern school system. The study examined movement expressiveness and its effect on cognitive performance. Forty (40) African American and 32 European American first and second graders were tested on their retention of picture pairs in two contexts, one
with music and movement (a High Movement Expressive, HME, context) and one without music and movement (a Low Movement Expressive, LME, context). Randomly assigned children were tested in only one of the testing contexts. Subjects were exposed to posters of sets of matching pictures (animal/food pairs and household/clothing pairs) in either the HME or LME settings. These subjects were later tested in groups of four by asking them to arrange and match the same pictures printed on a deck of cards. The variance of scores was significantly greater (P<.0001) in the low income African American group than the low income European American group in HME contexts, whereas the reverse was true in LME contexts.

The researchers explain how the above findings fit into a larger body of research that has revealed unrecognized cognitive competencies of African descent children. In so doing, this body of research has identified culturally-informed pedagogical possibilities that contrast with standard pedagogical practices. The researchers offer the caveat that this type of research does not intend to treat students of African descent monolithically, noting the long-standing existence of African American achievement in the context of standard educational practices. Nonetheless, they offer their findings as pedagogically relevant, particularly prior to the patterns of school alienation observed among African descent students at an early age.

This study exhibits internal validity, which refers to the extent to which unwanted sources of influence are controlled and rival explanations that make generalizations of the findings irrelevant are avoided (Suter, 2006). In this Allen and Boykin study (1991), internal validity is seen in the cognitive measure of knowledge retention, which appears to be a reasonable way to gain information about the relationship of movement
expressiveness to cognition. This study also exhibits content validity, which is the extent to which a measure or scale reflects the domain of knowledge that it intend to measure (Suter, 2006). This form of validity is demonstrated by the cognitive measure’s reflection of the specific intended domain of study (movement expressiveness) as defined and developed by one of the researchers (Boykin, 1983).

The Student Achievement literature that is culturally-informed is generally focused on reversing underachievement patterns that currently exist for students of color (Gay, 2000). Identifying and building upon students’ strengths, cultural orientations, epistemologies, language, and other family and community experiences are viewed as ways to produce academic and cultural excellence and maintain students’ cultural competencies (King 2004a; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2004; LeMoine & Hollie, 2007; Moll & González, 2004). Teaching and learning are the primary focus of this category of research. Students’ families and cultures are viewed as the broad context within which teaching and learning need to occur in order for academic excellence to be the normative experience (Hilliard, 2003; Mandara, 2006; Perry, 2003).

Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson (2002) conducted a quantitative study that investigated the racial socialization practices (RSP) of African American parents of preschoolers. They examined whether RSP, which is grouped in four categories (racial pride, spirituality, preparation for bias, and promotion of mistrust), influenced the cognitive and behavioral competence of the study’s preschoolers. They also examined whether RSP varied according to parent characteristics or child gender. Two-hundred families of children between 3 and 4.5 years old in diverse SES African American neighborhoods in Baltimore participated in two home-visit interviews with the primary
caregiver and her/his children. Four measures provided data for this study. The first measure was of parenting behavior, using an adapted Survey Measure of Mother-Child Relationship for Middle Childhood (SMMCRMC). The second measure was of racial socialization practices, using an adapted Parent’s Experience of Racial Socialization (PERS). The third measure was of home environment, using the Africentric Home Environment Inventory (AHEI), created by the researchers. And the fourth measure was of child cognitive and behavioral competence, using the short form of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL). In addition, demographic data were collected on parent characteristics.

A range of statistical procedures were used to identify relationships and significance, while controlling for the confounding influences of SES and general positive parent involvement. It was found that the majority of parents in the study used racial socializing practices (RSP) with no differences based on family income, education of parent, or child gender. Parents reported that 88.8% of their RSP related to racial pride, 74.1% to spirituality, 66.5% to preparation for bias, and 64.8% to promotion of distrust. The RSP scores for spirituality and racial pride were significantly greater (p<.05) among parents living above 180% of poverty. AHEI scores were significantly greater (p<.01) for higher than lower income parents, and were significantly correlated (p<.01) with achievement and problem-solving skills, but not with behavior, even after adjusting for SES. For boys, higher AHEI scores were significantly associated (p<.05) with greater wealth of factual knowledge, which was not the case for girls. Differences existed within and across the RSP practices and SES, and between Africentric home environment and academic performance by gender. The researchers concluded that a culturally-rich home
environment was associated with greater factual knowledge and problem-solving skills, and that socialization related to racial pride was associated with few behavior problems in very young African American children.

The four measures used in the Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson study (2002) were either adapted, or in one case, created. Thus, researchers reported their efforts to achieve internal validity by using the SMMCRMC and adapting one of its subscales whose remaining items had an internal reliability of .95. They also conducted exploratory factor analysis of items on the PERS, resulting in the study’s four factors or sub-scales with internal reliability coefficients of .86 (promotion of mistrust), .84 (preparation for bias), .76 (racial pride), and .84 (spirituality) respectively. They also conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the AHEI, using principle axis factoring, which indicated a single underlying factor with an internal reliability of .88. Without knowing the specific items on the 10-item AHEI scale, face validity is difficult to determine.

The Learning Climate literature includes studies about the creation of school and classroom environments that build community, foster high expectations, engage students in critical inquiry, and build caring and trusting relationships between teachers and students and students and students (Smith, 1996, 2004). Learning climate studies investigate structural features of schools and classrooms that lead to standard practices and assumptions about teaching and learning. These structural features include such practices as school-wide and in-class tracking, competition, reliance on high-stakes testing, and other “one-size fits all” conditions that have been found to replicate socio-
economic and educational inequalities (Oakes, 1985; Ohanian, 1999; Peterson, 2001; Wheelock, 1992).

Susan Katz (1999) conducted a one-year qualitative climate study in a middle school of 1400 students in Northern California. Coolidge Middle School was located in a middle-class White and Asian community into which 270 Latino and African American students were bused as the result of a court order to desegregate. Nonetheless, the school engaged in tracking to the extent that in-school segregation was maintained. A third of the students were in the gifted program comprised of 49% White students, 43% Asian students, 5% other students, 2% African American students, and 1% Latino students. Thirty-one percent (31%) and 6.5% of Latino students were in ESL and special education classes respectively. Their classrooms were located in run-down, poorly ventilated, leaky outbuildings called “the cottages” that were condemned by the fire department. These ESL and special education students were then moved to classrooms in the school’s basement. Of the African American students, 21% were in special education. And 75% of the students identified as having discipline problems in the school were African American or Latino. A parallel situation existed among the teachers, with almost all White teachers in the gifted program. Asian or Latino teachers were assigned to the ESL program, and African American teachers were placed in special education classrooms or advised “at risk” students. There was an almost 75% turnover of teachers in the ESL program compared to the 18% turnover of the general Coolidge faculty.

The study’s methods involved student and teacher interviews, observations, audio-taped and transcribed classroom discussions, focus group interviews, student writing samples, and school records. Eight 7th-grade Latino students—four male and four
female who were first and second generation immigrants from Mexico or Central America—were the student subjects of the study. All were in bilingual classes in elementary school and were viewed as strong students, but by 7th grade were identified as at-risk by the school. The study’s findings revealed the alienation felt by the study’s students. They perceived the attitudes of their teachers as ranging from disrespect to disregard. Students reported thinking that teachers viewed them as problems for not always speaking English, as gang members, and as probable dropouts “doomed to fail” (p. 826). Teachers claimed to view students as individuals, yet all but one teacher revealed discomfort with Latino students’ behaviors, language, and hair and clothing styles. The teachers in this study often falsely assumed that Latino students’ ways of acting, speaking, and dressing were signs of gang involvement. Some teachers stated that they were committed to high-achieving Latino students who they viewed as worthy of investing their time and energy.

Katz concluded that the school’s structural features supported the racialized attitudes and practices demonstrated by teachers and administrators. The structural features sustaining these attitudes were tracking based on standardized test scores, in-school segregation of students and teachers, emphasis on English-only curriculum, and assignment of large numbers of Latino students to undesirable classroom locations. Given these structural features and the attitudes they sustained, Katz further concluded that Latino students’ chances of success were severely limited.

The above ethnographic study established validity through the use of triangulation and through the demonstration of construct validity. This form of validity refers to the emergence of constructs during prolonged fieldwork based on the building of trust with
participants and the checking for researcher and informant bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Trust was built with participants during Katz’s year of fieldwork in which the construct of student alienation in response to school structures emerged. Face validity was evident in the alienation of Latino students who experienced disrespect and disregard from teachers and from experiencing the structural features at Coolidge. Ethical validity, which refers to reciprocity between the researcher and researched through the sharing and building of trust, was also present in this study (Creswell, 2007). This form of validity was demonstrated by the researcher’s intent to elicit students’ voices once she recognized the constructs that were limiting their learning experience. The use of audio-taped and transcribed classroom discussions contributed to the study’s reliability.

Curriculum Reform literature that considers cultural knowledge conducts investigations through a focus on changing the permeating Eurocentric character of the knowledge base to which children are exposed. Curriculum is viewed as the totality of ideas, assumptions, values, and behavioral norms communicated in schools, including all aspects of schooling from instructional content to disciplinary practices to school structures. Investigations in this category of literature include three types of research. The first type is historical studies that rethink the content of diverse disciplines, making them more inclusive and accurate (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Asante & Mazama, 2005; Diop, 1967, 1974; Lumpkin, 1997; Takaki, 1993; Van Sertima, 1986; Zinn, 2003/1980). The second type of curriculum reform studies is critiques of instructional materials using criteria that include and more accurately represent diverse cultures and groups (e.g., CIBC, 1977; Harada, 1994; Pewewardy, 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 1991; Tetreault, 1986; Wynter, 1992). Conceptual and empirical studies of classroom practices is a third type of curricular
reform studies that puts knowledge of the first two types of curriculum reform studies into practice (e.g., Dean, 2008; Bigelow, 1996; Lewison & Heffernan, 2008; Secret, 1998; Smith, 2004; Swartz, 2004).

Lewison and Heffernan (2008) conducted a qualitative case study of the second researcher’s literacy practices that represents the third type of curriculum reform studies. In the context of a critically-framed writers workshop, students wrote “social narratives” in which they voiced their personal stories as a way to think about and critique their worlds. This case study was set in a third-grade classroom of 19 students in an elementary school of 450 students in a mid-size Midwestern college town. There were 12 boys and 7 were girls in the study. Seventeen (17) students were White and two were Asian American. Less than 5% of the students qualified for free lunch. While this setting was not urban, the five books read by students reflected socio-cultural contexts related to race, class, language, and power relationships. Typically silenced voices of difference were prominent in these texts.

