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# Content Area Teacher Practices for Middle School English Language Learners

Damian Jina' Elder  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Damian Jina' Elder

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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2018

Abstract

Content Area Teacher Practices for Middle School English Language Learners

by

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EdS, Augusta State University, 2010

MA, Augusta State University, 2009

BS, Kennesaw State University, 2004

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

June 2018

## Abstract

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) entering content area general education classes is on the rise and there is a lack of understanding concerning what content area teachers are doing to provide instruction to ELLs. ELLs throughout a southeastern state are making very little progress despite the resources put in place by the district. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the instructional practices and perceptions of 5 middle school content area teachers, who educate ELLs in general education classes. Differentiation, as defined by Tomlinson and the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA,) frameworks were combined to create the framework of this study. The research questions addressed how middle grades teachers use WIDA standards and practices in content area classes when differentiating and scaffolding lessons for ELLs in a rural school in a southeastern state. A total of 5 participants volunteered to participate in an open-ended questionnaire, interviews, and observations of classroom teaching methods. The data were analyzed and coded to find emerging themes. The findings of this case study suggested that teachers used differentiation, but that it was not directed by the WIDA standards. The findings also suggested a need for professional development to help the teachers better understand how to use the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to provide differentiated and scaffolded lessons for ELLs. As a result of the findings, a 3-day professional development was created with the implementation of a professional learning community to support content area teachers of ELLs. This study supports positive social change by providing an avenue that will ensure equity in instruction for ELLs and all stakeholders.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this Project Study to my late brother, George O. Hendrix, III. In honor of the life that he lived, I chose to better mine. Even in his absence on earth, I still hear his words. "You can do whatever, you want to do." Every time, I felt that this was too much, I would hear him. His words have pushed me to the place of completion.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) entering general education classes continues to increase (Daniel & Peercy, 2014). The problem within a rural middle school in a southeastern state school district is a deficit in understanding the instructional practices of general education teachers who also teach ELLs. Despite the use of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards (2014), students continue to struggle in academic classes and on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) (Principal, Personal Communication, 2016). When general education teachers lack understanding of how best to educate ELLs, their academic performance suffers (Hammann & Reeves, 2013; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). Many teaching preparation programs have not placed much emphasis on how to educate ELLs within general education classes (Daniel & Peercy, 2014). Many studies examine the instructional preparedness and teaching practices of elementary teachers (Stephens & Johnson, 2015; Tellez & Manthey, 2015) and secondary level teachers (Edwards, 2014; Turkan, Oliveira, Lee, & Phelps, 2014) who teach ELLs, but very few focused specifically on middle school teachers (McGrif & Protacio, 2015). The gap in practice is the lack of understanding of the teaching practices of content area teachers. Possible causes of the differences in ELL performance scores in middle school are teacher preparation programs, lack of professional development and training within school districts for general education teachers, lack of language acquisition knowledge, and the ESOL program structure (Roy-Campbell, 2013; Turkan et al., 2014).

## **Rationale**

The rationale for the study is to gain an understanding of the teaching practices and instructional strategies that are used in content area classes to meet the academic needs of ELLs. The number of ELLs who receive educational services in grades K-12 in the United States increases every year, with a total number of ELLs in the 2014-2015 school year of 4,808,758 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The ACCESS for ELLs is administered every winter by schools in this southeastern state within the US. In 2014, 84,176 students were tested using the ACCESS for ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In 2015, 100,304 students were tested and in 2016, there were 104,438 students tested (Ellis & Houston, 2016). The targeted middle school in this study is also experiencing growth in its ELL population. In 2014, the school district tested 561 students using the ACCESS for ELLs and currently has 1,466 ELLs enrolled in 2016 (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

Students that exit the ESOL programs pass the ACCESS for ELLs and others pass through a Language Assessment Conference (LAC). The percentages for exiting the ESOL program for the district over the past 2 years is in the 20th percentile. This issue is a local problem because the number of students entering and exiting the program remains close in number. The district is not experiencing academic growth within the ELL population and did not meet the 2016 Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAO) in the content targets (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

