

[Intro Music]

Me: As a reminder, Any time another work is referenced, you will hear a ding. A timestamped document with references will be available in the show notes. In addition, any time there is a direct quote, you will hear soft music playing underneath it. This will help you as listeners determine the difference between paraphrased information and quotes directly from other sources. This podcast is a unique opportunity to listen to the voices of educators in doing so they allowed their voices and opinions to be exposed while also allowing me to critically analyze their responses so that they relate to each episode's themes. This was all member checked or checked for validity by the participants before publication.

Me: Welcome to Education isn't a to do list, I'm Hannah Jimenez, your host, and in today's episode, we're diving into the recent interviews I conducted regarding the intersection of culturally sustaining pedagogy and educational technology initiatives. Our journey takes us across the state of North Carolina, where we'll hear from a diverse group of educators, each playing a unique role in implementing these transformative practices in their classrooms, schools, and districts.

At its core, education is about meeting the needs of all students. But what does that look like in today's classrooms? How do we ensure that students from diverse cultural backgrounds see themselves reflected in their learning experiences? And how can technology serve as a tool to enhance learning and sustain cultural knowledge? These are the questions at the heart of today's discussion.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy, a concept introduced by Dr. Django Paris, builds on the idea of culturally relevant and responsive teaching. It goes beyond merely recognizing students' cultural backgrounds—it seeks to sustain and foster them (Paris, 2012). This means that instead of students being expected to assimilate into a dominant cultural narrative, their unique identities, languages, and traditions are honored and integrated into their learning experiences (Paris, 2012). Our guests today will share their insights on how this pedagogy comes to life in their schools, the impact it has on student engagement, and the challenges they face in making it a reality.

Alongside culturally sustaining pedagogy, we'll explore how educational technology is shaping the way students learn, interact, and express themselves. With the rapid expansion of digital tools, educators are finding new ways to personalize instruction, provide equitable access to resources, and create interactive and engaging learning environments (Esteban-Guitart et al, 2020). Whether through the integration of learning management systems, the use of AI-driven tools, or the creation of digital storytelling projects that amplify student voices, technology plays a pivotal role in modern education. But as with any innovation, there are challenges—equity in access, digital literacy, and maintaining a balance between technology and human connection in learning (Selwyn, 2021). Our interviewees will share firsthand experiences in navigating these complexities.

And then, they will consider what it would look like if these two initiatives should intersect. Is it possible that these initiatives can and should help the other succeed? Some of the themes that you will see developed are as follows:

1. Who is community and how important are they
2. What determines initiative success
3. The Importance of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in NC Classrooms
4. The Use of Technology to support Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
5. The Impact of AI on Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

In today's episode, you'll hear from:

- **Ms. Kimberly Jones**
- **Dr. Aron Gabriel**
- **Ms. Jill Irwin-Hartle**
- **Mr. Silas Burke** and
- **Ms. Paula Januzzi-Godfrey**

Before diving in, each of our guests will introduce themselves and share a little bit about their background, experiences, and the passion that drives their work in these fields.

As we move through these conversations, we'll explore key themes that emerged throughout their interviews. We'll discuss the importance of representation in curriculum choices, the role of professional development in equipping educators with the tools to implement these practices effectively, and the barriers—both systemic and practical—that still need to be addressed. (start transitional music softly) You'll hear about the real impact these approaches are having on students, from increased engagement and academic success to a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

So, let's get started with some introductions from our educators, starting with Kimberly Jones.

(end transitional music)

Kimberly Jones: Sure my name, as she said, is Kimberly Jones. I'm in my 19th year of teaching English and humanities at Chapel Hill High school this year is a little bit different. I was very, very fortunate to serve as North Carolina State teacher of the year in 2023, and that actually comes with roughly 2 years of commitment of service to the State on various boards, and doing outreach to school districts and Epps, etc.

So this year I am teaching one singular humanities. Course, I'm teaching Ap. African American studies and balancing that with the other things I have to do. But for the majority of my tenure. I've been a high school English teacher just about every grade level, and in all of that time my focus has been largely on culturally relevant and culturally sustaining practices that do my best to engage all of my students and to honor their academic goals, but also their interpersonal development and prepare them for global citizenship.

I think that's becoming more and more significant. And so it's definitely guided my classroom practices and my professional development for for the majority of those those 19 years figuring out ways to continue to make what I do and what I teach relevant and applicable and enjoyable and reflective for my students. So just a little bit about me.