Methods in the study included text analysis of student-written stories, classroom observations and field notes, students’ notebook entries and illustrations, and student interviews. Students read, discussed, and responded to the five texts about social issues and forms of dominance. Student-written texts were independently and then jointly coded to identify idea units related to social issues and power-over relationships. Findings revealed that most students constructed stories about power relations related to bullying. The bullying actions students identified were verbal taunts, physical threats, and violence as well as exclusion based on physical appearance, race, and ethnicity. More girls than boys focused on gender-based forms of power, and boys more than girls developed
characters that responded to abusive treatment by crying. This was a response that the researchers viewed as indicating the existence of a safe space for boys to express their emotions without fear of ridicule. Other findings were that 57% of girls’ stories and only 8% of boys’ stories confronted abuse directly, and that the students who wrote these stories included ineffective adult characters who failed to respond to child complaints about mistreatment. The researchers concluded that teaching reading and writing in the context of real social issues built a classroom writing collective and resulted in more effective writing than usual based on students using themes they were passionate about. Focusing on real social issues also created a safe space for students to respond to social injustice.

Catalytic validity was evident in the Lewison and Heffernan study (2008). This form of validity refers to researchers stimulating participants to gain more knowledge of their situation in order to transform it (Creswell, 2007). The researchers exposed students to knowledge about social issues that mattered to them in order to transform their thoughts and responses to dominance through writing. The quality of this study is also seen in its honesty/authenticity, as the researchers made explicit their assumptions about the power of personal stories to critique the social world. The study exhibited credibility/veracity in terms of giving voice to its participants.

The Refutation Literature refers to research that ignores or discounts the importance of cultural knowledge. This is clearly the vast majority of research in the field of education, even during the last few decades when the salience of culture has received some empirical attention. In fact, the majority of education researchers and their counterparts in sociology, psychology, and anthropology have built careers on mining the
deficiencies of marginalized and oppressed cultures and groups. Their research is
typically used to explain why the indices of success in schools and other social contexts
are so “gapped” (Hilliard, 2003). Such deficit model theoretical and empirical research
runs counter to the studies reviewed above. This deficit research has been used to confirm
and replicate standard/Eurocentric practices that de-center African descent people and
other marginalized cultures and groups in educational policy and planning. A deficiency
orientation that ignores the cultural context of African descent people hides from view
the cultural knowledge and productions that refute supposed deficiencies (Alkebulan,
2007; Asante, 2007a &b; Mazama, 2003). This deficit orientation seeks to separate
African descent people from their past and present realities and accomplishments through
cyclic repetition of dominant discourse concepts. These concepts range from emphasis on
degrees of humanness (Wynter, 2005) to intellectual capacity (Gould, 1981; Herrnstein &
Murray, 1994) to cultural disadvantage (Clark, 1983; Office of Policy Planning and
Research, 1965), to socioeconomic status and child-rearing practices (Comer, 1988;

It is worthy of note that deficit model research has the tenacity of phenomena
born of and continuously supported by supremacist theories and practices. While earlier
decades of deficit-oriented sociology (e.g., eugenics), psychology (e.g., biased
intelligence testing) and education (e.g., racist basal readers) are often dismissed as the
flawed thinking of a bygone era, current examples of deficit research are plentiful. This
deficit research is more difficult to discern and dispel, since its authors do not subscribe
to supremacist theories and practices. In fact, current deficit model researchers seek to
ameliorate current inequalities by providing findings that increase our understanding of
the conditions that support inequalities. For example, since the 1960s, a strain of scholarship has studied the seemingly positive practice of school integration. There is no doubt that it was necessary to end the legal segregation of schools in the pre- Brown v. Board (1954) era. It is also clear that separate education in a race stratified society would logically be unequal (Bell, 2004). However, the drive for school integration in the same race stratified society that has vehemently resisted race mixing suggests that “being together” in schools (diversity), by itself, is not be the “fix” it was intended to be.

An historical overview reveals that school integration was obstructed by White flight, inequitable government lending and other funding practices, real estate redlining, in-school segregation policies and practices, and reversals by the Supreme Court on affirmative action and school desegregation (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Robinson, 2000). Even if this was not the case, “being together” does not alter inequitable curriculum, pedagogy, and structural practices. In fact, school integration may be a deterrent from even considering anything more than a cosmetic alteration of the Eurocentric policies and practices that have produced the inequalities that integration was supposed to change. Yet empirical studies from the 1960s to the present continue to show—in support of integration—how school concentrations of Black students adversely affect their achievement (Coleman, 1966; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002; Lee, 2007; Schofield, 2001). These studies suggest that the deficiencies of African descent students are the result of their concentrated presence in a school. This is one example of how the need to explain school failure without looking at the relevance of responsive curricular practices and cultural knowledge
maintains deficiency-minded research that has become more difficult to discern. The study reviewed below is one such case.

Lee (2007) conducted a quantitative multiple regression study of the effects of racial/ethnic school composition on student achievement. This national study of seventh-through twelfth-grade Black, White, and Latino students was drawn from a sample of 80 high schools and 52 middle schools representative of U.S. schools by region, urbanicity, school type (public/private), race/ethnicity, and school size. The final sample, drawn from Add Health data, consisted of 9,764 students. The dependent variable was Add Health Picture Vocabulary Test (AHPVT) scores, which correlate highly with standardized intelligence tests. This, along with in-home interviews and data collected from administrators in each sample school, provided the study’s multiple data sets.

Independent variables (race/ethnicity, family characteristics, individual characteristics, peer group characteristics, and school characteristics) were grouped into individual and family characteristics variables, peer group-level variables, and school-level variables (e.g., social composition, school resources, class size, school size, school type, existence of tracking, teachers education level). These variables were used to determine which ones had an effect on student achievement using a hierarchal and multilevel modeling procedure. The study found that correlations between individual-, school-, and peer-level variables and AHPVT scores were all significant at the $P<.001$ level, with a positive correlation (0.30) between the percent of a school that was White and AHPVT scores and a negative correlation between the percent of a school that was Latino or Black and AHPVT scores (-0.22 and -0.23 respectively). Thus, the higher the proportion of Black or Latino students in a school, the lower the AHPVT scores of a
respondent in that school. School characteristics such as size and the existence of tracking, parental education (a proxy for SES), and peer-group characteristics slightly decreased the effects of school composition on achievement, but school composition remained significant. For example, for Latino and White students, as the proportion of their individual peers that were Latino increased, AHPVT scores declined, with a greater decline for Latinos than for Whites. Increasing the proportion of individual peers who were Black improved AHPVT scores for Latinos, but had no effect for Black or White students. However, these individual peer influences did not mediate the relationship between a school’s racial composition and achievement. It was also found that an increase in the proportion of White students reduced the AHPVT scores for White students.

Given these findings, Lee (2007) concluded that racial composition in U.S. schools significantly affects achievement, recommending that strong efforts be made toward school integration. Predictive validity was claimed by the researcher for the dependent variable (AHPVT scores), which “correlated highly with standardized intelligence tests” (Lee, 2007, p. 158). Predictive validity refers to the extent to which scores on a measure can predict an outcome it is supposed to predict (Patten, 2007). While face validity seemed to exist in the AHPVT measure’s assessment of the relationship between school racial/ethnic competition and achievement, it was compromised by the absence of variables related to curricular and pedagogical cultural knowledge and socio-economic inequalities. The absence of these variables detracts from the study’s content validity. In other words, the domain of achievement without cultural knowledge and social context components risks a teleological assumption about the
“natural” absence of cultural knowledge related to people of color in schools and the
“natural” or inherent presence of inequalities in society.

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review indicates the importance of both theoretical/conceptual and
empirical research in the fields of Afrocentric, multicultural, and culturally-responsive
education. The empirical literature offers the paradigmatic power of science to support
and advance what African descent scholars have been conceptually articulating for more
than a century. Such empirical studies investigate how gaining cultural knowledge and
considering students’ cultural identities during instruction affect teachers’ practices.
These studies also identify essential aspects of the knowledge base needed for teachers to
be effective practitioners, particularly in urban schools. This knowledge helped to shape
and refine a plan of action for examining the current knowledge base of teachers about
effective teaching in urban schools. Reviewing the literature also brought the relationship
between teachers’ knowledge and the design of professional development into sharper
focus. Empirical studies show that teachers who learn about inclusive approaches use this
knowledge in their classrooms (Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007), and that cognitive
competence increases when pedagogical practices are congruent with students’ socio-
cultural experiences (Allen & Boykin, 1991). Other findings from this literature further
indicate the relevance of pedagogy that centers students. It was found that the cultural
characteristics, practices, and values of students affect learning and require related
pedagogies (Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002). And teachers who see
themselves in relationship to their students provide pedagogical opportunities for students
to think critically and increase their understanding of social issues (Lewison &
Heffernan, 2008). Research studies also verify the negative effects of tracking programs that segregate faculty as well as students, provide blatantly undesirable classroom locations for marginalized and low-performing students, and engage in racial stereotyping (Katz, 1999). Together, these findings indicate a wide range of knowledge areas needed by teachers to negotiate the structural aspects of schools and schooling and to create culturally-responsive learning environments that position each student and groups of students as the subjects of their own learning.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

The General Perspective

Teachers are generally engaged in a wide range of professional development activities, with teachers in New York State being required to complete 175 hours of professional development every five years. School districts in New York State are mandated to support professional development planning committees that include teacher centers and teacher unions. While effective teaching with students of color in urban schools has been conceptualized and studied, there are limited empirical findings available related to what practicing teachers specifically know about effective teaching in urban schools. This hampers the planning of professional learning experiences that might lessen gaps in the knowledge base of teachers about teaching students of color. Thus, the purpose of this study was to add to the empirical findings about what teachers know related to effective teaching in urban schools. This descriptive study proceeded by examining a central research question: What is the current knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools? The following set of secondary research questions was also examined:

1. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between male and female teachers?

2. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to age?
3. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between elementary and secondary teachers?

4. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools according to self-descriptions of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity)?

5. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between respondents who teach special education and those who do not?

6. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools for teachers whose first choice is an urban district compared to those whose first choice is a rural or suburban district?

7. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to years of teaching experience?

8. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have taken a course in African or African American history and teachers who have not?

9. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have a degree in African or African American history and teachers who do not?

10. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have participated in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge and those who have not?

11. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who are currently or have ever been a mentor?
A validated quantitative instrument entitled *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* (Swartz & Bakari, 2005) was used to measure the knowledge of teachers about effective practices in urban schools (see permission letter in Appendix A). Data were gathered by administering this instrument to teachers in the district under study. Using a validated instrument provided a stable measurement or “read” of participants’ knowledge at a given point in time in the form of empirical findings (Williamson, Karp, Dalphin, & Gray, 1982). A demographic section accompanied the *Scale*, which allowed for statistical comparisons within various categories such as race/ethnicity, gender, interest in urban teaching, and grade level. Testing for significance was done at the .01 level to guard against the probability of finding significance by chance alone (Lipschutz & Schiller, 1998; Moore, 2010). Analysis of the data produced findings from which implications were drawn and recommendations for professional development were made based on what a sample group of teachers knew about effective teaching in urban schools.

**Research Context**

This study was approved and conducted during the 2009-2010 school year in a mid-sized urban school district in New York State that had a student enrollment of approximately 34,000 students (see Appendix B). In 2009-2010, students of color represented 88% of all students in this district, with African descent students representing the majority of students (65%). During this same period, White teachers represented 78% of the 3,638 teachers employed by the district. In the same year, this district had the highest poverty rate among the largest five New York State school districts with 88% of its students receiving free or reduced lunch. The city’s continuing loss of manufacturing jobs has served to intensify the downward socioeconomic spiral experienced by many
residents. The district’s graduation rate was 48% and its drop-out rate was 26% in 2008 compared to the 77%-97% graduation rates and 1%-13% drop out rate for surrounding suburban school districts (NYSED, 2009).