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

ELLs in the local setting did not make academic progress on end of grade assessments. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2017), the ELLs within the target school did

not meet the State or subgroup performance target in any content area classes (i.e., math, English language arts, social studies, and science) despite the use of professional development provided by the school (Principal, Personal Communication, April 13, 2017). The administrator of the middle school stated that teachers have been provided with professional learning from an outside source to provide strategies to better serve the ELLs within the building and believes that the problem with passing the assessment continues to exist despite the approaches used to remedy the situation (Principal, Personal Communication, April 13, 2017).

### **Evidence of the Problem in Literature**

Pawan and Craig (2011) suggested that since 1995 more than 5.1 million ELLs have entered public schools within the United States. The authors also found that most teachers who teach ELLs received fewer than 8 hours of training on how to provide academic instruction for ELLs (Pawan & Craig, 2011). Lewis, Maertan-Rivera, Adamson, and Lee (2011) conducted a study that focused on teaching practices used to support ELLs. The authors suggested that many of the teachers were not prepared to provide instruction to students with diverse backgrounds (Lewis, et al., 2011). Lewis et al. found a weak relationship between teaching practices used to support ELLs and strategies utilized by teachers to accommodate the needs of ELLs in general education classes. According to Foley and Kiser (2013), the lack of implementation of instructional strategies was due to the lack of foundational knowledge, confidence, and/or feeling supported while trying to meet the needs of ELLs. Teachers may be uncertain about changing teaching practices if they are uncomfortable or lack resources or tools to implement the practices successfully (Richards & Skolits, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the instructional practices of middle school content area teachers who educate ELLs in general

education classes to gain a better understanding of what happens when instruction is provided for ELLs in content area classes.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms below are commonly used terms when discussing ELLs. The commonly used terms are defined to clear any misconceptions about the meaning of phrases and acronyms that will continue to be used within this research study. For the purposes of this study, the terms used to discuss ELLs vary across state lines, and therefore require clarification. Legal definitions were used from state and national documents for clarification.

*Content Area Teachers:* Any teacher who teaches math, science, social studies, or English language arts (Georgia Department of Education, 2016; Goldman, 2012).

*Differentiation:* A way of teaching that ensures that student differences and needs are incorporated into teaching, through delivery of content, how information is processed, and end products that are based on student readiness, interest, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2014).

*English Language Learners (ELLs):* Students whose first or native language is any language other than English and are eligible for language services due to performance on an English language proficiency assessment (Georgia Department of Education, 2016; WIDA, 2016).

*English Language Proficiency:* The leveled understanding of the English language, determined by the ACCESS learning assessment (Georgia Department of Education, 2016; WIDA, 2016).

*English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):* Educational supports for ELLs to help conquer language obstacles and to enable students with the ability to contribute studiously in



educational programs, also known as English as a Second Language (ESL) (Georgia Department of Education, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

*Middle School:* Schools that educate students in grades 6-8 in any combination (Georgia Department of Education, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

*Scaffold:* Academic supports that provide students with the ability to complete a task that they may not have been able to achieve otherwise (Martin-Kniep & Picone-Zocchia, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978).

*Teaching Practices:* Teaching methods used within the classroom. The way in which teachers provide instruction to students within their classrooms or general principles for instructing and supervising classrooms, also known as teaching methods (Liu & Shi, 2007)

*World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA):* In 2002, a group of states (Wisconsin, Delaware, and Arkansas) who were devoted to the proposal and execution of high academic standards and equitable education for ELLs in school. Due to the number of states who joined the mission the acronym was dropped, and WIDA became the official name (WIDA, 2016).

