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# Instructional Models for English Language Learners as Contributors to Elementary Teachers' Effectiveness

Arleen Elizabeth Folorunsho  
*Walden University*

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Arleen Folorunsho

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Walden University  
2014

Abstract

Instructional Models for English Language Learners as Contributors to Elementary

Teachers' Effectiveness

by

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MEd, Nova Southeastern University, 1997

BS, Florida Memorial University, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Faculty at a public school in Georgia have been unable to explain how and why English language learner (ELL) students improved their performance on English and writing standardized tests. Leadership at this school desired an evidence-based ELL teaching model, which required exploration of this improved performance. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological, and heuristic project study was to understand the roots of this ELL achievement. Guided by teacher effectiveness theory, which suggests that examining the role of teachers is a valid way of understanding student achievement, this theory provided a specific construct of effectiveness consisting of distinct behaviors and characteristics. Thirteen teachers of ELLs were purposively sampled and participated in semi-structured interviews in which they described possible connections between instructional practices, student success, and consistent expectations of themselves and their students. Through analytic strategies of horizontalization, thematic clustering and synthesis, the data revealed that teachers favored the push-in approach, despite the established practice in the school to use a hybrid model, because of various pedagogical advantages. The findings established a professional development plan to guide future ELL pedagogy and support activities. This study generated knowledge to help educators in the target school in selecting the most appropriate instructional strategy to ensure the academic, economic, and social success of ELL students, which is of increasing importance given their growing percentage among students in the United States.

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## Dedication

Foremost, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my son Malik Folorunsho who has encouraged me without even realizing his role in this endeavor. I also dedicate this accomplishment to my parents who made great efforts for me to succeed. I just want you to know my accomplishments are because of you.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

Educators at a public school in Georgia (the site of the research conducted for this study) lacked knowledge about why the school's English language learner (ELL) students experienced a sudden improvement in standardized testing. ELL students face a multitude of pedagogical challenges that require teachers to gather the information, skills, and tools to properly address this population. Furthermore, educational leaders must adopt evidence-based ELL strategies, especially strategies with documented impact on standardized testing and other forms of academic achievement (Kibler, Valdés, & Walqui, 2014; Safford & Costly, 2008). These needs are important because, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), the percentage of ELL students of school age (5–17) in the United States rose from 10% in 1980 to 21% in 2009.

Nationwide, ELL students in elementary school tend to underperform students who are not ELL in standardized tests of reading and mathematics knowledge. For example, in 2009, the average reading scale score of fourth grade ELL students throughout the United States was 188, compared to 223 for non-ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). This gap grew even larger by the eighth grade, by which time ELL students' average reading scale score was 219, compared to 265 for non-ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Nationally, then, the percentage of ELL students in U.S. classrooms is growing at the same time that a performance gap between these students and non-ELL students persists (Garcia, Lawton, & De Figueiredo, 2012; Safford & Costley, 2008). Given that

one of the core principles of the U.S. public education system is equity, this performance gap is a problem because it indicates that the system fails to inculcate the same level of knowledge in these two kinds of students.

While the performance gap is an important problem in itself, a second layer of the problem is that there is extensive state-by-state, district-by-district, and even school-by-school variation in the performance of ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Not only does the U.S. educational system fail to ensure parity of learning between ELL students and non-ELL students, there appears to be little knowledge about why, how, and under what circumstances some ELL students are doing better than others (Jia, Chen, Ding, & Ruan, 2012; Safford & Costley, 2008). Although there is extensive research on the performance gap between ELL students and non-ELL students, the question of local ELL student performance variation in the setting has not been as thoroughly examined (Charbonneau & Van Ryzin, 2012; Hill & Miller, 2013).

### **Definition of the Problem**

The problem at the study site was educators did not understand how ELL students' improved their performance in standardized testing, making it difficult for them to identify and continue specific strategies associated with ELL student success. At the school, the internal benchmark for improvement in the subjects of reading and English language arts (ELA) had historically been 14% per year. The school's achievement of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks was complicated by the presence of ELL students, who, at the time of the study, comprised 103 of the school's 498 enrolled students and who were members of a statewide population of ELL students who do not

perform as well in Georgia's standardized tests for English language arts as other demographic groups (Sullivan, 2011).

Of all the demographic subgroups tracked by the state—Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan, White, multiracial, students with disabilities (SWD), ELL, and economically disadvantaged—ELL students have historically performed worse on both the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT) and Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) English than all groups except for SWD.

Educators at the school, like at other elementary schools throughout the region, observed a recent surge in ELA achievement among ELL students without understanding exactly why the observed improvement has occurred. Table 1 illustrates the 5-year progress experienced by elementary schools in the percentage of ELL students who meet or exceed the CRCT for ELA and the Grade 5 writing standards. There has clearly been improvement in both of these metrics over the past 5 years:



Table 1

*Selected Performance Metrics*

School Year	Elementary ELL Students Meeting or Exceeding ELA CRCT	Elementary ELL Students Meeting or Exceeding Writing Standards
2010–2011	82%	63%
2009–2010	81%	60%
2008–2009	83%	56%
2007–2008	75%	48%
2006–2007	67%	39%

Lack of knowledge about why the improvements documented in Table 1 occurred meant no evidence-based foundation from which to make further adjustments to ELL teaching program and philosophy. Now that the state of Georgia has a No Child Left Behind waiver—effective as of February 9, 2012—the entire state is free to discover, explore, and reward best practices in English teaching to ELL students, without as much concern for test scores. However, without obtaining a better understanding of what has worked and what has failed during the past 5 years, neither the school nor the school district could approach the future of ELL teaching with confidence (Hill & Miller, 2013).

Currently Georgia schools employ a number of methods of instructing ELL students in ELA. One approach is the push-in approach, in which a teacher of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) provides academic support to ELL students in mainstream classrooms. This approach is known as *push-in* because it proactively sends TESOLs to mainstream classrooms rather than pulling ELL students out for instruction (Sullivan, 2011).

In a second approach, the pull-out approach, a teacher of English as a second language takes ELL students out of mainstream classrooms and provides them with both English language and subject-matter instruction in a sheltered classroom (a sheltered classroom is a classroom exclusive of native speakers of English). The premise behind this approach is that ELL students will do better when they do not have to keep up with the demands of a native-language English classroom (Hill & Miller, 2013).

In a third approach, the consultative model, ELL students remain in mainstream classrooms, but continue to be observed by faculty TESOLs and, when necessary, receive individualized attention based on coaching, prompting, and other forms of academic interaction.

A fourth approach, a hybrid mainstream–sheltered environment, is used when the sheltered method can also serve as the basis for an intensive English language program, in which ELL students receive instruction on a completely parallel track until they achieve enough English-language proficiency to transition to a mainstream classroom. This method is also referred to as the hybrid pull-out and push-in method (Sullivan, 2011).

### **Rationale**

The purpose of this study was to determine best practices for ELL student pedagogy and curricula by gathering teacher effectiveness data from teachers at the target school in a manner that allows for a comparison and contrast of the strengths and weaknesses of push-in, pull-out, hybrid push-in/pull-out, and consultative approaches and distilling insights and recommendations from these data into a professional development

plan for school leaders (in particular the principal and vice principal). The identification of best practices and their dissemination in professional development could allow the school to identify, replicate, and improve what worked best with ELL students, thus improving the entire school's capacity to facilitate acceptable academic outcomes for ELL students.

At the research site, the mode of ELL instruction was predominantly a combination of the pull-out and push-in methods. Only two of the school's 103 ELL students were in a consultative program. The problem with the school's approach was that it was not evidence-based. The hybrid push-in/pull-out method was not consciously adopted, but evolved haphazardly in response to the school's transient needs, scheduling limitations, and number of ELL students. With 103 ELL students enrolled at the school, representing 20.6% of all enrolled students, and given that the No Child Left Behind waiver offered a reprieve to teaching-to-the-test methods, there was a need for a more systematic, evidence-based approach to ELL student pedagogy and curricula to inform school leaders' sponsorship of specific ELL teaching models. Such an approach would reflect on what specifically has worked at the school to inform a systematic and evidence-based approach to structuring curricula and pedagogy applicable to ELL students.

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

The setting of the study was a 488-student public school in the southeast United States. Teachers at the school were under significant pressure to raise the reading and ELA scores of students. The results of teachers' efforts were not only reflected in mainstream students' test scores but also in ELL students' test scores coupled with

improvement in language proficiency. The school was in the fortunate position of having seen ELL students' test scores increase. However, this situation was a mixed blessing for the school. While results improved, the empirical reasons for this improvement had not been discovered.

In a continuous improvement framework, it is not sufficient to obtain improved results; the bases of these results must be understood in order to duplicate and improve upon them (Harris & Sass, 2011). Thus the absence of data and explanatory frameworks can become a problem even in high-performing environments.

In Georgia, the problem has been exacerbated by the recent No Child Left Behind waiver. In the aftermath of this waiver, schools will have to wait for further standardized test guidance from the state. In this intermediate period between the end of one standardized regime and the beginning of another, it is all the more important to understand the roots of high performance as a prelude to replicating success in the years to come.

### **Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

In order to examine themes of ELL teaching more closely and systematically, the literature review contains two sections. The first section of the literature review provides a description of the theoretical base for the study. The second section of the literature review provides discussion, evaluation, and critique of current empirical studies on the topic of ELL reading and ELA instruction, glimpsed through the frames of pedagogy, curricula, and administration.

As the purpose of the study was to examine how different instructional models for ELL students might help or hinder teachers' effectiveness in the five criteria listed by Goe et al. (2008) and to report on the results in a manner that could support school leaders' ELL strategies, there was a dual focus in the literature review: an analysis of aspects of teacher effectiveness and an analysis of individual instructional models.

According to Forlin et al. (2008), Kieffer and Lesaux (2010), and Safford and Costley (2008), school climate is a variable that is of paramount importance in academic success. The role of school culture has been noted by numerous scholars, all of whom have argued that school climate is more important than instructional models. One proof of this claim is that, when different schools employ the same instructional model, schools with more supportive climates reported higher rates of ELL student success.

It is not just school climate that matters, but also classroom climate. Reutzel, Reutzel, and Clark (2011) argued that mainstream classes with ELL students have to be more organized than classes with only native speakers of English, both to raise the total exposure to the curriculum and to ensure time and space for moments of one-to-one pedagogy. The same point was made by Roache and Lewis (2011), who emphasized the added importance of classroom management in ELL teaching—whether sheltered, mainstreamed, or in any other venue.

According to DuFour (2004), the development of a professional learning community (PLC) can benefit the classroom environment, allowing the teacher to enhance his or her teaching skills and using them to cater to the learning needs of the students. Ideas to improve schools through development of professional learning

communities are in fashion these days. This term is commonly used to describe combinations of individuals who have a vested interest in the development and improvement of education. The people who have such an interest include grade-level teaching teams, school committees, and high school department staff (DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 7). Apart from this, the entire school district has something to gain through the development of PLCs while the state department of education and the national professional organization also stand to benefit significantly.

The model of PLCs basically assumes that the primary objective of education is not just ensuring that all students are taught well; instead, they must ensure that the students are learning well (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 7). A shift in focus from teaching students to facilitating learning has a massive impact on the efficiency of the schools. In the long run, it is imperative that the school staff ask themselves some very important questions such as (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 7): What practices and characteristics of school have helped students achieve at high levels? How can such practices and characteristics be adopted in our school? What commitments must we make in order to help each other in creating such a school? What indicators could we monitor to assess our progress?

After the staff has constructed shared knowledge and found common ground on these questions, the school has a solid foundation for moving forward with its improvement initiative (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 7). As the school moves forward, every professional in the building must engage with colleagues in the ongoing exploration of three crucial questions that drive the work of those within a professional learning community: What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each

student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?

The third question's answer helps to differentiate between traditional schools and learning communities (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 7). DuFour et al. provided an example of a scenario that is all too common in traditional schools. Instructors teach a group of students to the best of their capabilities. However, as the lesson ends, some of the students do not seem to have mastered the desired learning outcomes. Although the teachers are willing to help the students by giving them some extra hours, they strongly feels that they must push forward with the course content in order to avoid any wastage of time and to ensure completion of the lesson (DuFour et al. 2010, p. 7). The teacher has two options, but both of them have benefits as well as drawbacks. For example, if the teacher spends the instructional time he or she has to in order to help students lagging behind, the progress of the students who have mastered the course content will suffer.

On the other hand, pushing on with new concepts will further isolate the students who are already struggling to grasp the concepts. In a traditional school, the choice on how to respond is left entirely to the teacher as there is minimal interference in the way the students are taught (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 7). Herein lies the main difference between a school and a PLC. In a PLC, teachers develop a strong awareness of the incongruities that exist between their primary commitments (ensuring learning for all students) and their lack of coordinated strategies (responding when some students have trouble grasping the concepts). DuFour (2004) explained that in order to deal with this problem, strategies are designed for the purpose of ensuring that students who are

struggling are given additional support as well as time regardless of who their teacher is. Just as importantly, the response of PLCs to such issues is timely, thorough, and based on interventions rather than remediation (DuFour, 2004)).

Directive, timely, and systematic intervention programs used by PLCs provide students with a much better student-centric learning experience (DuFour, 2004). For instance, students receive progress reports every third week. Within the first month of school, all students get the idea that they will be provided with a wide range of interventions if they are not performing well in school. The teacher, counselors, and the faculty advisor will have different sessions with the struggling students in order to determine and resolve the problem. Apart from this, the parents of the students are also notified of the problem and are kept updated regarding the performance of their child (DuFour, 2004). Additionally, the student will also be provided with study hall passes to school tutoring centers so that the student is provided extra help with the course. Older students are also included in the process and serve as mentors who, in collaboration with the advisor of the struggling student, help the student with his or her homework until the expiry of the advisory period. If, after 6 weeks of interventions, students still fall short of the teachers' expectations, it is made compulsory for them to attend tutoring sessions during the study hall period (DuFour, 2004). A counselor will start making weekly checks on the progress of students struggling with lessons. Also, should tutoring fail in bringing about significant improvements in the students' performance in the first 6 weeks, then the student will be made to attend a daily guided study hall that comprises a minimum of 10 students (DuFour, 2004). The supervisor of the guided study hall will



communicate with the classroom teachers and try to learn precisely what homework is supposed to be completed by individual students. The supervisor then makes sure that the students complete the homework under his or her supervision (DuFour, 2004). This helps to ensure that the progress of all students is measured on a timely basis and that the most useful and effective interventions are used by teachers.

Educators developing a PLC must work in collaboration with each other to ensure the learning of all (DuFour, 2004). Hence, they must develop a structure that encourages a culture of cooperation and collaboration. In spite of compelling evidence suggesting collaboration and cooperation as the best practices, it is still common for educators to continue working in isolation. In fact, it is common for the willingness of the staff to collaborate to stop at the classroom door in schools that promote collaboration (DuFour, 2004). There are also many schools that mistake collaboration with congeniality. As a result, they end up focusing on the development of group camaraderie when they should be emphasizing greater collaboration. The main distinguishing characteristic of PLCs is powerful collaboration. It is a system that encourages teachers to work in collaboration with each other to assess classroom practices and make improvements. In PLCs, the teacher facilitates learning by engaging students to work in teams and by engaging them in a question and answer sessions. This ensures higher levels of student learning.

Roache and Lewis (2011) observed that school and classroom climate, as ranked by students, were more important than students' starting abilities or expectations as a predictor of student achievement. School climate is a variable that, according to Dix and Cawkwell (2011), encompasses teacher development. Dix and Cawkwell argued that

some schools offer minimal support and development opportunities to teachers who work with ELL students, either because of a general lack of funding, because such schools deprioritize ELL education, or because there is not enough accumulated knowledge about how to best support and develop ELL teaching expertise (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007; Yan, Many, & Krunemaker, 2008).

There are mixed data about whether schools with longstanding experience with ELL students have superior or inferior climates with regard to ELL teaching. Keonghee (2010) argued that schools with limited experience will fail to address ELL students' special needs, but Hutchinson and Hadjioannou (2011) argued that mainstreaming might actually work better if ELL students are fairly new to the school, as the school will not have had the time to stereotype such students, or for less ideal forms of pedagogy to become entrenched.

Kibler's (2011) case study made the point that even well-meaning schools with longstanding ELL experience can succumb to a culture of getting students through classes solely with test-oriented knowledge. It is not clear whether such climates are conducive to long-term ELL learning, as there appears to be little longitudinal data on the subject. Edwards-Grove (2012) suggested that one possible problem with school climates that prioritize test-oriented pedagogy is that not enough attention is given to the context of pedagogy, and too much attention is paid to content. ELL students in such school climates might emerge with elevated test scores but impaired creativity and flexibility, and low levels of what Benedit (2009) referred to as portable analytical skills.

According to Culican (2007), it should not be assumed that teachers' expectations are always positive or communicated directly to students. Both Culican and Ippolito (2010) noted the propensity of some teachers to become frustrated more easily with ELL students, leading to a lowering of their expectations that has corrosive effects on how ELL students feel about their own academic chances. Even ELL teachers with patience and good intentions can fail to model the correct level of expectations for ELL students. For example, according to Chang (2010), ELL teachers who mentally label ELL students as being weaker than students for whom English is a native language could subconsciously set lower expectations that, in turn, reduce ELL students' own expectations and belief in themselves.