Research Participants

All 3,638 teachers employed by the district where this study was conducted were invited to voluntarily and anonymously participate in this study during the 2009-2010 school year. Inviting all district teachers to participate, rather than selecting a sampling frame, was influenced by current state and local district policies that require all teachers to engage in a specified number of professional development hours. While voluntary professional development has been shown to be more effective (Guskey, 2000), this state and local requirement has positioned professional development as a given part of teachers’ professional lives. Mirroring this element of full engagement of all teachers in professional development, an invitation to participate was extended to every teacher. The actual sample size was determined by the number of teachers who completed the Scale.

Instrument Used in Data Collection

The Teaching in Urban Schools Scale is a 91-item instrument and was used to measure the knowledge base of participants about effective teaching in urban schools (see Appendix C). The Scale’s response format is categorical. Participants were asked to respond to each item by checking one of the following: “Yes,” “No,” or “I Don’t Know.” Since this instrument measures knowledge, the “I Don’t Know” category was included to discourage guessing. The 91 items were followed by a demographic section of 13 questions, which were also completed by respondents.
The items on the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* were drawn from theoretical and empirical research in the fields of multicultural, culturally responsive, and Afrocentric education that has shown knowledge of students’ cultures as a primary context for effective teaching and learning (Allen & Boykin, 1992; Asante, 1980, 2007a; Boykin, 1994; Goodwin & Swartz, 2008; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; King, 2004a & b; Moll & González, 2004). As stated by the instrument’s authors (Swartz & Bakari, 2005):

Urban students bring specific cultural orientations and practices to the classroom including diverse patterns of language and socialization. Their experiences frequently include patterns of restriction such as racism and classism that limit their educational opportunities and life chances. When these occurrences are ignored, students are placed at a distinct disadvantage. Due to a lack of knowledge about urban students—in particular African American and Latino/a students—many teachers position learners at risk of academic failure, misidentification of special needs (including giftedness), unnecessarily harsh disciplinary action and diminution of self. In contrast, effective teachers share a set of common practices and knowledge about urban students that minimize negative outcomes (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1997; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994a; McDermott, Rothenberg, & Gormley, 1999). (pp. 829-830)

The *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* is composed of eight sub-scales, each being a conceptual component or construct needed for effective teaching in urban schools. The eight constructs are Teachers as Professionals, Families and Community, Emancipatory Pedagogy, Cultural Knowledge, Systemic Analysis, Classroom Environment, Student Experience, and Importance of Cultural Knowledge. Considered together, these
constructs represent a baseline of knowledge needed for effective teaching in urban schools. While knowledge alone is not sufficient, this researcher views this information as a necessary platform upon which to inform and build effective professional development programs for teachers of urban students. The following descriptions of the eight sub-scales or constructs are drawn in abbreviated form from Swartz & Bakari (2005):

1. Teachers as Professionals – refers to congruency between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Teachers who are professionals are learners who seek knowledge about themselves, teaching, and the process of learning so as to respond to students’ learning needs and build connections between themselves, students, families, and communities.

2. Families and Community – refers to understanding that families and communities are central to the schooling experience. When families’ and communities’ knowledge of their children and ideas about their engagement are sought and considered, this knowledge can be incorporated into the instructional program.

3. Emancipatory Pedagogy – refers to using curricular and instructional practices that encourage students to learn and act in the interests of themselves, their families, and communities. Such practices position students as the reason for the learning process and as producers of knowledge who actively and critically engage with meaning.

4. Cultural Knowledge – refers to the knowledge base of diverse cultures, groups, and the communities that represent them. It includes ontological and epistemological orientations, values and beliefs, language, organizing premises of a culture/group, and its past and present practices. When cultural knowledge is present, it affirms students’ individual and collective voices.
5. Systemic Analysis – refers to the ability to critique information about socio-cultural forces and the schools and other systems these forces maintain. A critical analysis of systems produces knowledge about the ways in which hegemony and systems of privilege have resulted in social, economic, and political injustices across race, class, gender, and other group identities.

6. Classroom Environment – refers to knowledge about the physical organization, curricular and instructional practices, levels of expectation, and the social and cultural relationships that build a classroom ethos or culture and contribute to students’ engagement in the learning process.

7. Student Experience refers to knowledge about the ways in which students observe and experience classroom and school life. It assesses understanding about how family and cultural knowledge, human development, and cognition are used to enable students to think critically, feel, and act in ways that reflect their multiple identities in the context of schooling.

8. Importance of Cultural Knowledge – refers to how multicultural curriculum and pedagogy are as important as being competent in other subject area(s) one teaches. Having cultural knowledge is understood as a way to develop critical thinkers and demonstrate respect for students who are viewed as bringing “cultural capital” with them to school.

An extensive literature review resulted in the initial development of 150 knowledge-based items and their correct answers. These items were independently reviewed by an expert panel of seven educators who reduced the 150 items to 91 items (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). The panel then met numerous times to consensually decide on
the revision of some items and the removal of others that failed to achieve unanimous agreement. The *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* was piloted in 2002-2003, revised, and then conducted as a full study in 2003-2004 (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). It was found that the 2003-2004 data looked very similar to the pilot data in terms of reliability, which for the pilot was .90 and for the first full administration of the *Scale* was .91. This high and consistent reliability suggests that the instrument was able to provide an accurate reading of the constructs being measured. Since the reliability of the total scale was much greater than for any of the sub-scales, group comparisons were only made based on total scale scores. In terms of content validity, an expert panel was used to establish consensus on item selection. The strong similarities between mean sub-scale and total scale scores on the pilot and the first full administration of the Scale suggested consistency in the *Scale’s* performance. The fact that the mean and median on the total scale score were close demonstrated that the mean scores were derived by scores that clustered strongly around the mean rather than being averages of very high and very low scores. The score hierarchy from the pilot to the first full administration was identical. And the range of scores on the total scale (from 16% to 98%) indicated that varying degrees of knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools could be identified by the *Scale*.

*Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis*

A letter was sent to all 3,638 teachers in the district (see Appendix D), inviting them to participate three weeks prior to the first administration of the *Scale*. The letter indicated the nature of the study, including how, when, and where teachers could participate and the length of time involved. Interested teachers were asked to respond via e-mail, indicating which of four *Scale* administration sessions they wished to attend. A
second letter was sent to all teachers two weeks after the first administration, offering four additional opportunities to participate in this study. Thus, a total of eight opportunities to participate were offered at several site locations. The data for this study were collected within a six-week period.

A paper administration was chosen rather than an electronic administration of the Scale. The ease of taking the Scale electronically was considered as a possible way to facilitate more participation than asking respondents to come to a site to complete the Scale. However, the length of the Scale mitigated against this approach. It was decided that while more people might begin to complete the Scale electronically, their completion and submission rate would be lower than teachers who agreed to come to a site to complete the Scale. In fact, only 1% of teachers who came to participate in the study did not complete the instrument. Ten and one-half percent (10.5%) of the district’s 3,638 teachers—or 383 teachers—completed the Teaching in Urban Schools Scale.

The researcher conducted the Teaching in Urban Schools Scale during each administration, using the same written and read protocol for Scale completion. Respondents were given as much time as they needed to complete the Scale. In order to avoid socially desirable responding, participants were not informed of the study’s specific focus. A packet was handed to each participant, including the Scale and a letter of consent (see Appendix E). All collected Scales were placed in envelopes and sealed to protect anonymity. To avoid bias in the responses, the researcher did not respond to questions seeking clarification about any of the 91 items.

This study did not seek to establish a representative sample. Since all teachers in the district were invited to participate in this study, the extent that the actual sample
would be representative across the general population under study could not be predetermined. However, the actual sample was later compared to the general population to determine similarities between the general population and the actual sample. Given the absence of a representative sample, this study’s results can not be generalized to the general population of teachers in the district under study.

A PASW Statistics GradPack 18 statistical software package was used for analysis of data. Data from each packet were entered into PASW. To ensure accuracy of data transfer, the data for each set of 14 items (the number of items that were visible on the screen at any one time) were double checked by insuring that the data entered at the end of the screen line was the same data as written on each respondent’s form for that item. When the data did not match, the whole row of 14 items was checked to see where the error occurred, which was then corrected.

The percentage of correct responses for the total scale and sub-scales were computed. As a measure of reliability and consistency of responses, Cronbach’s alpha, was computed for the total scale score. Other descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, mode, range of scores, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for eleven demographic categories were also computed and are reported in Chapter 4. Data for one demographic category, self-description of identity, were collapsed from eight to two categories for analysis in order to create groups of similar size for comparison. Given the small number of items on some sub-scales, sub-scale means were not statistically compared and group comparisons for statistical significance were only conducted based on the total scale (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). However, the range of sub-scale scores was examined for its practical significance, which according to Kirk (1996) refers to a
research result that “is useful in the real world” (p. 746). Thus, practical significance looks at whether a difference is large enough to be of value in a practical sense.

This study’s descriptive analysis of respondents’ knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools, as well as differences in knowledge across demographic categories, was in response to the problem around which this study was designed. This problem is the limited empirical findings available related to what practicing teachers specifically know about effective teaching in urban schools. The study’s recommendations are based on this empirical knowledge and will help to frame and guide future professional development planning for teachers in the district where this study was conducted.
Chapter 4: Results

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine what teachers specifically knew about effective teaching in urban schools in order to inform approaches to professional development in the city where this study was conducted. This study proceeded from the examination of a central research question: What is the current knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools? A set of eleven secondary research questions was also examined through demographic questions included with the knowledge instrument (Teaching Urban Schools Scale) in an effort to assess contributing factors to teachers’ knowledge base as well. Because participation in this research was voluntary and the solicitation was indirect (by way of letter invitation only), representation was difficult to achieve for demographic variables. Eleven of the thirteen demographic categories were considered for comparison in response to the following secondary research questions:

1. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between male and female teachers?
2. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to age?
3. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between elementary and secondary teachers?
4. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools according to self-descriptions of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity)?

5. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between respondents who teach special education and those who do not?

6. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools for teachers whose first choice is an urban district compared to those whose first choice is a rural or suburban district?

7. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools related to years of teaching experience?

8. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have taken a course in African or African American history and teachers who have not?

9. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have a degree in African or African American history and teachers who do not?

10. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who have participated in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge and those who have not?

11. Is there a statistical difference in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools between teachers who are currently or have ever been a mentor?