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study will be important to the local setting because they may help in understanding the specific perceptions and practices of middle school general education teachers concerning their work with ELLs. It is important for the local school to understand how these teachers see themselves as part of the ELLs success. The school has spent time and resources training teachers and implementing the WIDA framework because of its stated goals in the School Improvement Plan to increase student achievement in English Language Arts and Math

for all students. The School Improvement Plan specifically addresses the need for incorporating research based teaching techniques and implementing WIDA standards in content area classes (Principal, Personal Communication, 2016). It is important to understand what specific instructional practices the teachers are using to address ELL needs because they will inform the school about gaps in the practices of teachers and how they perceive their roles as implementing ELL instruction in general education classrooms. This study is unique, as it specifically looks at the perceptions and practices of general education middle school teachers and their roles in educating ELLs. This study will provide the district with much needed information as to how to help general education teachers instruct ELLs by focusing on why teaching practices are used to instruct ELLs and what the perceived roles are for differentiating instruction for teachers who educate ELLs in content area general education middle school classrooms. Furthermore, the insights gained from the study may help restructure the ESOL programs in middle schools and provide greater supports for the teachers. For the wider educational context, this study will add to what is known about the education of ELLs by providing the middle school teacher perceptions and instructional practices. The WIDA framework is widely used in 32 states in American schools (WIDA, 2016) which will help examine how a group of teachers see their role in delivering education and understanding their own practices. The study may assist other similar schools to investigate the practices of teachers to better serve ELLs within content area classes. This study might lead to positive social change by providing an avenue that will ensure equity in instruction for ELLs through understanding and identifying teaching practices. Thus, ELLs will be provided with instruction that incorporates the WIDA Can Do Descriptors in a way that will ensure differentiation within instruction.

## **Research Questions**

The guiding research questions focus on gaining an understanding of teaching practices of middle school content area teachers who educate ELLs and when and how differentiation and scaffolding occur. Research Question 1 will identify teaching practices utilized within the targeted classrooms. Through understanding teacher perceptions and practices within the content classes, school and district leadership will be able to implement different avenues to support content area teachers while ensuring that the needs of ELLs are being met. Research Question 2 provides an opportunity to identify what instructional practices teachers implement when teaching ELLs, which will help gain an understanding of the methods used within their content classes.

*Research Question 1.* What are the teaching practices and perceptions of content area teachers when providing instruction for ELLs in a rural middle school in a southeastern state?

*Research Question 2.* How do middle grades teachers use WIDA standards and practices in content area classes when differentiating and scaffolding lessons for ELLs in a rural school in a southeastern state?

## **Review of the Literature**

The literature examined for this study includes research from peer reviewed journals, Education Source, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Teacher Reference Center, Education Research Complete, and the search engine Google Scholar. Information was also gathered from websites and books that focus on the education of ELLs. The review of literature encompassed the laws surrounding the education of ELLs, ESOL Programs, content

area teaching methods when educating ELLs, effective teaching strategies for ELLs, scaffolding, differentiation, and WIDA.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this project study is Tomlinson's framework of differentiation (Tomlinson, 2014; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013) and WIDA's theoretical framework of language proficiency (WIDA, 2014). Tomlinson's framework of differentiation provides teachers with the tools to deliver content to students with tiered lessons, which allow students the opportunity to master content and skills on their own level (Tomlinson, 2013). The WIDA standards and Can Do-Descriptors provide a way for teachers to deliver content area instruction for students based on their language proficiency levels (WIDA, 2014).

Tomlinson's framework of differentiation provides teachers with the tools to deliver content to students with tiered lessons, which allow students the opportunity to master content and skills on their own level (Tomlinson, 2013). Tomlinson (2014) defines differentiation to include the use of modified content, process, and product, all based on student interest, readiness, and learning styles. Content is further explained to include the information taught to the students, while process involves the activities that students complete to demonstrate their understanding. The product is the result of the activity and a demonstration of what has been learned. Tomlinson acknowledged the need to understand the readiness for learning different concepts, as well as student interest as it relates to their passions about certain topics or skills. Through the use of auditory, tactile, and visual learning styles teachers can provide instructional content that best fits the way in which each student obtains information.