It is unrealistic to expect that teachers will always have the patience, goodwill, and professional excellence to maintain high expectations of students. Scope, Empson, McHale, and Mabuzoka (2007) argued that teachers ought to make a distinction between students with whom they are frustrated for miscellaneous reasons and students who have behavioral and developmental problems (see also Avramidis, 2010; Soulis & Floridis, 2010). Such students, according to Scope et al., ought to be identified and addressed by interventions outside the classroom; otherwise, lowered teacher expectations, generated by a handful of students, can spread to impact ELLs who deserve more patience and higher expectations than emotionally-depleted teachers can offer (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2011).

In this regard, professional development plays an integral role in training teachers on how to ensure maximum success among students. Currently one of the main issues

raised in research on teacher training refers to training for skills and the acquisition of these skills in the course of professional development (Blandford, 2012). In this framework there is no clarity regarding the formation of competencies, either in initial or continuing training or also as a possible way to understand the development of the teacher. Guskey (2003) defined professional development as the process by which teachers revise, develop, and renew the purposes of education and knowledge essential to professional thinking, planning, and practice. Guskey explained that it is essential for teachers to undergo professional development to develop and hone the skills needed to control the learning environment. Moreover, Guskey identified professional development as an evolving and complex process that occurs by continuous development rather than beginning and ending with initial training.

According to McElvain (2010) and Sharp (2012), the best teachers of ELL students ask them to develop a critical consciousness. Short, Echevarria, and Richards-Tutor (2011) argued that teachers can encourage critical consciousness in their students by themselves being passionate about material, eager to teach in ways that acknowledge the social and emotional resonance of texts, and aware of ways to tie classroom experience to ELL students experiences. McNicoll and Ho (2011) added the insight that developing a critical consciousness is a collaborative process; thus, teachers who hold themselves aloof from students are not able to communicate the same level of expectation and elicit the same amount of critical commitment as teachers who take the risk of truly joining students on their own terms. Yeh (2010) pointed out that novice teachers of ELL students often assume that lowered expectations lead to greater student motivation;

however, Yeh found the opposite to be true: students who were asked to read more material became more motivated as they realized that teachers recognized their ability.

According to Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy, and Wearmouth (2009), some of the academic models that apply to ELL instruction include English language development (ELD), question–answer method (QAM), cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) cycle of instructions, sheltered instruction observational instruction (SIOP) model, specially-designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) model, the improving literacy transitional instructional program (ILTIP) model, and the bilingual cooperative integrated reading composition (BCIRC) model, among others.

As documented by Takallou (2011), the ELD method is a kind of seminar whereby the courses taught in English offer opportunities for students to use the language. In such seminars, one is capable of improving and remembering the basics of the English language. This program has mostly been used in Europe in what is referred to as Euroversity Seminars (Takallou, 2011). The seminars not only equip students with added value in English language, but also assist them to improve on the personal level and acquire a firm background in business English.

However, the ELD program has elicited both positive and negative views. According to Yoon (2007), it is a recommended measure bearing in mind that English is an international language. Indeed, the ELD method prepares learners in a holistic way since it does not only improve the language basics of a student while also giving a worthwhile foundation in other areas such as business. However, the ELD method has been touted to take an extended amount of time before showing necessary impact. For

example, teachers may need prompt results to assess their teaching; therefore, this model of teaching may not be preferred. Even though the program has an all-around means of educating learners, the development of the learners may not be realized immediately after the commencement of the program (Shin-ying, 2009).

The cooperative learning method (CLM) in teaching English employs the tactic of putting learners in groups so that they can impart knowledge to one another (Calderón et al., 2005). According to Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008), the best way of learning is when students share what they have acquired. For example, some students may be lagging behind in certain aspects of the English language while others may be more proficient. In such cases, the CLM would offer a viable opportunity for all students.

CLM is considered a favorable and a sound means of leveraging all students (Furnham, Monsen, & Ahmetoglu, 2009). It is especially effective in groups of four or fewer learners who have diverse needs and learning capabilities. Incorporating the CLM, teachers' efforts are minimal, and much of the task basically involves facilitating. The teacher may technically have a task of guiding students or giving ideas and strategies as students explore.

It is also important for the teacher to understand the classroom environment and the dynamics that determine the success rate of teaching. In this regard, systems theory helps to give comprehensive insight into the classroom environment, also highlighting the main factors that may influence the learning of students. General systems theory was developed by Von Bertalanffy (1950) as part of an explanatory scientific model of the behavior of a living organism. Von Bertalanffy defined a system as an organized whole

made up of interdependent elements that are surrounded by an outer medium (environment). The system interacts with the external environment while related elements in the system are affected by exchanges of energy and/or information (Von Bertalanffy, 1950). The input or output channels that convey information or energy are called channels of communication (Von Bertalanffy, 1950).

According to Furnham et al. (2009), the CLM is most appropriate for elementary teachers and for students who feel that there is a need for concerted efforts. It is mostly for students who are newcomers to the English language. However, heavy reliance on CLM may impair the function of the program. Teachers feel that their maximum presence in a class is highly necessary and expecting the students would do everything for themselves would only hinder the rate of learning.

The CALLA program is designed to improve achievement in academics, especially for the post elementary levels of students in ELL programs. CALLA builds on the cognitive aspect of learning and accommodates academic content instruction that enhances language development. This is an effective method of learning that engages cognitive development while involving other learning modes such as academic language. Engaging mainly in the cognitive domain ensures that the degree of recall is high.

According to Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008), the CALLA method focuses on generating reflections from learners while they are undergoing their own process of learning. The method contains three major components of elements: content topics, development of academic language, and explicit instruction. This is a highly rated method by elementary teachers and has been cited as a way of qualifying the

mind, which comes first in learning. Even though CALLA is considered an effective method, there are concerns in the aspects of gathering immediate formative information.

The CALLA is seen as a long-term measure and not a method that can give instant feedback. It is more of an investment rather than a solution to English acquisition. CALLA requires five sequential steps within the instructional model to improve academic language proficiency:

1. Preparation.
2. Professional development plan.
3. Practice.
4. Self-evaluation.
5. Expansion.

A teacher implementing the CALLA program will have to complete the five steps while guiding students through the students' expectations. At the end of progressive steps, students would have spent a noticeable amount of instructional time before generating assessment data to support mastery of presented objectives.

The SIOP model gives teachers effective tools for working with students in ELL programs, even with differing language of instruction (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). It encompasses teaching meanings and reading strategies which are effective in the nature of reading comprehension. The method includes using language objectives for content lessons, background knowledge, content vocabulary, and academic literary practice (Hansen-Thomas, 2008).



The SIOP builds on the traditional sheltered strategies that encourage the elementary teachers to always speak slowly, connect learning materials with concepts, and promote the interactions with peers. This is a versatile method that takes in various measures, but more importantly, it is preferred by some teachers and students because of its step-by-step means of teaching. It can start from the basic preparation of content, to building background knowledge and having comprehensible input to review and assess the interaction of English learners.

The SDAIE is a classroom strategy for teaching English only, but is similar to the sheltered instruction (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). This strategy gives the students in ELL programs access to core curriculum at the same time as promoting ELD. It is a strategy that aims in providing appropriate content in academics, especially in learning the English language, and integrates with intermediate proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the English language. According to Cline and Necochea (2003), SDAIE has been used extensively in California in making the model comprehensible to students in ELL programs.

However, for effective use of this method, the learners must demonstrate a particular level of competency so that they can experience the maximum benefit of the SDAIE model, since this model requires at least intermediate competence in students (Cline & Necochea, 2003). This means that the elementary teachers must use this method sparingly. Learners who have not attained a certain level in speech development would not be well-served by this method. Firstly, the teacher must establish that at least the

majority of the students obtained satisfactory levels of proficiency in the English language.

The English as a second language instruction model (ESLIM) is an explicit method as well as a direct means of giving English language instruction. Most importantly, it is intended to equip and help students in ELL programs to achieve English language proficiency equivalent to the language proficiency of mainstream students. This model is mostly designed for students who are learning English as a second language. Students in ELL programs are expected to be able to compete within the same guidelines as their mainstream peers, and this can only be accomplished with a language learning model that can raise English proficiency effectively and timely. According to Hansen-Thomas (2008), the ESLIM method is used to review the proficiency of students in ELL programs. In ESLIM, students who are not proficient cannot be in the same classrooms as mainstream peers.

The BCIRC model is one of the dual language means of teaching the English language, and acts as a transition into what can be termed as the mainstream classrooms of English language. This program was designed to equip and assist students with language proficiency as well as literacy development in their native language and then transpose the students' instruction to the English language. The method utilizes an explicit instructional method in language as well as literacy activities, reading comprehension, and ELA. It is most suitable for students in Grades 2 through 5 (because non-English speakers in these grades have cognitively easier time functioning in two languages than older students) with the majority of focus on second and third grade

students. Most teachers regard BCIRC as significant because it first captures students in their first language before transitioning their skills into English (Kapantzoglou, Restrepo, & Thompson, 2012).

The ILTIP model is a dual language method of teaching that, as the name suggests, improves the English literacy of English speakers of other languages. It has a major focus on equipping students with the necessary skills for success in school. According to Sargazi and McClelland (2010), the ILTIP ensures that there is a strong transition or continuum with content in all grades. The ILTIP model gives students academic challenges that help to increase motivation.

Most importantly, it connects students' background knowledge to English skills and strategies being taught. Sargazi and McClelland (2010) qualified this method as being very motivating to the students and elementary teachers for improving literacy. That is why the ILTIP is highly regarded as an important tool of transition from first language to second language development. However, according to Sargazi and McClelland, the ILTIP method is not as effective as other researchers may deem. Transition is not always easy for international students.

After students begin the ILTIP model, they become accustomed to the curriculum's simplicity as the ILTIP caters to students on an emergent level in an ELL program. Therefore, the ILTIP is not ideal for language learners who have surpassed the entry level of English proficiency. Some students' native languages do not have commonalities with the English language, which makes learning more difficult without the common thread of background knowledge of language. Consequently, the lack of

commonality is another reason why some teachers are not enthusiastic about the ILTIP method (Sargazi & McClelland, 2010).

In recent literature concerning ELL teaching, the emphasis is not so much on specific models or even modes of teaching (i.e., pull-out versus push-in, etc.), but rather on the qualitative nature of teaching ELL students. Even scholars who assign a great deal of importance to the role of formal instructional models in determining ELL student achievement argue that it is not the model itself but rather the teacher and school behaviors that determine student achievement (Cline & Necochea, 2003; Frances & Potter, 2010; Kapantzoglou et al., 2012). For example, Frances and Potter argued that the success or failure of the pull-out model does not depend on the intrinsic pedagogical or curricular properties of the model itself, but rather on how it predisposes teachers, administrators, and students to feel.

Numerous scholars have pointed out that good models can be mishandled by schools and teachers, and that questionable models can be redeemed by good teaching (Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, & Spatzer, 2012; Johnston, Johnston, Ivey, & Faulker, 2011; Karchmer-Klein & Shinas, 2012). It would be a mistake, then, to become too fixated on model names, labels, and characteristics; although it is absolutely necessary for schools and teachers to adopt methods with some academic substance and proven basis in pedagogy (McCartney, Ellis, Boyne, Turnbull, & Kerr, 2010), educators should remember that models are just one of many possible components of ELL student achievement (Long, 2008; Lopez, 2011). It is possible to relate some of the existing models of ELL achievement to older theories of learning.

There are two theories of particular relevance to both pedagogical and curricular ELL teaching approaches: the linguistic threshold hypothesis and the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. Both of these theories address a single question, namely whether “second-language reading is a language problem (linguistic threshold) or a reading problem (linguistic interdependence)” (Pichette, 2005, p. 250).

According to Ng and Renshaw (2008), the linguistic interdependence theory holds that skills in the native and the acquired language (which, for ELL students, is English) “are interdependent...Experience with one language can promote the development of cognitive/academic proficiency across languages...provided that there is adequate exposure to L2 [the acquired language]” (p. 207). Vygotsky (2012) argued that, if the linguistic interdependence theory is correct, an ELL student “can transfer to the new language the system of meaning he already possesses in his own,” and that “The reverse is also true—a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language” (p. 110). By contrast, according to the linguistic threshold hypothesis, students attempting to master a second language “must achieve threshold levels of bilingual proficiency to avoid detrimental effects on cognition and potentially to allow positive effects” (Appel & Muysken, 2006, p. 112). According to Gail (2006), the controversy between the linguistic interdependence theory and the linguistic threshold hypothesis has continued for decades because both theories have been found to apply to different sets of data.

The practical consequences of these theories for ELL pedagogy and curricula are immense. Teachers have considerable leeway, within both curricular and pedagogical

constraints, in how they teach reading and ELA in elementary school. Teachers' and schools' applications of reading strategies are influenced by both the linguistic interdependence and linguistic threshold theories about English (typically annotated as L2, or the second language) and the student's first language (annotated as L1, or first language).

If a teacher or school holds to the linguistic threshold hypothesis, then it is more likely that the ELL student will be pulled out into a class taught in L1, or a teacher who knows L1 will be more likely to use that language to prompt or teach the student. These approaches are more common now that there is a larger population of semilinguals, meaning students who are semiproficient in both their native language and in English.

The core of the linguistic interdependence theory is that an ELL struggling in English is not necessarily struggling with English but rather is cognitively immature; this immaturity can be resolved by using interventions in the student's L1. It might seem paradoxical, but, if the linguistic interdependence theory is correct, a student's English language skill can be improved by reading in the student's first language.

On the other hand, if the linguistic threshold theory is correct, then the main task of pedagogy and the curriculum is to bring the ELL to a higher level of competence in English through the use of English in the classroom (whether sheltered or mainstream). This approach is the one that is currently used at the research site. However, as Gail (2006) noted, it is not clear whether either of these theories is more correct than the other in any given environment. It is for this reason that it is important to consult the empirical

literature and also to audit teachers' knowledge to determine whether either of these approaches, or perhaps both, would be a better foundation for teaching ELL students.

Students' self-expectations have numerous components, including students' prior psychological characteristics, teachers' expectations of the student, and students' experience of instruction. Clearly, then, neither schools nor teachers control all of the determinants of student self-determination; however, the category of teacher expectation is particularly important in determining ELL students' expectations because of such students' existing tendencies to feel at a loss in the classroom (Barr, Eslami, & Joshi, 2012). Learning opportunities are connected both to the model that informs ELL instruction and to the organization and delivery of the model, which implies the importance of a combination of time management, classroom management, and administrative organization.

Creese (2010) argued that the execution of an ELL teaching model might be more important than the content of the model itself. Craighead and Ramanathan (2007) also argued that, instead of engaging in a misguided quest for the best teaching model, teachers and administrators ought to ensure that existing models are delivered with the maximum efficiency. According to Craighead and Ramanathan, one of the indicators of efficiency in this regard is time spent on curricular tasks.

One way to improve efficiency is to call upon teaching assistants and also technological tools (Farrell, Alborz, Howes, & Pearson, 2010; Florian, 2008; Wellington & Stackhouse, 2011). Nonetheless, the main factor in the success of intermediate outcomes is the teacher's ability (AeJin, 2010; Demaris & Kritsonis, 2011; Goldschmidt,

Ousey, & Brown, 2011; Ionin, Baek, Kim, Ko, & Wexler, 2012). For this reason, it makes sense to talk to teachers themselves to discover what works, and what does not, in the context of teaching ELLs.

Given the highly idiosyncratic nature of success factors in ELL teaching success, it is appropriate to employ a case study format to determine what works best in a local ELL setting. The main purpose of this study was to gather data from the local level and to analyze it in a manner that allows for the creation of a professional development plan of best practices. This professional development plan will benefit not only from the theoretical insights in the literature but also from proven success factors within the school environment. Indeed, the literature can cast an explanatory light on why certain ELL approaches within the school have succeeded or failed in the past, and can thus serve as a guide to future practice as well (Blandford, 2012).

### **Definitions**

In the *consultative model*, ELL students are retained in mainstream classrooms but, when deemed necessary by mainstream teachers or TESOLS, obtain individualized academic attention (Creese, 2010; Musti-Rao, Hawkins, & Tan, 2011).

An *English language learner* is a student who must fulfill two criteria: possess limited English proficiency (LEP) and speak a native language other than English (Lapp & Fisher, 2010).

*Hybrid methods* consist of a combination of pull-out and push-in methods (Demaris & Kritsonis, 2011).



*Pull-out methods* involve the teaching of ELL student by removing the student from a mixed classroom environment (that is, an environment in which both ELL and non-ELL students are present) and into an environment in which only other ELL students are present (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007).

*Push-in methods* involve the teaching of ELL student by inserting the ELL student into a mixed classroom environment—that is, an environment in which both ELL and non-ELL students are present (Safford & Costley, 2008).

### **Significance**

This study has the potential to impact how ELL students are taught because, by using open-ended and qualitative means of inquiry, it was possible to determine not only which models have worked but why. Understanding the rationale behind model success was a means of achieving deeper insight into the efficacy of teaching, insight that can be used to improve ELL teaching further.

In recent years, the county in which the research site is located has witnessed a major demographic change. The number of Hispanic students in the school system went from 2,215 in 1994 to 14,000 in 2003 (Sjoquist, 2009). Currently, 16.5% of all school district students are Hispanic, and 4.8% are Asian.

