

2016

The Experiences of Grade 3 Literacy Teachers Teaching English Language Learners

CaSaundra Joyce Howell
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CaSaundra J. Howell

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

The Experiences of Grade 3 Literacy Teachers Teaching English Language Learners

by

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EdS, Walden University, 2013

MEd, Grand Canyon University, 2010

BS, Florida A & M University, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2016

Abstract

English language learners (ELLs) at a public elementary school in the southeastern United States had not been passing state tests on literacy. Researchers have found that teachers must be adequately prepared to use instructional practices in mainstream classrooms to help ELLs increase language acquisition and pass state tests in literacy. The purpose of this case study was to examine the experiences of Grade 3 literacy teachers teaching ELLs in a mainstream classroom at the study elementary school in order to understand their instructional challenges. The conceptual framework was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory in order to understand how these teachers might improve their instructional practices. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify potential participants. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with 4 Grade 3 literacy teachers teaching ELLs. Data were analyzed using open coding and thematic analysis to identify emergent themes. The themes identified were inadequate professional development, lack of support at school, and lack of parental support impacting language acquisition of ELLs. Findings of this study can be used by school administrators, curriculum planning educators, and area superintendents to make decisions regarding the training of literacy teachers who teach ELLs. Based on findings from the study, a professional development program was developed for literacy teachers who teach ELLs to help them prepare students to graduate from high school. Implications for positive social change include providing strategies for literacy teachers at the study site to help ELLs pass standardized tests.

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Dedication

This body of work is dedicated to my daughter, Markeisha, who believed in me when I often doubted myself. It was through her that I found the strength to persevere as I watched her stumble time and time again in pursuit of her dreams and stand taller each time she picked herself up! That's my girl! To my little lady Kimari for listening to me read through countless drafts with such interest, as if it were her favorite story being read over and over again. Thank you both for believing in my dream and for your unwavering support. The two of you sacrificed so much "mommy" time while I submerged myself in what seemed like never-ending hours of reading, writing, and typing. It is my wish that you remember my commitment to furthering my education and find that same desire for self-improvement through higher education.

Furthermore, I want to dedicate my achievement to my mother, Janice Howell. When I was tired and wanted to give up, it was you who said, "You can do it! Just keep looking to GOD for your strength and HE will give you all that you need!" I love you so much for that! I am who I am because of you.

Lastly, this would not be possible without my group of guardian angels, Cheryl Holman, Abigail Arocho, and Kim Charles. There are no words to express how much your friendship and support have meant to me throughout this process. Your prayers, words of encouragement, and listening ears have guided me through a very difficult yet rewarding journey.

I shall remain forever grateful to each and every one of you for your love and support!

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I lift mine eyes to the hills from which cometh my help, for all of my help cometh from the LORD! First and foremost, I thank GOD. I would not have completed this process without HIS Grace, Mercy, and Faithfulness!

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I want to take this time to thank a very special group of educators who agreed to be my participants, who understood the purpose and importance of conducting this study, and who supported me to the end. To the phenomenal group of women that I have had the pleasure of forging a life-long bond with, I salute you as I am sure that our meeting was part of a larger plan.

Lord I thank you for carrying me through to the end. This part of the story ends.....a new chapter begins!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

English language learners (ELLs) are an overall growing segment of the student population across the United States (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011). When a child enters a public school, the parents are asked to complete a home language survey to identify all languages spoken in the household. Should parents check any language other than English, students are identified as ELLs and then are tested to determine their proficiency level in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehending English. According to Lee (2012), in 2012 approximately 11 million school-aged children were ELLs had very limited previous educational experiences. Many immigrant children are often 2 or more years behind peers of the same age, causing successful grade completion a difficult task (Lee, 2012). The lack of prior educational experiences is due largely to the fact that immigrant families relocate several times during the school year or every year (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009). These factors have an effect on the academic careers of this diverse group of students leading to many ELLs dropping out of school before graduation as compared to their English-speaking peers (Sheng et al., 2011).

At the research site, the school's mobility rate had consistently increased for the 2 years prior to data collection. The research site had been declared a Title I school with an almost 80% economically disadvantaged student population (Table 1). A contributing factor to the school's identification as a Title I school was the consistent increase in ELLs of over 32% at the research site. A school's categorization as Title I can occur when the percentage of free-and-reduced lunch students rises above 75% as well as the school

meeting other demographic criteria. The school qualifies for additional financial assistance from government programs and in return must follow specific guidelines regarding the way the monies can be spent in support of educational programs to increase academic success of all students.

Table 1

School Demographic Data for Free/Reduced Lunch

Academic Year	Number of Students	% Free/Reduced Lunch
2014-2015	602*	81.68*
2013-2014	587	79.97
2012-2013	638	65.70
2011-2012	580	72.90
2010-2011	572	61.00

Note. * indicates projection for the 2014-2015 school year.

Literacy teachers are expected to not only know how ELLs acquired language skills but also to help these learners with language acquisition. A comfortable learning environment for acquiring a second language is helping ELLs with their motivation, self-esteem, and confidence (Allison & Rehm, 2011). Krashen (1983) stated that language acquisition takes place when students receive information that is comprehensible. ELLs learn a second language when instruction is at a level appropriate to their language competencies (Krashen, 1983).

Acquisition of a second language is a learning process. A prominent researcher in the acquisition of a second language is Cummins (1994), who noted that, of the two types of language that children develop, one is more conversational and the other is used for the completion of academic tasks. According to Cummins (1994), interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency may be an indicator as to why many ELLs continue to have difficulty with the language acquisition process. Teachers of ELLs need to adopt and implement best teaching practices to help ELLs in the acquisition of a second language.

The English proficiency levels of ELLs are impacted by their English language skills (Sheng et al., 2011). Factors impacting English proficiency levels of ELLs include the educational level of the parents (Herbert, 2012; LeClair et al., 2009; Lee, 2012; Sheng et al., 2011). ELLs may have difficulties at school because of cultural differences between them and their peers that could cause them to experience difficulties adjusting at school (Lee, 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Sheng et al., 2011). The educational environment, differing teaching methods, and student expectations could negatively impact the education of ELLs (Maxwell, 2013). As with English speaking students, poor academic achievement, especially in reading and math, has been a strong predictor of high school dropout rates (Lee, 2012), and, according to Herbert (2012) and LeClair et al. (2009), the English proficiency levels of ELLs are 2 to 4 years behind their peers, which can accentuate the decline in the graduation rate.

For the language acquisition process, a variety of teaching approaches have been used to support and encourage language development in ELLs. Teaching approaches

include the use of context clues, narratives, and silent reading period to help ELLs acquire English as a second language (Aukerman, 2007). Teachers use context or multiple examples of the word within pieces of text, when presenting new concepts to ELLs to help them understand their meaning. ELLs may enter school with very little English language skills, as their exposure to the language may have been minimal or none. As a result, literacy teachers dedicate a large amount of time to help ELLs understand how the English language is used in spoken terms while simultaneously utilizing pictorial representations with all learning tasks (Aukerman, 2007). By using this process in language acquisition literacy, teachers help learners develop knowledge of the rules that govern how language is used grammatically and appropriately (Ellis, 2008). With intense grammar lessons, language learners learn the proper rules for language formation, which is another key component in the acquisition process. Once successful, learners then learn to develop implicit knowledge of the second language. I did an extensive review of the current literature and identified shortfalls in the area of instructing ELLs in terms of teaching barriers for literacy teachers who need to understand diversity. I reviewed the focus and success of professional development programs for literacy teachers as well as the development of instructional materials and tools to assist literacy teachers.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

District guidelines are used to allow ELLs to be promoted to the next grade level before these students can become successful in the acquisition of the English language at

their current grade level. ELLs at the school where the current research took place were performing below grade level in class as well as scoring below satisfactorily on the state assessments according to the school's accountability report posted on the state's department of education website (district superintendent, personal communication, November 30, 2014). The research site was an urban public school district located in southeast United States. At the research site, (a) elementary schools had the highest number of ELLs at 30,032 or 16% of its student population ("ELL Students Increase," 2012), (b) the number of ELLs had increased over the past 5 years to over 32% of student population, (c) ELLs were not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP), and (d) ELLs did not pass the state tests in reading (Table 2). According to the Department of Education (2012), the research site's school accountability report was posted with state testing scores for the 2011-2012 school years indicating 24% of ELLs scored at a *satisfactory* level or higher in reading on the state test. However, ELLs were not making AYP as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Each academic school year, 50% of the students in each demographic group must show academic gains over the previous year on the state standardized test. The No Child Left Behind Act required schools to demonstrate that ELLs are making continuous progress in English language development.

In addition to AYP, the department of education initiated a *highly qualified* mandate that set higher standards for teachers, which has placed pressure on teacher education programs to update and reform the curriculum in ELL teacher education (Liu, 2013). State test scores have been low for at least 2 academic years (Table 2; district

superintendent, personal communication, November 30, 2014). Grade 3 students participate in standardized testing used to determine promotion to the next grade level or retention in their current grade level. Grade 3 is a pivotal year for both students and teachers; I chose this grade level as the focus of my research study to understand experiences of literacy teachers regarding the impact of their instructional practices on instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom with the limited training, professional development, and instructional materials available.

Table 2

Grade 3 Reading Scores and Demographic Data

Academic Year	AYP	Grade 3 Students	ELL Students	State Scores in Literacy Below 3
2012-2013	No	116	25	84%
2011-2012	No	98	23	78%
2010-2011	No	109	25	68%
2009-2010	No	99	30	33%
2008-2009	Yes	80	13	61%

The school's mobility rate had consistently increased, as well as the school's numbers for free-and-reduced lunch students, by approximately 20 % each year for the past 2 years. The elementary school had a student population of 580. There were six Grade 3 literacy teachers at the research site, with academic careers ranging from 3 to 27 years, who were responsible for teaching all academic subjects. The school district where I conducted this study had decreased educational programs such as bilingual classrooms,

where instruction is given in both languages, and sheltered classrooms, comprised of only ELL students. These changes had resulted in mainstream classroom literacy teachers teaching ELLs.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2012 54% of the teachers in American public schools had ELL students in their classrooms and 20% of those teachers believed they were well prepared to teach them (Liu, 2013). Literacy teachers of ELLs lack teaching skills to teach ELLs, and 73% of urban school districts are in immediate need of ELL teachers (Liu, 2013). The process by which children acquire a second language, training to facilitate this process, and strategies and materials to assist in the development of the second language are a few of the skills teachers lack and are not efficiently receiving with the current professional development programs (Lakin, 2012; Nan, Mitchell, & Howard, 2011; Orosco & Klingner, 2010). As with English speaking students, academic success, especially in reading and math, has been a strong predictor of overall academic achievement, but the situation is compounded with ELL students, as their English proficiency levels are 2 to 4 years behind their peers (Herbert, 2012; LeClair et al., 2009; Lee, 2012; Sheng et al., 2011). Literacy teachers would benefit from pairing ELLs with English speakers in the classroom for them to build their academic vocabularies (English, 2010; Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). Teachers may struggle to meet the needs of ELLs in mainstream classrooms (Allison & Rehm, 2011) and should engage ELLs in class activities using cooperative learning (Brooks & Thurston, 2010).

The differences in cultures can be very hard for some students to adjust to, and at times they can create a giant rift between home and school. What teachers deem to be minor components of the educational environment, such as daily routines, differing teaching methods, and student expectations, can be huge deterrents for the ELL student. Educational institutions should prepare students to become autonomous individuals (Hirst & Peters, 1970). Failure to educate ELLs to become responsible contributory citizens will have a direct impact on an already stressed social, economic, and political system as the unemployment rate, crime rate, and welfare recipient rates could increase. Progression before ELLs are prepared negatively impacts their self-esteem and confidence as well as increases their level of anxiety, affecting their focus on both language acquisition and understanding of content material (Aukerman, 2007).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of literacy teachers teaching ELLs to understand their instructional successes and challenges. I examined the experiences of Grade 3 literacy teachers instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom with limited professional development on how to teach ELLs. The goal was to understand the successes and challenges of literacy teachers teaching these students in order to narrow the achievement gap in the area of literacy, enabling students to be better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. To achieve this goal, I interviewed literacy teachers of ELLs in a mainstream classroom.

Definitions of Terms

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): The measure by which schools, districts, and states are held accountable for students' performance under Title I (Adequate, 2011).

English language learners (ELL): Students who are acquiring English for their education (English, 2011).

Literacy student: A student who receives instruction in the five components of literacy (Copeland, Keefe, Calhoon, Tanner, & Park, 2011).

Literacy teacher: A teacher that has specific knowledge of the content and instructional applications of the five components of literacy: (a) phonemic awareness, (b) phonics, (c) vocabulary development, (d) reading fluency, and (e) reading comprehension (Copeland et al., 2011).

Mainstream classroom: A classroom environment in which instruction and curricula have been designed for native-speaking students (Kibler, 2011).

Professional development: A lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily job-embedded, learner-centered, focused approach (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008).

Title I: A federal program under the Elementary and Secondary Education act of 1965 that provided additional financial resources to schools in which more than half of the students are low-income (www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/title).

Significance of the Study

The findings may potentially fill an important gap in the current educational practices of mainstream classroom literacy teachers who instruct ELLs. The gap in

understanding has been how students acquire a second language and how literacy teachers can effectively help increase students' English proficiency levels. In addition, the findings of this study could help district and school policymakers with successful strategies to teach ELLs.

Teachers of ELLs will benefit from the findings of this study. The compilation of academic strategies, programs, materials, and simple routines utilized by one participant may shed light on an otherwise hopeless situation for another teacher as they each strive to increase academic success in their ELL population. Senior administrators may use the findings for district-wide initiatives in the current training and professional development program mandated for teachers of ELLs.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this project study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the experiences of literacy teachers teaching Grade 3 ELLs in a mainstream classroom?

RQ2: What instructional challenges and successes do literacy teachers experience while instructing ELLs?

RQ3: What are the teachers' perceptions about the impact that the integration of technology and literacy programs into the curriculum has on student achievement?

RQ4: What are the teachers' perceptions of the effects the current professional development program has on the instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this project study was based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which outlined the framework for the construct of self-efficacy (Corcoran, 1991). Bandura's definition of self-efficacy is an attempt to explain that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce certain outcomes. Bandura's theory applied to my study because literacy teachers teaching ELLs strive to meet the needs of ELLs to produce certain outcomes, developing literacy skills, and their self-efficacy, which not only impacts their instructional practices, but also ELLs' academic achievement as measured by state tests. The experiences of literacy teachers teaching Grade 3 ELLs include instructional challenges. ELLs do not achieve academic success largely in part due to deficiencies in their English proficiency levels (Sheng et al., 2011). Daily routines, differing teaching methods, and student expectations have a large impact on ELLs' learning (Lee, 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Sheng et al., 2011). Teachers' attitudes influence student learning outcomes. Shishavan (2010) sought to understand the role that self-efficacy plays in the decisions made by teachers in the classroom. Decisions regarding teaching methodologies, strategies, and teacher attitude influence everything in and around the classroom, including the way teachers relate to parents, administration, and other teachers and staff. Additionally, Shishavan explored the perceptions of language learners regarding the effectiveness of the English language teacher realizing that the learner's perception had a direct impact on his or her learning (p. 4).

Shishavan (2010) believed that the self-efficacy of teachers instructing language learners is a worthy area of research; I explored the experiences of a small group of literacy teachers utilizing a case study approach with in-depth interviews with each of the participants. During the interviews, I assumed that self-efficacy might in fact be an emerging theme to arise from the analysis of the interviews. Bandura's theory provided the groundwork for this study and expanded upon the experience that Grade 3 teachers have in relation to their instructional practices for their ELL students.

More ELLs are attending schools across the United States (Albers, Hoffman, & Lundahl, 2009; Durgunoglo & Huges, 2010; "ELL Students Increase," 2012; Fayon, Goff, & Duranczyk, 2010; Herbert, 2012; Lee, 2012; Nan et al., 2011; Perez & Holmes, 2010; Sheng et al., 2011). Brooks, Adams, and Morita-Mullaney (2010) noted the necessity for schools to become more inclusive, supportive educational communities for their ELL population. The school district where this study was conducted had decreased the number of sheltered ELL classrooms as well as the bilingual programs, which resulted in mainstream classroom teachers taking the responsibility of ensuring proper acquisition of the target language without the benefit of assistance from a more experienced ELL teacher.

Search Terms and Databases Used for Literature Review

I began the literature review by using ProQuest and the Walden University Library to search for dissertations and peer-reviewed manuscripts in the ERIC and Education Research Complete databases. Conducting a broad search for peer-reviewed research on ELLs within the last 5 years, using the key words *English language learner*, I

narrowed the search of related articles by focusing specifically on research that had been conducted in the areas of professional development/training for teachers, instructional strategies/practices, and interventions/assessments for ELL students. This process still presented me with a wealth of information, so each article had to be carefully analyzed for relevance and either discarded or accepted as viable information for this project study. The review of literature revealed the emergence of common themes regarding the instruction of ELLs and professional development and training for teachers, instructional strategies and practices to be used by teachers, and assessment materials and processes for the classroom.