Data Analysis and Findings

Comparison of the study’s sample to the district’s teaching population reveals similarities between the population and sample on some demographics, but not others.
District data were available for seven demographic categories: gender, age, grade level, race/ethnicity, special education, years of teaching, and participation in the Summer Institute Informed by Cultural Knowledge. Similarities between the sample group and all teachers ranged from exact (0% difference) for age to 22% difference between sample teachers who had taught 16 or more years (44%) and all district teachers with the same years of teaching experience (22%). The binary (two choices) demographic sub-category comparisons for gender, age, grade level, special education, and participation in the Summer Institute Informed by Cultural Knowledge represented five sub-category comparisons. The two demographic sub-categories of race/ethnicity and years of teaching, with four distinct choices each (as determined by district data), made a total of eight sub-category comparisons. Thus, there were a total of 13 sub-category comparisons between the sample group and all teachers. Of these 13 comparisons, nine (69%) differed by 10% or less. No district data could be obtained about what type of school district would be teachers’ first choice, whether teachers had taken a course or held a degree in African and African American history, or how many unduplicated teachers had been/were mentors. Table 4.1 provides sample-district comparisons for the seven demographic categories for which district data were available.
Table 4.1:

*Sample-District Comparisons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Item</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>% of District Teachers</th>
<th>% of Difference between Sample and all District Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years or younger</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 years or older</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K – 6</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 12</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina/o</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White American</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 7</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 15</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in Summer Institute Informed by Cultural Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixty-four percent (64%) of the 383 teachers in the study identified themselves as White, 19% as African American, and 7% as Latina/o. The combined total of Native Americans, and Americans of Asian and Arab descent was less than 1%, and respondents who identified themselves as from Another Nation or Other were 2% and 7% respectively. Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents were female and 17% were male. The 383 teachers who completed the Teaching in Urban Schools Scale represented 10.5% of the total census of teachers (3,638) in the school district under study.

Analysis of data was conducted in relation to each research question. The total scale and sub-scales were scored according to the percentage of correct responses, and mean, median, and mode percents, standard deviations, and range of scores were identified. Scores of participants were also compared across demographic categories.

Central research question. Descriptive statistics provided findings related to the central research question: What is the current knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools? Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was .78. The total scale mean was 58%, the median was 59%, and the mode was 62%. The range of scores was 43 points, with the lowest scale percent being 25% and the highest being 73%. The standard deviation was .082. The distribution of scores is shown in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1. Distribution of Scores.

Related to the central research question, results were drawn from total scale scores. Given the small number of items on some sub-scales, sub-scale means were not statistically compared and group comparisons for statistical significance were not conducted. However, the range of sub-scale scores revealed differences in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools that were practically significant, with sub-scale means ranging from 21% (Classroom Environment) to 81% (Importance of Cultural Knowledge), rather than clustering around the total scale mean of 58%. As defined in the previous chapter, practical significance refers to whether a difference in findings is large enough to be of value in a practical sense. For example, there was a large difference—
therefore a practically-significant difference—between the Classroom Environment mean and the Importance of Cultural Knowledge mean. There was also a large difference between the Cultural Knowledge mean (42%) and the Importance of Cultural Knowledge mean (81%) to be of value in a practical sense. These sub-scale/construct differences are discussed in chapter 5. Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 describe and graph these sub-scale findings. The full names of the eight sub-scales (in order), which are abbreviated in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2, are Teachers as Professionals, Families and Community, Emancipatory Pedagogy, Cultural Knowledge, Systemic Analysis, Classroom Environment, Student Experience, and Importance of Cultural Knowledge.

Table 4.2

Sub-scale Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>.08159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Professional</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>.10350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Family</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>.15006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Pedagogy</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>.14005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Cult. Knowledge</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>.12799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Systemic Anal.</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>.13291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Class. Environ.</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>.10371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Stud. Exper.</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>.16931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p Cult. Importance</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>.16195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>383</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary research questions. The purpose of secondary research questions in this study was to examine whether certain demographics were related to knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. Descriptive statistics and group comparisons, using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were made based only on total scale scores. All tests of difference were calculated using a .01 level of significance.

Analysis of Variance between female teachers (n = 318) and male teachers (n = 64) revealed a statistically significant difference ($P = .000$). Female teachers knew statistically significantly more than male teachers. Analysis of Variance between teachers who chose an urban district as their first choice (n = 317) and teachers who chose rural (n
= 17) and suburban (n = 27) districts revealed a statistically significant difference (P = .000). Teachers who chose urban districts as their first choice knew statistically significantly more than teachers who chose rural or suburban districts. Analysis of Variance between teachers who taught 16 or more years (n = 165) and teachers who taught 8-15 years (n = 117) revealed a statistically significant difference (P = .001). Teachers who taught 16 or more years knew statistically significantly more than teachers who taught 8-15 years. And Analysis of Variance between teachers who participated in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge (n = 76) and teachers who had not participated in this Summer Institute (n = 292) revealed a statistically significantly difference (P = .000). Teachers attending the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge knew statistically significantly more than teachers who had not attended this Institute. Thus, statistically significant differences were found in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools in the categories of gender, choice of school district, specific years of teaching experience, and attending the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge.

Analysis of Variance between teachers 25 years of age or younger (n = 16) and teachers 26 years or older (n = 367) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .427). Analysis of Variance between teachers who taught Pre-K – 6 (n = 222) and teachers who taught 7 – 12 (n = 152) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .128). Analysis of Variance between White teachers (n = 234) and teachers selecting all other race/ethnicity categories (n = 131) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .312). Analysis of Variance between teachers who taught special education (n = 103)
and those who did not (n = 269) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .931). Analysis of Variance between teachers who taught 1-3 years (n = 26), 4-7 years (n = 68), 8-15 years (n = 117), and 16+ years (n = 165) revealed no statistically significant difference attributed to being a teacher with 1-3 years teaching experience compared to teachers with 4-7 years teaching experience (P = 1.000), 8-15 years teaching experience (P = 1.000), or 16+ years teaching experience (P = 1.000). There was also no statistically significant difference between teachers with 4-7 years teaching experience and teachers with 8-15 years teaching experience (P = 1.000) or 16+ years teaching experience (P = .154). Analysis of Variance between teachers who had taken a course in African or African American history (n = 235) and teachers who did not (n = 133) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .368). And an Analysis of Variance between teachers who currently were or had ever been mentors (n = 87) and teachers who had never been a mentor (n = 282) revealed no statistically significant difference (P = .947). Thus, statistically significant differences were not found in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools in the categories of age, grade level, race/ethnicity, teaching special education, specific years of teaching experience, having taken a course in African or African American history, or mentoring. No Analysis of Variance was conducted between teachers with a degree in African or African American history (n = 9) and teachers who did not have this degree (n = 360) due to the small number of teachers with this degree. This reduced the number of demographic comparisons from eleven to ten categories.
Summary of Results

This study’s data were examined and findings were reported in response to the central research question: What is the current knowledge base of teachers about effective teaching in urban schools? Data relating to ten secondary research questions were also examined and findings reported by comparing groups according to demographic characteristics. Comparison of the study’s sample to the district’s teaching population identified some areas of similarity. Differences between the actual sample and whole teaching population ranged from 0% to 22% on seven demographic categories where district data were available. These categories were gender, age, grade level, race/ethnicity, special education, years of teaching, and participation in the Summer Institute Informed by Cultural Knowledge. While some areas of similarity were identified, the study’s sample was not representative.

Reliability of the total scale was .78. Descriptive statistics for the total scale and sub-scales provided findings related to the central research question, and group comparison tests at the .01 level of significance provided findings related to the secondary research questions. Results related to the study’s examination of its central research question revealed a total scale mean of 58%, a median of 59%, and a mode of 62%. Scores ranged from 25% to 73%. Teachers’ knowledge about the Scale’s constructs or sub-scales was examined through practical significance, not statistical significance. Differences in teachers’ knowledge were found between some constructs that were large enough to be practically valuable. For example, teachers’ mean score for the Importance of Cultural Knowledge was 81%. However, their mean scores for Classroom
Environment and Cultural Knowledge were 21% and 42% respectively. The practical value of these differences is discussed in the next chapter.

The relationship of demographic characteristics to knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools was examined through the study’s secondary research questions. It was found that female teachers knew statistically significantly more than male teachers. Teachers who chose urban schools as their first choice knew statistically significantly more than teachers who chose rural or suburban schools as their first choice. Teachers who taught 16+ years knew statistically significantly more than teachers who taught 8-15 years. And teachers who participated in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge knew statistically significantly more than teachers who did not participate in the Institute.

There was no statistically significant difference between older and younger teachers and between teachers with four or more years of teaching experience compared to teachers with 1-3 years of teaching experience. There was no statistically significant difference between elementary and secondary teachers and between White teachers and all other teachers. There was no statistically significant difference in knowledge between teachers of special education compared to regular education teachers and between teachers who had taken a course in African or African American history compared to teachers who had not taken such a course. And teachers who were mentors did not know statistically significantly more than teachers who were not mentors. All findings are discussed and interpreted in chapter 5, and recommendations are made for research and professional development in the district where this study was conducted.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

A discussion and interpretation of the results of this study are presented in this chapter. The implications of the findings and their meanings are considered along with the study’s limitations. Recommendations for future research and professional development are presented, and a summary of the study is provided in the form of a conclusion.

This study examines what practicing teachers know about effective teaching in urban schools. According to Boykin (1983, 1994), Gay (2000), and King (2004), cultural knowledge (e.g., worldview, ontology, epistemology, heritage knowledge) is at the center of knowledge needed for effective teaching in urban schools. Studied and enacted through Afrocentric and culturally-responsive theories and practices, cultural knowledge connects teachers to their students, families, and communities. These connections translate into increased learning, engagement, and demonstrations of intellectual excellence (Asante, 1980, 2007a &b; Goodwin & Swartz, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 2004; lee, 1995; Nieto, 2003). A review of the literature, however, reveals a different pattern of discourse and research about teaching people of African descent based on assumptions about students’ deficits and the inferiority of African descent people. These assumptions have a long history, and have continued in some form throughout the periods of enslavement, segregation, and more recently, integration and de facto segregation. This deficit model accounts, in part, for the limited number of empirical studies about
what educators know, need to know, and therefore need to learn about teaching African
descent students and other children of color. In fact, the concept of teaching and learning
informed by knowledge about people of color has been vigorously resisted, leaving
teachers in urban schools virtually on their own to learn how to effectively teach their
students (Bloom, 1987; Howard, 1999; Schlesinger, Jr., 1992). This study responds to
this problem by adding to the limited empirical research on what teachers know about
effective teaching in urban schools. The results of this study can be used to assist in
designing professional development programs and practices in the district where this
study was conducted, and may be considered for similar purposes in other urban schools
districts. This means that professional development in the district under study can now be
informed by an analysis of the knowledge demonstrated by many of its teachers. This is a
departure from research based on generic “best practices” conducted in other locales or in
contexts that fail to consider cultural responsiveness. The value of in-district research
notwithstanding, the recommendations of this study for research and professional
development may also be of interest to other urban districts.