The demographic shift at the school itself has been sudden; in less than one generation, the school went from having almost no ELL students to a situation in which roughly 1 in 7 students is an ELL student. On paper, the county has dealt well with the influx of ELL students, who have improved their ELA scores faster than any other school with similar demographics. Indeed, ELL students' performance in English has increased,

even as, for example, countywide Native Americans' performance in CRCT English language arts has declined from 100% who met or exceeded standards in 2005–2006 to 92% who met or exceeded standards in 2010–2011 (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

The data have two implications. First, there is clearly something to be learned from how well teachers at the school, representing the county in general, have prepared ELL students for standardized English tests. Second, from a more critical perspective, it is also worth auditing the longer-term needs of ELL students at the research site and determining how such students' holistic English learning needs can be met now that the school is under less test pressure than at any time during the past 5 years. In fact, since the population of ELL parents and students in the county in which the research site is located continues to swell, stakeholders will look to schools to generate longer-term solutions to the problem of English instruction—solutions that are likely to emerge in the kinds of teacher-centric research that have not been conducted in the county before.

Scholars such as Short, Echevarría, and Richards-Tutor (2011) have turned to teachers in Arizona, California, and other Western and Southwestern states to learn more about such best practices. However, ELL students have been a significant presence in Western and Southwestern schools longer than in Georgia, and demographics have also favored different kinds of approaches between these states; for example, both California and Arizona have a proportionally greater base of Spanish-speaking teachers than Georgia does (Haydon, Bolanos, Danley, & Smutney, 2012).

Currently, the only readily-identifiable research on ELL practices in the county in which the research site is located is a dissertation (Cobb, 2008) case study of two children from Mexican-American households making the transition to kindergarten. More research on this topic appears to be necessary given the demographic changes underway in Georgia and also given that the way in which each state's standards apply to ELLs is likely to be unique because existing federal legislation on language instruction for ELLs does not specify pedagogical approach but rather focuses solely on achievement and accountability (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Georgia is most likely a test case for many other U.S. states in which the proportion of non-English-speaking students, especially those of Hispanic heritage, is growing. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2011), the U.S. states with above 100% Hispanic population growth from 2000 to 2010 are largely neighbors of Georgia, including South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas. In the decade ahead, these states will need better solutions to the dual problem of (a) raising ELL test scores in a short timeframe so as to meet NCLB guidelines and (b) planning for the longer-term, holistic needs of ELL students. The significance of this study is its potential to obtain possible answers to these challenges from teachers at the research site, while also determining how the school can also keep improving, within the general structure of a mainstreaming approach to ELL teaching.

Based on the review of literature, the methodology for such a study needs to be sensitive to the large number of variables that, as per Harris and Sass (2011), can influence and determine student achievement. Such a methodology will be described and

defended in the second section of the project. Taking its cue from the literature, which emphasizes the multifactorial and local nature of success in ELL teaching environments, the study design was calibrated to the exploration of numerous vehicles and also relied heavily on the insights provided by frontline ELL teachers themselves.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

The guiding question of the study was: What are evidence-based, teacher-centric reasons for ELL student success in the target school that can be leveraged in a professional learning community (PLC) dedicated to improving ELL students' academic outcomes? The conceptual framework for the guiding question was teacher effectiveness (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; Rockoff & Speroni, 2010). First, teacher effectiveness theory suggests that examining the role of teachers is a valid way of understanding student achievement; this suggestion validates research designs in which teachers' roles in student success are directly examined (Goe et al., 2008). Second, teacher effectiveness theory presents a specific construct of teacher effectiveness consisting of distinct teacher qualities that can guide research inquiry (Goe et al., 2008).

Goe et al. (2008) identified the following dimensions of teacher effectiveness as existing in the literature:

1. Effective teachers place high learning expectations on all of their students.
2. Effective teachers strengthen students' academic habits (such as being on time), attitudes (such as a sense of self-efficacy), and prosocial orientations (such as cooperative behavior).

3. Effective teachers are efficient in gathering and directing resources to improve planning and curricular delivery; they are also efficient in monitoring the results of instruction, evaluating their own effectiveness, and making changes as needed.
4. Effective teachers promote and strength diversity and good civic behavior.
5. Effective teachers are good collaborators who know how to work with other stakeholders (be they parents, administrators, or fellow teachers) in order to further the cause of student success.

Thus, Goe et al. (2008) suggested that effective teachers are consistently demanding, supportive of good behaviors and attitudes, efficient in utilizing resources, diversity-friendly, and skilled collaborators. The specific research questions of the study were designed so as to give broad evidence of teacher-based reasons for ELL student success.

RQ1: How did the use of specific instructional models at the school over the past 5 years contribute, if at all, to ELL student success?

RQ2: How have teachers at the school maintained consistency in their expectations for students?

RQ3: How have teachers at the school maintained consistency in their expectations for themselves?

### **Implications**

The general implication of the study was that push-in education has several potential advantages for ELLs, but that attaining these advantages requires specific forms of commitment from teachers, administrators, parents, and students. The location

implication of the study was that PLCs can be an effective means of attaining the advantage of push-in educations for ELL students. The scholarly implication of the study was that more work is required to understand how and why push-in education can be applied to improve the academic standing of ELL students.

### **Summary**

Teachers are on the front lines of student achievement and can offer invaluable input into how their own effectiveness has been improved within the context of various instructional models. Gathering and analyzing teacher effectiveness data from the perspective of instructional models is a way to determine which models can raise teacher effectiveness more, thus offering an evidence-based means of choosing between different instructional models that could provide important decision support for school leaders. I present both an empirical study and a professional development plan based on these factors in the remainder of the study, beginning with a presentation of methodology in Section 2. Section 3 comprises the study project, which emerged from an analysis of teacher-contributed data, while the reflections and conclusion of the study are presented in Section 4.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to clarify the qualitative and phenomenological methodology of this project case study as the best method of addressing the identified educational problem and answering the research questions of the study. Subsequently, I created a professional development plan titled “Push-in Strategy for English Language Learning Students: The Role of a Professional Learning Community” in response to the collected data (see Appendix A). This professional development plan serves as a guide for teachers with myriad techniques and approaches that assist them in not just teaching more effectively, but also facilitating student learning in the classroom. Section 2 consists of the following: Research Design and Approach, Setting and Sample, Instrumentation and Materials, Data Collection and Analysis, Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations, Measures for the Protection of Participants’ Rights.

The main premise of this study was that teachers can relate their effectiveness in terms of the different instructional models that they have had to use, but that this knowledge needs to be collected, clustered, and analyzed in the systematic approach provided by interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in order to yield coherent explanations and actionable data for future optimization of ELL student-targeted pedagogy. I used IPA to analyze the research findings in a manner that allowed me to create an evidence-based, locally-supported ELL strategy professional development plan—the ultimate deliverable of the project—for school leaders. The main result of the study was that teachers perceived push-in models to be more effective for ELLs,

primarily because such models were described as setting and enforcing high academic expectations that could be upheld by experienced and accountable teachers (Blandford, 2012).

### **Research Design and Approach**

This study was qualitative, phenomenological, and heuristic. According to Merriam (2009), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Merriam further defined phenomenology as the branch of qualitative research whose purpose “is to depict the essence of basic structure of experience” (p. 25).

In this context, the development of a PLC can benefit the classroom environment, allowing the teacher to enhance his or her teaching skills and using them to cater to the learning needs of the students. According to DuFour (2004), the development and improvements in the PLC is extensively beneficial for the advantage of the classroom and for the sake of a favorable environment prevalent in the educational settings. Dufour (2004) explains that PLCs permit the teachers to learn more about effective teaching and related knowledge for the sake of catering to the needs of the students.

Ideas to improve schools through development of PLCs are highly regarded today. A PLC is a term commonly used to describe combinations of individuals who have a vested interest in the development and improvement of education. The people who have such an interest include grade-level teaching teams, school committees, and high school department staff (DuFour et al., 2010). Apart from this, the entire school district has



something to gain through the development of PLCs while the state department of education and the national professional organization also stand to benefit significantly.

The model of PLCs basically assumes that the primary objective of education is not just ensuring that all students are taught well; instead, they must ensure that the students are learning well (DuFour et al., 2010). A shift in focus from teaching students to facilitating learning has a massive impact on the efficiency of the schools. In schools, mission statements that emphasize fostering learning for all has become a bit of a cliché (DuFour et al., 2010). In the long run, it is imperative that the school staff ask themselves some very important questions such as: What practices and characteristics of school have helped students achieve at high levels? How can such practices and characteristics be adopted in our school? What commitments must we make in order to help each other in creating such a school? What indicators could we monitor to assess our progress?

To begin with, educators know that the elementary schools in the region where the research site is located have experienced an improvement in the ELA performance of ELL students over the past 5 years (as documented by the Georgia Department of Education, 2010). One objective of the study was to investigate the reasons behind these findings from the perspective of teacher effectiveness theory, in which the assumption was that specific actions that teachers took—actions that were either helped or hampered by the instructional models within which the teachers operated—were partly responsible for student success.

According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is particularly suited to investigating the context of a human phenomenon, such as higher academic achievement

or improved school performance. Hence, for this study, statistical analysis alone could not have disclosed why the research site (or the county as a whole) experienced a significant increase in the English and language arts performance of its ELL students. Therefore, qualitative research was an appropriate methodology adopted in the study. Quantitative measurements have already established the extent of ELL improvement, preparing the way for qualitative analysis to excavate the reasons for this improvement as they might relate to the factors of teacher effectiveness (Goe et al., 2008) enhanced by specific instructional models.

Within qualitative research, there are five submethods: (a) narrative of lives, (b) grounded theory, (c) case study, (d) ethnography, and (e) phenomenology (Glesne, 2011). The narrative of lives method is essentially oral history, and leaves less room for the researcher's interpretation of data than the other methods (Glesne, 2011). Therefore, narrative of lives was inappropriate for this study, as the purpose was not to create an archive of teachers' narratives but rather to actively investigate and interpret a phenomenon. Grounded theory is an approach in which researchers enter data collection and analysis without a theory to confirm or a theoretical framework to guide the process of interpretation; the theory emerges from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In this study, I discarded grounded theory because theory-building is not the object; understanding participants' experiences is.

Within the tradition of phenomenology, there are several variant approaches. In this project, I used the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), an approach following Giorgi and Giorgi (2008). IPA is a popular method of phenomenology because

it is designed for heuristic purposes, that is, to solve problems. IPA is also a method with a highly specific method of data collection, processing, and analysis. I embedded the IPA approach within the case study format. According to Yin (2009), the case study is a form of inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

The case study format aligned well with the research emphasis of the study, which was to examine the phenomenon of learning success among ELL students as a factor of the ways in which specific instructional models might have improved teacher effectiveness. While the case study approach was appropriate for these reasons, IPA can provide a structured, well-recognized (Merriam, 2009) means of gathering, coding, and synthesizing data from human participants. As such, the case study and IPA formats not only met the methodological needs of this study but also complemented each other.

One of the reasons for the profusion of qualitative case studies in the field of ELL pedagogy is that scholars acknowledge that even slight differences between systems can result in different experiences (Farrell et al., 2010; Goldschmidt et al., 2011). Qualitative case studies, which are designed to investigate local contexts, are thus well-suited to applying systems-oriented approaches to an examination of ELL pedagogy. Scholars have suggested that, in such a qualitative approach, the researcher must be aware that there are several aspects of the system (including parental involvement, teacher diversity, curricular coordination, and other variables noted in the literature) that could influence the relationship between an ELL model and an ELL student’s success. For this reason,

qualitative interview protocols that cover various aspects of a system are more likely to generate legitimate explanations of how and why ELL models work in specific environments (Farrell et al., 2010; Goldschmidt et al., 2011; Proctor, Floyd, & Shaver, 2005). In this study, the use of a qualitative interview protocol that asked teachers about several aspects of the educational system maximized the likelihood of obtaining reliable and valid answers to the question of how and why certain models might work better than others.

### **Setting and Sample**

The setting for this study was an elementary school in the southeastern United States. The school had an enrollment of 488 students, 70 of whom were ELL students. The population for the study consisted of all the teachers and administrators at the school. Purposive and opportunistic sampling were the methods employed to draw participants from this population. I first approached teachers and administrators whom I knew, informed them about my study, and asked them to participate. My initial approach was with e-mails. The inclusion criteria for the sample include the following: (a) willingness to participate; (b) having been at the school throughout the 2005–2010 time period; (c) and teachers working in the ELA field. Because the circle of teachers within the school was a tight-knit one, I asked initial recruits to engage in recruiting on their own.

According to Creswell (2012), 10 to 12 participants are usually the threshold for data saturation. In other words, if more participants than this threshold are sampled, the chances are the participants will reiterate the same kinds of narratives. On the other hand, if the number of participants is smaller than this threshold, it is possible that some key

themes and narratives will not be included in the study. Therefore, the goal of sampling in this study was to draw between 10 to 12 teachers. Again, because the staff of the school was familiar to each other, I did not have to establish a working relationship with any of the participants because I already had a working relationship with them. According to Englander (2012), researchers' familiarity with subjects does not threaten the reliability, validity, or trustworthiness of data collection or data analysis as long as researchers' questions focus on what Englander called the "subject-phenomenon relation" (p. 25) rather than the "subject-subject relation" (p. 25).

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

I collected data through one-on-one interviews. I conducted two interviews with each of the 13 subjects in the study. The first interview followed a semistructured format that touched upon each of the aspects of the Goe et al.'s (2008) teacher effectiveness research. The interview protocol was open-ended and consisted of the following questions, none of which were seen by the subjects before the interview:

1. Tell me about your pedagogical experiences as a teacher over the past 5 years.
2. Which instructional models have you used over the past 5 years, and why?
3. Which models do you think have been most effective, and why?
4. Which models do you think have been least effective, and why?
5. How did you maintain consistency in your expectations for students?
6. How did you maintain consistency in your expectations for yourself as a teacher?

These questions yielded extensive data, and the use of an audio recorder, voice-sensitive tape-to-computer transcriber, and qualitative analysis software simplified the tasks of gathering and coding data.

The second interview session focused on specific themes of interest discovered in the first interview session. I transcribed and coded the first interviews looking for particularly noteworthy insights—both insights that emerged from an interview with a specific subject and insights which Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) referred to as thematic clusters that emerged across the entire sample space. The second interview sessions were less structured; their purpose was to obtain additional detail on the identified thematic clusters from the first wave of interviews. The second interview also provided for member-checking to ensure qualitative validity of the interpretation of the data from the first interview.

The interviews took place in locked rooms on school grounds. I reserved the room for an hour at a time (which proved to be longer than necessary, but which provided some leeway in case of participants who arrived late) and began the sessions by reiterating the purpose of the study and also repeating the rights of the participant. I made available water and light refreshments. I audio taped the sessions with an unobtrusive digital recorder; I reminded participants that the sessions would be tape recorded, and the taping was also mentioned on the informed consent letter (see Appendix A). I transcribed taped conversations into Microsoft Word. Each subject was identified with a pseudonym.

Data processing was carried out by a combination of traditional means and the use of NVivo software. NVivo has proven useful in automating the analysis of large volumes

of narrative because of the software's ability to isolate key words and to generate thematic clusters, However, NVivo on its own is not sufficient as a means of data analysis because this study had a specific coding structure that is based on the Goe et al.'s (2008) model for student achievement. I used NVivo only as an early-stage form of data processing, merely as an aid to hand-coding.

In terms of data analysis, Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) offered a specific three-part template to IPA researchers. The three parts of this template are horizontalization, thematic clustering, and synthesis. Horizontalization begins with a reconsideration of all the gathered data as part of an effort to set aside the researchers' biases. In horizontalization, an IPA researcher might read and re-read all of the data associated with the study, instead of considering only the data considered significant or confirmatory of the researcher's biases. Moran and Mooney (2002) discussed *epoche*, which is the process of setting aside biases and seeing through the eyes of the subject. I faced several challenges to adopting *epoche* in this study. For example, as a teacher, I was aware of a bias toward administrators' emphasis on standardized test results, which I failed to detach from the holistic mission of teaching. However, I performed a method of bias reduction known as empathetic journaling (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008), in which I pretended to be an administrator explaining the reasons for the usefulness of a test-centric approach to curricula and pedagogy. Empathetic journaling was one of my prewriting exercises prior to writing the proposal for this study; as a result of the widening of my horizons and adoption of *epoche*, I structured the study so that administrators as well as teachers could

participate, and chose a neutral, open-ended theoretical model of achievement that did not commit me to critiquing administrators and exalting teachers.

The task of thematic clustering was rendered through Goe et al.'s (2008) teacher effectiveness research as a foundation. However, I created new thematic clusters as warranted by the data. I used what Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) called member-checking as part of the data synthesis. In member-checking, which Creswell (2012) referred to as the qualitative spiral, the researcher works closely with the subjects after data collection so that subjects can have additional input into how their narratives are used, and additional chances to express their opinions—both about the research questions, and about how their data will be used in the study. Member-checking is helpful for two main reasons. First, it is a further guarantee of epoche and bias reduction. If the researcher and subject agree on questions of interpretation, clustering, and analysis, then the researcher cannot be said to exploiting, misrepresenting, or imposing bias on the subject. Second, member-checking adds additional interpretative power to a study. In member-checking, a subject can challenge a researcher or add new insights that improve the quality of a study's interpretation; in essence, subjects become collaborators and interpretative partners of the researcher, pooling their insights. Thus, in attempting to interpret the data, I benefited from another layer of critique, reflection, and commentary from the study's participants.