Organization of Literature Review

The literature review section was organized regarding an in-depth look at the academic work relevant to the instruction of ELLs. In this section, I present information on the issues and challenges that have been identified in regards to the instructional practices employed by teachers. Acquiring a language is a process that students go through whether they are second language learners or English is their native language. In regards to second language acquisition, researchers have continued to discuss and attempt to identify just how much instruction can best facilitate the language learning process.

Introduction of Literature Review

According to the Department of Education (2012), the research site's school accountability report for the 2011-2012 school year indicated that 24% of ELLs scored at a *satisfactory* level or higher in reading on the state test. However, ELLs were not making AYP as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). A review of the

literature indicated the need for published research on the special needs of ELLs and the issues faced by this very diverse population. Although specific research has been conducted, very little has been published so that both teachers and students can benefit from those efforts. Current data indicated a steady decline in the state test scores of ELLs at the research site, intensifying the need for conducting more research in the hopes of identifying additional strategies for supporting ELLs and the school.

Professional Development for Literacy Teachers

At the research site, the current professional development for instructing ELLs consisted of either a 2-week, 3-hour face-to-face evening course or a 6-week online course. The Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, recognized the unique educational disadvantages faced by non-English speaking students (Developing, 2005).

A review of the literature revealed that little research has been conducted on teacher knowledge and education in the area of ELLs (Siping, 2013). Soto-Hinman (2010) noted that professional development and teacher training programs must become more focused and aligned regarding the coursework involved in the training program and the reflective opportunities that come with professional development in order to better prepare teachers to be more sensitive and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of the ELLs.

Professional development necessitates the use of the teacher's personal time for completion without monetary compensation. At the research site, the training program was a series of six courses and a teacher had to make annual progress towards the

completion of the requirements or be removed from the classroom until courses were complete. The information presented was both outdated and inapplicable to the actual teaching environment. The content was geared towards teaching acceptance of the various cultures and the socially acceptable behaviors of students and teachers alike. Brooks and Karathanous (2009) noted that teachers currently take an *additive or contributions* approach to multicultural education without changing the basic structure of the curriculum (p. 47). Teachers could apply the theories associated with the language acquisition process in order to solidify their understanding, thereby improving their teaching practices (Lakin, 2012; Nan et al., 2011).

The works of Piaget and Vygotsky revealed that teachers take into account what their students already know, “tapping into their background knowledge,” build upon that knowledge, and allow students to put that knowledge into practice (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012, para, 3). At the research site, a reading program, designed to teach vocabulary and oral language, was integrated into the curriculum for ELLs. The school administrators mandated a 30-minute immediate intensive instruction (III) time, during which the lowest 25% of ELL students are assigned to a nonclassroom teacher such as the librarian, math, or reading coach, assistant principal and dean of students, as well as the extra-curricular music, art, and physical education teachers. The program, Imagine Learning, focused specifically on oral language and vocabulary development using printed materials. ELLs have been placed on the computerized version of the reading program that assigns lessons and monitors ELLs’ reading progress.

Diversity and ELLs

Diversity has been understudied within the ELL population, especially at the elementary level. Albers et al. (2009) stressed the need for published research on the special needs of ELLs and the issues faced by this diverse population. Historically, issues such as teenage dropout rates, teenage pregnancy, and drug use for White American children have been highly published with very little focus on non-English speaking children. Although the research has been conducted and strategic interventions discovered, very little research has been published (Albers et al., 2009). An area of frustration often discussed among teachers of ELLs is a clear and concise understanding of how these students acquire the second language in a manner that successfully facilitates the comprehension of content material.

Mancilla-Martinez, Kieffer, Biancarosa, Christodoulou, and Snow (2011) sought to understand the process by which “language minority” learners develop reading comprehension by conducting a longitudinal study involving fifth through seventh grade students in an urban United States middle school that served over 91% Latino and low-income students (p. 343). Mancilla-Martinez et al. felt that in order to fully understand the process, a student’s growth process and development needed to be looked at over a period of 3 years with assessments on listening comprehension, word reading, and reading comprehension being administered at strategic points over the 3-year period. Mancilla-Martinez et al. reported that while students in the sample seemed to drop in listening comprehension scores during the fifth and sixth grade years, on the average, “all students increased in reading proficiency across the years studied” (p. 347). Mancilla-

Martinez et al. noted several limitations within the scope of the study as well as possible avenues for future research that included larger sample sizes, limiting the scope of reading research, as well as possibly including an oral vocabulary measure.

Burns and Helman (2009) reported that the sight word acquisition rate among 43 Grade 2 students at three urban schools was analyzed in relation to their oral proficiency levels in English. Burns and Helman sought to determine if the students' oral proficiency level was in direct correlation with the students' sight word acquisition rate, meaning the higher the level of English proficiency, the higher the sight word acquisition rate would be and vice versa. A correlation between the sight word acquisition rate and English language proficiency was found (Burns & Helman, 2009). These are very real issues that influence the ELLs' ability to be successful in their educational careers and thereby evoke a need for more research at the research site. By conducting this case study, my findings from the research may include strategies for supporting ELL and schools in the district and beyond.

Barriers to Teaching Literacy Students

The profession of teaching has grown from a one-room building where students wrote on small slabs with chalk, to virtual classrooms where writing utensils and materials are obsolete. With so many technological advances, teaching itself has become more and more complex and at times perceived as an insurmountable task. Helfrich and Bosh (2011) reported the barriers perceived by teachers, beginning and veteran alike, teaching literacy to ELLs. Teachers do not fully understand the role of literacy development, or its importance, in diverse cultures (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). In further

discussing the barriers associated with literacy instruction and ELLs, Helfrich and Bosh noted that there is a diminished confidence level in teachers when it comes to assessing and monitoring the progress of their ELL students and often teachers devalue the insight and support that could be offered from collaboration with peers. From personal experience, I believe teachers do not reach out to their peers for fear of being deemed incompetent or somehow lack the training to be a teacher.

Instructional Strategies Used by Literacy Teachers

Even the best teacher training programs often do not prepare teachers for the challenges they face in the classroom. Allison and Rehm (2011) recognized the fact that many teachers struggle to meet the needs of ELLs in mainstream classrooms and have difficulty implementing strategies and practices that would enhance the learning process for this very diverse group of learners. These supportive strategies include creating a supportive and welcoming environment, implementing effective teaching strategies, and incorporating a variety of assessments as well as providing challenging lessons that would reflect the high expectations that the teacher has for all students.

Reading Programs for ELLs Students

The local district adopted a new reading and math program that had ELL programs built into the curriculum as well as printed materials and computerized lessons and tests in Spanish. Yoon (2013) discussed the use of technology for improving reading comprehension and vocabulary in a study where ELLs were able to use online e-books. For the remaining ELL population, teachers rely on instructional strategies such as using *comprehensible input* (vocabulary on the students' level of understanding) when

teaching, the use of labels and pictures to represent items and tasks, building on a child's background knowledge and prior experiences, cooperative groupings to help ELLs, and the integration of technology whenever possible.

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), language acquisition occurs when the input received is both comprehensible and slightly beyond a person's current level of understanding; an optimal condition of learning a language is for students to receive input that is appropriate to the current level of language competence. Krashen and Terrell explained that when learners receive the appropriate level of comprehensible input, learners acquire a second language. Small changes in class routines such as pairing an ELL student with a strong English speaker provide an opportunity for the student to hear academic vocabulary used correctly as well as understand vocabulary used in context; such changes also provide opportunities for the students to self-direct and work independently (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012). Teachers can help ELLs make links between past learning and new concepts (Haynes, 2004).

Many ELLs have not developed words like their native English speaking peers have, and as a result teachers have to really focus on increasing the student's vocabulary (English, 2010). Teachers create an acquisition-rich classroom to facilitate the language learning process, allowing for opportunities for exchanges such as students using the language to express their own personal meanings. This environment also helps students to engage in language-related activities that are beyond their current level of proficiency (Ellis, 2008). Teachers also provide differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of ELLs by providing students with different avenues to acquiring content and to develop

teaching methods and materials in order for ELLs within the classroom can learn effectively regardless of differences.

Response to Intervention for Literacy Students

Another area of notable concern for classroom teachers is the identification of and response to the identification of areas of deficiency in ELL students. Orosco and Klingner (2010) studied the implementation of the response to intervention (RTI) model for ELLs at an urban elementary school. Orosco and Klingner (2010) reported that training and professional development are needed in order to successfully implement and monitor the RTI process for ELL students. Topor (2013) examined the experiences of teachers of visually impaired students in order to determine their preparedness to instruct ELLs who were visually impaired. The sample was 66 teachers who completed an online survey, consisting of five separate parts, over a period of 1 month. The findings included strategies that could be used to instruct ELLs as they were effective in instructing the visually impaired students who were not ELL students.

Strategies such as grouping students together for academic tasks have proven very effective with both native English speakers as well as language learners. Brooks and Thurston (2010) investigated the engagement of ELLs in class activities using cooperative learning. The sample consisted of 28 ELLs who were native Spanish-speakers. The results indicated that the students preferred smaller group settings versus whole group or one-on-one instructional practices.

Using a variety of materials and unconventional settings can increase student engagement and therefore maintain a student's interest in learning. Sockett and Toffoli

(2012) studied ELLs who prefer online virtual communities to a regular classroom setting. The sample was a small group of ELLs who used the Internet to read and listen to English over a 2-month period. Sockett and Toffoli used activity logs of the participants' online activity as a data source to be analyzed and guide discussions.

Implications

The findings of this project study may potentially fill a significant gap in the instructional practices of literacy teachers who instruct ELLs. Teachers could use the findings to develop a better understanding of the language acquisition process for ELLs and their role in that process. The findings of the study provided much needed practical solutions to guide the development of a more effective professional development program for teachers of non-native English speakers. By looking closely at the experiences of these teachers and comparing those experiences with the level of preparedness the training program provides, strengths and weaknesses were identified and can be addressed in a manner that would allow for a more comprehensive program to be developed. Teachers of ELLs could benefit from the findings that may include strategies to facilitate changes to the instructional practices of teachers in the way they approach the instruction of ELLs in the classroom by exposing them, through reflection, to any subconscious actions or words that may impact the delivery of their academic content from the perspective of their students. Implications for social change included strategies for teachers of ELLs to help these students to be successful on standardized literacy tests. The findings will be published in journals and reports at the district level.

Summary

As evidenced from the literature, ELLs are not only a fast growing segment of the population in public schools, but this very diverse group of learners are not attaining that academic success of the English speaking counterparts. Educators strive daily to not only meet the needs of these learners but meet district and state accountability guidelines while facing the challenge of lack of training and professional development in understanding the differences that diversity brings but how and where to find instructional strategies and methods to assist them in the classroom. Other issues such as finding and implementing assessment and intervention programs and materials that will successfully target the areas of deficiency for language learners present daily barriers to teaching literacy to non-English speaking students.

The experiences of literacy teachers were examined in an effort to provide them with the support they so desperately need in order to develop and maintain positive feelings of self-efficacy, uphold the integrity and professionalism that is associated with being an educator, and ensure that all students receive a quality education. By conducting this case study, I hoped to be able to shed a small glimmer of hope to a small group of teachers and have that hope spread throughout our profession.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

Methodology to a researcher is as vital as instrumentation is to a surgeon; the success of an endeavor depends on the choice of tools. Educational research is undoubtedly different from the practice of medicine; however, both practitioners share in their quest for knowledge and solutions. I sought to understand a central phenomenon, the experiences of a particular group of individuals who share a commonality: they were all Grade 3 teachers of ELLs.

In this section, I discuss the research methodology I chose and explain why the case study design was an appropriate method to employ in order to address the research question and subquestions. I also describe the sample, including the size and how I chose the sample. Data collection and analysis methods are described. This careful explanation may prove beneficial to future researchers who may consider using this study as the basis for further research.

The use of a quantitative research design and approach could have provided great insights had I chosen to collect and use numerical data such as student test scores or teacher observational scores for the basis of this project study. Because I determined that it was important to collect data through one-on-one interviews, in which participants expanded upon their personal experiences as they related to instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom, a quantitative approach could not be used.

In order to understand their experiences, I needed to choose a research method that would yield the most honest and reflective responses to the questions I posed,

questions that allowed teachers to reflect upon their pedagogical beliefs and practices and examine how the instruction of ELLs shaped and/or altered those beliefs and practices. In focusing on the experiences of these individuals and deriving data from one-on-one interviews, a qualitative design and approach were a more logical choice for conducting my project study.

Qualitative research offers numerous designs that could have been used to explore this particular research topic. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative case study design was used to interview Grade 3 literacy teachers at an elementary school regarding the instruction of ELLs. I chose this particular group of teachers because it was at this grade level that students first became exposed to standardized testing used to determine promotion to the next grade level or retention in their current grade level. Case studies are employed when the researcher is more interested in understanding the experiences of teachers teaching Grade 3 ELLs versus trying to identify shared patterns (Creswell, 2012). I chose to employ the collective case study for various reasons that will become evident further along in the chapter.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The five commonly used qualitative research approaches are ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative research, and case studies (Merriam, 2009). Based on the research topic and the individual needs of the researcher(s), any one of these designs may be used in a qualitative study. When looking at my research topic and sample size, I determined that a collective case study design would be the most suitable choice for this research study. First, an ethnography design is used to understand the

interactions of individuals, with others as well as with the shared culture of their society (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the research participants were from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, largely due to a large immigrant population within this southeastern state. Therefore, ethnography, in any of its various styles, would not have been a suitable choice for this study.

According to Lodico et al. (2010), the aim of a phenomenological study is to “attempt to capture the essence of the human experience” (p. 16). Merriam (2009) explained that phenomenological studies examine the experience of different people, with the focus on one phenomenon, which are then bracketed, analyzed, and compared in order to identify the essence of the phenomenon.

The focus of grounded theory research design is the development of a theory based on the analysis of the researcher’s data that may or may not change as the researcher conducts the study. The researcher is building a theory from the narrative data collected in the study (Lodico et al., 2010). For this study, I used Bandura’s social cognitive theory as the conceptual framework and did not attempt to develop any theories before concluding the study.

The fourth type of qualitative approach is the narrative research design. According to Creswell (2009), this design combines the views of one participant’s life depicted in a “collaborative narrative” (p. 13). Using only one participant in this study would not have provide the depth of discover necessary to understand the shared experiences of the population chosen for this study and generalizing the findings to the general population would have been difficult at best.

The collective case study approach worked best because I attempted to uncover the separate and distinct teacher perspectives of the phenomenon, their experiences in teaching literacy to ELL students in a mainstream classroom. If I had focused on teacher satisfaction with their experiences, then an intrinsic case study would have sufficed because the study would have focused on an issue, teacher satisfaction. In the instance where I would have planned to look at a homogenous group of participants, then an instrumental case study approach would have been the appropriate choice (Creswell, 2012).

A homogenous group is defined as having defining characteristics that tie the individuals to the group (Creswell, 2012). Consequently, in reviewing all forms of case studies, I determined the collective study approach was more aligned with the problem and research questions and thus more practical considering each participant was treated as an individual case, defined by the number of years teaching and whom I expected to have very diverse thoughts, opinions, and response to the interview questions. Subsequently, each teacher was a case providing insight into the phenomenon.

Setting, Population, and Sample

At the research site, Grade 3 is a pivotal year for both teachers and students. For students, this is the first year in which they are introduced to standardized testing and the implications associated with how they score on these tests. For teachers, this is the year that they must prepare these students for the rigor of testing and endure the pressure of performance for teacher and school evaluations.

The target population for this study was a specific group of individuals that shared some “common defining characteristics” (Creswell, 2012, p. 142). The population of this study consisted of all literacy teachers at the research site who had taught Grade 3 within the past 2 years who were responsible for teaching all academic subjects. A purposive sampling, more specifically, a maximal variation sampling technique, was used due to the selection of participants being based on specific selection criteria such as the number of years teaching ELLs at the research site (Creswell, 2012). Purposive sampling involves the researcher “intentionally” selecting participants and/or locations from which they can better learn and understand a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). For this study, I focused on Grade 3 literacy teachers and their instructional practices and how those practices involved the integration of technology; learning strategies within the classroom; and additional instructional resources added that supplemented the current curriculum. The sample was four teachers who returned signed consent forms. Creswell (2012) stated that smaller sample sizes allow researchers to provide a more in-depth picture, and while adding more participants would have provided more data, it may have also diminished the depth I as the researcher was trying to obtain. This was accomplished by conducting hour-long sessions with each participant with a follow-up session for member checking.

According to Creswell (2012), there are no set guidelines as to the number of participants or sites that may be sampled during qualitative study and those numbers vary from study to study. Because the collection and analysis of qualitative data can be quite time consuming, more participants mean a greater amount of time necessary to complete

the study. The participant pool chosen for this research study consisted of four literacy teachers at the research site who had taught Grade 3 within the past 2 years.

Protection of Participant's Rights

As with any study, the ethical treatment of the participants had the highest priority. Prior to any interviews taking place, all participants were informed of their rights concerning participation in the study. Once the teacher had signed the consent form, I reiterated the fact that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I then scheduled a time and date for the interview and asked if they had any questions before the interview was to take place.