Implications of Findings

Low mean, median, and mode total scale scores on the Teaching in Urban
Schools Scale indicate that the teachers who participated in this study have limited
knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. The Scale itself is composed of
eight sub-scales, each representing a distinct but interrelated construct or area of
knowledge that contributes to the overall knowledge base needed for effective teaching in
urban schools. While items on some of these sub-scales are too few to allow for statistical
comparisons, the practical significance of findings related to these sub-scales can
contribute to professional development planning. For example, respondents demonstrate the most knowledge about the Importance of Cultural Knowledge construct and the least knowledge about the Classroom Environment construct. The difference in knowledge about these two constructs is large enough to be of value in planning professional development. If teachers have limited knowledge about the importance of culture, it is unlikely that they will consider cultural responsiveness much less seek knowledge about how to implement it. Thus, the Importance of Cultural Knowledge construct represents a foundation for learning how to build a Classroom Environment that centers students both individually and culturally. If teachers have knowledge about Classroom Environment, they demonstrate this knowledge by having and maintaining high expectations of students, organizing their classrooms to encourage collaboration, and using culturally-responsive curriculum materials that support community building (Nieto, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 1995b; Secret, 1998; Smith, 1996, 2004). However, learning how to implement these ideas and practices first requires knowledge about the importance of culture in teaching and learning.

The study’s teachers also know much less about Cultural Knowledge than about the Importance of Cultural Knowledge. In other words, teachers know that culture is important, but they know little about what culture actually entails. The Cultural Knowledge construct includes content about students’ ontological and epistemological orientations, heritage knowledge, and multiple and overlapping cultural characteristics (Boykin, 1983, 1994; Dixon, 1971; Grande, 2004; King, 1994, 2004; Nobles, 1976, 1991; Tedla, 1998). Teachers with Cultural Knowledge demonstrate this construct in the lessons they write and teach, in their reciprocal interactions with students and families,
and in the connections they make between students’ everyday lives and their ancestral heritage (Gay, 2000; Goodwin, 1996; Moll & González, 1997, 2004). However, before teachers can learn how to implement these ideas and practices, they must first understand that culture is an essential element in effective teaching and learning.

The knowledge of teachers in this study about the Importance of Cultural Knowledge may be the result of recent attention, albeit minimal, given to multicultural education and diversity in teacher preparation and professional development programs (Castro, 2010; Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007). At the same time, the teachers in this study’s sample are not demonstrating nearly as much knowledge about other constructs of effective teaching in urban schools. The practical significance of such uneven knowledge about constructs of effective teaching in urban schools has professional development implications that are discussed in this chapter’s Recommendation section.

Demographic categories with statistical significance. Group comparisons within ten demographic categories reveal statistical significance in four areas. Significant differences are attributed to gender, choice of school district, specific years of teaching experience, and participation in a Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge. In terms of gender, female teachers in this study know statistically significantly more than their male colleagues about effective teaching in urban schools. This may indicate the impact of women’s epistemology or ways of knowing on women’s knowledge about teaching (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Ruddick (1989) and Noddings (1991/1992) have observed women’s ways of knowing in the form of maternal thinking and an ethics of care. Producing curriculum and pedagogy that are more relational and connected to students, eliciting female and
other indigenous voices, and linking internal motivation to caring and a sense of belonging are normative practices that emerge from these women’s ways of knowing. These practices are assessed on the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale*, which may explain the significantly greater knowledge of women than men in the sample about effective teaching in urban schools.

Teachers who selected urban schools as their first choice know statistically significantly more than teachers who selected rural or suburban districts as their first choice. This is not surprising in that people generally know more about topics and contexts that represent their preferences and interests. It may also mean that teachers who are practicing in environments they prefer are more engaged or more open to becoming effective in that context. Finding that teachers who choose urban schools as their first choice know more about effective teaching than other teachers suggests that future research on the motivations, interests, and willingness of urban school choosers may be fruitful.

Among the four categories of years of teaching experience, only the teachers in the sample who taught 16 or more years know statistically significantly more than one other group, the teachers who taught 8-15 years. The fact that the most experienced group of teachers knows more than a less experienced group of teachers suggests that veteran teachers have more knowledge based on more years of experience with students, families, and their own professional learning. After all, veteran teachers have lived a significant portion of their professional lives in schools. Perhaps 16 or more years of teaching represents some type of threshold that can explain this finding. However, why this veteran group only knows significantly more than the group of teachers with 8-15 years
and not significantly more than other less experienced groups is not clear. The following sub-section further discusses the non-significance found between veteran teachers and two other groups of teachers with much less teaching experience. This study’s findings about years of teaching experience needs to be further explored in replications of this study to better understand if these findings are anomalous or represent a pattern that needs to be better understood.

The Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge is a professional development program that focuses on educating children of color. The Institute’s curriculum includes instruction and interactive learning experiences about cultural knowledge, emancipatory pedagogy, ancient to modern cultural continuities, historical knowledge, and culturally-responsive language acquisition practices. Teachers who participate in the Institute know statistically significantly more than teachers who do not participate in the Institute. This finding may suggest that experiencing the Institute makes a significant difference in teachers’ knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. It is also possible that teachers who participate in the Institute’s professional development represent teachers already interested in, more knowledgeable about, or open to learning about cultural responsiveness. Research on the knowledge of teachers who choose the Institute for the first time compared to teachers who do not choose the Institute for professional development would examine this possibility.

*Demographic categories without statistical significance.* Based on group comparisons, there are no statically significant differences in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools that can be attributed to age, specific years of teaching
experience (explained in the following paragraph), race/ethnicity, special education
teaching, mentor status, grade level, or having taken a course in African or African
American history. The first five of these seven findings were unanticipated. For example,
one might expect older teachers and teachers beyond the novice level to have
significantly more knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools than younger
teachers and novice teachers. One might also expect African American and Latina/o
teachers to know significantly more than White teachers, and special education teachers
to know significantly more than regular education teachers. And one might expect
mentors to know significantly more than teachers who are not mentors. What connects
this wide range of demographic categories that might explain these unanticipated results?
An experience shared by most teachers is the intractable Eurocentric character of
traditional K-12 schooling (Loewen, 1995; Swartz, 2009). These years of schooling are
followed by teacher preparation programs and in-district models of professional
development that provide either surface knowledge, distorted knowledge, or no
knowledge about the relationship between culture and student learning (Bakari, 2003;
Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007; Woodson, 1933/1990). Together, these systems are
largely responsible for the historical and professional knowledge teachers possess. These
systems of education provide predominantly monocultural, “colorblind,” and generic
approaches, rather than using theories and practices that have been shown to produce
effective teaching in urban schools (Gay, 2000; King, 2004a; Ladson-Billings, 1994a). A
closer examination of the unanticipated nature of these findings facilitates understanding
of what they mean.
Since older teachers have had more opportunities for professional learning and growth, one might expect them to know significantly more than younger teachers. This not being the case suggests that systems of traditional education, including professional development, have consistently failed to provide knowledge about the worldviews, histories, and teaching and learning practices of diverse cultures and groups. This is echoed in the finding that teachers with 4-7, 8-15, and 16+ years of teaching experience did not know statistically significantly more than their novice counterparts with 1-3 years teaching experience. In other words, while teachers with 16+ years experience know statistically significantly more than teachers with 8-15 years of experience (as stated and discussed above), none of the most experienced teacher groups (4-7, 8-15, and 16+ years) know statistically significantly more about effective teaching in urban schools when compared to the newest group of teachers with 1-3 years of experience. This might be attributable to the knowledge that new teachers are bringing into the profession based on changes in teacher preparation programs and socio-cultural trends. As stated above, additional research is needed to either replicate this study’s findings or to seek other explanations for these unanticipated results.

Researchers and practitioners have shown that African American and Latina/o teachers demonstrate familiarity with and connection to African American and Latina/o students and their communities. These teachers of color also incorporate cultural content and culturally-connected patterns and practices in structuring their classrooms and selecting curriculum (Foster, 1995, 1997; Nieto, 2003; Secret, 1998; Smith 1996, 2004). Thus, one might expect a significant difference in knowledge between White teachers and teachers who chose all other race/ethnicity self-identity categories, the majority of
whom were African American and Latino. Yet this was not the case in this study’s sample. The conceptual and empirical research about culturally-responsive teachers of color notwithstanding, the study’s finding related to race/ethnicity suggests that many teachers of color continue to use the dominant paradigm. The dominant paradigm in education refers to the defining philosophical or theoretical framework held in common by the majority of Europeans, their descendents, and those who identify with them. This paradigm, as discussed previously in chapter 2, has defined the theories, policies, practices, and professional learning in the field of education and appears to have influenced the knowledge base of the teachers in this study.

Over the past several decades, there have been high and consistently growing numbers of special education designations among Black children, especially boys (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005; Harry & Anderson, 1994). Given these disproportionate placement rates, it would make sense for teacher preparation programs in special education to consider the relationship between the content of their curriculum and the cultural knowledge related to their fastest growing population. However, this appears not to be the case according to the study’s finding that special education teachers demonstrate no more statistically significant knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools than regular education teachers. This means that these special education teachers are in no better position to assess students’ placements or learning needs than any other teachers in the sample. Thus, the African American children they teach may be at greater risk than had they never received a special education label.

Mentors in the district under study are selected for their demonstrated efficacy and experience in teaching in urban schools. Thus, one might expect mentors in this
The study’s sample to have statistically significantly more knowledge about the ideas and practices involved in becoming an effective urban educator than teachers in the study’s sample who are not mentors, which is not the case. This unexpected finding suggests that mentors’ education and professional learning have not focused on the theories and practices specific to teaching African American and Latina/o students.

The low mean scores of elementary and secondary teachers carry the same systemic explanation made above. Both groups are similarly exposed to traditional schooling practices in their elementary and secondary education, higher education, and professional development contexts that are typically not culturally responsive. Thus, these limited and limiting learning contexts fail to impart the historical and professional content to both groups that is needed to develop knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. As for the absence of statistical significance for those who took one course in African or African American history compared to those who did not, taking one course, even a recent course, is unlikely to have much impact on the range of constructs involved in knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools.

Limitations

The instrument, Teaching in Urban Schools Scale, has some limitations as described by its authors (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). This instrument measures knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. It does not measure attitudes, subject area knowledge, communication skills, or teachers’ dispositions, all of which are necessary elements that support effective teaching. In other words, while knowledge about effective teaching as measure by the Scale is essential, it is not all that teachers need to be effective educators in urban schools. Also, the instrument’s authors report the low reliability of the
sub-scales. This is attributed to the low number of items on some sub-scales, which makes statistical comparisons across these sub-scales inadvisable. While practical significance was used to examine large differences in knowledge across some sub-scales/constructs, being able to statistically compare sample teachers’ knowledge of all eight constructs would have provided more direction for professional development.

The absence of a representative sample is another limitation of this study, which means that its results cannot be generalized to all teachers in the district. A later comparison of the study’s sample to the whole teacher population shows some similarities, but does not alter this limitation.

Any approach to administering a survey involves some limitations. For example, there would be limitation, albeit different ones, for a paper and pencil administration or an electronic administration. This study invited teachers to participate by coming to one of a number of locations and taking a paper and pencil survey. While this was thought to be a better choice compared to an electronic administration (as discussed in chapter 3), its limitations involve the possible reluctance of some teachers to come to a specific location at a specific time. Even though there were choices of locations and times, participation may have been compromised by the type of survey administration used in this research.