In summary, the methodology for this project was qualitative, phenomenological, and case study-oriented, with the purpose being to determine how different instructional models improved, or did not improve, teacher effectiveness in the five areas noted in Goe et al.'s (2008) teacher effectiveness theory. The data obtained through these questions



were analyzed and synthesized through the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis, whose goal was to connect the specific insights generated by teacher interviews into a broader framework of best practice themes to be reported on in the professional development plan that was the deliverable of the project. Thus, the methodology was designed to address both the research problem and the research questions of the study in a direct and integrated manner.

### **Results**

Not surprisingly, teachers in the study reported that they had used the hybrid model most frequently, with 9 of the 13 teachers reporting usage of this model. This model of teaching, as reflected by results of this interview and the current trends in the teaching, is noted to be effectively emerging as an extensively beneficial model for enhanced student learning (Blandford, 2012). It is thus, characterized as an experience which is being carried out by most of the schools for the sake of increased student learning through personalized learning in classrooms and through the modern technological advancements, as asserted by Fabricant and Fine (2012).

Eleven of the 13 respondents reported that they used ELL models based on school mandate, with only two teachers indicating that they had been able to choose their model. “We don’t have much choice in our choice of model,” Teacher 1 indicated. “I think I’m able to choose my model because I’m sort of in a corner, ignored by the principal,” said Teacher 13. As indicated by the current interview responses and their patterns, it is ascertained by the extensive works of Boyd et al. (2011) that the choice and preference of the teachers in having to choose and adopt teaching model, is usually tinted affluently by

the administration. In relation to the current patterns of decision making by the administrators as indicated by the interview responses, it is significantly conventional that the administration has more say than the teachers in decision making regarding strategies or policies.

Despite the fact that the majority of the teachers in the sample had the most experience with hybrid models, 12 of the 13 teachers still registered their belief that the push-in approach was the best, with the lone exception nominating the consultative approach. Relating the findings of the current interview responses with the academic literature in the related field entails the review of numerous works conducted in this regard. As aforementioned, the hybrid model for teaching is enunciated by the administration as a decision for the teachers (Bell & Baecher, 2012). Even with the depiction of the fact that hybrid model is significantly being utilized in the schools nowadays, the preference of push-in models by the teachers notably indicate about the effectiveness of this teaching model.

There were three themes that emerged in the analysis of why the push-in model was deemed the most effective: Push-in was appropriately challenging for students and set high expectations (cited by seven teachers); push-in was a forum for the more experienced teachers to excel (cited by four teachers); and committed parents allowed the push-in model to thrive by supporting their children in push-in models, but not knowing as much about providing support for children in hybrid models (cited by two teachers). Each of these themes will be discussed more fully in this section of the professional development plan, with the assistance of representative quotes from teachers.

There were three themes that emerged in the analysis of why the hybrid model was the least effective: Bad curricular organization (cited by 6 teachers); (2) teacher coordination problems (cited by 5 teachers); and inconsistent experience for students (cited by 2 teachers). Each of these themes will be discussed more fully in this section of the professional development plan, with the assistance of representative quotes from teachers.

### **Success of Push-In: High Expectations**

The interview responses revealed that a considerable majority of the responses stressed the importance of expectations in the academic achievement of the students. As stated by Teacher 2, “I find that students rise to the level of expectations put on them.” As ascertained by numerous study endeavors in the field of education and learning strategies, it is inherently analyzed that in most of the cases where teachers hold expectations from the students, it is particularly in relation to the ways adopted for teaching the students. As stated by teacher 2 who was one of the respondents of the interviews, “Push-in is a big challenge, but you see students stepping up to it with enthusiasm. Then when they get pulled out, the challenge level goes down, and they kind of coast until they’re back in the mainstream classroom.”

“I think it’s kind of a sink-or-swim situation,” said Teacher 5. “When the [ELLs] get pushed into the mainstream classroom, it’s just a survival thing. They perform really well because they have to. Why is that? Well, they don’t want to fall behind, but they’re also being treated by us, the teachers, like all the other students. They forget that they’re *not* supposed to be good at English.” Included and analyzed as one of the major plus

points of the push-in teaching strategies, it is significantly analyzed that the sense of being included in the mainstream education reciprocally ignites higher performance from the students, indicating the give-and-take relationship students feel having been included in the mainstream system, as signified by the works of Pundt, Beiter and Dolak (2007). Similar was observed to be affirmed by the response of teacher 3, “What you expect from students is often what you get,” said teacher 3. “It’s human nature. If you treat [an ELL student] like they’re just the same in terms of their English level, well, they catch up. It’s amazing to see.”

### **Success of Push-In: Experienced Teachers**

In relation to what is reflected through by the observation of the interview responses regarding experience of teachers being an influential factor in effective learning of the students, it was significantly observed that the more understanding teacher has with the student psyche, the more it is easy for customizing the teaching strategies with the needs of the students (Wilkins, 2012). “I think we have a core of teachers who are experienced and excellent at the push-in model, even if they have to get drafted into hybrid models,” said teacher 2. “Push-in gives these teachers a chance to sign.” Push-in models for teaching English to the learners in schools works best with the experience level of the teachers, as with experience teachers are competent for inculcating the same energy in their students. “Building on my sink-or-swim analogy,” said teacher 5, “that’s a system that works if there’s an experienced swimmer in the pool who can give you that confidence and extend a hand if needed. So I think that high expectations automatically need to be accompanied by experienced teaching. I can sit there in a room with you and

expect you to learn something and, although you'll probably feel good that I expect so much of you, the expectation is useless if I can't actually teach you."

### **Success of Push-In: Committed Parents**

Involvement of the parents and the role of their say in teaching strategies of their children is doubtlessly an important and pertinent part of what approach is adopted by the schools. It is significantly claimed by the schools and their administrations that in some cases it is often thought that the involvement of parents should be integrally involved in the decisional process of strategies for teaching. It is acclaimed due to the fact that there are some parents placing unsuitable demands on teachers for their children, while the teacher claims to know how to handle them (Souto-Manning and Swick, 2006). This skeptic view of teachers regarding the commitment of parents for having a say in their children's education is also reflected by what was stated by teacher 4, "Some of the immigrant parents are really on board with the push-in approach," said teacher 4. "They expect that their kids will be taught in English and not get special treatment. Maybe it's a cultural issue or that's just the kind of parents clustered in our district, I don't know."

Also, it is judgmentally analyzed from the interview responses that often, it is the pressure or demands of the parents which places children in perplexity about the educational strategies being implemented on them. "I've had kids who struggled a bit in the mainstream classroom and then, a few weeks later, they're really motivated. I ask them what happened and usually it's the parents who are reinforcing the necessity for push-in. The kids don't have room to feel sorry for them or get demotivated because the parents are so much in favor of push-in."

### **Teacher Consistency in Push-In: Grading Criteria**

Analyzed and extracted from the responses collected through interviews for this study, it is evaluated that one reason indicated by teachers about consistency in the ELL students' expectations is the constant strictness in maintaining the grading for the students. "I know there's a lot of pushback against grading these days, and I myself understand where the critics are coming from," said teacher 3. "However, grading is also about consistency. It keeps us honest about not only evaluating our students but also understanding where they are and where they need to go. One thing I've found with [ELL] students is that they respond well to grading. They respect the honesty of the process, even when it works against them. And they feel a real incentive to get out there and earn better grades. I really believe it's a cultural issue, as many of the [ELL] students I've had are Asian and they have not just a tremendous work ethic, but a belief in measurement."

Maintaining a constant set of grading criteria and benchmarks for the students is indicative to the students about their performances being evaluated on an unbiased, constant and objective way, which pertinently relates significantly with considerably better performance of the students which is also indicated as an effective method of teaching the English language (Harper and de Jong, 2009). "You have to be careful about giving what I call 'mercy grades,'" said teacher 5. "Yes, these students are coming from tougher circumstances, but coddling them is just going to lead to a loss of motivation. They know how well their peers are doing and they want to earn those same grades,

fairly. So I treat [ELL] students just the same, grade-wise, as any English as a first language student. And it works.”

“There’s absolute progress and relative progress,” said teacher 1. “I think that the [ELL] students and their parents know that, outside the bubble of school, they’ll be judged on absolute progress. It’s tough out there in this economy. So I think when you keep the grades consistent, you do everyone a favor by letting them know where they really stand and where they need to improve.” Also, maintaining an unvarying set of grading also keeps students and learners at comfort of being judged by the same yardstick with which they have made changes accordingly.

### **Teacher Consistency in Push-In: No Talking Down to Students**

“There’s that stereotype of talking louder to the foreign person, something I’ve seen all the time in movies and TV,” said teacher 10. “There’s a thin line between talking so you can be understood and, well, patronizing the [ELL] students. What I find is that, when I talk normally, I keep their attention more, and I think I send them a pretty respectful message, namely that they are able to understand what I’m saying.” Setting an unbiased learning environment and projecting favorably unprejudiced learning surroundings to the students imperatively impacts on their conducts and learning. Hence, equal treatment with all the students, whether they are learners of English language or not, is held significantly crucial for gaining trust of the students which in turn helps to maintain and reflect to the student about expectations placed upon them. Similar pattern is indicated in the book by Hill and Miller (2013) which discusses effective learning and teaching.

“Consistency of speech and articulation is part of high expectations,” said teacher 9. “If you find yourself doing what I call talking down to the [ELL] students, you’re telegraphing that you have low expectations for them. I keep my expectations consistent by talking in the same way with all students at all times.”

### **Teacher Consistency in Push-In: Maintaining the Curriculum**

“It’s not that we have a choice in the curriculum, but we do have a choice in how we teach it,” said teacher 4. “We can dilute it for the [ELL] students or we can keep teaching with high expectations. I teach with high expectations. I’ve never, ever been afraid of exposing the kids to challenging subject matter in a challenging way and expecting them to be able to learn it.” Literary review and analyses which support the significance and importance of curriculum indicate that for the same purposes as developing an enhancing predictable and equally favorable environment for the students learning English language as designated by Olson and Land (2007).

“Sometimes, when [ELL] students fall behind, there’s a temptation to alter the pace of teaching. However, that’s not necessarily a good fix. If someone’s falling behind, the answer isn’t just to slow down. It’s to diagnose what’s happening with that individual student. I find that keeping the pace of the curriculum altered but putting more effort into extra exercises and trying to find out how I can help the [ELL] student outside the classroom is usually the way to go, or at least in my experience.”



### **Failure of Hybrid Approaches: Bad Curricular Organization**

Implementing the strategies for enhanced learning of the students, it is invariably determined by the study findings of Park (2012) that adjustment of the children in particular educational setting or strategy is a time consuming action pertaining to the successful adjustment of the children. Hence, it is particularly ascertained through the analysis of the related researches and studies that one of the causes of letdown of hybrid model is the organization of planning various educational goals and functions. “Despite the best intentions, you can’t move a student back and forth between mainstream and sheltered classes without getting curricula mixed up,” reported teacher 9. “There are attempts at coordination, but it’s an impossible task.”

“I think that you could have an approach to hybrid teaching in which curricula were aligned,” said teacher 11. “It’s possible, but it’s very, very difficult to bring about in practice. The fact is, because there’s no predictable way of knowing when and why a certain student will be pulled out, there’s also no predictable way of structuring curricula to ensure that they are always aligned.” Reflecting on the responses of the interviews, it is invariably determined that a number of investigations in the educational field about effectiveness of educational plan assert that the curricula with which children are approached is pertinently required to be customized and planned accordingly (Uribe, 2013).

“The fact is, what’s appropriate for a sheltered curriculum isn’t necessarily going to fit with what’s in the mainstream curriculum,” said teacher 8. “I don’t think alignment

can be pulled off. You're going to have to have a seat-of-the-pants approach in these cases, no matter what the rhetoric about alignment is."

### **Failure of Hybrid Approaches: Teacher Coordination Problems**

"When you've got students coming in and out of mainstream classrooms back into and out of sheltered classrooms, you have a co-teaching situation, whether you acknowledge it or not" said teacher 4. "Co-teaching, to me, works best if you're in the same classroom and working with the same curriculum. You can't really co-teaching across classrooms, especially if one classroom is very different. That's why I think the hybrid method runs into so many coordination problems, despite our best attempts. We really sweat blood for our [ELL] students. So much of our success is not because, but in spite of, our hybrid model." The academic works and research endeavors by Kaleta, Skibba and Joosten (2007) also indicate about the extensive impotence of coordination among the teachers for the implementation of the educational strategies.

"We're already under time pressure and we're already trying to serve the needs of both mainstream and [ELL] students. Given all that, being able to coordinate very closely with another teacher in another classroom is naturally going to be a huge strain," said teacher 6.

### **Failure of Hybrid Approaches: Inconsistent Experiences for Students**

As particularly reflected by the quality of hybrid system of education, consistency is the most widely recognized drawback of this system. "What I see as a problem is the inconsistency of student experience," said teacher 12. "I understand the theory and the intentions behind hybrid, I really do, but these are kids, not theories. Stability is important

to them. Too much moving between classes can hurt them.” As also ascertained by Paredes (2010), the best integrated model of teaching English language to the students is particularly the one which induces consistency as viable feature of teaching. “I believe that the most progress they tend to make is when they’re in the mainstream class for long stretches of time, building on their strengths,” said teacher 7. “They need that stability.”

### **Summary of Hybrid Critiques**

Remarkably, there was unanimous consensus among the sample that the hybrid method was the least effective. Given that the hybrid model predominates at our school, it is of obvious importance to understand why teachers believed this model to be less effective. The hybrid model of learning amalgamates and integrates the traditional learning and the contemporary ones, which is ascertained by Washington (2009) as not suitable for the learning of English language learners, as they can gain more benefits from the realistic classroom settings than the online ones. The critiques of the hybrid method were wide-ranging, implicating curricula, teacher practice, and student experience. The hybrid method seemed to be critiqued for a number of independently, though possibly complementary, reasons. However, the majority of critiques could be reduced to a single theme, that of the difficult of achieving true coordination (whether coordination of the curricula or of the teachers themselves) via this method.

### **Teacher Expectations**

There were four themes that emerged in the analysis of how teachers maintained consistency in their expectations of themselves: Being held accountable by a PLC (cited by two teachers); being held accountable by standardized testing goals (cited by three

teachers); being held accountable by administrators (cited by five teachers); and holding themselves accountable through personal means (cited by three teachers). Each of these themes will be explored further in this section of the report.

### **The Role of PLCs**

In the role and context of the development of a learning community, most commonly known as the development of a professional learning community, it is ascertained that the classroom environment is enhanced, which in turn allows the instructor or the teacher to increase the span of his or her teaching abilities. These benefits of professional learning community are advantageous for the teachers' skills as they allow them to utilize what they have learnt from it and extensively implement it to cater the need of the students. Thus, according to DuFour (2004), PLC has proven to be of great advantages to the teaching faculty and is observed to be significantly in practice these days. PLCs are most generally regarded as a heterogeneous group of individuals from various walks of life, who have mutual and vested interest in the educational sector and its matters. These people mainly include teachers or their teams from the grade-levels, the people in administration of institutions and also the department staff belonging to high school (DuFour et al., 2010).

Besides these groups of people, a considerable number of people from the district school levels are also regarded to be the stakeholders of educational sectors, which significantly qualifies them for people having vested interests in the development and improvements of the educational matters and issues. Other beneficiaries of the

educational sector also include people employed in the national and state level professional organizations that are linked with the educational institutions.

From the initial stages of defining and outlining its functions, the model of professional learning communities is presumed to be holding the primary objective of imparting education which is effective for an influential learning of the students (DuFour et al., 2010). Therefore, these improvements in the educational strategies presented by the models of PLC were recorded to have massive influence on the ways in which schools performed. In comparison to the previously chartered missions of schools making learning common for all, it is rather judged that what practices or policies are observed to have boosted achievement of the students at higher levels; how such practices or strategic policies could be implemented in our schools and what kind of organizational goals are required to be set for implementing and evaluating the effective suggestions put forward by the PLC.

With effective considerations given to these questions or queries, it is ascertained that the school builds and develops upon an effective and a solid foundation for influential learning programs and institutions (Snider and Eliasson, 2009). However, it is quintessential that these effective strategies are taken up by the school staff as a whole; and that every professional working in the educational institution must bond with the strategies and planned policies. Communities such as PLC which are working for the betterment and enhancement of the educational programs claim that the schools which are to adopt these effective strategies and implement them accordingly should be operating on the basis of three crucial aspects. These three fundamental aspects of the

professional development should invariably be the driving force of the people in the PLC; including the goals of student learning, the process of evaluating and monitoring the performance of students, and also to have an understanding of how to respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning (Allen, 2002).

One scenario which is all too common in the traditional or customary schools is the situation which teachers face after teaching students for any particular subject area only realizing after that there are some students who do not master what was taught to them and the way teacher had set the desired learning threshold. Such cases pose serious dilemmas for the teachers, as they particularly want to help the students who lack in learning and provide extra hours for letting them catch up with the others. However, it is very likely that the teacher feels a strong pressure for furthering the course for the sake of ending it on time planned for the same purpose. Such conditions pose serious dilemmas for the teachers and they find themselves in a fix as both the courses of options available for them are beneficial as well as risky. The provision of extra hours to the students might be impacting the course timings and plans, while on the other hand, leaving the students who lacked in learning would also pose to be a drawback to the classroom learning.