The participants of this study were not members of one of the identified protected groups as defined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) nor were they teachers that were under my supervision. Although I have taught at the research site for the past 10 years, the teachers that were chosen had no personal connection to me and their identities were protected by the use of numbers to maintain confidentiality. During the interview process, I established my role as the researcher as one that was separate and distinct from that of coworker. All interviews were held in a private meeting room at the back of the school's library, which allowed for comfort and privacy for the participant, and interviews occurred outside of the school day so as not to interfere with their instructional time.

Data Collection

Once IRB approval was received and permission granted from my administrator, I contacted in person all Grade 3 literacy teachers who met the inclusion criteria, notified

them of my project study, and requested volunteers to participate. A total of 10 literacy teachers were contacted. The IRB approval number for the study was 07-16-15-0334373. When a teacher agreed to participate, I requested their home e-mail addresses and notified them of future correspondence taking place through their personal e-mail accounts or in person. All 10 teachers were interested and were then asked to respond, via e-mail or in person, to a few questions designed as a criteria selection. These questions were used to ascertain their teaching history, degrees held, training in instructing ELL students, and the number of years instructing ELLs. I wanted to select teachers at differing points in their teaching careers to identify how years of teaching experience affected the overall experiences instructing ELL students. I selected a participant for each of the total years teaching ranges that follow: 0 to 3 years of teaching, 4 to 7 years of teaching, 8 to 14 years of teaching, and 15 or more years of teaching experience. Once all responses were received, I used the participant selection criteria to choose participants for the study: (a) number of years teaching, (b) number of years teaching third grade, and (c) whether or not the teacher was certified to teach ELLs. These participants were then contacted in person, where I expressed my desire to have them participate in the project study along with a brief description of the goal of the study. I provided the consent form and asked each participant to sign and return the form to me when we met. I then scheduled a time to meet with each participant briefly to answer any questions they may have had regarding the study. We also discussed confidentiality and the procedures that would be in place to protect their privacy and maintain their confidentiality in order to establish a working relationship built upon trust and mutual respect.

Data collection consisted of one-on-one interviews that I audio taped using a recording device that had been tested for maximum operational capabilities. The interviews were recorded with the participants being notified of the recording in advance, allowing for accurate transcription, and consisted of a list of open-ended questions. An interview log was maintained in order to ensure the accuracy of the documentation of the dates, times, location, and length of the interviews. Creswell (2012) stated that open-ended questions allow participants to best voice their experiences unconstrained by my perspectives. The interview questions were designed to address the research questions and allowed me to elicit information relevant to the study (Appendix B). Any probing questions that were asked were used to clarify points or elicit more in-depth information. I also took notes in a reflective journal during the interviews, where I was able to note facial expressions, hand gestures, and body language that could not be captured by audio recording equipment.

The data collection process took 2 weeks between August 11 and August 25, 2015. Although I received IRB approval in July, due to summer break and vacations, I had to wait until the beginning of the new school year to conduct interviews. The interview data for each participant were kept in a colored file folder and labeled with a corresponding number, specific to that individual, in order to prevent contamination or other inaccuracies in recording, transcribing, or analyzing the recorded data.

The first interview was conducted with a teacher who had 8 years of teaching experience but was in her first year of teaching Grade 3. The interview lasted almost an hour. During the interview, I did note the fact that she shrugged her shoulders and shook

her head often while responding to questions about parental involvement. Her body language and facial expressions suggested that the subject of parental involvement was one that evoked feelings of sadness and possibly hopelessness. Participant 2's interview lasted a little more than an hour due to the lengthy and very detailed responses of the participant. Participant 2 had an extensive background in speech and oral language development and referred back to her background when responding to many of the interview questions. Participant 3, a third-year Grade 3 teacher, was the only interviewee who appeared to be nervous and at times cautious in regards to her answers. I offered reassurance that the interview would be kept confidential. Participant 4 had 17 years of Grade 3 teaching experience, which was the longest career in teaching of all four participants. This interview lasted just under an hour because the participant was expecting workers at her home. She graciously offered another interview, if necessary, and apologized for the seemingly rushed interview.

The interview questions were designed to solicit responses regarding the training and professional development that is required for teachers of ELLs as well as gain insight on the success and challenges of literacy teachers with instructing ELL students. The interview guide consisted of 11 questions:

1. Background: Tell me about your teaching career up to this point?
2. Background: Describe your philosophy on education.
3. Tell me about your experiences instructing ELLs.
4. What instructional strategies do you use to teach ELLs?
5. What type of training do you need to teach ELLs?

6. What do you feel is your greatest challenge in instructing ELL students?
7. What are some of your greatest successes in teaching ELLs?
8. If a student is having difficulty with the language acquisition process, what steps do you take to determine whether or not the difficulties do or do not stem from there being a second language?
9. If you find that there is “something else”, how does that affect the fact that there is also a second language issue?
10. What is your perception of the impact the integration of technology and literacy programs into the curriculum has on student achievement?
11. What is your perception of the effects of the current professional development program have on the instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs?

Before the start of an interview, I reminded each participant that the interview was being recorded with an audio recording device. Once collected, the data and consent forms were stored in a locked file cabinet at my home, with access limited only to me as the researcher, where they will remain for a period of 5 years following the conclusion of the study. All electronic files were kept on a password-protected computer. At the end of the 5 years, all printed files are to be shredded and all computer files are to be deleted.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I really had to take a step back during the data collection process to ensure my personal biases would not cloud my judgment due to the passion I held regarding helping my ELL students achieve academic success through effective

instructional strategies. I refrained from participating in any professional development involving ELL students so that the questions would not be influenced by information received through the training. Lodico et al. (2010) stated that in order to portray the participants' perspectives, I as the researcher, needed to develop an "insiders" point of view (p. 265). My position as a teacher of second language learners proved beneficial in that it gave me some insight into the experiences of the participants but by not having had any prior discussions pertaining to ELLs or any previous experience instructing ELLs in third grade, allowed me to operate outside of their team in my role as the researcher.

Data Analysis

After I collected the interview data, the long a tedious process of transcribing the data began. I tried to ensure that the transcription of the collected data took place within 48 hours of the interview so that the details of the interview would still be somewhat fresh in my mind. Transcription consisted of me listening to the audio recording repeatedly while manually writing the conversation on notebook paper. I then typed the conversations into a word document and looked for emerging themes. To verify the accuracy of my transcriptions, I checked my typed notes with the audio recordings.

Once that data had been transcribed, the coding process began. According to Creswell (2012), coding is defined as the process of breaking data into parts and placing those parts into descriptive categories or broad themes. All interview transcripts were transcribed by me and coded for emergent themes. Codes are used to help researchers identify the way the participants in the study accomplish tasks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This coding strategy was appropriate because the direction of the study was to closely

examine teacher practices and their experiences in the classroom. The identification of themes or major ideas, allowed the researcher to add depth to the insight of the experiences of those teachers and their instructional practices (Creswell, 2012).

Coding Procedure

I began the coding process by carefully reading through the transcriptions and made note of words and/or phrases that stood out or seemed to repeat as I read. This allowed me to get a sense of what was being revealed in the transcripts. As I read through each interview document, I made notes in the margin to indicate ideas, unique topics or thoughts, or when a question elicited an emotional response from the interviewee. These words were coded. Bogdan and Bilken (2007) noted that the words and phrases used to identify categories serve as a means for researchers to sort descriptive data. Working off my initial list of categories, I created codes for the list and then performed a more detailed analysis of each transcript in order to validate, eliminate, or add to my list of codes. I placed the codes beside the notes previously made and continued through all of my transcripts until each note made in the margin had been assigned a code. Creswell (2009) noted that the more traditional approach in the area of social sciences is to allow the themes to emerge during the data analysis process. For instance, while reading thoroughly through the transcripts, the word “training” appeared many times so I highlighted the word in blue. Once all transcripts had been analyzed, I looked more closely at the context in which the word “training” was used in order to identify a theme. The data revealed that “training” beyond certification was a concern shared by all four participants in the study. Once the themes were identified, I then assigned each of the five

themes a color (Table 3) and began to manually list the portions of each transcript that were assigned to each specific theme.

Table 3

Color Coding System Used for Identification of Themes

Color	Theme
Blue	Inadequate Training
Green	Professional Development
Yellow	Support at School
Orange	Parental Support
Red	Identification of Other Issues

For example, the sections of the transcription that contained references to the training program were highlighted with the color blue. When the coding process was finally completed, all of the transcripts had been color coded which allowed me to more easily locate and compare common answers as they related to the research question and each subquestion. Further detailed data analysis was conducted using a software program called NVivo for assistance in providing a more accurate and detailed analysis and to further validate the themes that I had identified and coded. Creswell (2012) noted that the use of a computer program that aids in the analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to more easily search through data, locate key information quickly, and assign codes or categories more easily. This allowed for a comparative analysis of the manually coded data. Once the analysis was complete, I scheduled follow-up meetings with all of the participants so that they could review the data. Themes were shared with the participants

during the follow-up meetings, at which time each participant reviewed the themes for accuracy of the transcription and coding process as a part of member checking for accuracy process (Creswell, 2012). Member checking was the process by which the participants reviewed my transcribed notes from the interviews to ensure their responses were accurately recorded. Participants had the opportunity to agree with the themes identified. This process provided credibility to the transcription and coding process performed by the researcher.

Evidence of Quality

Member checking is used by researchers to verify the accuracy of the reports obtained from interviews by asking the participants to review and verify what is reported from the interview and the accuracy of themes that may have been identified within the report (Creswell, 2012). My findings were member-checked to determine the accuracy of the findings. The participants gave me feedback on the findings for about 45 minutes in the library at the research site. Member-checking was also a way to validate the study as well as provide credibility to the findings of the study. By allowing the participants to review the transcribed interview notes and emergent themes identified in the study, I ensured my personal biases were not reflected in the data but rather the data were a true reflection of the thoughts and perceptions of the interviewees. Triangulation was done by reviewing the interview transcripts, member-checking, and my reflective journal and research log. By employing these methods to ensure evidence quality, I was able to ensure reliability and validity in the results that are reported.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases were considered and presented in the findings. Once data saturation has occurred, researchers often look for data that leads to alternate explanations, or discrepant cases. If there is not enough evidence found to support the discrepant case, then more confirmation can be given to the identification of the emergent themes presented by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Saturation is the point at which information tends to repeat itself over and over without there being any new information presented (Merriam). For example, participants may have revealed the same opinions regarding teaching ELLs or the same opinions on the available technology for instruction. After careful analysis of the data and triangulation of all sources, the following discrepant cases were noted and documented.

Analysis of the data revealed that the ability to communicate with students and parents due to language barriers was an area of great concern for the participants and often created barriers to effective relationship building between home and school and ultimately impacted student success. However, one participant shared a different experience due to being the only participant to actually speak a language other than English. This fact gave the participant an advantage not shared by the remaining three participants but served as a hindrance at times. She revealed that because she spoke Spanish, her parents expected her to deliver instruction in Spanish, rather than English, as an accommodation for their children thereby eliminating the necessity to learn and use the English language.

Another discrepant case was the fact that while three of the participants received their ESOL endorsement through a district program that consisted of six classes, one of the participants' received their endorsement through her degree program in Early Childhood Education. Receiving her endorsement through her college program provided a more thorough preparation for the instruction of ELL students. The other three participants shared that many of their classes were self-paced online classes with very little interaction from an instructor.

Another discrepant case, "lack of training", arose due to one of the participants having a degree and experience in speech pathology, which allowed for extensive training in language development and she was therefore able to transfer that knowledge and experience to the daily instructional practices used for her ELLs. She also had knowledge of specific interventions and strategies that could be used to make the acquisition process a little smoother for her students. These strategies and interventions were not a part of the county training program and therefore provided an advantage to this participant that the other participants lacked. While these particular cases had shared experiences in the instruction of ELLs, their backgrounds and previous experiences made their cases stand out in a unique way.

Limitations

The project was limited in the fact that there were only four participants in the study. The limited number of participants restricted the depth of investigation into the experiences of Grade 3 literacy teachers that could have been reached by the researcher had there been a larger group of participants. Another limitation was the focus of the

study being on one Title I school in one specific school district. Being able to make comparisons beyond the school district in the southeastern region of the United States may yield more issues that literacy teachers face as well as more viable solutions to assisting those teachers. Since the population sample for the study was small, increasing the sample size and including more research sites would present a better representation of the district. Interviewing the personnel that facilitate the ESOL teacher training program would have allowed for the problem to be addressed differently. Additionally, providing a questionnaire on teacher efficacy could have provided insight into the perceptions of teachers' effectiveness in their instruction of ELL students.

Data Analysis Results

Individual interviews were conducted to answer the main research question and three subquestions:

1. What are the experiences of Grade 3 literacy teachers instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom?
2. What instructional challenges and successes do literacy teachers experience while instructing ELLs?
3. What are the teachers' perceptions about the impact that the integration of technology and literacy programs into the curriculum has on student achievement?
4. What are the teacher's perceptions of the effects the current professional development program has on the instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs?

Demographic data were collected. These questions consisted of some yes or no items and short response items. The purpose of these questions was to ascertain how long the participant had been teaching, their degree(s), the number of years teaching Grade 3, and whether or not they held an ESOL certification or endorsement. Of the 10 literacy teachers who responded to the invitation to participate, all reported that they had taught ELL students within the past 2 years. Of these 10, three participants reported that it was their first year teaching Grade 3, one of which was a first year classroom teacher as well. Six participants had taught Grade 3 for 3-9 years and one had taught Grade 3 for more than 15 years. I wanted to choose participants with a different perspective to instructing ELLs based on their years of experiences teaching these students in a mainstream classroom and I chose the teachers: one teacher in their first year, one teacher who was in her first year of teaching third grade, one teacher in her seventh year of third grade, and one teacher who had taught third grade for more than 15 years.

Other information that I was able to obtain from the demographic data from the 10 teachers who expressed interest in participating in the study, was gender, native language, and whether or not any of the participants spoke a second language. All participants were females with careers in education that ranged from 2 years to 25 years with an average teaching career of 14.6 years. Two teachers shared that they were proficient in speaking and writing a second language fluently while a vast majority (80%) were native English speakers. When asked about their training in instructing ELL students, seven teachers stated that they received an endorsement through their district's training program that consisted of six classes. One of the teachers had started taking the

classes but found them too time consuming and decided to take the certification test in order to receive her ESOL certification. Another teacher was in the process of obtaining her ESOL endorsement and one had received her ESOL endorsement as a part of her degree in Early Childhood Education. Four individuals were selected to participate in the study based on their number of years teaching Grade 3 as well as their number of years teaching all together. The goal was to have individuals at varying phases of their careers so as to create a diverse group of participants to see how their experiences varied based on their number of years. I also wanted to see if the number of years had an impact on the experiences, challenges, and successes and if they were in fact positive or negative.

Teachers with shorter careers seemingly rely more upon information provided through their training program and have not yet had the opportunity to perfect, or nearly perfect, strategies and practices that would help to increase academic success with second language learners.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

RQ1 question for this project study was as follows: What are the experiences of literacy teachers teaching Grade 3 ELLs in a mainstream classroom? The transcripts from the four participants who were interviewed for the study were the most detailed source of data used to answer this question. When it comes to the experiences that these four individuals have had in instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom, their responses were very different.

Participant 1 described her experience in their instruction as being “just like early childhood, it’s all about language acquisition.” She said that the same strategies that were learned in pursuit of her early childhood degree were instrumental in her instruction of second language learners in that large amounts of exploratory play were the students are allowed to develop their oral language is key in the acquisition of the English language.

Having a background in Speech and Language gave Participant 2 a different experience in working with ELL students. Since becoming a classroom teacher, her work with language learners has “for the most part included students that have had other disabilities” in addition to being second language learners. With a background in Speech, her thoughts are in line with Participant 1 in stating that oral language and vocabulary development are key factors in the acquisition of a second language.

Participant 3 shared a different perspective on instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom due to the fact that she herself is a second language learner. She shared that, Well, being ESOL myself it’s been easier to understand the process of what students go through at first. Some of them are shy even though they can understand, but they are not able to read at first or the opposite, they are able to read, but are not able to speak the language. I use my experience in a way that I let them if they need to talk to me in Spanish then I listen, maybe I will answer them in Spanish, but repeat it in English. I ask them to make an effort to repeat it as well.

Participant 3 also reported that having obtained her major outside of the United States where she had never taught English had a huge impact on her being an ELL and a

teacher teaching the language at the same time. For her, the most difficult part was the listening part of learning the language, actually hearing the sounds and the way the words are pronounced and pronouncing them correctly with her heavy accent. She reported having gone through this process has served as a great benefit to her and her students as it has allowed her the opportunity to truly understand how scary and difficult the process of learning a different language can truly be.

While discussing her teacher career, Participant 4 shared that her career started in 1982 in a state in the Midwestern United States but soon after took time off to have children. She returned to the teaching field in 1990 in this southeastern school district. She went on to say that her career has span more than 25 years of which more than 15 have been instructing third grade students in different classroom settings.