In terms of the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge, there was no demographic question on the Scale asking how many Institutes participants had attended over its eight years of existence. This limits understanding about whether participation at multiple Institutes is needed to produce a statistically significant difference in knowledge.
Another limitation of this study is the absence of district and school-based administrators who are positioned above teachers in the hierarchy of leadership and power in school systems. Administrators are a significant factor in the decision making that shapes schools and the instructional and professional development programs in the district under study. If administrators had participated, their knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools could have been compared with teachers. Such findings might be useful in bearing some influence on approaches to instructional decision making and the district’s focus and planning of professional development.

Recommendations

Based on this study’s findings and implications, recommendations for future research, culturally informed professional development, and education policy are provided.

Recommendations for research. Replication of this research with a larger sample of teachers in the district where this study was conducted is needed to confirm whether the findings can be generalized across a broader cross-section of teachers. In replicating the study, future researchers should consider refining the data collection procedures to address this study’s limitation related to obtaining a representative sample of teachers to complete the Teaching in Urban Schools Scale. This limitation may be related to this study’s reliance on voluntary participation. Replicating the study with unduplicated groups of teachers, while not a replacement for a representative sample, can provide a more comprehensive picture of what teachers in this district know about effective teaching in urban schools.
As stated above, administrators should be included in future implementations of the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale*. In addition, research on leadership with administrators and teacher leaders is needed. How is leadership defined and understood within the district? What do teachers and administrators know about culturally-connected models of leadership? What characteristics are essential for effective leadership in urban schools? Are administrators and teachers knowledgeable about the systemic forces that shape schools and schooling, and if so, how do they respond to them? Research related to such questions can contribute to defining the leadership requirements for effectively educating urban school children. This research on decision-making administrators and teacher leaders must acknowledge the historical and cultural factors and systemic forces that shape and maintain urban school systems. Such research has the untried potential of affecting the learning experience of all children in this district.

A final research recommendation is to study the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge, since its participants know statistically significantly more than other teachers. What are the specific components, content, and pedagogies used in the Institute that explicate theories and practices specific to effectively educating children of African descent? What types of knowledge are participants in the Institute learning and how are they applying this knowledge in their classrooms? How are students doing in the classrooms of Institute teachers who demonstrate more knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools? And how does the knowledge of first-time Institute participants compare to the knowledge of teachers who have attended multiple Institutes and to the knowledge of teachers who have not attended the Institute? Research findings related to these questions can be used to better
understand those teachers who choose to participate in the Institute, to conceptualize future Institutes, and to further strengthen teachers’ knowledge and curricular and pedagogical practices.

Recommendations for professional development informed by cultural knowledge. The professional development planning recommendations are shaped by the concepts and pedagogies consistent with the theoretical frameworks that are the foundation of this study. Further, the planning initiatives and suggested models incorporate themes reflected in the knowledge required for effective education in urban schools. Based on the findings of this study, there are four recommendations for culturally-informed professional development planning.

The first recommendation is based on the findings and implications of no statistically significant differences in the categories of teaching special education and mentoring. It is recommended that professional development programs in this district design and implement Special Education and Mentoring Initiatives as learning opportunities for these two groups of teachers. As indicated by this study’s findings, the overall knowledge limitations of these two groups stem from traditional education and professional development experienced by most educators. In response, professional learning models should engage special education teachers and mentors in formal learning about the history and culture of the students they are teaching. These models should be informed by knowledge about the systemic forces that have created the social and educational inequalities impacting urban students and teachers alike (Duncan, 2004; Swartz, 2009).
The collegial learning circle model is one professional development model that can facilitate this formal learning. Collegial learning circles are collaborative learning contexts in which participants typically choose to study a topic and with whom to study it (Collay, Dunlap, Enloe, & Gagnon, 1998). They can exist within or across schools. A group of special education teachers, for example, might decide to study disproportionality by reading and discussing articles and texts on this topic. These readings should include the history of the inequitable outcome of disproportionality, the education practices that have produced and maintained it, and how multicultural education as a culturally responsive approach can alter it (Charlton, 1998; Sleeter & Puente, 2001). They might further identify sets of ideas and recommended practices related to the misidentification of students of color, particularly Black boys, and share these ideas and practices with regular education teachers. Material and consultant resources for such circles are needed to facilitate learning how disproportionality came about, what maintains it, and how teachers can interrupt it by using culturally-responsive practices.

Mentors might engage in teacher research projects with their interns as a way to increase knowledge about effective teaching in urban schools. Teacher research involves teachers in examining and reflecting upon some aspect of their practice in order to deepen their understanding, take some action, and make changes in the interests of students (MacLean & Mohr, 1999). Ongoing facilitation by a coach with culturally-responsive knowledge is needed to support both the mentor and intern in research design and implementation. Interns who conduct teacher research framed by cultural responsiveness experience a process at the very beginning of their career for reflecting on their practice in the context of centering their students as individuals and members of diverse cultures.
and groups. This type of professional development can shift first-year emphasis from trial and error or only learning the practices of more experienced colleagues to an experience of inquiry, self-reflection, and the development of agency. These experiences reflect the Emancipatory Pedagogy construct, since they are built around questions related to intent, purpose, effectiveness, improvement, and results (Goodwin, 2004). Such questions consciously consider how to encourage student engagement with the learning process.

Mentors can assist interns with their research through joint planning, participation in data collection, and collaborative conversations about research results and meanings. Mentors might decide to study the same topic in their classrooms and then compare and discuss their findings with interns. Completed teacher research projects can be presented at mentor meetings to extend this research-based learning to colleagues. All new teachers in the district where this study was conducted are guided into the profession by mentors, and increasingly disproportionate numbers of students of color are being assigned to special education. Thus, professional learning programs designed to support these two groups of teachers have the potential for a far-reaching impact on a large number of teachers in the district under study. Culturally connected approaches to professional learning acknowledge the interdependent nature of learning, responsibility, and achievement of organizational or group goals. These concepts are expressed in the Teachers as Professionals and Systemic Analysis constructs of effective teaching in urban schools.

The second recommendation is based on the findings in this study’s sample that both elementary and secondary students in this district are experiencing teachers who have limited knowledge about teaching that can center them in the educational process.
Entry-level professional learning initiatives about effective teaching in urban schools do not need to be grade-level specific. However, these experiences should be followed by Grade-Level Teacher Cohort Initiatives that provide more specific, leveled knowledge and experiences to teacher cohorts. For example, how does knowledge about culturally-responsive language acquisition practices affect what elementary teachers do and are like in classrooms compared to secondary teachers? Even when these two groups are engaged in learning about culturally-responsive language acquisition, what are the developmental tenets and pedagogical practices that differ across these cohorts? Entry-level seminars and presentations on African American Language (AAL), including its West and Central African origins, structure, and discourse styles, are suitable for elementary and secondary teachers to engage in together. However, learning to apply this knowledge should occur in grade-level professional development contexts.

The extensive development of knowledge about AAL for classroom instruction by LeMoine and others (LeMoine & Los Angeles Unified School District, 1999; LeMoine & Hollie, 2007; Secret, 1998; Smitherman, 2000) makes course work at varied grade levels possible. This course work involves studying the origins and Diasporan trajectory of AAL and how to teach Standard English Learners (SELS) to translate from their first language of linguistic competence to Mainstream American English (MAE). Ongoing support for interested teachers is essential, including demonstration teaching by consultant experts. Videotaping of these demonstrations and of teachers using code-switching, translation, and other second-language learning practices at different developmental levels is also useful in problem-solving group discussions and seminars. A cohort model allows individual teachers to develop and demonstrate their new learning
and skills with their cohort members who may exhibit varying degrees of skill and accomplishment depending upon their career level. Over time, group learning and relationship building supports the development of resident knowledge and expertise in schools and district-wide contexts.

The third recommendation is to develop a Building on Teachers’ Knowledge Initiative. This recommendation is based on the study’s finding that teachers demonstrated little knowledge about the Classroom Environment and Cultural Knowledge constructs and much more knowledge about the Importance of Cultural Knowledge construct. Teachers who organize collaborative classroom communities, develop relevant curriculum and pedagogy, and have and maintain high expectations of students build these practices with knowledge of the Classroom Environment and Cultural Knowledge constructs. Knowing that culture is important means that teachers in the study’s sample know that multicultural content and pedagogy need to be made relevant to their students (Swartz & Bakari, 2005). This teachers’ knowledge is a strength to build upon. Using knowledge from the Classroom Environment and Cultural Knowledge constructs, professional development sessions would provide specific ideas and examples about how to make content and pedagogy relevant to students.

Bridged learning can be facilitated through a professional development model called coaching that positions teachers as adult learners guided by expert and respected colleagues in individual or collaborative settings (Harwell-Kee, 1999; RTC, 2001). Coaches can assist less-expert colleagues with feedback on ways to apply their knowledge about the importance of culture to organizing culturally-responsive classrooms and producing culturally-connected curriculum and instruction. Coaching can
help to bypass the difficulties teachers may experience in developing practices that go against the grain of their prior educational experiences, even when these practices have been shown to be effective with students in urban schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll & González, 2004; Secret, 1998; Smith, 1996, 2004). Coaching can also be combined with seminars and courses on the eight constructs of effective teaching in urban schools. While knowing that cultural knowledge is important represents entry-level knowledge about centering students, it is a strength that can be built upon in professional development planning.

The fourth recommendation is that a Systemic Analysis Initiative frame professional development initiatives that proceed from the findings of this study. Without the ability to critique information about socio-cultural forces and the schools and other systems these forces maintain, teachers are at a severe disadvantage in trying to determine how to more effectively educate their students (Duncan, 2004). Developing an analysis of systems involves critical and conscious understanding about how systems work to produce knowledge, whose knowledge counts and why, and how hegemony and systems of privilege create inequalities (Duncan, 2003; Giroux, 1986; Howard, 1999). Teachers with systemic analysis are better positioned to teach in ways that interrupt and redirect a system that is failing to effectively educate children of color in urban schools. Such teachers understand that school structures and curriculum are shaped by dominant social, political, and economic forces. Having systemic analysis positions teachers to identify and interrupt these forces by restructuring their classrooms, curriculum, and pedagogy to be more inclusive and representational of the students they are teaching (Duncan, 2003; Goodwin, 1998; Smith, 2004; Swartz, 2009).
Developing systemic analysis can be a lengthy process, depending upon when and where one enters the examination of the larger social system and the school systems that mirror it. Reflexive or reflective journaling is a professional development model that is based on learning through writing (RTC, 2001). This type of journaling was first used in qualitative research as one means of establishing credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This may be an effective way to learn about systemic analysis. As individuals, or in groups that can share and discuss journal reflections, teachers develop voice and can deepen their understanding of how systems affect their personal and professional lives (Killion & Todnem, 1991). This reflective journaling process needs to be guided and facilitated by a colleague with expertise about systemic analysis. And the process needs to include readings that provide theoretical as well as practical knowledge about how systems work, the interests they serve, and how they can be interrupted and redirected. Regular meetings are needed to share journal reflections and discuss facilitated presentations of practice-based examples related to the district in general and participants’ school contexts in particular.