In the traditional or customary schooling, it is indeed observed that the teachers are more independent in their choices of choosing the preferences for teaching strategies. The dilemma posited in such situations for the teachers inculcates in dissonance for their choices between the things they are supposed to perform as their primary commitments and the ones they are spontaneously required to perform in face of certain situations (Piccinni, 2012). The essential and crucial purposes of serving the students with a more

student-centric approach and catering to their learning needs, the PLC performs undoubtedly a predominant role in planning out customized and particular strategies.

The other related effective strategies are accounted for the advantageous strategies that include periodic and timely reporting to the students about their performance in the class or on numerous tests. These reports and grading results then help out the main purposes of serving the students with the strategies to constantly put in their participation towards improvement. Furthermore, PLCs also draw out plans for developing an all-inclusive approach to the learning and teaching of the students; thus, for the same purposes, senior students are also included in the process and they are utilized to be having an essential role in providing feedbacks to the students regarding their performance.

For the integral and essential purposes of development of a professional learning community, it is quintessential that all the people in the professional teaching community work with collaboration and alliance with each other. This collaboration and alliance among the professionals in the educational sector is essential for the exceptional learning of the all the students alike. In relation to the requirements of such needs of collaboration and alliance, it is certain that a cohesive structure would be needed for the strategies to be implemented in the most influential ways possible. On the contrary, it is still commonly observed that some schools and their administration act independently to the strategies suggested by the PLC. However, with the articulation of functions performed by PLC, it is observed that a collaborative environment is encouraged and shared practices with mutual interests are implemented. Professional learning communities are observed to be

characteristically known for developing and endorsing a system which imperatively encourages a collaborative environment which is distinctive for attuning higher levels of student learning.

“Being in the PLC is a means of being reminded, on a continuous basis, of what I need to do to be not just a good teacher, but an improving teacher,” said teacher 6. “Honestly, if I didn’t have the PLC, I think my expectations of myself could stagnate. My peers motivated me to do better.” In this context, Dufour (2011) explains how it is important to consider the relationship between teacher/student with the climate established by the teacher, empathetic relationship with their students, their ability to listen, reflect, and discuss the level of understanding of ourselves and the creation of bridges between your knowledge and theirs. Thus, the participation of students in class is very important because we will be expressing their knowledge, concerns, interests, desires and experiences of movement and can thus participate actively and critically in the construction and reconstruction of their culture movement and group in which he lives.

According to Dufour (2011), the teacher's role is to be the facilitator, seeking common understanding on the construction of shared knowledge process, which occurs only through interaction. The lesson must transform and provoke reflection about their own actions, their consequences for knowledge and educational activities. Dufour supports the idea that the teacher-student relationship is affected by the ideas that one has of the other and even mutual professional development plans between them. The teacher-



student interaction cannot be reduced to the cognitive process of knowledge construction, because it also involves the affective and motivational dimensions.

Dufour (2011) explained that in a professional learning community, the professor becomes a mentor, someone who follows and participates in the construction process and the new learning of the student in their education process. Thus, one can say that the teaching methods are the actions of the teacher in which they organize teaching and student activities to achieve goals of teaching in relation to a specific content. They regulate the forms of interaction between teaching and learning, being the teacher and the students, whose result is the conscious assimilation of knowledge and the development of cognitive and operational capabilities of the students.

### **Standardized Testing Goals**

Another important aspect observed in relation to the theme of teachers' accountability is the prime factors of standardized testing prevalent in the school settings. It is invariably observed and analyzed in the school environment that the facet of standardized testing conducted by the teachers is an essential part of holding them accountable for their roles and functions. Valli and Buese (2007) also endorse the importance of teacher accountability in relation to the role and importance of the standardized testing of students. "At the end of the day, all teachers have the tests in mind, regardless of what they say in public," says teacher 13. "We know how well our students do every year and I think we have to calibrate our expectations and efforts accordingly."

### **The Role of Administrators**

“The principal is a huge part of my maintaining consistent expectations for myself,” said teacher 9. “I get good, useful, constructive feedback quite frequently and so I always know where I’m doing well and what I need to improve. I’m able to adjust my expectations of myself as needed based on where I fit into the big picture of this school’s success, and the principal is the one who tells me about my role.” The emergence of this theme in relation to the responses obtained on the interviews is also endorsed and researched by a number of scholarly resources in the field of educational study. It is indubitably acclaimed that the administration of any school or institution is one of the key contributors in maintaining the accountability of the teachers or professionals working under it (Louis, Febey & Schroeder, 2005).

### **Personal Commitment**

In addition to the various facets of accountability of the teachers reflected and observed in the interview responses, personal commitment of the teachers was also indicated as an essential factor. The analyses of interview questions affirm that off all the accountability factors and facets, personal conscience about being willfully committed to one’s profession is also undeniably a pertinent factor. As indicated in the interview by teacher 7, “At the end of the day, you are the only one who can hold yourself accountable and consistent in your expectations.” “I surely benefit from the PLC and the principal, but I have to look in the mirror to hold myself accountable.” In relation to these indications in the interview responses, Parkay, Stanford and & Gougeon (2010) also talk about how becoming a teacher involves extensive emphasis on the personal commitment and pledge

to being responsible towards the effective learning of the students and being devoted to the profession.

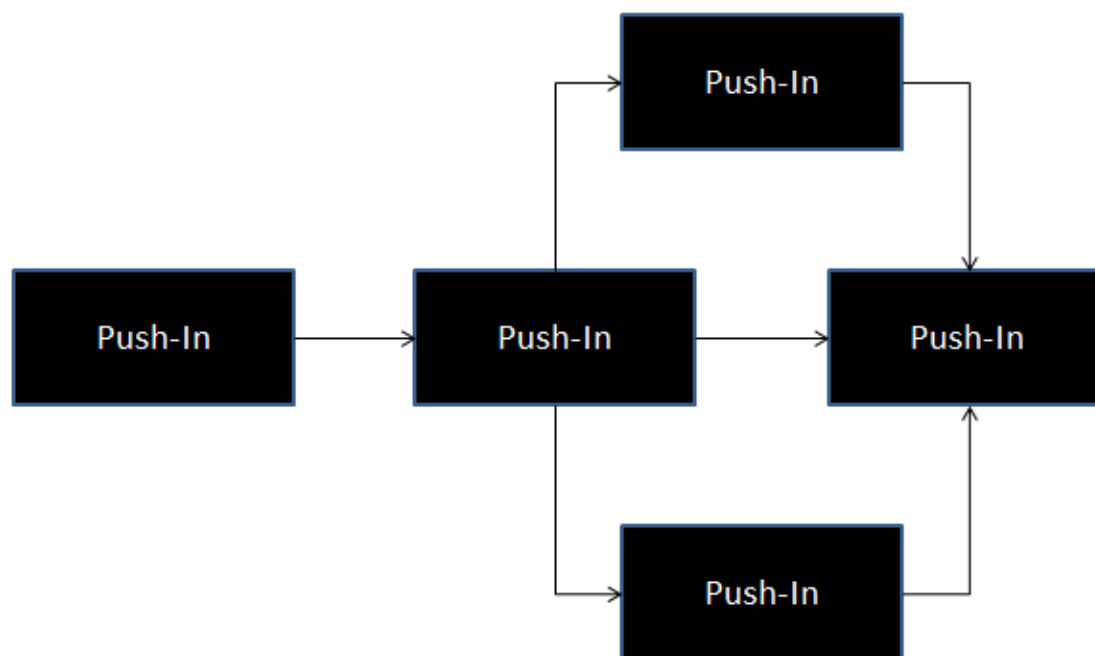
### **Findings in Relation to the Research Questions**

With respect to the first research question (How did the use of specific instructional models at the school over the past five years contribute, if at all, to ELL student success?), it was found that push-in was a successful model because of its more demanding nature, an effect noted in the literature (Goe et al., 2008). In terms of the second research question (How have teachers at the school maintained consistency in their expectations for students?), it was found that realistic grading; respectful communication, and maintaining the curriculum were the main drivers. There is support in the literature for demanding grading and non-diluted curricula as providing motivation for ELL students (Goldschmidt et al., 2011), especially when teachers are respectful of ELL students (AeJin, 2010). In terms of the third research question (How have teachers at the school maintained consistency in their expectations for themselves?), the answers highlighted the roles of personal integrity (AeJin, 2010), principal support (Gail, 2006), and PLC support (Gail, 2006), all of which have also been cited in the literature.

### **Conclusion**

In the wake of extensive and wide-ranging connotations of the analysis of responses provided by teachers in the interviews, the outcome evaluated in relation to them was utilized to develop a plan which would essentially be implemented for the betterment of English language learning of the learners. The outcome of the analyses of responses was significantly and most effectively utilized for careful development of the

plan with characteristic features required for bringing changes in the models for the English Language Learners according to what the teachers were assessed to have responded and relegate through their interviews. The Professional Development Plan (PD Plan) developed in the due process effectively related to the conduction of workshop and training of the teachers. The PD plan is notably indicated to be preceded by a comprehensive workshop and training of the teachers, as well as, the parents of the children; so that all the eminent figures having impacts on learning and language development of the children are brought on an equal plane and have an understanding about how their children are to be taught the English language. Based on these insights, a theoretical model (Figure 1) was generated and used to structure the project.



*Figure 1.* Visual summary of push-in success model.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

The essential outcome of this project study is a professional development plan titled “Push-in Strategy for English Language Learning Students: The Role of a Professional Learning Community,” which serves as a guide for structuring future ELL pedagogy and support activities. The PD plan will be used by the principal of the school as part of an outreach to the PLC dealing with ELL issues. In addition to the PD plan, the project outcome includes a plan for a parent and teacher interaction workshop where parents will be informed of the progress of their children.

#### **Description and Goals**

The goals of the current project, developed as a result of extensive evaluation of the current study, are importantly developed to be based upon a clear statement of what is expected of the program. The goals of the project are significantly the ones which relate and coincide with the ways in which evaluation of the involved people will be carried out. The primary goal aimed to be achieved through the implementation of this PD plan is succinctly concerned with the learning outcomes for the students. The primary goal of the PD plan is, “Increased and efficient English Language learning of the ELL Students”

As with any PD plan or effective program for bringing out betterment in the learning of the students, there are a number of related goals with the primary ones, known as secondary goals. As pointed out in the evaluation of the PD plan and how it is aimed to be gauging the end results, the secondary goals of the current PD plan include:

- Increased collaboration among the teaching and administrative staff for working towards the effective learning method or procedure for students
- Collaboration among the involved personnel including the PLC, teachers, and stakeholders
- Enhanced and effective parental understanding of the learning model or method being utilized for the English Language learning of their children

At this workshop, the teachers will also highlight the myriad challenges that ELL students face in the classroom and how their parents can help them to overcome them. This study generated knowledge to help the target school and other schools with increased teachers' capacity in selecting the most appropriate instructional strategy to ensure the academic, economic, and social success of English language learners, which is of increasing importance given their growing percentage among students in the United States.

Thus, the project informs the target school about best practices for ELL student pedagogy and curricula as revealed through qualitative interviews with teachers at a single school, and delivered in the form of a professional development plan for leaders at the target school. At the target school, there are four paradigms for ELL education: push-in, pull-out, hybrid push-in / pull-out, and consultative approaches. In order to design an ELL best practices PD plan for leaders at the target school, these instructional models were examined for their ability to improve teacher effectiveness in the five dimensions measured by Goe, Bell, and Little (2008), namely the dimensions of demanding behavior,

support of good behaviors and attitudes, efficiency in resource utilization, support of diversity, and collaboration with other teachers.

For the success and triumph of the PD plan, it is essential that the teachers and parents are briefed about what model is being adopted for them, how it would be implemented, and its details such as timeframe, effectiveness or ways of carrying out. Hence, lesson plans, in addition to the workshop with the parents, are suggested to be carried out. It is essentially important to brief the instructors about the PD plan, as it is vital for them to be included in the entire plan arranged for the learning of the students and their language development.

The PD plan will serve as the basis of 7 90-minute professional development sessions which will be essentially divided in varied tasks and operations to be carried out in relation to providing teachers some briefing about the plan. The sessions, which will be administered once a day, will be as follows:

- Introduction
- Using the PLC to Set High Expectations in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Benefit from Teacher Experience in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Improve Parent Commitment in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Good Curricular Organization and Maintenance in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Consistent Experiences for Students in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Consistent Grading in Push-In ELL Environments

These sessions will introduce teachers and administrators in attendance to the reasons that push-in were found to be more effective. The professional development sessions employed in the seminar will also be converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) and made available via the school's Web site to parents or any other interested parties. Specific lesson plans have been designed to properly convey the contents of the PD plan to teachers and administrators at the school.

### **Rationale**

The PD plan was specifically developed to leverage what was learned about the success of push-in models to inform PLC best practices. Thus, the PD plan was highly dependent on presenting findings about ELL teaching success, converting these findings into practical guidance for teachers and administrators, and inviting the PLC to implement and improve the push-in model. The use of distinct sessions was deemed to be a useful way of introducing the PLC to the content, rationale, and practical outcomes of the findings in relation to applying push-in models for the better of ELL students.

### **Review of the Literature**

The findings from the project were condensed into six discrete topic areas, namely:

- The importance of setting high expectations in push-in ELL environments
- The importance of teacher experience in push-in ELL environments
- The importance of parent commitment in push-in ELL environments
- The importance of good curricular organization and maintenance in push-in ELL environments



- The importance of maintaining consistent student experiences in push-in ELL environments
- The importance of ensuring consistent grading in push-in ELL environments

The proposed PD plan centers on the use of a PLC to address each of these topic areas. The purpose of this brief review of the literature is to relate how PLCs can facilitate, generate, or leverage high expectations, teacher experience, parent commitment, good curricular organization and maintenance, consistent student experiences, and consistent grading, resulting in an alignment between what was discovered in the research and what has been said in the literature about the power of PLCs to address these issues. Before addressing the individual areas, however, the overall relevance of PLCs to ELL student success will be explored.

### **The General Relevance of PLCs**

The scholarly literature on building capacity through professional development suggests that academic performance is the end result of an interaction between a variety of factors, including students' cognitive abilities, school climate, teacher support, curricular materials, parental support, and many other variables (Ng & Renshaw, 2008; Parkin & Beaujean, 2012). The literature on ELL teaching models specifically tends to acknowledge that no model is innately superior to another (McCartney et al., 2010; Rix et al., 2009). Rather, the success or failure of any model of ELL teaching is part of a much larger system (Abedi & Gandara, 2006; Proctor, 1984; Rix et al., 2009). The literature on ELL teaching suggests that teachers have made many different forms of pedagogy work (Long, 2008). Scholars have documented teacher success in pull-out, push-in, hybrid, and

consultative environments (Lapp & Fisher, 2010). The most appropriate conclusion to be drawn from these data is that the strengths and weaknesses of a specific model of ELL teaching are inextricably intertwined with the strengths and weaknesses of the larger system of education, including systems such as the PLC. As the PD plan addresses teachers, parents, and administrators separately, yet integrating these stakeholders into a single vision of student success, it represents a version of systems thinking designed for the PLC environment. It is pertinently supported through the large numbers of researches and studies that there are numerous genus and varieties of methods through which the teaching of ELL are conducted. Of the plethora of studies and researches conducted on the topic of teaching methods and their effective delivery, a number of studies contend that the teaching methods which are regarded as most favored methods of teaching are PD plans implemented within PLCs (Farrell, 2013).

The support for PD plans enacted within or augmented by PLCs being the most effective methods for the success of ELL students is provided by Keonghee Tao (2010), and Milnes and Liying (2008). These studies signify the importance of teaching ELL students with efficiently planned PD plans embedded in PLC contexts. They reflected these important factors through the methods of case studies, thus, providing an in-depth analysis of how the PD plans employing push-in strategies have succeeded with the ELL students. The same general observation has been made by scholars who have studied academic success within the pull-in, hybrid, and consultative environments (Reutzler et al., 2011; Rix et al., 2009). There does not appear to be a way to test the appropriateness of the models themselves, since there are so many other variables that can influence the

success or failure of a teaching method. These models include the commitment level, cognitive skills, and cultural sensitivity of teachers; the kinds and level of support provided by administrators; the supportive roles played by students' parents and communities; and many other factors (Proctor et al., 2005).

Systems theorists suggest that the very same model can have dramatically different results in two environments that are systemically different from each other, which is why the specific insights and actions of a PLC are especially important (Farrell et al., 2010; Goldschmidt et al., 2011). In this project, the insights and lessons are based on what was learned about a specific school context from specific teachers.

### **PLCs and High Expectations**

Despite the fact that high expectations of students are positively correlated with student success, some teachers do not set high expectations of students (Boaler & Staples, 2008). There are many reasons that teachers might fail to set these expectations (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Some teachers feel pessimistic about their student's abilities (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Others are not able to sustain high expectations (Boaler & Staples, 2008). Yet others succumb to an institutional culture in which students are not asked to achieve (Ladson-Billings, 2010). In each case, a PLC can be helpful in helping teachers set high expectations. Within PLCs, teachers who have high expectations of students can share how to set, maintain, and, if necessary, alter these expectations with teachers who have less experience in understanding the role of expectations (DuFour, 2004). PLCs also tend to advocate for student achievement and thus break down walls of institutional resistance to a culture of achievement (DuFour, 2004). Finally, by inviting experts, parents, and

others to speak, PLCs can help to create a mood of optimism and proactivity around setting expectations and achieving goals (DuFour, 2004). The current PLC does not have an explicit mandate around high expectations of students, but the literature suggests that such a mandate should be adopted.