I've had a variety of classrooms, both just regular ed. I've also done many inclusion classrooms, be it, ESE with SLD students where I've co-taught with teachers. I've taught speech language, co-taught with the speech language pathologist.

When asked about her experiences instructing second language learners, she revealed that she has had almost 20 years of experience teaching ELL students and have found that many of the strategies used in previous years with various student groups, also work well with second language learners.

I try to build prior knowledge whether that be just sharing experiences with other students, sometimes visual pictures so they can connect. I try to build prior

background vocabulary and constantly building vocabulary. Prior teaching is helpful if you have time to do that, especially with the vocabulary. A lot of that.

There were many similarities among the participants in regards to their overall experiences instructing ELL students in a mainstream classroom. The differences with their experiences depended upon the number of years in the classroom as well as the education and career paths that led to this particular moment. It is indeed those differences that affected their experiences with ELL students and their response to those students through the delivery of instruction and instructional practices. A lengthier career affords opportunities to develop, through a multitude of experiences, a repertoire of effective strategies to rely upon to assist students with the language acquisition process. In comparison, teachers with shorter careers and experiences with ELL students, depending upon their educational background, may not have acquired those effective strategies that can be employed in the classroom.

Research Question 2

The second research question in this project study was as follows: What instructional challenges and successes do literacy teachers experience while instructing ELLs? In regards to the greatest challenges in the instruction of ELL students, three of the four participants (75%), overwhelmingly stated that the language barrier or inability to communicate with their students was the greatest challenge. One of the participants, who happened to be bilingual, Participant 3 shared this challenge from a different perspective entirely. When asked about her greatest challenge in instructing ELLs, she responded,

I would say I have two challenges. The first one is even though it's a benefit (to be) able to speak Spanish, it is challenges at the same time because parents and students expect me to always do everything in Spanish. Translate books, translate homework, and talk to them in Spanish. Then they feel too comfortable, because the teacher speaks their language and they don't challenge themselves to move on from that stage. It is a part that I need to let them go little by little so they understand that it's time to move on.

Participant 3 had a clear advantage in being able to communicate with students and parents due to being bilingual, which certainly helps her students' facilitation of the language acquisition process. She stated some of their views on the challenges she has in her mainstream classroom. She reported,

The second one is when you don't have a student that speaks your same language that is going to be difficult sometimes to be able to understand, because of the culture. We also need to learn what is their culture? What kind of stuff do they do in order to help?

Participant 4 concurred with the group as communication with her students' parents being one of her greatest challenges in ensuring the success of ELL students. Participant 4 reported, "I am not a Spanish speaker (and) so for those families who only speak another language it's very, very difficult." Participant 4 emphasized that ELL population is mostly Spanish and there are several adults on campus that speak Spanish and as a result getting assistance with translations during conferences or having notes translated is not difficult provided those few teachers are not helping another teacher by

translation during a conference. At this point in the analysis process, the theme, lack of support within the school building, was identified. The participants had shared frustrations with materials and resources that are made available to them for use with ELL students and even went so far as to say that often times it is up to the teacher to either make materials or purchase them without reimbursement.

Participant 2 added a different perspective on the challenges in the classroom. Participant 2 noted that her greatest challenge was found in the expectations that are identified for second language learners. Participant 2 stated,

The challenge is probably getting them to progress and succeed under the stipulations that they're supposed to be meeting, while still allowing them to be an ELL student who isn't quite there. Sometimes we're requiring something of them that they're not quite ready for based on some criteria. For me the challenge has been bridging that gap allowing them to succeed and I think that's the struggle.

All of the participants shared their tireless quest to find as many resources as possible to provide the much needed support for their students with the language acquisition process, even to the point of purchasing materials themselves to send home or using teacher websites to print manipulatives and other resources for their students. Ideally, reinforcement from home can make a world of difference and can often enhance the learning process, but past experiences have shown that continues to be another challenge for teachers on a daily basis.

Participant 1 stated that she is feeling very frustrated with the lack of support that she receives from home with her ELL students substantiated the second theme that emerged, lack of parental support from home. She described her frustration,

Even though you've given them things that are available for them to use they don't always use it. Some do. They will use the portions that are available.

They're reading with their kids whereas others don't. They continue not to maintain the level of growth they need to with the rest of the class.

When asked about the success the participants have had in instructing ELLs in their mainstream classrooms, each participant shared unique responses. Participant 2, who has a background in speech and language and is trained in specific language disabilities, expressed that because she often has ELL students who have other disabilities, that "it's a success and nice to see that a student who is truly ELL, see them progress so rapidly and pick up the language and filling the gaps with what they already know and succeed."

Participant 3 stated, "I think every step of what they do it's important." Participant 3 stated added, "Even the smallest accomplishment like learning the ABC's or the vowel sounds, to being able to speak, to read, and try to be proficient in that second language is a success!"

In the field of education, every now and then teachers will encounter a unique situation. Participant 4 spoke of such a challenge while sharing her most memorable success with an ELL student. She spoke of a child from a country outside of Nepal and how challenging it was because she had no resources in his native language because the resources available would not translate to particular language. Participant 4 stated,

I just couldn't find things to really help him but it was amazing to see him learn and how quiet he was initially but when he eventually got to be comfortable with the children and take some risks of trying to share. One day he openly just shouted out in class and started saying his math facts, I about fell over! It was just so awesome. That's probably one of my best remembrances anyway.

Participant 1 shared a similar story with a student that had come from Puerto Rico and barely spoke English. But because this student had a strong foundation in Spanish, he did well and was reading above grade level by the end of the academic year. Of course this student had a strong support system at home and "was motivated with lots of support from brother and parents to help him along in first grade." All of the participants agreed that it is a wonderful accomplish when evidence of their hard work and a child's determination shows with each little milestone in their educational careers, but it is even more rewarding when a non-English speaker makes those same milestones in their academic careers when starting out with such a significant deficit.

Research Question 3

The third research questions in the project study was the following: What are the teachers' perceptions about the impact that the integration of technology and literacy programs into the curriculum has on student achievement? Participant 4 said, with advances in technology, there are certainly more pieces that can be used in the classroom "like being able to talk into your phone and having it translate, that's been a huge, huge plus with us, especially for me when I don't speak the language." Participant 4 stated that

there is certainly a lot more to choose from but also noted the costs of such programs and the district's inability to implement such programs.

Participant 3, who is also in favor of technology in the classroom, agreed that while you can use the visual enhancements for your students "sometimes we rely on technology too much and then we forget about the other things that we can do to help the students who need to also learn to interact with others." Participants 1 and 2 shared their love of technology in the classroom as an interactive way to increase student engagement. Participant 2 reported,

I absolutely love technology and I think we have to go that way because that's the way society is going. The issue currently is we haven't quite meshed the two in a way that's showing the data. Right now we're in that situation of getting it all together and there's a money issue...component technology costs money. To me it's a necessary cost that's going to have to be built in, but at this point we're in that transition stage and it's just not aligned very well.

Participant 2 also reported that the current school superintendent has pledged to match current government funds by 75% in order to put more technology in the hands of the students. Currently the school teachers and students use a computer program called Imagine Learning that helps ELL students learn the basic letter name and sound recognition, phonics, and vocabulary while building reading fluency and comprehension. Students also have online access to the reading, math, and sciences resources that are used for instruction in the classroom; however, online resources are currently limited to English and Spanish, which makes it a little more difficult for students who speak other

languages. All participants agreed that more resources need to be accessible in languages other than what is currently offered to help the students and families who speak a language other than Spanish.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question of this project study was as follows: What are the teachers' perceptions of the effects the current professional development program have on the instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs? In looking at all of the participants' transcripts in regards to their responses throughout the interview process, this particular question lacked the elaboration that other question responses received and yet the emphasis placed on professional development, another theme that emerged, in any field, elicited short responses from this group. When asked for the perceptions of the effects of the current professional development program on the instructional practices of teachers of ELLs, Participant 2, stated,

I'm not sure that I honestly can answer that. I'm not sure I know. From what I've seen professional development there hasn't been a lot of stress on the ELL. It's been more all-encompassing or the new standards, it's every child will meet this sort of thing. I haven't seen a lot just tailored to Ells to be honest.

Participant 2 also stated,

I wouldn't say it's so much instructional practices, as much as it has been at other times as much as I would like it to be we're at a point now where there's a lot of procedural stuff and a lot evaluation measures.

Participant 2 stated that professional development that she feels she needs, likes, or feels that will benefit her the most, she has to seek out personally. When asked the same question, Participant 1 explained that she had not had to participate in anything since becoming ESOL endorsed with the completion of her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education. Participant 2 stated then added that there had only been short trainings on specifics such as "with the staffing specialist with paperwork to fill out or when they would go over ESOL strategies again and about how to implement them or show them in our lesson plans." Participant 3 seemed to sum up the perceptions of the group and stated,

Well my perception is that it's not really impacting directly what we are doing. I can just say as a teacher and having a team, we collaborated to look at the standards exactly to understand what is mandatory for us to teach our students and for them to be able to learn and break it down and find those strategies and ways of presenting it to the students so they can learn how to read or how to understand and analyze what they're reading. It's not because of the impact or directly from any coach here at school. We just work it in, they say we go to this website or here are some books that you can read and figure it out, but not directly showing and modeling of how to do it.

The participants felt very strongly regarding the current professional development or lack thereof. The participants stated that the effects of professional development on the instructional practices of literacy teachers help ELL students.

Discussion of Key Findings

The findings from this study indicated that teachers felt that their experiences, with instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom were in and of themselves, no more frustrating than the challenges and successes faced in instructing native English-speaking students. There were factors present with ELL students that were not present with instructing their peers. The sample for the study consisted of four participants from the target population and equated to approximately 40% of the teacher population at the research site who had taught Grade 3. Analysis of the qualitative data identified five major themes that derived from the four research questions. The first finding was linked to the first, second, and third research questions. Analysis of the responses from what instructional challenges and success literacy teachers experience yielded three key themes: (a) lack of support at school lack of support at school from personnel within their building; (b) lack of parental support from home; and (c) lack of support in the identification of other issues associated with learning beyond second language.

Finding two is directly linked to research question 1 and question 4 and suggests that at times teachers feel under prepared and ill-equipped to deliver effective instruction. Two key themes emerged from the analysis of responses regarding teachers' perception of the effects the current professional development has on the instructional practices of literacy teachers: (a) inadequate training to instruct ELLs; (b) little to no follow-up professional development that is directly related to instructional practices specifically for ELL students.

Inadequate Training

The first theme was inadequate training to prepare teachers to provide instruction for second language learners which is linked to research questions 1, 2, and 4. A search of published research on the topic of teacher training revealed that in 2012 54% of the teachers in American public school had ELL students in their classrooms and only 20% of those teachers believed they were well prepared to teach them (Liu, 2013). Currently the training program for teachers consists of 6 classes that may be taken online or in person. Some of the teacher responses that resulted in the identification of this theme were:

I would say that the classes themselves weren't all that beneficial honestly, but a lot of it to me was just good teaching practices and it didn't pertain particularly to ELLs so I'm not sure that I would say it was all that helpful", and "When I was in college there were two specific courses that pertained to rules and laws that were passed for ESOL.

Further analysis of published research on teacher training revealed that literacy teachers of ELL's lack teaching skills to teach ELLs and 73% of urban school districts are in immediate need of ELL teachers (Liu, 2013). The process by which children acquire a second language, training to facilitate this process, and strategies and materials to assist in the development of the second language are a few of the skills teachers lack and are not efficiently receiving with the current professional development programs (Lakin, 2012; Nan et al., 2011; Orosco & Klingner, 2010). The participants shared that the required ESOL classes focused more on "just knowing what an ELL student might

struggle with, what you might encounter with a ELL student and how to try and prepare for those encounters” (Participant 2). Overall, the shared sentiment was that although the training is mandatory in this school district in order to keep your teaching certificate, very little of the training prepares teachers to provide efficient instruction to ELL students at their varying phases of language acquisition.

Lack of Professional Development

The second theme was the lack of professional development beyond the initial ESOL training that pertains to actual practices and strategies that teachers can use to provide instruction for language learners. This theme is directly linked to research question 4, which asks for the teachers’ perceptions of the effects of the current professional development on program have on instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs. According to Siping (2013), published research on teachers of second language learners revealed that they often suffer from weak professional development due to their being very few published works on teaching ELL students. Sample responses from which this theme emerged were, “Well my perception is that it’s not really impacting directly what we’re doing” and “Recently I wouldn’t say it’s so much based on instructional practices, as much as it has been at other times and as much as I would like it to be we’re at a point now where there’s a lot of procedural stuff and a lot of evaluation measures.”

Other common phrases that assisted in the development of the theme were, “I really haven’t had to participate in anything because I am ESOL endorsed (meaning she has completed the required 6 classes and received her certification). If there was anything

specific it usually pertained to the staffing specialist with paperwork to fill out or when they would go over ESOL strategies again about how to implement them or show the in our lesson plan”. And finally, when asked, Participant 4 replied:

I’m not sure that I honestly can answer that. I’m not sure I know how. From what I’ve seen of professional development there hasn’t been a lot of stress on the ELL. It’s been more all-encompassing or the new standards, it’s every child will meet this sort of thing. I haven’t seen a lot just tailored to ELLs to be honest.

Participants went on to add that most of the professional development opportunities that they feel are beneficial to them or that are of interest, they must seek independently.

Identification of Other Issues Related to Language Acquisition

The third theme was the lack of support in the identification of other issues that impede the acquisition of the second language. Some of the common phrase that helped to identify this theme were, “In hindsight a lot of times when we figure out that it was not an ELL issue we’ve taken a long time to do that,” “The process actually is not very clear”. They don’t really explain to us what to use or how to do it.” Other responses were, “It certainly is difficult to get the resources and help that you need. Trying to convince people that it’s more than just a language issue has been a major concern, I would say, because they just want to fall back on “Oh it’s language, it’s not an ESE issue, it’s just their language”, and “It becomes tedious and too long for students to become identified whether or not they have a learning issue”.

The participants shared their understanding of the 7-year timeframe in which it takes second language learners to fully acquire the language, but note that current policies in their district allow children to be removed from the ESOL program after only two years. Often the 2-year period is not sufficient to identify issues, not associated to language acquisition, that hinder to learning process. The teachers further expressed the need for teachers to be adequately training to identify learning problems that can be attributed to learning disabilities and how to provide interventions once identification is made.

Lack of Parental Support

The fourth theme was the lack of parental support from home as 3 of the 4 participants expressed that since they themselves did not speak a second language, it was very difficult to communicate the expectations of the classroom and assignments with parents. The teachers added that the language barrier and having very little bilingual staff prevented parents from reaching out to staff and teachers for assistance with curriculum. Sample common response that resulted in this finding included, “I would say a lack of support from home (is the greatest challenge). Even though you give them things that are available for them to use they don’t always use it” and, “probably my communication with their parents is probably my biggest struggle.” One of the participants is bilingual and while she shared that support from home was an issue for her as well, the communication piece was not as much as an issue for her than actually having the parents work with the students at home.

All of the teachers noted that when parents were active at home with the learning process then the students continue to maintain a level of growth that allows them to be successful. Bernhard (2010) suggested that teachers and staff are diligent in regards to communicating with them in regards to their child's progress, even with accurate translations; the information may still be incomprehensible to them. She further noted that often the case with the lack of participation is the parents' possible disagreement with some of the school's policies and even further, not fully understanding their role in being able to elicit changes in some of the policies and procedures that pertain to the instruction and assessment of their child.

Lack of Support at School

The fifth theme was a perceived lack of support at school with resources and personnel to assist in the instruction of their ELL population. All of the teachers reported concern with the availability of resources in languages other than English as a barrier to providing adequate instruction for language learners. Some of the sample teacher responses that resulted in this finding included common phrases such as, "I would say sometimes not having all their resources" and "I would say there should be a resource or a way that the school should help us in what to do with the kids or listen to your concerns and say this is what you should be using. This is how you should be helping them with strategies or intervention."

Teachers also reported that not having enough bilingual personnel on campus to assist teachers with translation for those students at the very beginning stages of language acquisition is another huge factor that impacts the instruction of second language

learners. In a study of high school science teachers, Cho and McDonnough (2009) noted that teachers' perceptions of their most significant needs for adequate instruction of ELL students included bilingual instructional materials, while noting that their most significant issue was the language barriers and their inability to properly communicate with their students. These sentiments were shared collectively by the participants in the study as the struggle to rely upon the few individuals within their building who fluently speak a second language.

Summary

I felt the shared experiences of the participants could shed light on an overwhelming issue in education. The instruction of ELLs is at times a massive undertaking not easily understood by those outside of the education field and yet it is those individuals who make the decisions regarding what is to take place in the classroom. My hope was to shed light on those decision making processes starting with the research site, then progressing through the learning community, and eventually our district.