**Recommendations for education policy.** Local school boards, states, and the federal government produce education policies that create, substantiate, and in other ways establish the status quo for education. These policy-making entities have all hosted or led conversations about reform in education that continue to reflect traditional or factory model thinking about schooling. Increasingly, district leadership and reform agendas are being determined or significantly influenced by non-educators (Ravitch, 2010). Research, performance history, and concepts and evidence about effective teaching practices are not
generally found at the center of these conversations. Education policies that focus on supporting teacher learning about student learning are long overdue.

This study’s findings suggest a need to view teacher learning and development along a continuum of growth and professionalism. Given the sample’s limited knowledge about the constructs of effective teaching in urban schools, it is clear that teachers have not learned about the concepts embedded within these constructs in their pre-service programs. Preparing teachers to be effective in urban schools must begin in teacher preparation programs. State and federal standards of teacher quality and excellence must include the constructs of effective teaching in urban schools. Teacher quality discussions that do not focus on these constructs have certainly contributed to the inability of school systems to meet the needs of African descent children and other children of color. For the most part, in-service professional development programs designed to support practicing teachers have also failed to incorporate learning about teaching students of color. Education policy development that views teacher preparation, internship, and professional development along a continuum designed to support effective teaching in urban schools could significantly change the nature of current approaches that have failed to produce results for too many children.

Preparing education students through culturally-informed instructional frameworks and practices and continuing this focus through the currently mandated New York State professional development requirements for teachers and administrators is a different vision for improving teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. This vision stems from a policy analysis that considers rather than resists viewing knowledge about African descent people and other peoples of color as a requisite for teaching them.
Cultural knowledge can be learned and its absence should not remain the barrier it has been to effective teaching in urban schools. Education policies that place cultural knowledge at the center of teacher quality and professional development can assist teachers and administrators in learning to become culturally-responsive educators.

Conclusion

Learning about African descent people as a requisite for teaching them has been advocated by community leaders, parents, scholars, and legislators of African descent (Perry, 2003). However, these constituencies have either been excluded from or marginally represented in efforts to improve educational outcomes for urban students (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Lee & Slaughter-Defoe, 2004). This has resulted in a lack of cultural knowledge about African descent people, which is a barrier to effectively educating children of African descent and all children (King, 2005). In response, Afrocentric and culturally-responsive theories and practices connect cultural knowledge to shaping curriculum and pedagogy and centering all students as the subjects of their own learning (Asante, 2003, 2007a; Gay, 2000; Goodwin & Swartz, 2008).

Teacher Knowledge about Educating People of African Descent in Urban Schools is a quantitative study that examines what teachers know about effective teaching in urban schools in order to inform professional development in the district where this study was conducted. The knowledge of groups of teachers is also compared according to 10 demographic categories. The categories include gender, age, grade level, race/ethnicity, special education teaching, choice of school district, teaching experience, taking a course in African or African American history, participating in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge, and mentor status.
The literature about effectively teaching students in urban schools is both theoretical/conceptual and empirical. This literature includes three interrelated fields of study: Afrocentricity, multicultural education, and culturally relevant/responsive education. Three elements define this literature: 1) deficit vs. culturally-connected education models (Boykin, 1983; King, 1994); 2) inequalities in schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 1992); and 3) miseducation resulting from the curricular absence of cultural knowledge about people of African descent (Woodson, 1990/1933; Wynter, 1992). This body of literature is essential in designing research and professional development that contribute to preparing teachers to serve African descent children and communities.

Two decades of empirical literature about effective teaching in urban schools and its relationship to professional learning was reviewed under six categories: Professional Development, Cultural Integrity, Student Achievement, Learning Climate, Curriculum Reform, and Refutation (e.g., deficit model research). Empirical studies in the first five categories have identified a wide range of knowledge needed by teachers to create effective learning environments in urban schools. Teachers who learn about inclusive approaches through professional development use this knowledge in their classrooms (Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007). Cognitive competence has been shown to increase when pedagogical practices are congruent with students’ socio-cultural experiences (Allen & Boykin, 1991). Cultural characteristics, practices, and values of students and parents have been found to affect learning and require related pedagogies (Caughy, O’Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2002). Teachers who see themselves in relationship to their students provide opportunities for them to think critically about social issues
(Lewison & Heffernan, 2008). And the negative effects of tracking programs that use undesirable classroom locations for low-performing students, segregate faculty as well as students, and engage in racial stereotyping have been empirically verified (Katz, 1999).

This study was located in a mid-sized urban school district in New York State. Of its 34,000 students 88% are students of color, with African descent students being the majority of students (65%). Conversely, White teachers are the majority of teachers (78%). The city has very high rates of poverty, unemployment, and dropout rates, with a low graduation rate compared to surrounding suburbs (NYSED, 2009). All 3,638 district teachers were invited to voluntarily and anonymously participate in this study during the 2009-2010 school year, resulting in a sample of 383 teachers (10.5%). A 91-item instrument, the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* (Swartz & Bakari, 2005) was administered to this sample. This *Scale* is composed of eight sub-scales or constructs that together represent the knowledge base needed for effective teaching in urban schools. A demographic section accompanies the *Scale*, which allows for statistical comparisons within categories such as race/ethnicity, gender, interest in urban teaching, and grade level. Testing for significance was done at the .01 level to guard against the probability of finding significance by chance alone (Lipschutz & Schiller, 1998; Moore, 2010).

Of the 383 teachers in the sample, 64% identified themselves as White, and 36% selected all other race/ethnicity categories, with African Americans and Latinos being the majority. Females were 83% and males were 17% of the sample. Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was .78. The total scale mean was 58%, the median was 59%, and the mode was 62%. The range of scores was 43 points, with the lowest scale percent being 25% and the highest being 73%. The standard deviation was .082. Teachers demonstrated
the most knowledge about the construct called the Importance of Cultural Knowledge and much less knowledge about the constructs called Classroom Environment and Cultural Knowledge. Group comparisons of demographic categories were made using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Statistically significant differences were found in the categories of gender, choice of school district, specific years of teaching experience, and attending the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge. In the case of gender, normative practices that emerge from women’s ways of knowing may explain the greater knowledge of female compared to male teachers in the sample. These normative practices include producing relational curriculum and pedagogy connected to students and linking internal motivation to caring and a sense of belonging (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Noddings, 1991/1992; Ruddick, 1989). In the case of the Summer Institute, intense learning about the cultural and historical knowledge of people of color, emancipatory pedagogy, and culturally-responsive language acquisition practices (Asante, 2007a & b; Goodwin, 2004; LeMoine & Hollie, 2007) may explain the greater knowledge of teachers attending the Institute compared to all other teachers in the sample.

No statistically significant differences were found in the categories of age, race/ethnicity, teaching special education, specific years of teaching experience, mentoring, grade level, or taking a course in African or African American history. Most of these findings represent a wide-range of demographic categories, and were unanticipated. For example, it is likely that older and more experienced teachers and mentors would know statistically significantly more than younger teachers, novice teachers, and teachers who were not mentors. However, this was not the case. A possible
meaning for these findings is that commonly experienced and entrenched Eurocentric theories and practices at all levels of education, including professional learning, have similarly shaped the knowledge base of teachers in this study.

The *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* has some limitation. It only measures knowledge, not other elements of effective teaching in urban schools. Also, the low reliability of the sub-scales does not allow for statistical comparisons. The absence of a representative sample is another limitation of this study, which means that its results cannot be generalized to all teachers in the district. Administrators were not included, which did not allow for a comparison of their knowledge to teachers’ knowledge. And there was no demographic question about how many Summer Institutes participants had attended, which limits understanding about whether participating in multiple Institutes is needed to produce a statistically significant difference in knowledge.

Recommendations for research include replication of this study in the district where it was conducted and designing additional research on leadership with administrators and teacher leaders to better define the connection between leadership and effective teaching in urban schools. Research is also recommended on how teachers in the Summer Institute are using knowledge about effective teaching in their classrooms.

Recommendations for professional development planning informed by cultural knowledge are the implementation of learning opportunities for special education teachers and mentors and the design of leveled programs for teacher cohorts. Since teachers know the most about the Importance of Cultural Knowledge construct, this is a strength around which professional development should be built. Also, all professional development should be grounded in systemic analysis. Without the ability to critique
information about socio-cultural forces that maintain school and other social systems, all
groups of teachers are at a severe disadvantage in determining how to more effectively
educate students in urban schools. Various professional development models such as
collegial learning circles, teacher research, courses and discussion-based seminars,
reflective journaling, and coaching are suggested models for professional development.
These models can provide the support teachers need to increase their knowledge of
effective teaching in urban schools, since they are models that reflect the concepts
embedded in the constructs of effective teaching in urban schools.

Recommendations for education policies that support teacher learning about
student learning place cultural knowledge at the center of teacher and administrator
quality. Such education policies view pre- and in-service teaching along a continuum. For
the most part, both pre-service learning and in-service professional development
programs have failed to incorporate learning about teaching students of color. Centering
all students through cultural knowledge is a systemically untested approach, making this
study of potential interest to the profession, teachers’ professional development
organizations, urban school districts, and education policy makers.

This study, Teacher Knowledge about Educating Children of African Descent in
Urban Schools, provides a much needed lens for viewing the continuing disconnect
between urban school children and the educational systems charged with designing and
delivering their education. This lens can be used to inform and reshape professional
practice for teachers before and after they enter urban schools. This study supports
educators in rethinking instruction and it provides policy makers with a vehicle for
examining existing educational policies and, most importantly, developing new ones.
References


Appendix A

Permission Letter for *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale*
Susan Goodwin  
104 Atkinson Street  
Rochester, New York 14608  

Dear Ms. Goodwin:

    I have discussed your request with Dr. Bakari and we both agree to your use of our instrument entitled *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* (2005). We understand that you plan to conduct the instrument in January 2010 as part of your dissertation work. I have enclosed a copy of the 91-item *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale*, and understand that you will construct a demographic section that accesses information of interest to you from your particular population.

    I have enclosed a manual booklet that provides *Scale* instructions, scoring and computation practices, a list of items for which false is the correct answer, and information about the psychometric properties of the instrument.

    We wish you success in the completion of your dissertation and would be interested in reading the results of your study.

