



Washington State University

College of Education, Sport and Human Sciences

Dominique Smith

Will defend their dissertation on

Date: March 4, 2026

Time: 9:00 A.M.

Zoom: Link by request ceshs.gradstudies@wsu.edu

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

Title:

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Chair: Katherine Rodela

Abstract:

This study employed a case study approach to investigate how teacher leaders in a suburban school district perceive their roles in supporting the implementation of an Ethnic Studies Framework, with the aim of extending culturally responsive pedagogy throughout the district. Grounded in Khalifa et al.'s (2016) Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) framework, this study examines how teacher leaders experience their role supporting other educators in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and integrating principles of ethnic studies into their classroom practices. Participants included members of an ethnic studies lead teacher team comprised of, a cohort of educators engaged in the district's multi-year effort to design, pilot, and scale an ethnic studies framework for the district. Through interviews, participants shared their perspectives on their roles as teacher leaders and what they perceive as supports and challenges in implementing a culturally responsive ethnic studies curriculum. Document analysis and observation provided additional contextual insights. This study offers researchers and educational leaders the opportunity to gain insight into the role of teacher leadership in equity-driven curriculum initiatives. Findings inform best practices for district-wide implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies, highlight the supports and barriers that influence teacher leadership in this context, and contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable, equity-centered instructional change. In addition, the study explores and identifies changes at the systems level that support culturally responsive practices becoming an integral part of the district's instructional design, rather than an isolated initiative.