### **PLCs and Teacher Experience**

ELL students and their rates in the schools of United States have been increasing (Linguanti & Cook, 2013). Traditionally, making students learn and gain proficiency in English language is the responsibility of the teacher in an inclusive system. Thus, the role of teacher is immensely important and holds a significant position in impacting or influencing the student performance. Teacher performance is typically the most popular variable to explain changes in student performance, even among systems theorists who acknowledge that teacher performance is part of a much larger model of student success. The empirical evidence for the influence of teacher performance in the language acquisition of the students is strong. In Boaler and Staples' (2008) study, students who were previously lagging their peers by 30% or more in mathematics standardized scores achieved parity with those peers after one to three years' of exposure to new, highly-related teachers. Other research, both quantitative and qualitative, has also indicated that teacher performance is the main determinant of student success, especially since it has been demonstrated that the mental capacity of students is the same across races, income levels, and genders (Axford, Harders, & Wise, 2009; Beck & McKeown, 2007; Cowen, Kazamias, & Unterhalter, 2009). One compelling example was furnished by Jaime Escalante, the mathematics teacher in Los Angeles whose largely Hispanic students

achieved some of the highest AP Calculus scores in the nation over a period of several years (Ng & Renshaw, 2008). These seminal studies highlighting the role of teachers in learning of the students pose significant implications for the language learning of the ELL students. Thus, due to the empirically proven association between variation in teaching quality, methods, and strategies is likely to be one of the most important predictor of students' learning of language.

Teacher performance has been demonstrated to be closely correlated with teacher experience, in particular (a) experience with a specific student population; and (b) experience with specific methodologies, content areas, and curricula (Axford et al., 2009). PLCs have been described as an experience multiplier in that, when less-experienced teachers interact and collaborate with teachers with more experience, they acquire experience by proxy (Beck & McKeown, 2007). In addition, within PLC frameworks, teachers with more experience can guide teachers with less experience towards making fewer mistakes (Beck & McKeown, 2007). In the context of the present development plan, pairing mainstream teachers with highly experienced ELL teachers is a means of improving the cumulative experience of all teachers who will interact with ELL students in a push-in environment. These findings from the literature support the more aggressive recruitment of ELL teachers for the PLC, as well as the possible pairing of highly experienced ELL teachers with less-experienced mainstream teachers.

### **PLCs and Parent Commitment**

Parental commitment is an extremely important predictor of student performance, especially the performance of ELL students (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Some

parents happen to be resistant to commitment (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). These parents can be encouraged to improve their commitment through the intervention of teachers and administrators (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Some PLCs have adopted a parent-facing strategy as part of their mandate (DuFour et al., 2010). In these PLCs, the experience of teachers and administrators who have particular expertise in reaching out to certain kinds of parents, such as the parents of ELL students, is particularly valuable (DuFour et al., 2010).

The current PLC at the target school is not parent-facing. However, many ELLs and administrators at the school have experience in reaching out to ELL parents, and this experience can and should be passed on to mainstream teachers who will be increasing the tempo and quality of their interactions with both ELL students and their parents. The literature (DuFour, 2004; DuFour et al., 2010) supports the proposed change to the PLC, and furnishes some specific recommendations that will be passed on to the PLC through the professional development lesson plan dealing with parents.

### **PLCs and Curricular Organization and Maintenance**

Curricula are an important focal point in the existing PLC. However, the existing PLC lacks input from a combination of mainstream and ELL teachers about how to best organize and maintain a curriculum in the context of teaching ELL students. Mainstream teachers who expect to work with a significant number of ELL students can, within PLCs, receive recommendations about supplemental or alternative curricular materials used by ELL teachers (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Mainstream teachers can also learn about how ELL teachers organize curricula in a manner likely to positively impact the

academic achievement of ELL students (Forlin et al., 2008). In the current PLC, the curricular focus is limited to the ELL context; however, as the literature indicates, the PLC should be expanded to include cross-curricular insights from both mainstream and ELL teachers.

### **PLCs and Consistent Student Experiences**

Providing consistent experiences can be a challenge when students are handled in more than one environment (such as in a hybrid environment) (Kaleta et al., 2007). However, providing consistent experiences is also a question of aligning all members of a school community behind the goal of ensuring that students know exactly what to expect in all phases of their academic experience (Kaleta et al., 2007). PLCs are venues for articulating and championing consistent experiences, as they provide a collaborative place in which various personnel can understand the school vision, understand what is happening in individual classrooms and communicate their own approaches (DuFour, 2004; DuFour et al., 2010; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). All of these activities assist in building a consistent student experience. In the context of the current PLC, consistency is limited, as there are not enough different kinds of stakeholders (in particular, mainstream teachers) in the PLC who can contribute. The proposed professional development has been tailored accordingly.

### **PLCs and Consistent Grading**

Grading can be a particularly difficult challenge for mainstream teachers who are asked to work with ELL students (Kapantzoglu et al., 2012). Lenient grading can backfire because of its signal of lower expectations, which in turn correlates with lower

achievement (Kapantzoglu et al., 2012). At the same time, punitive or overly strict grading can discourage an ELL student from continuing to work hard (Kapantzoglu et al., 2012). The challenge for mainstream teachers of ELL students is therefore to set a grading policy that is neither lenient nor overly strict, that is fair to non-ELL students while also recognizing some of the special limitations and motivational needs of ELL students (Kaleta et al., 2007). In this respect, both mainstream and ELL teachers can learn from each other, especially in the context of a PLC. Some PLCs are more empowered to discuss grades and set grading policies (DuFour & Marzano, 2011); while the current PLC does not have grading as a formal agenda item, the literature suggests that grading policies are likely to be improved if (a) multiple voices within the PLC help to identify the appropriate grading policy; and (b) the PLC is empowered to set grading policies, whether formally or informally. These two insights will be incorporated into the PD plan.

### **Summary of Evidence from Literature**

There are a number of points of consensus in the literature on PLCs. Scholars agree that PLCs are generally relevant to improving the quality of ELL teaching (Ng & Renshaw, 2008; Parkin & Beaujean, 2012), in particular by: helping to create, enact, and improve professional development relevant to teaching (Milnes & Liying, 2008); demonstrating how to set and maintain high expectations for students (Boaler & Staples, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2010); leveraging experienced teachers to pass on hard-won knowledge to teachers without as much experience (Axford et al., 2009); assisting individual teachers and entire schools to build and encourage parent commitment (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006); assisting individual teachers in learning how to provide



consistent experiences for ELL students (Kaleta et al., 2007); and setting a standard for consistent grading (Kapantzoglu et al., 2012). PLCs therefore have many contributions to make to individual and collective ELL teaching excellence.

### **Implementation**

Consideration and meticulous analyses of the development of the PD plan reveals a number of points of discussions for the careful implementation of the PD plan. The discussion of implementation of the PD plan will take place under four headings: potential resources and existing supports, potential barriers, proposal for implementation and timetable, and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. These aspects of implementation of the PD plan are specifically pointed out so that the PD plan is methodically introduced along with all the aspects of resources, barriers, scope and potentialities already covered.

#### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

The push-in model, which was nominated by many teachers as the most effective model, is already one of the models in use at the school. More of the teachers in the project had experience with the hybrid model than with any other model and had thus been exposed to push-in in one form or another. Therefore, it is considered that there is already a strong base of support for the push-in model at the school. The model is supported by both the administrators and the teaching staff. Of all the teachers interviewed for this project, only one withheld support from the push-in model. Based on the data contributed by the teachers, it seems as if ELL students are also thriving under the push-in model and can therefore be expected to support it. The PD plan will be used

by the principal of the school as part of an outreach to the PLC dealing with ELL issues, exploring the potential for moving to more of a push-in model on the district level (Mendez, 2013). There is thus strong institutional support for the use of a PLC to improve ELL outcomes associated with adoption and improvement of the push-in environment.

Concurrent use of the professional development plan by the principal and teachers aligns administrative and pedagogical resources; in other words, the professional development plan will help the principal direct resources to where they are needed, while teachers will be able to apply these resources to tried-and-true classroom approaches. The PD plan thus has the potential to promote coordination and close down some of the information gaps between the administration and the teaching staff.

### **Potential Barriers**

One of the barriers to implement the PD plan is that not all teachers would prefer to use the push-in model as opposed to the pull-out model. Another potential barrier is that the project might not be deemed to be representative of the majority of teachers at the school. The administration might prefer to see a stronger rationale for standardizing the use of push-in models, which could constitute a barrier. There are also logistical barriers in that moving the remainder of the ELL and subject matters to a push-in model will require close coordination and planning over the next several months, especially in the PLC context.

The PD plan provides a basic rationale for summoning the institutional will to challenging these barriers. Although there has been strong support for push-in models in

multiple layers of the school, the absence of empirical support for a push-in model, and how such a model can be facilitated or augmented by a PLC, has suppressed enthusiasm for engaging in change. Insofar as the professional development plan provides empirical support for change, it is likely to overcome both institutional and personal barriers to change. The proposal for implementation below contains a discussion of how to overcome potential barriers and how to make the most use of existing supports, all within a specific timetable.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

The PD plan will be released to the school in December, 2014, in time for the 2015-2016 school year. The recipient of PD plan will be the school principal, who will disseminate the PD plan to the school's PLC tasked with ELL matters, individual teachers, parents, and possibly to other stakeholders (DuFour, 2004). The stated goal of the principal is to use 2015-2016 to explore the feasibility of moving to more of a push-in than a hybrid ELL teaching model; the PD plan will be used as evidence for supporting this move and also as a means of providing specific guidance for PLC members to support this strategy (Mendez, 2013).

However, since other ELL models might remain in place, the main focus of the PD plan is to present guidelines that can be implemented in support of any ELL teaching model, even though these guidelines are likely to work best in a push-in setting. For example, the idea of creating challenging environments, while often associated with push-in (Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007), has been discussed generically in the literature (Babad et al., 1982; Ladson-Billings, 2010) as a means of improving the performance of

all students. While the study supported the adoption of a push-in model, the PD plan's guidance to teachers, administrators, and parents will draw upon the existing scholarly literature to explain how to create an academically challenging environment, regardless of whether push-in is adopted.

The study's findings support a process change in the direction of push-in. Having already expressed a desire to move in the direction of push-in, the principal sought empirical support for this strategy in the form of the PD plan. The PD plan is valuable in this context because it provides data analysis that supports the use of push-in; these data will be used to train teachers in emerging best practices for push-in pedagogy and to serve as the basis for PLC discussions. The PD plan contains guidance that can be applied generically in any learning environment, so that it remains a viable source of guidance even if the school moves away from a push-in dominant model (Mendez, 2013).

One of the main insights that emerged from the interviews was that the quantity and quality of interaction between the ELL teacher and the subject-matter teachers are extremely important. These relationships help teachers by aligning their approaches and also help students by ensuring that they receive the focused and relevant attention of two different kinds of teachers. The second main insight is that teachers find regularity and repeatability to be highly important. To the extent that teachers experience fluctuations in schedules or are not able to keep working with students in predictable way, both teacher pedagogy and student achievement suffer. These insights can be used to guide the implementation proposal. Specifically, the first step administrators should take is to retain existing partnerships between ELL and subject matter teachers and also work to pair off

ELL and subject matter teachers who do not currently participate in push-in classrooms. This pairing can be achieved in the first months of the 2014-2015 school years, once teachers return to the classroom, and should be completed before January 1, 2015. Next, administrators should include ELL and subject matter teachers who will be implementing the push-in model, creating a structure to ensure that the quantity and quality of the interactions between these two kinds of teachers will be high. New ELL and subject matter teachers should be included in the PLC no later than the end of winter break and the beginning of the final semester of instruction in the 2015-2016 school year (Calderhead, Denicolo, & Day, 2012).

The administrators need to work especially hard to demonstrate the value of the push-in model to those teachers who remain skeptical. It should be emphasized that, within the context of the school, the push-in model has been the most frequently-used model during the same time period that the school has seen its largest increase in ELL student performance on standardized tests. Therefore, there are good empirical reasons to choose this model, and both ELLs and general education teachers are likely to respond well to the message that the use of the push-in model is associated with increased student success. Some of the teachers who participated in this project, and who have good firsthand knowledge of how and why the push-in model has worked with ELL student populations, would be excellent contributors to PLC discussions about the usefulness of the push-in model. As such, both administrators and teachers should make the case for push-in adoption without portraying the decision to standardize on this model as a top-down mandate. Rather, the administration should emphasize that the pull-out model is

being retained for use when teachers have variable schedules and when ELL students need specialized attention. Some of the resistance to push-in adoption should be defused as teachers who support the pull-out model realize that pull-out is not being abandoned, but retained for use in specific circumstances (Calderhead et al., 2012).

Throughout the first half of the 2015 calendar year, the school would have to consider questions of curricular alignment at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school years. Data collected during this study revealed that the push-in model works best when teachers are highly coordinated; accordingly, the final stage of implementation will require the school to make preparations to ensure that the ELL and subject matter teachers who are about to begin using the push-in method at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year will be working with the same curricula and abiding by the same timelines as the teachers who are currently working with the push-in model.

Again, however, these aspects of implementation do not necessarily presume that push-in will be adopted. Because the principal has informed me that push-in will likely be the main model of ELL instruction in the near future, it is necessary to explain how the professional development plan can help support this specific process change. However, at heart, the professional development plan is a compendium of best practices for improving the ability of teachers, parents, and administrators to support the academic success of ELL students, regardless of the teaching environment that is in use. Even if push-in is not implemented in the manner that has been anticipated, the professional development plan will still have value for its detailed guidance to all stakeholders about how to support the ELL at the school, based on the study results as well as a review of literature.

### **Project Evaluation**

The PD plan will be effective to the extent that (a) teachers decide to embrace and dedicate themselves to student success, whether primarily through the push-in model or other means; (b) parents understand and carry out the student support actions suggested for them in the PD plan; and (c) administrators understand and carry out the teacher and parent support actions suggested for them in the PD plan. Although it is highly likely that the push-in model will be mandated, what is truly required from teachers is not simple obedience to the mandate but rather active participation, both on their own and within the PLC, to ensure its success. There is an important difference between compliance and enthusiastic dedication, and it is hoped that the PD plan will spark the latter quality in teachers. To determine whether the PD plan has had this effect, it will be necessary to continue to monitor the discussion within the PLC and also the individual discussions between teachers and principals. There can be no simple quantitative benchmark to indicate that the PD plan is helping to build a strong emotional and professional commitment to push-in; the principal and other key stakeholders will have to monitor the tone and content of teacher feedback to (a) measure the emergence of a genuine and passionate commitment to push-in (as opposed to mere compliance to push-in) and (b) track what role teachers ascribe to PD plan in the formation of their own ideas about push-in. To the extent that a genuine and passionate commitment emerges, and that the PD plan is cited as one of the reasons for this commitment, the PD plan can be said to have been successful.

The target site has observed a marked increase in the academic performance of ELL students. If the implementation recommendations are accepted, the most appropriate form of practical evaluation would be the continued implementation of the teaching model or characteristic found to be the most effective. This has to be done to keep up the trend of ensuring ongoing performance improvement of the students. The most pressing goal at the target site is to ensure that students continue to learn, and the surest indication of ongoing learning improvement lies in the use of standardized tests. What is not clear, however, is how close the school is to its ELL performance ceiling. If there is indeed more that the school and individual teachers can do on the pedagogical front, then it is likely that the performance improvements detected so far will continue. On the other hand, it is also possible that the school will maintain its current level of academic performance. Without further observation, it is not clear whether the school should set an arbitrary performance standard (such as, for example, 90% meet or exceed in a particular test area), be satisfied with the current level of academic performance, or choose relative improvement as a benchmark of progress.

Given that more data are needed, the recommendation I would make at this point will focus on relative improvement. The school ought to look for continued improvement in students' scores as the push-in model is more widely adopted across the school. However, there will be some statistical problems created by the fact that the older student performance data (from the era when the state was not exempt from No Child Left Behind testing) will have to be made comparable with the new state standardized tests. Ordinarily, state testing boards provide some index of comparability between older and



newer test scores. It is recommended that a statistical consultant be hired in order to facilitate the conversion of older scores to newer scores, measure whether the changes from old to new are significant, and use linear regression or some other statistical procedure to determine whether observed improvements in the new scores—over the next several years—are statistically significant.

Once these resources are deployed, then the school should seek continuous improvement for at least the next 3-5 years; after this time period, it is likely that ELL performance levels will be considerably higher than state norms, and success could be measured by ensuring that levels remain high.

A formative assessment of the PD plan will be obtained by requesting teacher and administrator feedback on the results, analytical strategies, and data of the PD plan. This stage of assessment might lead to the determination to create another PD plan, one with input from more teachers or administrators. A summative assessment of the PD plan can be performed by noting the extent to which the school modifies its approach to ELL instruction going forward. The promotion of the push-in model would indicate that the PD plan was successful in its goal of highlighting why teachers considered this approach superior to the other ELL teaching models at the school.