Sincerely,

Ellen Swartz, Ph.D.
Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter
From: "Mosca, Jamie" <jmosca@sjfc.edu>
Date: March 19, 2010 1:16:40 PM EDT
To: "Susan Goodwin" <sgoodwin3@earthlink.net>
Cc: "Walton, Arthur" <awalton@sjfc.edu>

Subject: IRB Approval

Dear Ms. Goodwin:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “Teaching and Learning about People of African Descent.”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at 385-5262 or by e-mail to emerges@sjfc.edu, or if unable to reach me, please contact the IRB Administrator, Jamie Mosca, at 385-8318, e-mail jmosca@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen M, Merges, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Appendix C

Teaching in Urban Schools Scale
### Teaching in Urban Schools – A Knowledge Base Scale

**DIRECTIONS:** This section of the survey asks you to give an answer that you think is correct to each item. If you are unsure of the correct response, mark the box titled DO NOT KNOW. Read each item carefully and put a check in the box under TRUE, FALSE, or DO NOT KNOW. Please do not leave any item blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TRUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Urban teachers are change agents who can help to improve the structure of schooling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Learning occurs most effectively in urban schools when students are encouraged to integrate information from several subject areas.</td>
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<td>3. Multicultural education should be part of a basic school curriculum.</td>
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<td>4. Within African American and Latino cultures, people who are not relatives are seldom regarded as family members.</td>
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<td>5. Social justice is a standard that should shape the curriculum of every teacher in urban schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teachers must model the concepts (e.g., democracy, justice) they teach.</td>
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<td>7. Knowledge of students' cultures is essential to be a successful urban teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Parents in urban schools have little knowledge and resources that can enrich student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. It is better for teachers to meet with parents at the school where the educational process occurs than for teachers to make home visits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Our educational system continues to teach African inferiority and European superiority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Race is a factor that affects every aspect of schooling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. The race, class, and gender of students should not affect how teachers prepare their lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. There is a relationship between student performance and the extent to which the curriculum includes information about students' cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITEMS</td>
<td>RESPONSES</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Teachers in urban schools need to learn about the values and perspectives of their students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Race and class are relevant topics for curriculum development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. African American people generally do not regard interruptions during conversations as rude or disruptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. A quiet classroom is necessary for learning to take place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Discipline is the most important aspect of teaching effectively in urban schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. It is more important for urban teachers to maintain control in the classroom than to be respected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Teachers must advocate for what they know works effectively with students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Urban teachers can play a large role in decreasing students from being &quot;at-risk&quot; of educational failure.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22. While it is an accepted practice to use enough wait time for students to answer questions, doing this in an urban school is not advisable because it &quot;opens the door&quot; for behavior problems.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. A curriculum designed to stimulate students' critical thinking should include the accounts and perspectives of diverse cultures.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Within African American and Latino cultures, competitive activities are favored over group activities as a way of encouraging participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. There is a body of knowledge about culture that should be studied in order to be an effective urban teacher.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Establishing a classroom community will increase African American and Latino students' interest in learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Any topic can be taught by building on what students already know and are thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Students who are below grade level need continuous drill and practice in order to learn.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. White teachers in schools with predominately African American students need to demonstrate that they have knowledge of students' history and culture.</td>
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<td>ITEMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. It is necessary to use uncompromising discipline in urban schools, especially with boys.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Using small, mixed-ability groups of students to investigate topics is not a very useful approach in urban schools.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Relying on rules to keep order is very important within Latino and African American cultures.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Urban teachers need to include students' real life experiences in their lessons.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Establishing strong relationships with parents/families is essential for success in urban teaching.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Urban teachers need professional development in multicultural education for all subject areas.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. New urban teachers should develop their own relationships with parents rather than rely only on their school's established program (e.g., Open House, Parent/Teacher Conferences).</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Within African American and Latino cultures, people think it is essential to acknowledge and be acknowledged by everyone in their presence.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. An urban teacher should use a wide range of teaching approaches with the same class.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Classroom management in urban schools can be built around a teacher's ability to model how to negotiate and compromise.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. When urban students do not seem interested in a topic being taught, it makes sense to determine why before moving on to the next topic.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. To effectively prepare teachers for urban schools, their course work needs to be based on research of cultural frameworks and human development.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Teaching students how to think, not what to think, is a primary responsibility of teachers.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. A teacher cannot develop students' fullest potential without knowing them both individually and culturally.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Latinos and African Americans value knowledge that is acquired through lived experience as much as they value knowledge that is acquired through formal training.</td>
<td>TRUE FALSE DO NOT KNOW</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITEMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. Urban students bring &quot;cultural capital&quot; to school that teachers can build upon when they are teaching.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Teachers must examine the curriculum and teaching strategies for their capacity to empower urban students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Within Latino and African American cultures, claims of personal interactions with ancestors are rarely believed.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. It is important for urban classrooms to be formed like communities.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Teachers must know how to vary their curricular and instructional practices to meet the particular needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Teacher certification should indicate that a teacher has the content and pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach children of all cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. African American people generally expect younger people to address them by title or surname.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. In American history courses, it isn't possible to include every culture and group that participated.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Schools are responsible for reflecting students' cultural and historical backgrounds.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Within African and African American cultures, nature is viewed as a force to be studied so that it can be controlled.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. When research shows that certain instructional approaches achieve desired outcomes with large numbers of children, teachers can confidently use them with urban students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Children of all cultural groups have an equal opportunity to do well in school.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Within African American and Latino cultures, punctuality is regarded as an extremely important personal attribute.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. When teachers are from a different cultural background than their students, they should learn how to teach in ways that are culturally relevant to their students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. In order to effectively use the literature/stories of another culture, a teacher would need to know something about that culture.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
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<td>ITEMS</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>60. While special education programs are designed to provide additional services for students, in reality these programs can limit educational opportunities for students who are in them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>61. Improvisation is a method used to solve problems by people of African ancestry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>62. There is a system of White privilege that upholds racism in American society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>63. Control of a classroom guarantees effective teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>64. Parents and teachers in urban schools should be equal partners in educating students</td>
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<tr>
<td>65. &quot;Only the strong survive&quot; is a belief basic to Latino and African Americans cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>66. Teachers must demonstrate respect in order to involve most urban students in the learning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>67. Urban teachers should have as much cross-cultural competence as they have competence in content areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>68. Visiting students' homes should be a practice of urban teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>69. African American individuals often attribute their success to family more than to talent and expertise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>70. Urban teachers should have high expectations for parent involvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>71. Being able to relate effectively with students and colleagues from various cultural groups should be a requirement for teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>72. Successful urban teachers are comfortable in the community where they teach</td>
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<td>73. Standardized tests are not biased.</td>
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<tr>
<td>74. For African American people, self worth is mostly based on economic status.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. You must know about the culture(s) of your students in order to be an effective teacher in an urban school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>76. The use of Ebonics should be discouraged in school because it makes it more difficult for students to learn Standard English.</td>
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<td>ITEMS</td>
<td>RESPONSES</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>77.</strong> Students should be able to observe that their teachers are against racism and other forms of discrimination.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>78.</strong> Students who read well below grade level cannot be expected to understand concepts above their reading level.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>79.</strong> Urban teachers should learn what parents regard as reasonable norms of behavior.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>80.</strong> African Americans have a language with a structure and syntax.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>81.</strong> Bureaucracies in urban schools complicate teachers' jobs rather than provide the support that teachers need.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>82.</strong> When teachers instruct using cultural information that reflects students' backgrounds, they are showing respect for students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>83.</strong> Students need to be compliant and obedient in order for teachers to create a positive learning environment in urban classrooms.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>84.</strong> Special education students in urban schools should be taught in separate classrooms so that other students have a chance to learn.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>85.</strong> If urban teachers take no position about past and present socio-economic inequalities, they communicate their acceptance of inequality to their students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>86.</strong> Teachers should learn about the history and linguistic patterns of Ebonics in order to incorporate this knowledge into the teaching of reading and writing.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>87.</strong> Students in urban schools come with many deficits that can rarely be overcome.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>88.</strong> Asking students thought-provoking questions is a way for teachers to demonstrate respect for students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>89.</strong> Teachers who choose the teaching profession because they love children are likely to avoid having race, class, and gender biases toward their students.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>90.</strong> When it comes to race, it is better for an urban teacher to be &quot;color blind&quot; and to teach children as if they are all the same.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>91.</strong> Urban teachers can play a large role in keeping students from dropping out of school.</td>
<td>TRUE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**General Information Section**

This last section asks for information about you. Please complete each of the questions below.

1) What is your gender?
   - Female (1) ___
   - Male (2) ___

2) In what age group are you?
   - 25 years or younger (1) ___
   - 26 years or older (2) ___

3) In what grade range do you teach?
   - Pre-K – 6 (1) ___
   - 7-12 (2) ___

4) Select one of the following groups that describe you most accurately. Please select only one group or use “Other” if a single category is not suitable to you.
   - African American (1) ___
   - Arab American (2) ___
   - Asian American (3) ___
   - Latino/a (4) ___
   - Native American (5) ___
   - White American (6) ___
   - Another Nation (not U.S.) (7) ___ (please specify) __________________________
   - Other (8) ___ (please specify) __________________________

5) Are you a special education teacher?
   - Yes (1) ___
   - No (2) ___

6) If you are not a classroom teacher, are you currently working in schools with students in any of the following positions?
   - Social Worker (1) ___
   - Psychologist (2) ___
   - Other (please specify) (3) __________________________

7) What type of school district would be your first choice?
   - Rural (1) ___
   - Urban (2) ___
   - Suburban (3) ___
8) How many years have you been teaching?

1-3 (1) ____
4-7 (2) ____
8-15 (3) ____
16+ (4) ____

9) Have you ever taken a course in African or African American history?

Yes (1) ____
No (2) ____

10) Do you have a degree in African or African American history?

Yes (1) ____
No (2) ____

11) Have you participated in professional development with the Teacher Center?

Yes (1) ____
No (2) ____

12) Have you been a participant in the Summer Institute on Teaching and Learning Informed by Cultural Knowledge?

Yes (1) ____
No (2) ____

13) Are you currently, or have you ever been, a mentor?

Yes (1) ____
No (2) ____
Appendix D

Invitation Letter to Participate in the Study
Dear Colleague,

I am inviting you to participate in a research project by taking an anonymous survey about teaching and learning in urban schools. What will be learned will be very important to refining and expanding the future direction of Teacher Center and Teachers Association professional development work. Research findings and conclusions will be shared with teachers through a number of events.

I am conducting research as a student at St. John Fisher College, with approval of the appropriate Internal Review Boards. It is my intent that fellow teacher unit members who are currently serving City School District students inform this important work in a tangible way.

This paper and pencil survey takes about twenty minutes to complete and there will be multiple opportunities to participate.

Please RSVP by emailing the TC at <teachers.com> to indicate your intent to participate and receive date and location information. And thank you, in advance, for helping to build knowledge about teaching and learning in and in other urban school districts.

Sincerely,

Susan Goodwin, Director
Teacher Center
Appendix E

Letter of Consent
Dear Colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important study. By completing the *Teaching in Urban Schools Scale* (Swartz and Bakari, 2005), you have consented to taking this survey. As participants you are asked to respond to items on this scale by checking True, False, or I Don’t Know. It is possible that you may feel some discomfort or risk in responding to some of the items. Be assured that your responses are anonymous and data will be aggregated, thus preventing any respondent from being associated with any answer on this instrument. Should you find that you are not comfortable taking the survey, you may choose to opt out of doing so.

The findings from this study will benefit participants and the teaching population at large by providing insights into what the teaching population at (district) knows about effective teaching in urban schools. Such knowledge has the potential to inform professional development programs that support the work of teaching and learning.

Once again, thank you for your important contribution to teacher leadership, knowledge, and research about teaching.

Sincerely,

Susan Goodwin
Director, _________ Teacher Center