There were a total of four teachers in the target population of 10 teachers who had taught Grade 3 within the past 2 years, who took part in the project study. Even though the sample size of four was small, causing a limitation to the depth of the study, the size closely mirrored the size of teaching teams at the research site as most teams consisted between four and six teachers. The four teachers who participated had an average teaching career that spanned 11 years with all of the teachers having had prior experience with instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom. The first theme was training provided

in order to instruct ELLs was perceived to be no more than an overall review of best teaching practices and yielded very little insight into the rigors of the second language acquisition process that ELLs go through beyond a glimpse of an overview. Most of the participants acknowledged that they had little training or a solid foundation of knowledge to teach language learners and without having the benefit of speaking a second language, instruction at times became an insurmountable task. The same sentiments were expressed in reference to the professional development that is offered and its effects on instructional practices, which was the second theme to emerge.

The participants expressed frustration in the amount of support available from administration to provide ELL support personnel, resources for home and school to assist in meeting the needs of this very diverse group of learners, which was the another theme, the third theme to emerge. Collectively, all of the teachers acknowledged that the language barrier is the major reason parental support from home, the fourth theme to emerge, is often non-existent. The availability of technology from home can facilitate the acquisition, provided there is access to the internet in the home.

Subsequently, there exists the issue of being able to determine if the language difference is the primary barrier to learning and communication or an underlying issue further complicated by the language difference. How then do we address an issue when we are not sure what the issue may be is a very difficult task at best for teachers who struggle with providing grade level content to ELL students. The identification of other issues arose as the fifth emergent theme in the analysis of the data. The teachers collectively share that it is very difficult to get the resources and help that is need in

helping to identify non-language issues as often times; it is easier to acknowledge the issue as a language rather than accept that there may be an underlying issue with and ELL student.

All of the teachers shared as their response to their greatest success in instructing language learners as being that very moment when a student whom they had received as a non-English speaker, carries on their first conversation or response independently to a question posed by the teacher. The participants agreed that an experience such as this makes all of the struggles and frustration with an otherwise broken system, well worth the trouble.

The findings from this case study using qualitative data collected from one-on-one interviews shaped the following conclusions:

1. The ESOL training program provided for teachers was little more than an overview of what to expect while instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom.
2. There is a lack of but an intense desire for professional development that is relevant to the topic of how to effectively instruct ELLs in the mainstream classroom.
3. With the lack of support from home and the lack of support with personnel and resources within the building, teachers are in need of a support system that will provide solutions to the challenges they face daily with providing adequate instruction for their second language learners.

The findings can be used for the development and implementation of a professional development program for teachers of ELL students. Literacy teachers are seeking relevant professional development that provides them with the tools, resources, and strategies that would allow them to provide effective instruction for their students. The participants sought support from outside of their classrooms from individuals that share in their successes; however, can also understand their challenges and provide needed support. Since the teachers shared that they must independently seek professional development that is beneficial to their pedagogy, a self-directed approach to a professional development program would allow teachers to continue to have autonomy in their choice to participate. Noting the ease of accessibility that technology offers, adding an online component would break the restrictions placed upon participation in traditional professional development programs being held in locations that are often inconvenient for teachers to attend. The program would consist of a series of roundtable discussion where teachers can discuss topics related to literacy instruction as well as share resources, strategies, and tools in a collaborative forum.

In Section 3, I present the project, which was created as a result of findings from the project study. The qualitative data collected and analyzed for the project study were taken into account and serve as the basis for the creation of this professional development program. The themes that were presented in the findings have been discussed in detail in this section. In Section 4, I present my reflections as a learner during this project study as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the project as it addresses the problem and the implications for future research opportunities.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this project study was to explore the experiences of Grade 3 literacy teachers who instruct ELL students in a mainstream classroom. Qualitative data were collected from one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with four participants at the research site who taught third grade ELL students in a mainstream classroom. The themes included professional development and training, support from within the building, and support from students' home as well as the identification of other issues related to the lack of academic success of their ELL students.

Description and Goals

The project that resulted from this study is a professional development program based upon the findings of the qualitative data collected. The professional development program will be a series of roundtable discussions culminating in a professional learning community (PLC) training conducted by the teachers who attend the discussions. The participants will also have access to a site created to allow teachers to continue their professional growth in a self-directed learning style.

The professional development program will include the five formed learning communities in this southeastern school district. Each learning community will hold a roundtable discussion for teachers of ELL students geared towards providing a support system to equip teachers with strategies, resources, and readily available materials to use within the classroom setting to help facilitate the instruction of the second language learners. These discussions will occur bimonthly starting 4 weeks after the start of the

school year. Teachers at each of the elementary schools in each learning community will receive a flyer noting the date and time of the roundtable discussion as well as an invitation to bring any resources, websites, and/or materials that they have found to be useful in the instruction of their ELL students.

The objective of the 10-week program will be to build a support network of personnel and resources for literacy teachers to rely upon during the course of the year. Teachers will have an opportunity to collaborate with peers across the district to address one universal issue—how to provide effective instruction for ELLs. Teachers will have access to resources and strategies that they may have never had an opportunity to explore the expertise and support shared by those peers who work tirelessly to perfect their art of teaching. The program will be refreshed and maintained by me each grading period so that the most recent and up-to-date information will be available.

Rationale

The professional development program that was developed in response to the results of this study is a 10-week process of conducting roundtable discussions, one in each of the five learning communities within the district, with a focus on providing support for literacy teachers who instruct ELL students in a mainstream classroom. The professional development is designed specifically to meet the needs of literacy teachers as outlined by the findings in the research study. Findings of the project study demonstrated a need for the development and implementation of a professional development program for teachers of ELL students that would provide them with the tools, resources, and strategies to provide effective instruction for their students. Teachers

would participate in a self-directed type of learning as participation is voluntary and use of the program is at the sole discretion of the individual teacher.

The results of the project study revealed that Grade 3 literacy teachers struggle with some of the same issues such as how to increase parental involvement and how to increase support within and outside of the building as well as other challenges that come with the instruction of ELL students in a mainstream classroom. With the many successes shared by these teachers, the challenges often outweigh those bright moments, leaving teachers with feelings of frustration and helplessness.

The conceptual framework was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce certain outcomes such as successful instruction of ELLs. Cellante and Donne (2013) expressed that the low levels of achievement among ELL students leave teachers feeling unsuccessful and unprepared to provide quality instruction. When a teacher's belief regarding his or her ability to perform his or her job as an educator changes, those new beliefs affect his or her behaviors, attitudes, and performance which in turn directly affects the academic success of his or her students.

This project is designed to offer a support system for teachers of second language learners as well as equip those teachers with the skills and resources to implement professional development through the PLCs on their campuses; allowing them to regain and even maintain their belief regarding their effectiveness as educators. The willingness to participate and flexibility are critical elements to the success of this program. The online component of the professional development program would house all of the

information from the roundtable discussions as well as resources and links to resources on all of the six areas of reading that teachers could share and utilized as needed. The benefits are innumerable and participation is open to all teachers at all grade levels across all subject areas.

Review of the Literature

The literature review in Section 1 addressed several key points. First, the literature revealed a lack of effective professional development and training for teachers of ELLs in all grade levels. Secondly, the literature suggested that there is a diminished confidence level in teachers when it comes to assessing and monitoring the progress of their ELL students, and often teachers devalue the insight and support that could be offered from collaboration with peers. Finally, research revealed that literacy teachers have difficulty implementing strategies and practices that would enhance the learning process for this very diverse group of learners. This section contains a literature review of sources published from 2005 through 2015 and covers the topics of professional development and training, the importance of the implementation and maintenance of effective PLCs within the building, and a support system, in and out of the building, to provide teachers with the necessary support personnel and resources to adequately instruct ELL students.

I conducted the literature review using a variety of online databases, some of which were ED/IT Digital Library, ProQuest Central, Educational Research Complete, ERIC, and Sage Premier. In the searching process, I used search terms such as *professional development, professional learning communities, English language learner, self-directed learning, collaboration, andragogy, and literacy teachers* either individually

or in combination with one or more of the other terms in order to locate relevant articles and other sources.

Self-Directed Learning

Adults gaining knowledge and expertise and having control over their learning process is what Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012) defined as adult learning. Knowles et al. discussed the concept of andragogy as a “set of core adult learning principles,” and self-directed learning is a key component of the six principles (p. 2). The term andragogy became a popular phrase in the early 1970s thanks to Knowles. The term describes the differentiated way in which adults learn as compared to the way children learn. Those key differences are found in the motivation for learner, the need to know *why* before they engage in the learning process, and the learner’s prior experiences. Furthermore, Knowles et al. noted that “as individuals mature, their need and capacity to be self-directing, to use their experience in learning, to identify their own readiness to learn, and to organize their learning around life problems increases steadily” (p. 60). Therefore, the goal of the professional development program created from this project study needed to provide teachers with these precise criteria in order to be effective and readily applicable to the challenges they face in the mainstream classroom. Allison and Rehm (2011) recognized the fact that many teachers struggle to meet the needs of ELLs in mainstream classrooms and have difficulty implementing strategies and practices that would enhance the learning process for this very diverse group of learners.

The premise of self-directed learning, as identified by Knowles et al. (2012), centers on two major concepts, self-teaching and personal autonomy. The first asserts that

teachers are more than capable of controlling the “mechanics and techniques” of teaching themselves a desired subject or topic. The latter assumes that teachers take ownership of the learning when they are allowed to take control of the goals and purpose of their learning (p. 184). As powerful as self-directed learning can be, Parise, Finkelstein, and Alterman (2015) emphasized, “The most useful professional development opportunities involved learning from or with other teachers” (p. 2). Snow (2010) stated that even after beginning a self-directed learning approach, support is valuable to the learner to provide ongoing support for an extended period of time while modifying and redefining the focus of study. The professional development program that was created from this project study will provide a continuous support system for self-directed learning that will be reviewed on a consistent basis to determine the need for changes and/or modifications to the platform.

The collaborative learning environment is the optimal growth in instructional knowledge and practice experience for teachers. Loyens, Magda, and Rikers (2008) reported that learning is not an individual task, that it requires relationships with others. Further research, Lee, Tsai, Chait, and Koht (2014) indicated that when self-directed learning and collaborative learning are paired, learners are paired in learning situations with more capable peers and ultimately they will “appropriate the problem-solving strategies of the more capable person and use those strategies to solve their own problems” (p. 427). Slavit and McDuffie (2013) reported that when teachers have the autonomy and resources to choose their own opportunities for active learning, they can

overcome barriers to their own development as an educator and thereby improve their students' academic success (p. 3).

Professional Development

Soto-Hinman (2010) noted that professional development and teacher training programs must become more focused and aligned regarding the coursework involved in the training program and the reflective opportunities that come with professional development in order to better prepare teachers to be more sensitive and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of the ELLs. More and more, research has shown that promoting professional learning communities is an effective way to provide teachers with the professional development necessary to continually perfect their craft (Blitz, 2013). Blitz (2013) stated that it is the cultivation of these PLCs that allows schools to improve student achievement, thereby making teaching and classroom practices more effective. Analysis of the data revealed that teachers felt there was little to no follow up on professional development once their initial training had been completed. This revelation was the guiding force behind the development of this program. Teachers also shared that they were in need of information and training that was relevant and that could be readily applied to the classroom.

Dufour et al. (2008) stressed that in order for students to learn at their highest possible levels, teachers must constantly seek the best strategies for helping their students. With very little being offered in the way of professional development that is specifically designed for ELL students, teachers, through this project, will have the opportunity to learn from a community of teachers who face the same challenges and

celebrate the same successes. Cellante and Donne (2013) shared that in 2001 teachers reported that they had received only an average of about 4 hours of training in instruction and of those teachers, only 26% were likely to receive any professional development related to ELLs (p. 2). According to Cellante and Donne, actions by the U.S. Department of Education are requesting the creation of improved professional development programs for ELL teachers. Additionally, Short (2013) stressed that the creation of new professional development programs would not be enough and stressed the need for there to be changes made in the “materials used, teaching approaches, and the belief in what people do and think” in order to achieve the desired effect of the professional development program (p. 148). The major goal of the project is to engage teachers in collaborative discussion on the strategies and resources that they can share with fellow teachers for increasing academic success in their ELL population. Using PLCs, teachers will seek to discover and implement the best practices in teaching and thereby become self-directed learners who have control over what they learn and how they learn. By providing teachers this ownership, learning becomes more focused and more valuable.

Professional Learning Communities

Adams and Vescio (2015) shared that professional learning communities consist of individuals who need different things in order to learn and who may be at drastically different places in their careers or their levels of teaching abilities. Taking this fact into consideration, a collaborative learning group derived from a roundtable discussion group would serve a greater benefit than having teachers sit through a training session that may or may not address their individual needs. Adams and Vescio stated that in order to

maximize the impact of the PLC as a method of professional development, a focus for teachers should be on the collective as well as the individual learning. In 2010, Green, Foote, Walker, and Shuman revealed through their research on professional learning communities how vital it is that a professional development program have as a foundation, small PLCs so that teachers can meet regularly to discuss their students and their work in the classrooms (p.149).

The professional development program platform would allow teachers to continue to pull what they need from the group (individual) while sharing (group) strategies and resources that have proved successful in their individual classrooms.

Professional Development Program

The project that resulted from this study is a professional development program that was based upon the findings of the project study. Five themes emerged: (a) inadequate training; (b) lack of professional development; (c) lack of support at school; (d) lack of parental support; and (e) lack of support in the identification of other issues. The findings from one-on-one interviews shaped the following conclusions: (a) the ESOL training program provided for teachers was little more than an overview of what to expect while instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom; (b) there is a lack of but an intense desire for professional development that is relevant to the topic of how to effectively instruct ELLs in a mainstream classroom; and (c) there is a lack of support from home as well as from within the building with personnel and resources, necessitating the need for a support system to help provide solutions for the challenges teachers face with the daily delivery of instruction.

Cellante and Donne (2013) expressed that the low levels of achievement among ELL students leave teachers feeling unsuccessful and unprepared to provide quality instruction. Cellante and Donne (2013) stated that in 2001 teachers reported that they had received only an average of about four hours of training in instruction and of those teachers, only 26% were likely to receive any professional development related to ELLs (p. 2). As astonishing as those numbers are, that is the reality that teachers face each year which is why a professional development program of this type could prove to be a viable solution. Teachers will have access to resources and strategies that they may have never had an opportunity to explore as well as the expertise and support shared by those peers who work tirelessly to perfect their art of teaching. The program will be refreshed and maintained each grading period so that the most recent and up-to-date information will be available.

The objective of the 10-week program will be to build a support network of personnel and resources for literacy teachers to rely upon during the course of the year. Teachers will have the opportunity to collaborate with peers across the district to address one universal issue-how to provide effective instruction for ELLs. Teachers will have access to resources and strategies that they may have never had an opportunity to explore the expertise and support shared by those peers who work tirelessly to perfect their art of teaching. The program will be refreshed and maintained each grading period so that the most recent and up-to-date information will be available.

The professional development program consists of a series of five roundtable discussions with one meeting held in each of the five learning communities within this

school district. There will be five sessions in each learning community. By hosting a different meeting in each of the learning communities, I hope to build a larger collaborative network of literacy teachers that may not be possible with hosting all of the meetings in one particular area of the city. There will be no restrictions placed on the number of sessions each teacher must attend, but ideally attendance at all of the sessions is highly encouraged to maximize the benefit of the program. The roundtable discussions will be facilitated by the researcher. I will provide copies of resources for the planning process as well as information relevant to the four areas of instructional focus for ELL students as outlined in the SIOP model and examples of different types of assessments for each of the six areas of reading. Participants will be encouraged to either bring a copy of the district's plan for ELL instruction or they can access the plan from the meeting via the group's website as all of the information will be posted in a district resource folder. Teachers will also be encouraged to bring any SIOP instructional tools or resources they utilize in the classroom.

The learning objectives of these discussions will begin with an overview of things to consider while instructing ELL students such as culture and attitudes towards school and learning. Next, we will discuss the elements of lesson planning and participants will have the opportunity to create a lesson plan focusing on a specific area of reading. The program will also serve as a continuous platform for teachers to share the answers that they have discovered through instruction.

Each session meeting will have a specific objective, last approximately an hour and a half, and will focus on reading utilizing the Sheltered Instruction Observation

Protocol (SIOP), which is often used in preparation of instruction of ELL students. There will be sessions throughout the year to provide teachers with training of 10 full days. The protocol places emphasis on the four areas of focus; listening, speaking, reading, and writing the English language. It is important for teachers to consider how these areas will be addressed in each lesson to enhance the acquisition process. Teachers will be asked to share answers to questions such as “what works”, “what doesn’t work”, and “what to do if it doesn’t work” within the sessions. The answers will serve as a means to reassure fellow educators they are not alone in their instructional practice struggles with ELLs.

Each discussion will begin with a PowerPoint presentation in which the purpose of the meeting will be explained. Teachers will be asked to complete an opening activity where they write down 5 strategies they have found to be useful in teaching their language learners sound patterns or word parts and to list them in order of effectiveness. With each roundtable discussion, the opening activity will focus on that particular area of reading. The activity will be followed by the explanation of the goal of the program and the objective of the day’s meeting that will be based on SIOP. Teachers will then participate in an ice-breaker activity to help relieve and anxieties they may have surrounding the uncertainties of what lies ahead.