The WIDA Consortium relied on many theories and approaches to “ensure consistency with linguistic and educational theory” that not only meets the federal laws and regulations, but provide supports for both teachers and students (WIDA, 2014, p. 2). Based on the WIDA Consortium framework, one theory is not able to provide guidance alone to guide teaching and learning for all ELLs. Which is why one may be able to identify some of Cummins (1981) work as well as Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that language is coconstructed and the learning of language occurs within a zone of proximal development within the WIDA framework. While using a combination of theories developed by other theorists, WIDA developed a Can Do Philosophy.

Cummins (1981) stated that students learn to be proficient in two types of language: “basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)” and “cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)” (p. 16). His theory attempts to provide an understanding of how students learn how to communicate with their peers and when to expect social language to develop. According to Cummins, BICS are achieved within the first 3 years of speaking English. CALP, on the other hand, takes a minimum of 5 to 10 years to develop because it deals heavily in academic content vocabulary (Bolos, 2012). While Cummins recognized the need for understanding language development, he did not address how to provide instruction for ELLs in content area classes. Due to the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), WIDA was developed to provide guidance for education systems who chose to be a part of the consortium (WIDA, 2014). Cummins and WIDA combined create a foundation for helping teachers understand language development for ELLs.

ELL teachers scaffold instruction for their students in the classrooms. Through a Can Do Philosophy developed by WIDA, ELLs are receiving supported learning and assessments

through a continuous developing Standards Framework for language (WIDA, 2014). WIDA (2014) proposed a plan with the primary purpose of providing an advanced framework for teaching and measuring the learning of ELLs. This framework is grounded in the theory of development and Vygotsky's (1978) socially constructed theory that intellectual and language development is socially created and that the development of children can be channeled through appropriate well thought out instruction. Vygotsky's socially constructed theory bases their theoretical opinions on continuous social contacts with family, friends, and other adults. Components of the WIDA (2014) program concur that children learn to understand and create meaning through sounds, words, sayings, and sentences. The program was also designed to demonstrate that children are reflections of their cultural rules, roles, and environment; therefore, social interactions associated with L1 helps to develop meaning for ELLs (WIDA, 2014). The learning experiences cause the context for learning to differ for young ELLs due to how language learning differs in each episode of their life (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory adds strength to the WIDA framework and makes it easier to understand how learning occurs in different during developmental stages.

When combining differentiation and the WIDA standards of language proficiency, students gain multiple options or opportunities to master skills as teachers deliver content instruction with instruction appropriate for the individual student based on their language proficiency levels. The WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors (WIDA, 2014), guided by Tomlinson's model of differentiation (Tomlinson, 2014), provide individualized lessons and activities so ELLs may grow linguistically and academically in their general education, content area classes (WIDA, 2014). This framework is appropriate to guide the investigation because it

specifically uses the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors (WIDA, 2014) and differentiation to identify the teaching practices and perceptions of teachers' roles in middle school content area classes, when educating ELLs.

The use of the combined framework relates to the study of content area teachers and teaching strategies when instructing ELLs because it focuses on the teaching strategies and best practices. To understand the teaching practices of middle grades content area teachers, this study specifically looks at differentiation and scaffolds found within the class using field notes from classroom observations, a questionnaire, and interviews. Identifying how the WIDA standards are used for differentiation and scaffolding lessons was documented through an interview of each content area teacher and the questionnaire.

### **Laws Affecting ELLs**

The Department of Education and the Civil Rights Office are interested in how districts handle ELL learners in the schools (Civil Rights Act of 1964). The law requires the educational system to teach ELLs how to speak, write, and read English (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The resources must be evidence based and effective when implemented to ELL learners. Sparks (2016) acknowledged the laws protecting ELL learners and case that set the precedent for legal protection:

The history concerning the education of ELLs in the United States arose in the early 1900s and has continued to be a very important aspect of the American education system (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The 14th Amendment has helped to ensure that ELLs receive an education equal to their peers as it declared no student shall be deprived of an education and equality of this education, which is protected by the law (Cornell University Law School, n.d.).