### **Implications Including Social Change**

#### **Local Community**

ELL students at the target school are at the beginning of what will hopefully be long, productive lives in which they achieve some measure of success and are also able to give back to their communities. This project addresses an important aspect of

investigating the success of students; while disclosing important information to the stakeholders and involved personnel about the needs of ELL students at the target school by not only identifying why the push-in model is favored by teachers but also how to (a) ensure that the push-in model keeps yielding the desired results and (b) give teachers who prefer the pull-in method the kind of insight needed to derive good results from that model as well. By identifying not only what model worked, but also why the model worked and how to implement specific best practices in support of the model, the project furnished teachers, administrators, and parents with knowledge of how to best support ELLs in the school environment. Achieving this kind of rich, deep insight will help the school as a whole keep improving ELL student performance. Heightened ELL performance will be a benefit to the families of such students, many of whom are immigrants and who are deeply invested, both emotionally and financially, in the success of their children. Given that student success is highly correlated with individual students' ability to earn well, function as good citizens, and give back to their communities, any contribution to improving the performance of such students is meaningful for many stakeholders.

### **Far-Reaching**

In a larger context, the kind of information presented and modeled in both the study and the project can guide other schools about how to improve ELL education. Dissemination of this knowledge could result in academic and social benefits in many parts of the United States. Parts of the country with high concentrations of ELL students might especially benefit from the findings of the study and the contents of the project.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to interview teachers at the target school about their impressions of the relative strengths and weaknesses of ELL delivery models, and related curricular and pedagogical topics, in a manner that would result in the generation of evidence-based best practices for the target school. Since teachers were the most intimately acquainted with the ELL delivery models and their strengths and weaknesses, gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing teachers' viewpoints was an appropriate way of generating insights for school leaders in search of a school-wide ELL strategy. The goal of the project was to turn the findings of the study (which I characterized as 'knowledge that') into a PD plan (which can be understood as 'knowledge how'). The study thus provided justification and a basic structure for the PD plan, which will consist of specific implementation guidance targeted to teachers, parents, and administrators; this guidance will be based on an analysis and synthesis of the appropriate literature.

Next, a discussion of implementation was provided, including a recommendation for how the school ought to support the push-in model while supporting the pull-out model in more targeted instances. This recommendation synthesized findings from the project as well as from the literature to offer the principal specific guidance about the transition to a push-in-dominant model. Although the PD plan will be written to be generally useful, the assumption underlying the project is that there will be a strong move towards push-in, a move that needs to be both justified and supported (in terms of specific guidance for teachers, parents, and administrators). Subsequently, potential resources and existing supports, potential barriers, a proposal for implementation and timetable, and

roles and responsibilities of stakeholders vis-à-vis the implementation were presented.

Finally, the implications of the project were discussed, emphasizing the positive kinds of social change that can be achieved from further improving the performance of ELL students at the target site. The next section of the study will provide reflections and conclusions related to the project.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the final section of the study is to (a) offer an overview of the strengths and limitations of the project in addressing the identified problem; (b) propose recommendations for ways in which the problem can be addressed differently than it has addressed historically; (c) describe what was learned about scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change; (d) describe self-development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer; (e) provide an overall reflection on the importance of the work and what was learned; and (f) discuss implications, applications, and directions for future research.

### **Project Strengths**

The main strength of the project is that the data were derived from interviews with teachers. As Babad et al. (1982) argued, teachers who believe in what they are doing, both pedagogically and in terms of classroom management and other administrative matters, tend to transmit more enthusiasm and support to students. Oftentimes, teachers are asked to teach curricula, adopt pedagogies, and otherwise align themselves with educational practices with which they are not in agreement (AeJin, 2010; Demaris & Kritsonis, 2011). Accordingly, the identification of a particular pedagogy that has wise support among teachers has important implications for the academic success of students. First, it is likely that such pedagogy is objectively more aligned with student success—since teachers have a keen understanding of how and why student success is associated with certain pedagogical approaches (Goldschmidt et al., 2011). Second, even if a

teacher-preferred pedagogy is not objectively preferable to pedagogy, the mere fact of teacher belief in, and enthusiasm for, such pedagogy can translate into classroom success if that pedagogy is adopted.

With this background in mind, the primary strength of the project was the generation of insights that were based directly on teacher experiences, emotions, and cognitions about ELL pedagogy. These insights not only affirmed the importance of push-in pedagogy among teachers but also provided a foundation for understanding why this pedagogy was so widely and passionately embraced by the teaching corps. Since teachers were asked a wide range of questions about why they preferred push-in, and about why push-in worked in both classroom and community contexts, the study contained rich explorations of reasons for push-in success that can be appropriately applied both in the collaborative context of the PLC and in individual teacher's classrooms.

### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

One of the limitations of the project was that the insights of other key stakeholders—in particular, students, parents, and senior administrators—were not included. Triangulation can be an important means of improving the quality of any research study (Creswell, 2012), and in this study the identification of push-in as a superior pedagogy might have been justified had students, parents, and administrators also praised this approach. While it is true that teachers are the stakeholders who are likely in the best position to critique and recommend particular pedagogical approaches, it is also the case that students, parents, and administrators possess important perspectives that are worthy of being collected and analyzed.

Another limitation of the project was that, as a qualitative case study, it was less likely to lead to generalizable conclusions about ELL teacher opinions. Although it is possible for the conclusions of case studies to generalize, in practice generalizations from case study data are not common (Yin, 2009). It is possible that the viewpoints of the interviewed teachers, the circumstances of the research site, or both were highly idiosyncratic and therefore the conclusions cannot be held to extend to other school settings. Scholars have pointed out that variability from school to school can be extreme, even when schools are in the same district or otherwise appear to share some characteristics with each other (Sargazi & McClelland, 2010). Because the situations of individual schools are unique, results from a case study should not necessarily be construed as applying to other contexts; the project's findings were therefore limited.

An additional limitation of the project was that it was based on a cross-sectional approach to data gathering. It is possible that the teachers in the sample happened to be particularly enthusiastic about push-in at this moment in time, but that at some future time they might come to prefer another model. Had the study been longitudinal in nature, there would have been more of a basis on which to believe that the teachers' viewpoints genuinely represented their considered and time-validated opinions rather than their current and contingent understanding of best practices.

A final limitation of the project was that it lacked methodological triangulation. Data were collected solely through interviews and not through additional means such as examination of teacher diaries or gathering oral narratives from students or parents. The

absence of more than one source of data can limit the richness of academic insights generated in an empirical study (Creswell, 2012).

The problem identified by the study was that the reason for ELL student performance in standardized testing was not understood, making it difficult for the local school that was the research site to be able to consciously identify and continue specific strategies associated with ELL student success. The approach taken in the project was to approach the problem qualitatively and from the perspective of teachers, in an attempt to determine the links—if any—between pedagogical approach and ELL student success. Other approaches to the problem were also possible. One such approach might have included a quantitative analysis of changes in student performance over time. It is possible that student performance was dependent not on factors such as pedagogical approach but on factors depending on the students themselves; for example, if there had been a high level of variability in the linguistic background of the students, then the variable of home language might have been more important than the variable of pedagogical approach in explaining the dependent variable of ELL students' academic success. In the absence of a quantitative approach to the problem, it was not possible to ascribe a specific level of explanatory importance to the variable of pedagogical approach. While such a quantitative approach could have helped to isolate the importance of pedagogical approach, it is also the case that time-based statistical models typically often need to include years of data to be valid (Creswell, 2012). Consequently, quantitative and statistical approaches might be less powerful than qualitative approaches



in terms of understanding and analyzing short-term, rapidly unfolding changes in academic performance.

An alternate approach to the problem that is still rooted in qualitative analysis would have involved soliciting data from stakeholders other than teachers, including students, parents, and administrators. It is possible that speaking to students and parents—especially if students were sampled longitudinally, such that some former as well as current students were included—could reveal variations in the student body’s characteristics that could cast light on the reasons for changes in academic performance over time. Administrators, too, have a perspective that in some respects goes beyond that of teachers, as administrators are aware of the full impact of factors such as budgets, leadership issues, and so forth, of which teachers might not be aware.

### **Scholarship**

In scholarly terms, the project was important in terms of (a) serving as a form of empirical support for the research site’s decision to move to a push-in model and (b) contributing to the ongoing academic debate about how and why certain ELL pedagogies might be more effective than others. The project involved collecting and analyzing teachers’ insights into ELL pedagogy, insights that represented decades of cumulative experience. Even if it is granted that the interviewed teachers’ preference for push-in models reflects local circumstances and does not constitute a general validation of this pedagogical approach, the project still gathered a meaningful spectrum of insights as to how and why the push-in models works well locally. Such insights can be used as a starting point to explore ELL pedagogies in other school settings, for example as thematic

clusters or inspirations for interview questions. Thus, the study's generation of themes has methodological importance even if the themes are not replicated in future data analyses of push-in pedagogy.

The insight dealing with high expectations was particularly important. The teachers in the study indicated that the push-in model is effective largely because of the high expectations that this model places on students. In American education, as in American society in general, there is an ongoing and highly contentious debate about whether policies should encourage a race to the top or accommodate the circumstances of the people at the bottom of the social system. When educational expectations are too high, the danger is of ushering in a form of social Darwinism in which too many students are left behind. What fails in such a model is the goal of equity; the model might be efficient in terms of identifying and rewarding excellence, but it might be inequitable because of its inability to serve the students who are not, for whatever reason, high achievers. On the other hand, it is possible to promote equity at the expense of efficiency. If we create school systems in which all students are treated equally and promoted regardless of achievement, then we have created an equitable system, but we sacrifice efficiency—since education of this sort would fail to identify and reward the high achievers that society surely requires. What is needed, then, is a balance of equity and efficiency. The push-in ELL model might represent a compromise of precisely these qualities, since the high expectations placed on ELL students in mainstream classrooms are accompanied by a supportive educational ecosystem, including caring teachers and caring parents. Thus, as long as high expectations are matched by high support, it seems

that the ordinarily contradictory goals of equity and efficiency might be achievable in a single pedagogical model. If so, then the results of the study might be important for their support of a high-expectation, high-support approach to American education in general.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

One of the temptations of leadership is to use the power of the leadership position to, as it was, load the deck in favor of the outcome preferred by the leader. For example, in this project, limiting the evaluation criteria to the percentage of pushed-in students would have been an example of bad leadership. It is certainly the case that, if the school passes a push-in mandate, then the vast majority of ELL students will find themselves in mainstream classes. Limiting the evaluation criteria to this outcome is an evasion of leadership responsibility; the leader should be interested not only in the final outcome but also in the attitudes and processes that underlie that outcome. Personally, I feel that the move to push-in would be a failure if it were disliked by a majority of teachers, regardless of how many students were placed into mainstream classrooms as a consequence. A leader should be willing to acknowledge these kinds of qualitative failure possibilities, even if these kinds of failure don't (at least on paper) matter as much as simply pushing an initiative through.

### **Leadership and Change**

In terms of change management and leadership, I also learned a great deal in making specific recommendations about the structuring of ELL programs. In my recommendations, I suggested that pull-out, hybrid, and consultative ELL delivery models should be allowed to persist where there is a specific demonstrated need for them.

Even though administrative leaders might commit fully to a specific model of ELL teaching, there should be some acknowledgement that there is room for additional models and approaches, as long as they are justified. Leaders should make some attempt to include other paradigms and perspectives.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

Completing this project exposed me to many new scholarly concepts and insights. Until conducting the literature review, I had never considered the possibility that academic success was the endpoint of an entire system of inputs, including the inputs of student ability, parental involvement, community values, school climate, teacher attitudes, and pedagogical approach. After completing the literature review, I became aware of the importance of each of these variables and also gained an understanding of how the variables interact with each other (for example, in Proctor, 1984's model as cited in Proctor et al., 2005). I was able to transfer this knowledge to project development, as I used my newly acquired insights about the roots of academic success to design questions for ELL teachers. Because the nature of the project was closely connected to the questions I decided to ask teachers, there was alignment between what I learned about the nature of academic achievement and what I learned about structuring research.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

I learned that, as a practitioner, I am data-driven. While I have my own idiosyncratic approaches and long-held beliefs about the best means of teaching ELLs, I came to understand how I can benefit from understanding and implementing best practices that have worked for many other teachers. While I would not subject my overall

philosophy of practice to change, I did realize that I was more open than I thought to the adoption of evidence-based best practices.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

The task of project development was relatively simple given the facts that (a) the school was already having a discussion of ELL teaching approaches and (b) the principal was promoting a push-in model. The main purpose and contours of the project were, in this sense, already decided for me. However, I had to spend considerable time and effort thinking about how to apply project evaluation. At first, I thought of evaluation in strictly quantitative terms, including metrics such as (a) percentage of students in push-in environments and (b) pushed-in ELL students' academic testing scores. During the course of the project, I came to consider other aspects of evaluation, including qualitative aspects such as teachers' attitudes to push-in and the degree of enthusiasm with which push-in would be greeted by the PLC for ELL teachers (Calderhead et al., 2012). What I learned about project evaluation is that there ought to be a mix of both quantitative and qualitative indicators; quantitative indicators are good for creating empirical basis for evaluation and decision-making while qualitative indicators are also good for offering diagnostic insights into how, why, and when change is actually taking place as a result of the program. Something else I learned was that project evaluation should be designed with a critical mindset, such that the evaluation metrics are not cherry-picked to include metrics that the researcher expects to improve as part of the project. To me, the absence of cherry-picked evaluation metrics is also a component of leadership (whether considered as academic leadership or school leadership).

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

The project has many potential impacts on social change. To begin with, improving the academic outcomes of ELLs at the target school can improve social outcomes related to unemployment, truancy, and underemployment in the local area. ELLs who do better as a result of the PLC and its adoption of push-in best practices are more likely to be employed, productive, and law-abiding.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

There are a number of directions that future research on the effectiveness of specific ELL teaching paradigms can take. First, as noted in the foregoing discussion of the study's limitations, it should be acknowledged that academic success can be understood from a systems perspective (Cowen et al., 2009; Proctor et al., 2005) that in turn requires gathering data from multiple stakeholders, including students, parents, and administrators. Much of the literature on the topic of ELL pedagogy has been conducted from the perspectives of, or drawing data, only one set of stakeholders, typically teachers (see for example Hutchinson & Hadjioannou, 2011) or students (Long, 2008). Future scholars could add significantly to the body of knowledge on ELL teaching success by taking a systems view in which insights from as many different kinds of stakeholders as possible were solicited and included.

Another recommendation is for future scholars to take a more longitudinal approach to the problem. Oftentimes, ELL teaching success has been studied in a cross-sectional manner, with scholars gathering data at a single point in time in order to understand the roots of student performance (see for example Lopez, 2011; McCartney et

al., 2010; McNicoll & Jang Ho, 2011). Only a few studies (such as that of Boaler & Staples, 2008) have taken a truly longitudinal approach to understanding the process of successful teaching and learning practices. Boaler and Staples conducted their research over a period of two years; the conclusions drawn from such a longitudinal study are likely to cast more light on the problem of academic underperformance and teaching best practices than a cross-sectional study could have done.

Future scholars can also fill gaps in the existing body of knowledge by implementing more sophisticated forms of statistical analysis, especially in conjunction with both systems-based and longitudinal approaches. Some forms of statistical analysis, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), are associated with the ability to test not merely for correlation but causation (Creswell, 2012). Scholars working with sophisticated statistical models of this kind might be able to uncover new knowledge about the ways in which the academic performance of ELL develops over time. For example, Proctor's (1984) systems model of academic performance appears to be particularly amenable to SEM, since there are many distinct independent variables that are held to not only influence the dependent variable of academic performance but also to interact amongst each other (Proctor et al., 2005). Thus, the use of SEM might make it possible to quantify the contribution of distinct independent variables (such as good teaching practices, curricula, pedagogical approaches, administrative support, school climate, etc.) to the dependent variable of ELL student success and to model how the various independent variables interact with each other, as in the Proctor model of academic performance. Indeed, because SEM is capable of generating visual models of

variable relationships, it would be particularly suited to testing complex academic performance theories such as those of Proctor.

There is also an important role for statistical analysis to play in understanding similarities and differences between schools. Sargazi and McClelland (2010) pointed out that, because the situations of individual schools are unique, there is a need for case studies that focus on individual cases. However, policy-makers require insights and solutions that go beyond individual case studies; decision-makers at this level would be better served by statistical analyses that draw upon data from hundreds of schools in order to reach generalizable conclusions about what kinds of ELL work, under what circumstances, and why. While case studies can empower policy-makers at the local level to make decisions to improve the performance of individual schools and school districts, it is unlikely that data of this kind will be useful to senior policy-makers who are in search of solutions to apply to entire cities, states, and countries. There is thus an important role that can be played by scholars who are capable of assembling large samples and employing sophisticated statistical techniques to reach conclusions at the regional or even national level. These scholars could provide an evidence-based validation of ELL teaching policies that could be broadly adopted across the United States.

### **Conclusion**

The final section of the study (a) offered an overview of the strengths and limitations of the project in addressing the identified problem; (b) proposed recommendations for ways in which the problem can be addressed differently than it has



addressed historically; (c) described what was learned about scholarship, project development and evaluation, and leadership and change; (d) described self-development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer; (e) provided an overall reflection on the importance of the work and what was learned; and (f) discussed implications, applications, and directions for future research. The actual PD Plan, which was the main outcome of the study, is presented in Appendix A.