The participants will also have access to a website that was created to allow teachers to continue their professional growth in a self-directed learning style. Professional development will be offered at five different locations within the southeastern school district, of which one was the research site. Each PLC will consist of a roundtable discussion for teachers of ELL students in order to equip teachers with

strategies, resources, and readily available materials to use within the classroom setting to help facilitate the instruction of the second language learners. Teachers at each of the elementary schools in each learning community will receive a flyer noting the date and time of the roundtable discussion as well as an invitation to bring any resources, websites, and/or materials that they have found to be useful in the instruction of their ELL students. Following each meeting, information will be shared on the ELL support group website that has been created by the researcher.

The resources needed for the success of the project are access to a copier and paper to print the flyers, evaluations, and agendas. At each meeting location, access to a meeting room, the internet and smart board or promethean board would be needed for use during the discussion. Any paper, writing utensils chart paper and other office supplies would be provided by the researcher. The existing supports include the participation of the schools and peers who have offered to volunteer at the discussions. Potential barriers would include a lack of interest in participation on behalf of the teachers at each location. As a possible solution to this barrier, I would request to address the staff at a faculty meeting if response is limited or nonexistent.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The project created as a result of this study is a series of five roundtable discussions which will serve as a self-directed professional development for teachers of ELL students at the elementary school level. The agenda and flyers were created by the researcher as well as the online discussion board, “parking lot” that will be shared with the discussion groups. It would be at the sole discretion of the administrative staff to offer

any credits for participation in the discussion groups. The only requirement is the ability to access the internet in order to access the online discussion board.

Potential Barriers

The foremost potential barrier to this program is the lack of motivation on the part of the individual teachers who would be invited to participate in the roundtable discussions. Unless the administrative staff at individual schools offers any type of intrinsic reward for attendance, pure desire and interest will be the determining factors for a teacher to attend. Family or other obligations may also be a barrier for teachers to participate. Since the meetings would be held after the duty day, teachers may have family or other job obligations that would prevent them from attending the discussions. Another potential barrier would be the neglect of the staff at the school sites to distribute the flyers so that the teachers are not notified of the roundtable discussions. Unless I am allowed to place the flyers in the teachers' mailboxes, I have no way of knowing if they were in fact distributed.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The implementation of the professional development program, a series of roundtable discussions, would take place four weeks after the start of the new school year. The discussions would take place bi-monthly, or every two weeks, from September 2016 through November 2016. The details of the project are outlined below.

1. Analysis of the data collected from the research study indicated a need for the creation of a professional development program with a self-directed learning approach. The program would be designed to provide teachers of ELL

students a collaborative support system where ideas, strategies, and resources could be shared and readily implemented with the classroom setting.

2. Locations for the five roundtable discussions, one in each learning community, would be identified and reserved.
3. A discussion board, “parking lot”, would be created and maintained by the researcher. This tool would serve as an online resource and support system for the teachers.
4. A flyer/invitation would be created and distributed 30 days before the date of each meeting. A half-sheet reminder would be created and disbursed two weeks before each meeting. The flyer would ask for requested topics of discussion as well as other topics/items that could be shared.
5. Based on the feedback from the invitation, an agenda would be created for each meeting and sent electronically to each perspective attendant.
6. A formative evaluation would be created for each roundtable discussion as well as a more inclusive evaluation for the completion of the series of roundtable discussions. The later would allow for the discussion of any teacher-led professional development that took place as a result of the roundtable discussion.

The first step in the implementation process is to prepare all of the necessary components needed for a successful launch. This includes the creation of the agenda for the roundtable discussions as well as work through the logistics of each meeting including time, location, and date of the meeting. A flyer for the roundtable discussions

was created to include the format for the discussion as well as location specifics and the process by which participants would participate in the meeting. The flyer also contains the name of the facilitator as well as the dates, times, and locations of all of the roundtable discussions that are to take place. The “parking lot” discussion board was created and verified as fully operational at least 30 days before the date of the first roundtable discussion. Copies of the flyer would be printed and mailed to each elementary school in the learning community where the first meeting would be held. Other decisions such as refreshments and technology support would be decided upon and a plan created for inclusion. Light refreshments consisting of water, cookies, and small candy would be purchased by the researcher and 2 days prior to each meeting. In advance of each meeting, the availability and permission for use of technology to include smartboards and computers, will be discussed with the principal or designee at each location. Thirty days from the date of the first meeting, the flyers will be delivered to the schools and placed in teacher’s mailboxes. I would request that the principal discuss the flyer at the earliest staff meeting as well to increase awareness of the event. Two weeks later, a half-sheet reminder flyer would be sent to the schools as a follow-up to the original invitation.

The next step was to create a teaching format for the facilitation of the roundtable sessions. I decided that a PowerPoint presentation would be easily accessible and can be altered quickly if necessary. The presentation would include background information on the program, the facilitator and its purpose. I felt it necessary to share a little background on the cultural differences that may affect the educational process for some of our ELL

students. Participants would first be asked to take part in an opening activity where they are asked to write down at least 3 strategies, pertaining to the topic, they have found useful in the classroom and rank them in order of effectiveness. The strategies listed will be shared with group as well as be retyped by the facilitator and placed on the site under the appropriate session. Each session would begin in this manner and strategies for all of the areas of reading will be placed in the appropriate folders on the site.

Completion of the PowerPoint presentation for the roundtable discussion would include provide a possible format for a follow-up professional development to give attendees an idea of how to present the information shared at the meeting. The agenda will also include information on the purpose and the accessibility of the “parking lot” discussion board that will be set up as online support resources for teachers of ELLs. The flyer would also ask teachers to reply with a topic of desired discussion, as well as ask to bring resources, be prepared to share what works well, links, and strategies to the group.

Discussion would then begin on the area of focus with some background, samples of strategies, and a discussion of the task the participants would complete on the specific topic. Teachers would be placed into groups, by grade level if possible, and would have a certain amount of time, 30-40 minutes, to complete a lesson plan, for the area of focus, using the template and resources provided. Once completed, teams would have the opportunity to share their ideas and strategies. Copies of the lesson plans would be made and uploaded to the site so that individuals who could not attend the meeting would have access to the information created and shared. The PowerPoint for each session would also be placed in the appropriate folder under the corresponding date of the meeting.

Attendees will also have an opportunity to see the site as it will be accessed during the roundtable discussion. At the conclusion of each roundtable discussion, each attendee would be asked to complete a short, five question survey that would ascertain their perception of the effectiveness and/or helpfulness of the meeting. Participants would also be notified that they would receive a more detailed summative evaluation following the conclusion of the final roundtable discussion as the attendees would have the opportunity to attend other roundtable discussions within the district. The follow-up evaluation would include questions regarding any professional development that the attendee was able to lead or participate in as a result of the roundtable discussion and its effectiveness on their instructional practices. They will also be asked to encourage their peers to attend the next session. The feedback received from each meeting will allow changes to be made in the format, presentation, or resources provided for upcoming meetings.

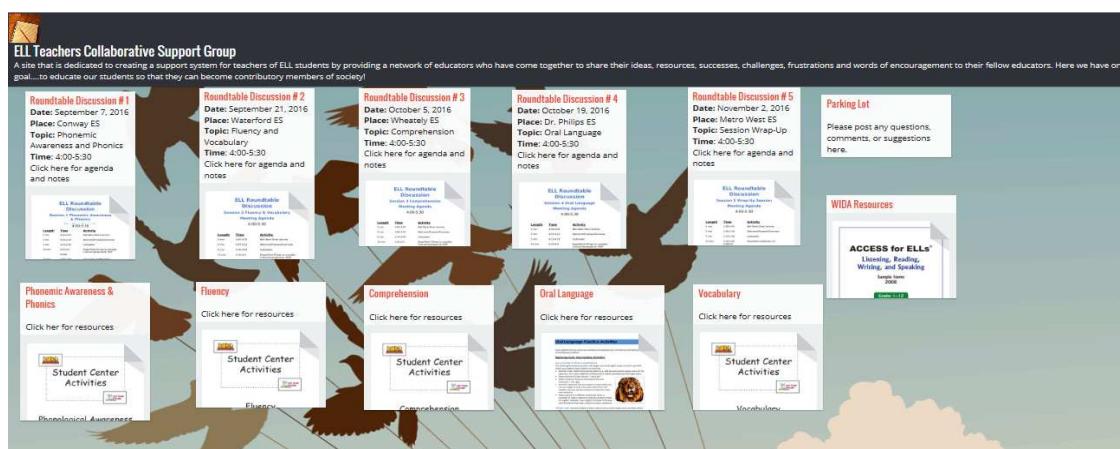


Figure 1. Screenshot of ELL support group website.

Benefits of the Professional Development Program

The school district where this study will be conducted has decreased educational programs such as bilingual classrooms, where instruction is given in both languages, and sheltered classrooms, comprised of only ELL students. These changes have resulted in mainstream classroom literacy teachers teaching ELLs with little to no professional development beyond the initial certification process. At the research site: (a) elementary schools have the highest number of ELLs at 30,032 or 16% of its student population (“ELL Students Increase,” 2012), (b) the number of ELLs has increased over the past 5 years to over 32% of student population, (c) ELLs are not meeting AYP, and (d) ELLs do not pass the state tests in reading (Table 2). The project created as a result of this study will provide teachers access to a collaborative network of teachers of ELLs who are willing to share the content specific resources, strategies, and resources to assist with providing instructional support to ELLs while helping teachers perfect their teaching craft.

Data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2012 54% of the teachers in American public school had ELL students in their classrooms and 20% of those teachers believed they were well prepared to teach them (Liu, 2013). Literacy teachers of ELL’s lack teaching skills to teach ELLs and 73% of urban school districts are in immediate need of ELL teachers (Liu). Since there are no restrictions to grade levels or geographical regions, this program can be utilized as is or modified to fit any group of teachers in any content area to provide support for teachers and produce academic success in their students.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

I designed the professional development program as a direct result of the project study. The flyers/invitations were my creation as well as the agendas and PowerPoint presentations for each roundtable discussion. I created the online discussion board, “parking lot” and will provide the maintenance for the website. I will monitor the evaluations from each session as they are completed and utilize the information to make adjustments to future discussions. It will be the sole responsibility of the teacher to participate in the roundtable discussions and it is their motivation that will lead them to access the online discussion board and utilize the tools, strategies, and resources presented either at the meetings or on the online site. Should any school administrator decide to use the program within their building as a means of professional development, it would be their responsibility to ensure completion and assign any points necessary for certification purposes.

Project Evaluation

The overall objective of this evaluation is to judge or determine the worth of the professional development program created as a result of the findings in this qualitative case study (Spaulding, 2014). Cellante and Donne (2013) and Peterson (2016) further elaborated on the purpose of a program evaluation is to provide “timely and constructive” information that could be used in making decisions regarding the program being evaluated. At the completion of each roundtable discussion, a formative evaluation will be given to each participant to solicit feedback on the relevancy and effectiveness of the roundtable discussions. The purpose of a formative evaluation as noted by Spaulding

(2014) is to change or make better the very thing being studied. In this case the researcher is studying the effectiveness of the discussions so that adjustments can be made and applied before the commencement of the next roundtable discussion.

The participants will be asked to reflect upon their perception on the roundtables' effectiveness in preparing them to conduct their professional development. Prior to the commencement of the roundtable discussions, I will ask a coach who is very familiar in creating and conducting professional development sessions at the school level to review my resources and format and request feedback and make any necessary changes to the format of the program.

The goal of the self-directed professional development is to provide literacy teachers with a platform (roundtable discussions) for them to receive the tools, resources, and strategies that would allow them to provide effective instruction for their students while simultaneously seeking and receiving support from outside of their classrooms from individuals that share in their successes but can also understand their challenges and provide needed support.

The tool that will be used as the formative evaluation was created by the researcher. The evaluation itself is outcomes-based as it will focus on the effectiveness of the program in increasing student success by improving instruction practices and strategies. By providing the participants with a short formative evaluation to complete, changes can be made within the two-week time frame before the next roundtable discussion takes place.

At the conclusion of the final roundtable discussion, a summative evaluation would be sent to all participants to further determine the relevance and effectiveness of the program but to also ascertain whether or not the participants provided any further professional development at the school site. The final, summative evaluation will consist of approximately 7-8 questions in both a multiple choice and short answer format. The goal of the evaluation will be to collect information from the participants who attend the roundtable discussions in order to make adjustments to the format or contents of the discussions to determine if the goals of the project should be adjusted. I will also collect information on the online discussion, “parking lot,” so that changes to the format and relevancy of the site can be made to ensure that teachers get the most benefit from the use of the site as well as the application of knowledge and resources obtained from the site. All of the feedback received will be used to make the program more effective for future participants.

The key stakeholders involved in this professional development program will be the teachers who choose to participate and/or any school who may choose to participate in the professional development program. Their participation depends solely on their motivation to participate or the influence of their administrative staff to participate. Some of the teachers may be motivated by the opportunity to try a new approach to seeking help with the challenges they face with supporting their ELL students and view the professional development as means to grow professionally as an educator. The program would also be available to those schools who wish to use it as a professional development

offering as credit towards certification or other internal program for teachers and support staff.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

This study has identified a need for relevant professional development that extends beyond the initial certification of ELL teachers that would be meaningful and easily transferrable to the classroom. This need has a direct impact on social change in that it provides a much needed opportunity for accessible and relevant professional development that is available to all teachers in this school district. The school district where this study will be conducted has decreased educational programs such as bilingual classrooms, where instruction is given in both languages, and sheltered classrooms, comprised of only ELL students. These changes have resulted in mainstream classroom literacy teachers teaching ELLs with little to no professional development beyond the initial certification process. At the research site (a) elementary schools have the highest number of ELLs at 30,032 or 16% of its student population (“ELL Students Increase,” 2012), (b) the number of ELLs has increased over the past 5 years to over 32% of student population, (c) ELLs are not meeting AYP, and (d) ELLs do not pass the state tests in reading (Table 2). The project created as a result of this study will provide teachers access to a collaborative network of teachers of ELLs who are willing to share the content specific resources, strategies, and resources to assist with providing instructional support to ELLs while helping teachers perfect their teaching craft.

Far-Reaching

The project that was created from this research study has implications not only at the local level, but for teachers on the global level. Data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2012 54% of the teachers in American public school had ELL students in their classrooms and 20% of those teachers believed they were well prepared to teach them (Liu, 2013). Literacy teachers of ELL's lack teaching skills to teach ELLs and 73% of urban school districts are in immediate need of ELL teachers (Liu). Since there are no restrictions to grade levels or geographical regions, this program can be utilized as is or modified to fit any group of teachers in any content area to provide support for teachers and produce academic success in their students.

Summary

The project created as a result of this research study is a series of roundtable discussions with a focus on a self-directed learning style of professional development as outlined in Section 3. The qualitative data that were collected and analyzed were considered and served as the basis for the creation of this project. The emergent themes presented in the analysis process were further researched and presented also in Section 3. These themes or topics were follow-up professional development beyond the initial training, support from within the building with professional development or challenges within the classroom. The language barrier and support from home were the remaining themes that emerged from the data analysis. The topics that were addressed on the literature review were professional development, self-directed learning, professional learning communities, and support from outside of the building for ELL teachers.

The findings from this study indicated that teachers felt that the experiences, positive and negative, of instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom were in and of themselves, no more frustrating than the challenges and successes faced in instructing native English-speaking students. There were factors present with ELL students that were not present with instructing their peers. The focus of the professional development is on training of and support to teachers of ELL students. The goal of the self-directed professional development is to provide literacy teachers with a platform (roundtable discussions) for them to receive the tools, resources, and strategies that would allow them to provide effective instruction for their students while simultaneously seeking and receiving support from outside of their classrooms from individuals that share in their successes but can also understand their challenges and provide needed support.

The results of the qualitative case study showed that the participants felt that there had been little to no professional development received since the completion of their ESOL endorsement requirements and a lack of support from both within and outside of the building with personnel and materials that could aid in the delivery of instruction with enhanced instructional practices for literacy teachers. The professional development program will help to promote social change by providing a cost-effective, teacher-led, truly collaborative professional development program to teachers of all genders and ethnical backgrounds who share a common goal for our children. In Section 4, I present my reflections as a learner during this project study as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the project as it addresses the problem and the implications for future research opportunities.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the challenges and success of Grade 3 literacy teachers who instruct ELLs in a mainstream classroom. The school district where this study was conducted has decreased educational programs such as bilingual classrooms, where instruction is given in both languages, and sheltered classrooms, comprised of only ELL students. These changes have resulted in mainstream classroom literacy teachers teaching ELLs. Each academic school year, 50% of the students in each demographic group must show academic gains over the previous year on the state standardized test. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) requires schools to demonstrate that ELLs are making continuous progress in English language development. The results of the study revealed that teachers felt they were in need of professional development beyond the completion of the district mandated training program.

Soto-Hinman (2010) noted that professional development and teacher training programs must become more focused and aligned regarding the coursework involved in the training program and the reflective opportunities that come with professional development in order to better prepare teachers to be more sensitive and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of the ELLs. The qualitative case study and proposed project both revealed that teachers felt there was little to no professional development offered after the completion of the required teacher training for the instruction of ELL students. The goal of the project was to further clarify the challenges faced by literacy teachers who instruct ELLs in a mainstream classroom and provide a support system for these

teachers with resources, strategies, and techniques that will provide much needed assistance in the classroom, which was expressed as a great concern by the participants in the study. In this section, I discuss my reflections on my role as a researcher through this project study process as well as a summary of the results of the study. This section will also include a description of the recommended project that could be developed as a result of the findings of the qualitative case study. The implications for further research as well as the social impact of the project are discussed in this section.