(start transitional music softly)

Host: Next we are going to hear audio from Dr. Aron Gabriel's interview, a NC superintendent.

(end transitional music)

Dr. Gabriel: All right. Yep, thank you. This is my 29th year in education, and I have served as everything, from a teacher and a coach to an assistant principal, principal of Alternative School and Ib. Magnet School, a traditional high school associate, superintendent and superintendent.

So minus teacher assistant, I've hit every rung on the ladder, including bus driver. So I'm a city school system superintendent. So there are only 14 of us in North Carolina. So it's a bit unique, and I served for 5 years prior to becoming superintendent as the associate and assistant in the same system. So it's my 12th year total. So I have 2 sons that are in the system, so they're often my biggest critics, but also great sounding boards from the student lens. When we've done things.

(start transitional music softly)

Host: Now let's hear from an IB Coordinator, Ms. Jill Irwin-Hartle. IB is short for International Baccalaureate which is globally recognized educational program that aims to develop students' knowledge across various subjects and disciplines, while also fostering confidence, self-motivation, and resilience in students to become global citizens.

(end transitional music)

Jill Irwin-Hartle: So my name is Jill Hartle and this is my 28th year in education. I started 1st as an English teacher, in 1997 in Southern California, 15 miles from the Mexican border. And I taught high school, 11th and 12th grade.

I realized I was too far away from home, missed the 4 seasons, and so I applied via the Internet to Alexander County schools, where I worked for 4 years. and then I went to a charter school in Iredell, Statesville. Currently I am teaching. I'm sorry. I'm no longer teaching. I'm working with teachers. And as an international baccalaureate coordinator for an inner city high school.

(start transitional music softly)

Host: Next we have an English teacher and technology specialist from Siler City, Mr. Silas Burke.

(end transitional music)

Silas Burke: Hi, okay. So I went into college knowing that I was going to be a teacher an English teacher specifically. And so I did my 4 years, and I got out, and I started working at Chatham Central High School, which is in Bear Creek, North Carolina. It's part of Chatham County schools and then my kind of my my best teacher friend told me he was leaving to come work at another school, which was Chatham Charter, which is in Siler City, which is, you know, 10 miles up the road from from the other school.

So I applied as well, and came here, and I've been at Chatham Charter ever since then. So I started here in 2,013. So this is I don't know. Year 12 or 13 depending on. When you start counting, I guess. And I've been a full time English teacher the entire time, and starting in 2,019 I also became the school's technology specialist, I think, is the technical title. So I'm responsible for teaching high schoolers English. But I'm also responsible for pretty much anything that plugs in on our campus computers, networking equipment projectors, copiers, security cameras, etc, etc. And that's kind of me.

(start transitional music softly)

Host: Last, we have Ms. Paula Januzzi-Godfrey who is a long time educators but is currently serving as an elementary school librarian in Durham.

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Paula_Januzzi-Godfrey: Okay, I'm Paula Januzzi Godfrey. I am currently a elementary school librarian. It's my 4th year as a librarian. It is my 41st year in education. So I have a varied background, but it includes. I started my career as a special education teacher in Kentucky. Actually, then, was in Virginia as a special education teacher, high school and elementary school.

Eventually moved to Durham, North Carolina, where I've been for the last 32 years and have been in several schools in different positions, so ranging from classroom teacher, mostly grades 4 and 5, and then eventually I became an instructional coach and coached whatever our staff of 50, 50, some teachers, and then in all subject areas and in everything. Went to another school and was literacy coach same idea, coaching teachers in Ela and reading and writing, and then I also had for a brief time I was a district. a district mentor, a full release mentor, they called it.

But basically I was assigned to 4 schools and mentored beginning teachers at 4 different schools. and somewhere beyond that I also was assistant director at a school at a charter school, and which was also designated as a peaceful school, which is an initiative in North Carolina, and it was new at that time. And way back in my life I was the founder and director of a children's museum here in Durham, so just kind of a wide range of experiences in education, but all in education. I've also taught at the college level as an adjunct faculty member at a couple of different universities, but always in the field of education.

Me: Now that you have met our interviewees and learned a bit about their own educational journey you will be better equipped to understand their perspectives as we dive into our thematic discussions. Understanding each interviewee, their educational positions, gender perspectives and racial backgrounds are all important to fully appreciating their answers and the variety of answers that are present.

In our next few interviews I will provide brief reminders about who each participant is before we get started but you can always return to this episode for a more detailed description. In our next episode we will begin looking at the first theme, can't wait for you to join me.

[Outro Music]