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## Appendix A: Project Professional Development Plan

### **Conception of the Project**

This Professional Development Plan (PDP) was conceived as the result of research into a school with several English language learners (ELLs). This research demonstrated that the push-in paradigm is most appropriate for ELLs, as this paradigm supports a number pillars of ELL student achievement, that, according to the literature, benefit from being incorporated into a professional learning community (PLC):

- Setting high expectations
- Leveraging teacher experience
- Building parent commitment
- Facilitating good curricular organization and maintenance
- Facilitating consistent student experiences
- Ensuring consistent grading

Each of these predictors of student success has been incorporated into a lesson plan to be administered to ELL-relevant PLC members.

### **Introduction**

The PDP is developed and formulated in alignment with the needs of the teachers and the way they have to be prepared to deal with the ELL students in an inclusive education system and in the context of a PLC devoted to the needs and challenges of ELL students. This PDP exclusively explains the purpose of the plan, its goals, timeline, activities, and instructional strategies for the teachers to adopt. Moreover, the draft also includes components of the plan which is essential for the stakeholders and targeted

population to know, so that they are able to know about the plan, its implementation, and the ways in which evaluation will be carried out.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of the plan is to provide instruction to ELL-facing PLC members in guidance related to the following topics:

- Using the PLC to Set High Expectations in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Benefit from Teacher Experience in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Improve Parent Commitment in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Good Curricular Organization and Maintenance in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Consistent Experiences for Students in Push-In ELL Environments
- Using the PLC to Ensure Consistent Grading in Push-In ELL Environments

### **Activities and Components of the Plan**

The following tables indicate the content and format for each of the seven sessions that make up the PDP. These sessions are the foundation of an ongoing PLC about ELL teaching and learning.



Table A1

## Session 1 Overview

Lesson Title	“Why Push-In Works”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Push-in, pull-out, hybrid teaching, teacher expectations, consistency, professional learning community
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: 1. The reasons why push-in is the most appropriate form of ELL pedagogy for the school Insights into push-in best practices
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss school performance improvements</li> <li>• Relate improvement to push-in</li> <li>• Define push-in</li> <li>• Define other kinds of ELL pedagogy</li> <li>• Explain the theoretical bases of push-in</li> <li>• Present results from findings</li> <li>• Provide appropriate guidance to all stakeholders</li> <li>• Reach conclusions about ELL pedagogy at our school</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to our school’s improvement in grade 5 CRCT standards from 2007 to 2011.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to our school’s improvement in grade 5 writing standards from 2007 to 2011.</li> <li>• Explain connections between school improvement in grade 5 CRCT standards and increasing use of push-in.</li> <li>• Explain the connection between school improvement in grade 5 writing standards and increasing use of push-in.</li> <li>• Introduce push-in. Introduce the three major approaches to ELL that have been used at the school.</li> <li>• Explain the ways in which the effectiveness of push-in has been validated in the literature.</li> <li>• Explain push-in as an effective and widely used model.</li> <li>• Explain the respective roles of teachers and administrators in the push-in setting.</li> <li>• Offer examples of teacher and administrator best practices in the push-in setting.</li> <li>• Explain the role of parents in the push-in setting.</li> <li>• Establish the importance of PLC in strengthening teachers in the push-in context.</li> <li>• Emphasize the different ways in teachers can be accountable to their students. Provide ad lib examples of each bullet point.</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson with a call to action that sums up the main themes of the PDP.
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

Table A2

## Session 2 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using the PLC to Set High Expectations”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Setting and maintaining high expectations of ELL students
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: 1. The theory of expectation as ‘warm demanding’ (Ladson-Billings, 2008) How to articulate, maintain, and improve expectations for ELL students in mainstream environments
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss Ladson-Billings’ (2010) theory of warm demanding</li> <li>• Explain what high expectations are</li> <li>• Explain why high expectations correlate positively with student achievement</li> <li>• Explain how to combine a warm orientation with a demanding orientation</li> <li>• Explain special considerations in setting expectations for ELL students</li> <li>• Explain how ELL and mainstream teachers can cooperate with PLC to set appropriate expectations for ELL students</li> <li>• Explain role of principal in supporting a culture of high expectation, both in the school in general and within the PLC in particular</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to the key literature on warm demanding, and provide definitions of both warmth and demanding orientations</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to empirical findings on the link between high expectations and student achievement</li> <li>• Explain how high expectations can be defined for ELL students in particular</li> <li>• Establish the importance of PLC in defining high expectations for the school’s ELL students; address the collaboration between ELL and mainstream teachers that can result in a good definition of high expectations for this population in the mainstream environment</li> <li>• Explain how atmosphere of high expectations can be led by the principal and supported by the community, especially parents</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson with a call to action to PLC members to define high expectations for ELL students
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

Table A3

## Session 3 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using the PLC to Benefit from Teacher Experience”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Teacher experience, multiplying teacher experience within the context of a PLC
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the reasons why teacher experience matters in determining mainstreamed ELL students’ academic outcomes</li> <li>2. how a PLC can ‘multiply’ teacher experience for the benefit of all</li> </ol>
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss link between teacher experience and teacher performance</li> <li>• Discuss teacher experience as emerging from contact with a specific population</li> <li>• Discuss teacher experience as emerging from contact with specific methodologies, content, and curricula</li> <li>• Discuss how teachers can learn from the experiences of other teachers within a PLC</li> <li>• Discuss how PLCs can distribute and multiply expertise by leveraging the experience of senior members</li> <li>• Discuss best practices in making use of teacher experience within PLC settings</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to the empirical findings relating teacher performance to teacher experience</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to the empirical findings relating student achievement to teacher performance</li> <li>• Draw the inference that teacher experience is a cornerstone of academic achievement, especially for ELL students</li> <li>• Discuss the kind of teacher experience that arises from contact with specific populations</li> <li>• Discuss the kind of teacher experience that arises from use of specific methodologies, content, and curricula</li> <li>• Discuss how principals can ensure that PLCs are structured and empowered to make best use of teachers’ experience</li> <li>• Discuss how experiences can be shared between ELL and mainstream teachers</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson by asking participants how they think teacher experience can be best leveraged within the PLC
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

Table A4

## Session 4 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using the PLC to Improve Parent Commitment”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Parent commitment
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the reasons why parental involvement is relevant to the academic achievement of ELL students</li> <li>2. insights into how to generate and improve parental involvement, leveraging the insights of ELL teachers and the institutional power of the principal</li> </ol>
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the concept of parental commitment</li> <li>• Discuss the literature linking parental commitment to the positive academic achievement of ELL students</li> <li>• Explain commitment difficulties faced by parents of ELL students</li> <li>• Explain what ELL teachers have learned about means of increasing the commitment of ELL parents</li> <li>• Discuss how the principal can take institutional actions that facilitate ELL parent commitment</li> <li>• Discuss how the PLC can give mainstream teachers insights into how to improve ELL parent commitment</li> <li>• Discuss framework for sharing ideas and concepts related to using the PLC to improve parental commitment</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to empirical literature on parental commitment, particularly literature that explains the numerous difficulties that can prevent ELL parents from exercising high levels of commitment</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to what the empirical and practitioner has to say about the ways in which ELL teachers have been able to improve the commitment of ELL parents</li> <li>• Discuss a system-wide PLC commitment to sharing best practices for building parental engagement, especially mainstream teacher-led efforts to build parental encouragement that can benefit from ELL teacher insights</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson by asking teachers to think about and write down best practices in improving ELL parental commitment
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

Table A5

## Session 5 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using the PLC to Ensure Good Curricular Organization and Maintenance”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Curricular organization, curricular design, curricular maintenance
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. how and why curricula matter when dealing with ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>2. how mainstream and ELL teachers can work together to learn more about best practices in curricular organization and maintenance</li> </ol>
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss importance of curricular organization and maintenance in the context of ELL students</li> <li>• Discuss the use of alternate curricular materials when teaching ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Discuss the use of asupplemental curricular materials when teaching ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Discuss how mainstream curricular can serve the needs of ELL students while achieving more general academic goals</li> <li>• Discuss what can be learned from ELL teachers in designing curricula that are responsive to the needs of ELL students</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to theoretical literature on curriculum organization and maintenance for ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to empirical literature on curriculum organization and maintenance for ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Explain the theory behind using supplemental or alternative curricular materials for ELL students in mainstream classes</li> <li>• Explain what ELL teachers can learn from mainstream teachers in terms of curriculum organization and maintenance for ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Explain what mainstream teachers can learn from ELL teachers in terms of curriculum organization and maintenance for ELL students in mainstream environments</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson by asking teachers how they would change or adapt mainstream curricula to reflect the needs and challenges of ELL students
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

## Table A6

## Session 6 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using PLCs to Ensure Consistent Experiences for Students”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Student experience
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the definition of consistency in student experience</li> <li>2. insights into how to generate consistency of experience for ELL students in particular</li> </ol>
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the definition of student experience</li> <li>• Explain and explore aspects of ELL student experiences in the classroom and in school in general</li> <li>• Explain how the absence of consistency in student experience can impact ELL students’ motivation</li> <li>• Explain how the absence of consistency in student experience can impact ELL students’ academic performance</li> <li>• Explain how both the PLC in particular and the school in general can work to ensure a consistent student experience for ELLs</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to the definition of student experience</li> <li>• Explore the theoretical reasons that consistency of student experience matters, particularly when it comes to (a) motivation and (b) academic performance of ELL students</li> <li>• Explore the empirical findings related to the claim that consistency of student experience matters, particularly when it comes to (a) motivation and (b) academic performance of ELL students</li> <li>• Discuss how the PLC can serve as a resource for defining, and ensuring the consistency of, student experiences, particularly the experiences of ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Explain what ELL teachers can learn from mainstream teachers in terms of ensuring the consistency of ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Explain what mainstream teachers can learn from ELL teachers in terms of ensuring the consistency of ELL students in mainstream environments</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson by asking teachers how they might ensure consistency of student experience
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

Table A7

## Session 7 Overview

Lesson Title	“Using the PLC to Ensure Consistent Grading”
Lesson Duration	90 minutes
Occupational Area	All teachers, principal, assistant-principal, selected personnel
Concepts Taught	Consistent grading
Lesson Objectives	To acquaint internal stakeholders with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. how to define consistent grading in the context of ELL students in mainstream environment</li> <li>2. how to achieve consistent grading in the context of ELL students in mainstream environment</li> </ol>
Supplies needed	Personal computer equipped with Microsoft PowerPoint™, overhead slide projector, laser pointer
Lesson Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the concept of grading</li> <li>• Explain lenient grading</li> <li>• Explain overly stringent grading</li> <li>• Explain appropriate, consistent grading, and how it is linked to the motivation and academic performance of ELL students</li> <li>• Explain what mainstream teachers can learn about consistent grading from ELL teachers</li> <li>• Explain what ELL teachers can learn about consistent grading from mainstream teachers</li> </ul>
Break-up of Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk participants through the items I intended to cover in the agenda.</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to theoretical literature on the concept of consistent grading</li> <li>• Bring participants’ attention to empirical literature on the link between consistent grading and student achievement, particular the achievement of ELL students in mainstream environments</li> <li>• Explain how PLCs can define and disseminate best practices in consistent grading for ELL students in mainstream environments</li> </ul>
Lesson Closure	Close the lesson by asking teachers to define what they would consider consistent grading in the context of ELL students in mainstream environments
Q & A Session	Encourage the audience to ask questions and provide them with answers.

### **Responsibility for Implementation**

The responsibility of implementation of such an important and significant learning and teaching project does not fall on any one of the person related to the education sector only; rather, all the personnel involved in the project are anticipated to be responsible for thorough implementation of the plan with commitment. All the related personnel are also required to be in adherence with any behaviors or strategies which may be required to be adopted in the course of implementation.

The district officers of the state, the administrators, teaching staff, helping staff and the parents and students are also essentially held responsible for the proper and accurate implementation of this developmental plan for the professionals in the educational field. The teachers and policy administrators in the schools will be characteristically required to the develop collaboration with a number of effective strategies and policies being implemented with regards to this PD Plan.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessments, as indicated by the results and findings of the study are suggested accordingly in the current PD Plan. The assessments of the ELL students regarding the learning strategies implemented for them will be importantly carried out, in order to know in depth about how well the strategies have worked and been successful. The assessments of ELL are projected to include qualitative testing based on: Periodic opinionated assessments of students from teachers and parents; teachers' point of views on change in students' learning; parental feedback; classroom observations. The



assessments of ELLs are also projected to include quantitative assessments based on standardized language tests and various standardized school tests

### **Timescale of the Plan**

The PD Plan will be released to the school in December of the first year in order to have an impact on the start of the new academic year in August. The recipient of the PD Plan will be the school principal, who will disseminate the PD Plan to the school's PLC tasked with ELL matters. The execution of the PD Plan will include imperative stages of implementation, enunciation, assessment, evaluation, and periodic monitoring. The timescale of each of the stage will primarily be flexible according to the needs and requirements of the ELL students.

### **Summary**

The PD Plan was based on the delivery of 7 professional development sessions, including a results presentation component as well as an interactive component, designed to explain how and why push-in can be used to improve ELL student outcomes. The plan was based on the findings obtained from the study. If implemented properly, the plan has the potential to improve the ability of the PLC at the target school to serve the needs of ELL students, thus better fulfilling the school's educational and social mission.

## Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation from the School District

Cobb County School District  
Dr. Judi Jones, Chief Academic Officer  
Office of Accountability  
514 Glover Street  
Marietta, GA 30060

Dear Arleen Folorunsho,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled “Mainstream Elementary Teachers’ Perspectives on Effective Instructional Models for English Language Learner within the Cobb County School District.” As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit teachers and administrators, collect data, engage in member-checking, and disseminate the results of your research. Individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization’s responsibilities include providing data about district-wide English language learner (ELL) student performance over the past five years. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judi Jones, Chief Academic Officer  
Office of Accountability  
514 Glover Street  
Marietta, GA 30060

## Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation from the School

Liz Murphy, Principal  
Compton Elementary School  
3450 New Macland Rd.  
Powder Springs, GA 30127

Dear Arleen Folorunsho,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled “Mainstream Elementary Teachers’ Perspectives on Effective Instructional Models for English Language Learners within the Cobb County School District.” As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit teachers and administrators, collect data, engage in member-checking, and disseminate the results of your research. Individuals’ participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization’s responsibilities include providing rooms in which to conduct interviews and gather data and to allow you to publicize the existence of this study to potential participants. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,  
Liz Murphy, Principal  
Compton Elementary School  
3450 New Macland Rd.  
Powder Springs, GA 30127

## Appendix D: Informed Consent

### **CONSENT FORM**

You are invited to take part in a research study of effective instructional models for English language learners (ELL students). You were chosen for the study because you are an English / language arts teacher at a school whose ELL procedures I am interested in studying because of a local need to understand best practices. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Arleen Folorunsho, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to understand what has worked, and what has failed, in the teaching of ELL students at your school from 2006 to 2011.

### **Procedures**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- (1) Participate in a one-on-one interview of approximately 30 minutes
- (2) Ensure that I used your input (quotes or paraphrases) accurately

Offer me written documents (diary entries, e-mails, letters, etc.) to which you have a right, and that cast on ELL teaching policies at the school.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at the elementary will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study**

One risk of the study is that, despite the fact that I will be using a pseudonym for Compton Elementary and for you; people who know my name and where I work can infer who you are. I will mitigate this risk by writing your participant biography in a vague way. The benefit of the study is that you can help to identify best practices in ELL teaching that might improve the pedagogy and administrative support for ELL teaching at your school.

### **Compensation**

There will be no compensation for participating in the study.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

### **Contacts and Questions**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher Arleen Folorunsho at Arleen.folorunsho@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott, the Director of Research Integrity and Compliance at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 03-01-13-0182890 and it expires on February 28, 2014.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date of consent \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Written or Electronic\* Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Written or Electronic\*  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.



changing needs of the business. Managed and supervised trainers. Provided matrix management for project results and process issues resolution.

- Received appointment by Anne burg and the University of Miami to develop an aftercare educational program for select Dade County Schools.

**Administrator on Assignment**      Dade County Public Schools      1995

Administered, managed, and structured meetings between students, parents, and teachers in order to facilitate discussion of alternative behavioral issues. Identified implicit and explicit needs for educational motivation and growth. Trained teachers to administer standardized tests. Oversaw staff needs, project planning, and coordination.

- Wrote a grant for the school, awarding \$90K for new computer systems.
- Presented workshops to refine teaching methods and improve student performance in reading and writing.

**Elementary Education Teacher**      Dade County Public Schools      1993 – 2000

Developed, prepared, and implemented curricula for instruction at individual, small group, and large group level. Trained instructors and students in skills and procedures for standardized tests. Served as chairperson and sponsor for variety of committees and activities. Organized and participated in tutorial services.

## MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMITTEES

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TESOL	2001-2008
Grant Writing Committee	2001-2004
Business Partners Committee	2001-2004
Staff Development Committee	2001-2005
Exiting Committee (students leaving ESOL program)	2001-2005
Leadership Committee	2002-2014
Student Support Team	2002-2004
Students Assessment	2002-2005
School Improvement Plan Committee	2008-2012
Culture Key Committee	2009-2014
Data Team	2010-2012
Design Team	2010-2014

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Paraprofessional of the Year 1992
- Sallie Mae Teacher of the Year 1993
- Teacher of the Month 2000
- Teacher of the Year 2001-2002

## EDUCATION

**B.S., Education**

**M.S., Educational Leadership**

**Ed.S., Early Childhood Special Education**

**Edd, Teacher Leader** (current student)

Florida Memorial College

Nova Southeastern University

University of Miami

Walden University