Project Strengths

Data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2012 54% of the teachers in American public school had ELL students in their classrooms and 20% of those teachers believed they were well prepared to teach them (Liu, 2013). Literacy teachers of ELLs lack teaching skills to teach ELLs, and 73% of urban school districts are in immediate need of ELL teachers (Liu, 2013). The project that was created as a result of this study addresses the issue of teachers' beliefs in their preparedness to teach ELLs in a mainstream classroom. The strengths of this project, as they pertain to the issues identified in the study, are as follows: (a) the project will provide five different roundtable discussions within the district, which provides more opportunities for teachers to attend as they will not be limited to only one date, and (b) the online component, the parking lot, will be available to anyone at any time so that teachers may participate in the self-directed professional development.

Project Limitations

The project was limited in the fact that the focus group for the roundtable discussions was literacy teachers in this specific school district. Being able to include other content area teachers would have provided more insight for literacy teachers as reading extends into all content area as a necessity for comprehension of the content material and could provide more viable solutions to assist those teachers.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

One way to approach the problem differently would be to seek the assistance of the district offices for support in obtaining resources and materials to present to teachers at the roundtable discussions. Including district personnel would allow them to receive firsthand knowledge of the struggles and success teachers experience with instructing ELL students in a mainstream classroom. Another recommendation would be to begin the discussions before the commencement of school so that teachers felt well prepared to begin instruction from Day 1. The research study and the project focused on the issue from the teachers' perspective; an alternative approach would be to conduct a meeting for parents of ELL students, with bilingual personnel on hand, to discuss ways to help their children at home and provide resources to the parents that can be used at home. Possible solutions to the lack of academic success of ELLs, beyond this project, would consist of the district revamping their training program and the types of professional development offered to be more relevant to what teachers actually need and can be easily applied in the classroom. When considering the alternative, cost is always a factor and the district would need to provide funding for such an undertaking.

Scholarship

Since beginning a career in teaching in 2005, I have felt drawn to the challenges faced by teachers of ELL students. Because I had a degree in economics and not early childhood education, I struggled the first few years with my instruction of ELLs. Upon completing the required district training program, I realized that I felt that I was no better prepared than before the training program. That feeling motivated me to learn as much as I could about the language acquisition process and how I could better reach my students. The research project provided a way for me to closely examine some of my previously held beliefs as well as challenge others. I was able to stand outside of the problem versus being consumed by it so that I could view the issue from a scholarly standpoint. In doing so, I was able to look beyond my own needs and identify the needs of others.

A review of the literature revealed that little research has been conducted on teacher knowledge and education in the area of ELLs (Siping, 2013). Administrative staff and other school leaders must find a variety of programs and resources that could be utilized to provide the needed professional development for teachers of ELL students. District personnel must review how monetary resources are allocated for the schools' support personnel assignments to ensure that teachers have internal supports that are fluent in some of the major languages that are represented by the student enrollment. By conducting the roundtable discussions throughout the district, members of the leadership teams will have the information necessary to implement changes in personnel, resources, and programs that would assist teachers in providing effective instruction to language

learners. Leaders will also have a better understanding of the challenges these teachers face and can share in and applaud their successes.

Project Development and Evaluation

When teachers have more control over their choices for and about their careers, they tend to be more motivated to participate in the process. Professional development programs should be created with the input of teachers and therefore should be focused on what they need in order to become successful. The findings suggested the development of a program outside of the traditional programs currently being offered. With the demands of the profession, time would be a huge factor so the convenience of an online system of collaboration and communication was a logical choice. Hence, the choice of a self-directed approach to professional development guided the creation of the proposed project. This type of learning style would allow teachers the flexibility of choosing when and where to access the online portion of the program and move at their own pace.

Leadership and Change

The task of a good leader is to be able to influence their followers to look beyond the here and now and inspire them to be the change they so desperately want. Because I have an extensive background in leadership and management, it was very easy for me to take on a leadership role in the creation of the proposed project. The problem solving skills acquired through a long career in management served a significant role in my being able to relentlessly look for solutions to the issues identified in the research study. The discovery of the self-directed learning style has given me the motivation and the vision to

seek to develop a program for the parents of our ELL students to help increase the amount of parental support and communication from home.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Through the completion of the project study, I have not only been able to develop skills as an educational researcher that can be put into practice, but I have also been able to deepen my understanding of the issues faced by the teachers in my building and consequently the district. Before I began the amazing journey of seeking my doctorate degree, I viewed my role as a classroom teacher as being a practitioner. The opportunity to research scholarly articles on various educational topics has allowed me to view my role a little differently. With all that I have been able to take away from this learning experience, the growth that I have experienced in the area of conducting research has been my greatest joy. I have become much more proficient in the analysis of data as well as experienced a more focused writing process. I can honestly say that I now have a much stronger appreciation for educational research and can now understand and express the value of such research.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a classroom teacher, I have found that by conducting educational research, I can now view issues that arise in education from a different perspective and can respond in a manner that allows me to utilize what I have learned through the research to inform and direct my own instructional practices. It has always been my goal to become a lifelong learner and allow what has been learned to transcend over into my teaching so that my students will reap the benefits of such learning. I had always heard leaders of

professional development sessions discuss the application of sound research to best practices, but it did not seem as feasible as it does now. I can now see how the knowledge can be easily transferred into the classroom daily.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This research study has the potential to positively effect social change in numerous ways. The proposed project that was created as a result of the findings of the study will be available to all teachers across the school district. By conducting the roundtable discussions in each of the five learning communities, the project is providing all teachers open access to the discussion and the message board that will be developed, which will be an amazing collaborative tool for teachers of ELL students to use. The program itself is free and therefore not restricted by costs as the implementation of other professional development programs. The free access provides a barrier to participation as many school districts are forced to cut many programs due to funding limitations.

The utilization of the internet for the self-directed learning portion of the professional development program allows users to have more control over their learning by being able to access the site at their leisure. The individual teacher's motivation will be the driving force behind his or her participation as participation will solely be voluntary. The benefits to teachers' instructional practices are limitless as they will have the opportunity to share in the transference of a wealth of knowledge and resources provided by their collaborative network of peers who share the same desire to see their children grow and succeed.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The research project conducted revealed the need for professional development opportunities that stretch beyond the initial training offered by the district for teachers of ELLs. The findings also revealed that there is a lack of support by leadership from within the building in regards to resources and support personnel to assist with the instruction of ELL students. Together the findings indicated the necessity for teachers to have support in the classroom as well as continuing professional development to improve their instructional practices as they relate to the instruction of ELLs. Although the district currently provides opportunities for teachers to select a more self-directed learning style when it comes to some aspects of the teaching and learning process, but a majority of the control over choices for professional development is maintained by the district.

Teachers need the connection that the online collaborative network would provide, emotional support, because the challenges teachers face in the classroom can often times be overwhelming. I can recall my first few years of teaching and how challenging they were for me especially with the instruction of my ELL students. Because I did not have a background in education, I had not had the exposure to early childhood development training and practices so identifying and addressing the needs of my language learners seemed like an insurmountable task. Every teacher that I reached out to for help suggested that I use “best practices,” which I had not yet identified. I enrolled in and finally completed the six required training courses that would then certify me as an ESOL teacher. I felt as if I had gained no new knowledge that would help me in the classroom. It was then that I started my own research and training. I researched

language acquisition and teaching strategies. I tried to network from within and outside of my building to find tried and true practices that would allow me to help my students. I developed a few strategies on my own and each new year brought forth a new ELL student with a new challenge. Soon I began my master's program and chose ELL students as the focus of my thesis and began to connect the dots. By the time I finished my specialist degree, I had conducted quite a bit of research on ELL students and felt as if I had acquired new knowledge but lacked the support of a group to help me continue to find my way.

The implementation of the proposed program could create positive social change in many ways. First, this program would be implemented and widely promoted in my school district which is one of the largest school districts in this southeastern state. Currently there is no printed resource that is available to assist with instruction for ELLs and many of the resources used are created by the classroom teachers. Teachers more times than not, get their best tools from teachers who have had to create the materials alone. This program would provide a collaborative network where teachers could exchange resources, ideas, and strategies that would prove very beneficial to another teacher in another building. Secondly, it would be my hope that the concept of this program would spread throughout the district to neighboring school districts. Once fully operational, I would reach out to neighboring districts, one at a time, and send literature on what we have been able to accomplish with the program in our district. Teachers would spend less time trying to recreate the wheel and more time on actually providing effective instruction utilizing the program. Once district leaders see the benefits and

results of the program, they may elect to recognize the program as a district professional development program for teachers by offering credits to participations that could be used for the purposes of teacher recertification.

In addition to the implementation of the proposed professional development program, I would seek to share the results of my research study with administrative leaders and educational coaches in my learning community who have recognized the struggle with instructing ELLs in a mainstream classroom within their buildings. In sharing the topic of my research study with my administrative team, they expressed interest in learning of the results of the study and seeing what issues could be addressed and how best to go about addressing them in an effective manner. I would very much like to publish the findings of my research for any interested party to view and possibly utilize as an extension of part or all of my current research.

The research study conducted and the data that were collected and analyzed explore the experiences of Grade 3 teachers who instruct ELLs in a mainstream classroom. A recommendation for future study would be the inclusion of teachers at other grade levels who instruct ELL students. With the discontinuation of sheltered classrooms and bilingual programs, the number of language learners in mainstream classrooms increases each year without there being an increase in the number of bilingual teachers. Any future study could focus on all of the teachers in one building or perhaps multiple buildings with multiple grade levels.

An additional research topic could include the ESOL training program as it currently exists with possible recommendations for changes or extensions. Many new

teachers that are hired have received their training through their degree program so a comparative analysis of the two teacher training programs would add a valuable information perspective for educators. The impact of the professional development program would provide another avenue of future research. This study examined the experiences of only Grade 3 teachers who teach ELLS, a future study could focus on the impact the program had on instructional practices or teacher efficacy in instructing ELL students.

Summary

The completion of the research study has afforded me the opportunity to examine the challenges and successes of Grade 3 teachers who teach ELL students in a mainstream classroom. The qualitative data that were collected and analyzed allowed me to better understand how to celebrate their successes while exploring their challenges and search for solutions. I have also had the opportunity to reflect on my research abilities as a scholar, a program developer, and a practitioner. The results of the research project is the creation of a professional development program that will partly be a self-directed style of learning to provide a collaborative support system for teachers to explore and share methods, resources, and strategies that will help produce academic success with their students. The implementation of the roundtable discussions with the online networking aspect has the potential to creative positive results for both teachers and students in this southeastern school district.

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Appendix A: The Project

Soto-Hinman (2010) noted that PD and teacher training programs must become more focused and aligned regarding the coursework involved in the training program and the reflective opportunities that come with PD in order to better prepare teachers to be more sensitive and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of the ELLs. The goal of the project is to further clarify the challenges faced by literacy teachers who instruct ELLs in a mainstream classroom by providing a support system for these teachers where resources, strategies, and techniques that will provide much needed assistance in the classroom, which was expressed as a great concern by the participants in the study. The project addresses the issue of teachers' beliefs in their preparedness to teach ELLs in a mainstream classroom.

ELL Roundtable Flyer for Fall 2016



ELL Round Tables

We will have different meetings, one in each learning community, to discuss ideas, resources and concerns about our ELL students.



Come and join us as we continue to share and learn together!

Date: September 7, 2016 **Time:** 4:00-5:30

Topic: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Location: Conway ES—Southeast LC

Please plan to share any resources, tools, websites, and strategies that have been successful for you in the classroom and can be implemented immediately.

Please bring your laptop so that you can access the online support site that we have created, at www.padlet.com/cas_howell/ellsupport

Please RSVP by email to Cassandra.howell@ocps.net at least 5 days before the session date to ensure that we have enough space. Light refreshments will be served.

Future Dates

Sept. 21, 2016—Fluency & Vocabulary—Waterford ES—East LC
 Oct. 5, 2016—Comprehension—Wheatley ES—North LC
 Oct. 19, 2016—Oral Language—Dr. Phillips ES—Southwest LC
 Nov. 2, 2016—Session Wrap-Up—Metro West ES—West LC

Facilitator: ~~Cassandra~~ Cassandra Howell, Conway ES

ELL Roundtable Reminder

Reminder

ELL Round Tables

Session 1 Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Come and join us on:

September 7, 2016- Phonemic Awareness|

Conway ES-Southeast LC

·Bring resources that can be implemented immediately in the classroom

*Bring a laptop so that you can navigate the website

https://www.padlet.com/cas_howell/ellsupportgroup

Facilitator: CaSaundra Howell, Conway ES

Session 1 Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Meeting Agenda

ELL Roundtable Discussion

Session 1 Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

Meeting Agenda

Conway ES-Southeast LC

4:00-5:30

<u>Length</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 min	4:00-4:05	Bell Work-Short Activity
5 min	4:05-4:10	Welcome/Purpose/Overview
5 min	4:10-4:20	Icebreaker
10 min	4:20-4:30	PowerPoint-Things to consider; Cultural background; SIOP model
15 min	4:30-4:50	Discussion on Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
5 min	4:50-4:55	Directions for group activity
30 min	4:55-5:15	Activity—Plan an lesson for PA And Phonics
10 min	5:15-5:25	Debrief/ Questions/Closing
5 min	5:25-5:30	Evaluation

The focus of the conversations is to identify helpful strategies, techniques, and resources with which to build a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics for our ELL students.

Session 2 Fluency & Vocabulary Meeting Agenda

ELL Roundtable Discussion

Session 2 Fluency & Vocabulary

Meeting Agenda

Waterford ES-East LC

4:00-5:30

<u>Length</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 min	4:00-4:05	Bell Work-Short Activity
5 min	4:05-4:10	Welcome/Purpose/Overview
5 min	4:10-4:20	Icebreaker
10 min	4:20-4:30	PowerPoint-Things to consider; Cultural background; SIOP model
15 min	4:30-4:50	Discussion on Fluency and Vocabulary
5 min	4:50-4:55	Directions for group activity
30 min	4:55-5:15	Activity—Plan a vocabulary lesson
10 min	5:15-5:25	Debrief/ Questions/Closing
5 min	5:25-5:30	Evaluation

The focus of the conversations is to identify helpful strategies, techniques, and resources with which to build a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics for our ELL students.

Session 3 Comprehension Meeting Agenda

ELL Roundtable Discussion

Session 3 Comprehension

Meeting Agenda

Wheatley ES-North LC

4:00-5:30

<u>Length</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 min	4:00-4:05	Bell Work-Short Activity
5 min	4:05-4:10	Welcome/Purpose/Overview
5 min	4:10-4:20	Icebreaker
10 min	4:20-4:40	PowerPoint-Things to consider; Cultural background; SIOP model
15 min	4:30-4:50	Discussion on Comprehension
5 min	4:50-4:55	Directions for group activity
30 min	4:55-5:15	Activity—Plan a comprehension Lesson
10 min	5:15-5:25	Debrief/ Questions/Closing
5 min	5:25-5:30	Evaluation

The focus of the conversations is to identify helpful strategies, techniques, and resources with which to build a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics for our ELL students.

Session 4 Oral Language Meeting Agenda

ELL Roundtable Discussion

Session 4 Oral Language

Meeting Agenda

Dr. Phillips ES-Southwest LC

4:00-5:30

<u>Length</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 min	4:00-4:05	Bell Work-Short Activity
5 min	4:05-4:10	Welcome/Purpose/Overview
5 min	4:10-4:20	Icebreaker
10 min	4:20-4:30	PowerPoint-Things to consider; Cultural background; SIOP model
15 min	4:30-4:50	Discussion on Comprehension
5 min	4:50-4:55	Directions for group activity
30 min	4:55-5:15	Activity—Plan a comprehension Lesson
10 min	5:15-5:25	Debrief/ Questions/Closing
5 min	5:25-5:30	Evaluation

The focus of the conversations is to identify helpful strategies, techniques, and resources with which to build a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics for our ELL students.

Session 5 Wrap-Up Meeting Agenda

ELL Roundtable Discussion

Session 5 Wrap-Up Session

Meeting Agenda

Metro West ES-West LC

4:00-5:30

<u>Length</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
5 min	4:00-4:05	Bell Work-Short Activity
5 min	4:05-4:10	Welcome/Purpose/Overview
5 min	4:10-4:20	Icebreaker
25 min	4:20-4:45	PowerPoint-Reflection on program Next steps, feedback, suggestions
20 min	4:50-4:55	Group activity-Share how you Conducted a PD during your PLC
15 min	4:55-5:15	Activity—Gallery Walk-Display PLC PD artifacts
10 min	5:15-5:25	Debrief/ Questions/Closing
5 min	5:25-5:30	Evaluation

The focus of the conversations is to identify helpful strategies, techniques, and resources with which to build a solid foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics for our ELL students.

ELL Support Group Website

ELL Teachers Collaborative Support Group

A site that is dedicated to creating a support system for teachers of ELL students by providing a network of educators who have come together to share their ideas, resources, successes, challenges, frustrations and words of encouragement to their fellow educators. Here we have one goal....to educate our students so that they can become contributory members of society!

Roundtable Discussion # 1
 Date: September 7, 2016
 Place: Conway ES
 Topic: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
 Time: 4:00-5:30
 Click here for agenda and notes

Roundtable Discussion # 2
 Date: September 21, 2016
 Place: Waterford ES
 Topic: Fluency and Vocabulary
 Time: 4:00-5:30
 Click here for agenda and notes

Roundtable Discussion # 3
 Date: October 5, 2016
 Place: Wheatley ES
 Topic: Comprehension
 Time: 4:00-5:30
 Click here for agenda and notes

Roundtable Discussion # 4
 Date: October 19, 2016
 Place: Dr. Philips ES
 Topic: Oral Language
 Time: 4:00-5:30
 Click here for agenda and notes

Roundtable Discussion # 5
 Date: November 2, 2016
 Place: Metro West ES
 Topic: Session Wrap-Up
 Time: 4:00-5:30
 Click here for agenda and notes

Parking Lot
 Please post any questions, comments, or suggestions here.

WIDA Resources
ACCESS for ELLs®
 Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking
 Sample Items 2008
 Grades 1-12

Phonemic Awareness & Phonics
 Click here for resources

Fluency
 Click here for resources

Comprehension
 Click here for resources

Oral Language
 Click here for resources

Vocabulary
 Click here for resources

Student Center Activities

Student Center Activities

Student Center Activities

Student Center Activities

Student Center Activities

ELL Roundtable PowerPoint Presentation

ELL Roundtable Discussion Session 1: Phonemic Awareness & Phonics

Facilitator: CaSaundra Howell

Date: September 7, 2016

Time: 4:00-5:30

Location: Conway ES-Southeast LC

Set up & Materials

- ▶ Table markers by grade
- ▶ Pens, Post it Notes, index cards - per table
- ▶ Chart paper
- ▶ Copies of SIOP Template

Explicit Direction

- ▶ Opening Activity will be a short activity that can be completed while all attendees arrive to the roundtable discussion. This activity will help to determine our comfort level for this topic.

Opening Activity/ Grouping (first 5-10 minutes)

- ▶ Please take a seat that lists your grade level.
- ▶ On an index card, list at least 3 strategies that you have found to be effective while teaching your ELL students the sound patterns and/or parts of words.
- ▶ List these strategies in order of effectiveness - be prepared to share with your table group.

Welcome/Purpose/Overview

- ▶ Introduction of speaker (a brief bio)
- ▶ Purpose: Our purpose will be to establish practical resources (**with guidance**) that are useful for the general education educator of ELL students.
- ▶ Tentative agenda

Focus for Today

- ▶ Today we will look at the foundations of reading that are generally taught first; phonemic awareness and phonics
- ▶ We will review what these two areas are comprised of and share some strategies that can be used in the classroom
- ▶ You will also share within your groups, various strategies that you use in your building that your table partners may find useful.

Goal - To gather, from colleagues present, useful resources in teaching Phonemic Awareness to ELL Students.

- ▶ **Language Objective** • Participants will discuss characteristics of effective lessons for teaching phonemic awareness.

Icebreaker (5 minutes)

- ▶ Share these first two questions with the person to your right
- ▶ Look into your future 10 years from now, what would your dream job be?
- ▶ If you could replay a fun (deep or eventful) moment in your life, what would it be?

Icebreaker (5 minutes)

- ▶ Share the next two questions with the person your left
- ▶ What part of your daily routine do you enjoy the most?
- ▶ If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be?

Things to consider when instructing ELL students:

- ▶ **Learning:** The way education is viewed by Americans is often very different from the way other ethnic races view its importance or need.
- ▶ **Cultural difference:** It is important that their language and cultural heritage be incorporated into the instructional planning process.
- ▶ **Communication:** Often times the families only communicate with people of same culture and often do not initiate conversation with people outside of their culture.
- ▶ **Hierarchical Order:** Different roles for men and women of a particular culture; in some cultures men are more respected than women so male teachers may receive more cooperation than female teachers.
- ▶ **Prior Experiences:** Many of the ELL children enter school with little to no prior exposure to the English

Some of the differences in cultures:

Aspects of Culture	Mainstream American Culture	Other Cultures
Age	All children are expected to enter school by age 5 and graduate.	Children may be expected to go to school later so as to stay home and help with younger siblings.
Gender	Equality among genders, education for all genders.	Male children may be encouraged to help support family or encouraged to uphold family honor by taking on the same trade as the father. Female children often attend school until they reach marrying age and school is no longer a priority.
Language	Informal and friendly language.	Often only communicate with people of same culture and often do not initiate conversation. This tends to hinder the language learning process.
Social Values	Gender equality. Individuals control their own destiny and often challenge authority.	Hierarchical. Respect for authority and social order. Different roles for men and women. Individuals accept their destiny. In some cultures men are more respected than women so male teachers may receive more cooperation than female teachers. Communication often goes through the father.
Time and Time Consciousness	Value placed on promptness and timeliness.	Relative time consciousness.
Family Roles	Focus on nuclear family and rely on them for support.	Focus on extended family and often do not seek help outside of that extended family.

SIOP Model

- ▶ The SIOP Model Lesson planning makes language objectives a part of EVERY lesson. This is helpful for the ELL student because he/she becomes aware of what they will learn and HOW they will learn it.
- ▶ Appropriate Content Concepts- content must correlate with the student's grade level; it must meet the needs of the ELL, but can't be diminished
- ▶ Supplementary Materials- support the core curriculum and contextualize learning
- ▶ Adaptation of Content- text must be accessible to all students while ensuring content concepts are still intact
- ▶ Meaningful Activities- should be used to master the learning goal while promoting language development
- ▶ **Learning AND Language** Objectives are needed.

Template

Lesson Preparation

Composed of the following features:

- **Learning Goal**
(what you want your students to learn)
- **Language Objectives-**
(how students will learn it)
- **Appropriate Content Concepts-**
content must correlate with the student's grade level; it must meet the needs of the ELL, but can't be diminished
- **Supplementary Materials-**
support the core curriculum and contextualize learning
- **Adaptation of Content-**
text must be accessible to all students while ensuring content concepts are still intact
- **Meaningful Activities-**
should be used to master the learning goal while promoting language development

SIOP Importance

- ▶ Review the features of Lesson Preparation and select which one you believe is the most important to the SIOP model. Discuss with a shoulder partner their answer and the reasoning for their selection. Share out your partner's response.

The Answer....

► Language Objective

Strands for LAFS

- 1. Reading Literature
- 1. Reading Informational Text
- 1. Reading Foundations (K-5)
- 1. Writing
- 1. Speaking and Listening
- 1. Language

Language Objectives

Identify how students will master the learning goal while supporting their language development in the four language domains.

1. Reading

1. Writing

1. Speaking

1. Listening

NO LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE-NO SLOP

SIOP * Lesson Plan Template 1

Teacher: _____	Date: _____	Grade/Class/Subject: _____
Unit/Theme: _____		Standards: _____
Content Objective(s): _____		Language Objective(s): _____
KEY VOCABULARY: _____		SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS: _____
SIOP FEATURES		
PREPARATION <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptation of content <input type="checkbox"/> Links to background <input type="checkbox"/> Links to past learning <input type="checkbox"/> Strategies incorporated INTEGRATION OF PROCESSES <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Listening	SCAFFOLDING <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Guided practice <input type="checkbox"/> Independent practice <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensible input APPLICATIONS <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on <input type="checkbox"/> Meaningful <input type="checkbox"/> Linked to objectives <input type="checkbox"/> Promotes engagement	GROUP OPTIONS <input type="checkbox"/> Whole class <input type="checkbox"/> Small groups <input type="checkbox"/> Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Independent ASSESSMENT <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group <input type="checkbox"/> Written <input type="checkbox"/> Oral
LESSON SEQUENCE: _____		
REFLECTIONS: _____		

Template adapted from: Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008). *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP® Model*

Here is a model of a lesson plan we will use to create our plan for a phonemic awareness/ phonics lesson for our ELL students

The plan will be created using the SIOP model to encompass the 4 areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Each participant will have a copy of the model as well as a blank copy to work from

Small Group Instruction				
Minutes	Component	Techniques	Activity	Materials
30	Differentiated Instruction	Teacher-led small group instruction **Levels of English proficiency should drive activities for ELLs to address language proficiency**	Teacher * creates groups based on student needs * allows for flexibility in grouping depending on lesson content * continues skill/topic presented in whole group, provides guided practice with feedback (we do) * delivers instruction based on student need * leads students in summary/reflection on learning * uses scale to monitor student understanding of concept and conducts formative assessment	* Guided Reading materials * Leveled passages from FAIR tool kit (3-5) * Content area leveled readers * Complex Text; (implement the Close Reading Model of instruction with scaffolding) * Decodable books * Thinking Maps
	Best Practices	* Advanced Decoding, Fluency, Word Study Vocabulary, Comprehension * Instructional Level text moving to more challenging text with scaffolding and support (Text Complexity) * "We do" portion of gradual release model * Monitored "You do" portion of gradual release model * Integrated Language, Listening, Speaking, and Writing Standards * Text Dependent Questions * Student Generated Questions * SIOP strategies for ELLs using language objectives * UDL strategies * See Attachment 1: Guided Reading Framework		

Phonemic Awareness

- ▶ When readers have the ability to hear and manipulate the different sounds within our language.

Building Blocks

- ▶ Phonemic awareness is the foundation for spelling and word recognition skills

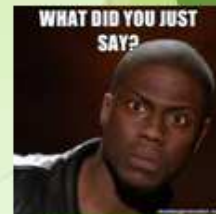


Possible Roadblocks to Phonemic Awareness



Students are sometimes unable to manipulate phonemes to letters when they see them blended together as words.

New language learners may not be able to produce certain sounds due to an un-obtained "hearing" of the new sound in a second language.



Phonemic Awareness Strategies

- ▶ Help beginning readers learn to identify sounds in words.

Phonemic Awareness Strategies

- ▶ Practice with the students to identify the sounds in words.
- ▶ Beginning, middle and end of short words - words using the CVC patterns.
- ▶ Mat, bat, bus, top, cop
- ▶ Elkonin boxes, poems and nursery rhymes.

Phonemic Awareness Strategies

- ▶ **Model, Model, Model!!!!**

Phonemic Awareness Strategies

- ▶ Help students “see” how the mouth is shaped to form words.
- ▶ Demonstrate the proper production of word sounds.
- ▶ Use small mirrors and exaggerate mouth movements.

Give one, Take one - Networking Opportunity at table (15 minutes)

- ▶ Share strategies used in your classroom that you have found to be most effective.

Phonics Instruction

- ▶ Assists new readers in understanding the relationships between letters and sounds.

Possible Roadblocks to Phonics Instruction for ELL students



Students with little or no formal education in their native language may struggle to put together the sound/symbol concept, new words, and new sounds all at once.

Students who have some formal education may have an advantage, they have learned the sound/symbol correspondence in the native tongue, which can then be transferred to the second language.

Strategies for Phonics Instructions

- ▶ Pre-teaching vocabulary words.
- ▶ When ELLs have early exposure to vocabulary words, they have better context when the words are formally taught.
- ▶ They can then relate letter symbols to sounds, thus helping them phonetically.

Strategies for Phonics Instructions

- ▶ Hands on Activities
- ▶ Using magnetic letters/ letter tiles/etc. have students make words, match or letters to image cards,

Strategies for Phonics Instructions

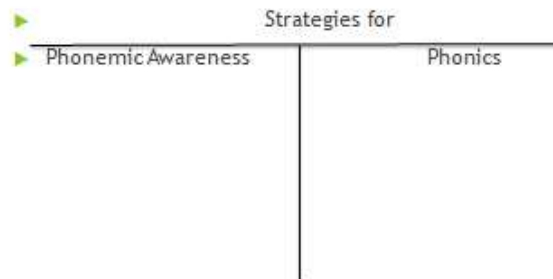
- ▶ Dictation
- ▶ Say a few short sentences with familiar words. Have students listen carefully and write what they have heard you say.

Hot Potato - Networking opportunity (15 minutes)

- ▶ Review the strategies discussed today select which one you believe is the you can easily implement.
- ▶ Discuss with a shoulder partner your answer and the reasoning for their selection. Share out your partner's response

Chart it out! Gallery Walk (10 - 15 minutes)

- ▶ Each table will create a t-chart of effective strategies they have used to teach ELL students phonics or phonemic awareness lessons.
- ▶ Gallery walk with your table group, use post it notes to write questions, checks for strategies attempted in the past.



Lesson Plan Development and Exchange (30-35 minutes)

- ▶ Create 2 SIOP lessons for your grade level
- ▶ 1 for Phonemic Awareness; 1 for Phonics
- ▶ Partner up within your table groups
- ▶ Exchange and share

Wrap-Up-----Website for group

- ▶ Review the site
www.padlet.com/cas_howell/ellsupportgroup
- ▶ Attendees can add materials
- ▶ Answer any questions
- ▶ Date and time of next meeting
- ▶ Website—info from each training

Thank You

- ▶ Evaluation
- ▶ Contact information:
▶ [Casaundra Howell---Conway ES](mailto:casaundra.howell@ocps.net)
casaundra.howell@ocps.net

Formative Evaluation Form**ELL Roundtable Questionnaire**

Use the scale for the following questions:

(1) unlikely, (2) somewhat unlikely, (3) likely, (4) somewhat likely, (5) very likely and (6) no opinion (i.e., you don't know enough about this program to make a judgment).

1. How likely are you to recommend this roundtable to a colleague?

1 2 3 4 5 6

2. How likely are you to attend another roundtable on this topic or by your presenter in the district?

1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Was the content presented today helpful? Yes / No

4. Have you gained any new knowledge or had any of your instructional practices validated from your discussions today? If so, please describe.

5. What information would you like to have added onto the agenda for future sessions of these roundtable discussions?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

- 1.) Background: Tell me about your teaching career up to this point?
- 2.) Background: Describe your philosophy on education.
- 3.) Tell me about your experiences instructing ELLs.
- 4.) What instructional strategies do you use to teach ELLs?
- 5.) What type of training do you need to teach ELLs?
- 6.) What do you feel is your greatest challenge in instructing ELL students?
- 7.) What are some of your greatest successes in teaching ELLs?
- 8.) If a student is having difficulty with the language acquisition process, what steps do you take to determine whether or not the difficulties do or do not stem from there being a second language?
- 9.) If you find that there is “something else”, how does that affect the fact that there is also a second language issue?
- 10.) What is your perception of the impact the integration of technology and literacy programs into the curriculum has on student achievement?
- 11.) What is your perception of the effects of the current professional development program have on the instructional practices of literacy teachers instructing ELLs?

CURRICULUM VITAE

2526 Bullion Loop (407) 493-3359
 Sanford, FL 32771 cas_howell@yahoo.com

CaSaundra J Howell

OBJECTIVE	To teach K-3 students to become responsible contributory citizens by providing a nurturing environment conducive to learning
EDUCATION	<p>Educational Doctorate Major: Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Walden University, October 2015 (anticipated)</p> <p>Educational Specialist Major: Administrative Leadership for Teaching and Learning Walden University, October 2013</p> <p>Master of Education Major: Administrative Leadership Grand Canyon University, October 2010</p> <p>Bachelor of Science Major: Economics with a Minor in Business Florida A & M University, December 1998</p>
CERTIFICATION	<p>Florida Professional Educator's Certificate Educational Leadership (All Levels) English for Speakers of Other Languages (Endorsement) Prekindergarten/Primary Education (Age 3-Grade 3)</p>
EMPLOYMENT	<p>Teacher; Conway Elementary; Taught kindergarten, second, and third Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, FL (2005-Present)</p>
PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS	<p>PTA Member- 2005-Present Orange County CTA Member- 2005-Present Florida Association of School Administrators Member—</p>

2011-Present

National Education Association Member –2005-Present **Florida Education Association Member - 2005-Present** **American Federation of Teachers Member –2005-Present** **AFL-CIO Member-2005-Present**

COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

Grade Level Chairperson- 2015-2016
Faculty Advisory Committee Chair- 2008-Present
CTA Building Representative-2008-Present
Behavior Leadership Team Member- 2012-2014
Technology Committee Member- 2009-2012
Healthy School Committee Member- 2010-2014

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Active Member of Macedonia M.B. Church- 1999-Present)

AWARDS RECEIVED

DonorsChoose.Org Grant Recipient- 2014
Conway Elementary Teacher of the Year Nominee- 2015-2016
2015 Black History Month Educator Award Nominee- 2015

REFERENCES

Ms. Cheryl Holman; 157 Pine Court, Apopka, FL 32703; 407-927-8141
Mrs. Abigail Arocho; P.O. Box 571006 Orlando, FL 32857; 407-595-6439
Mrs. Katherine Viteritto; 1034 Trout Creek Court, Oviedo, FL 32765; 321-217-8110