The first mention of providing instruction to students with a native language other than English was in 1923, *Meyer v. Nebraska*, when a teacher offered reading support to a student in the German language. The 1919 rule stated that instruction should only be provided in English for students who have not passed to eighth grade and any person guilty of doing so were guilty of a misdemeanor and fined; however, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the statute was in breach of the 14th Amendment under the United States Constitution as it dishonored the individual's rights to liberty (Oyez, 2017).

A cornerstone of the rights to education for all students was the groundbreaking case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The case was heard in the Supreme Court in 1954 due to racial segregation within public schools (The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, 2017). The court ruled that racial segregation violated the 14th Amendment under the Equal Protection Clause. While at the time the ruling did not speak of ELLs, it paved the way for future issues that would surface for ELLs.

The federal obligation stems from the 1974 case *Lau v. Nichols*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court found that Chinese-American English-learners who resided in San Francisco, California were not receiving educational support to help them learn and master the English language nor were they receiving an equal education (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The court ruled that school districts must make steps to remedy language deficiency to allow students to participate in instructional programs. The Lau's mandate has remained in successive versions in K-12 federal education laws as well as the law passed by Congress in 2016, which states that districts "must take affirmative steps to counter students' language barriers and ensure ELLs can participate meaningfully in schools' educational programs" (Sparks, 2016, p.5). The nonexistence



of educational support was deemed as discrimination as it was based on language and national origin, a direct violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (The Civil Rights Act, 1964).

The case of *Lau v. Nichols* was supported by The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race or nationality, from any programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance (The Civil Rights Act, 1964). Due to the ruling, the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights formed the Lau Remedies, which required districts to have bilingual education programs for students who were ELLs or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) (The Civil Rights Act, 1964). In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed, which acknowledged Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) (United States Courts, 2017). In 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) prohibited educational agencies and states from denying education to students who had language barriers, and it required that the states take adequate actions to help students overcome any language barriers that would interfere with them receiving an equal education (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

United States Courts (2017) concurred that *Plyer v. Doe* (1982) was another case that helped to provide education for ELLs. The Supreme Court found that under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment immigrant children had a right to a free public education (United States Courts, 2017). However, due to a class suit filed on behalf of Mexican school-age children living in Texas for lasting injunction, that asked the courts to safeguard education for students in this class, the school system could not determine if the students were undocumented illegal immigrants. Despite the suit, the system denied children the right to go to public school, which creates discrimination based on isolation and segregation (United States Courts, 2017). In addition, the actions violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment United States Courts (2017) concluded

illegal aliens were entitled to protection and the district court found that excluding such students would not improve the education system. Closing achievement gaps should be a major issue today because the United States has an influx of immigrants moving into the schools.

### **Closing Achievement Gaps for ELL Students to Achieve**

National Education Association (NEA) (2015) is focused on helping members become successful advocates and experts in closing the success bands for culturally, linguistically, and economically disadvantaged students by securing public policies and funding for the primary purpose of closing the achievement gaps. Closing the achievement requires ELL students realizing their potentials and assets as culturally and linguistically enriched and economically diverse learners.

Closing the achievement gap can be a process involving technology. Heuston and Shamir (2017) reiterated that the way to remove the literacy gap and improve literacy throughout the U.S. for ELLs might come in the form of a powerful tool known as computers. Computers have been utilized to implement adaptive software for ELL learners. Heuston and Shamir believed the adaptive learning software could alter each child's educational encounter, providing students with the ability to move at a comfortable pace while implementing rigorous, structured and repetitive activities. The software would be the individual instruction each ELL learner needed to learn. The adaptive approach offered a customized approach that assessed and monitored the learning process. Heuston and Shamir found the programs were successful, and a great way to provide differentiation for students as they move at their own pace. Nonetheless, teachers needed training on implementation of the program and how to close achievement gaps among students.

Teachers need extensive training and professional development to determine why exhaustive efforts have been unsuccessful in closing the gaps of learning for ELL students. Milliard (2013) discussed the success of one teacher by implementing *Comunidad*, which means one face one language. Each teacher remained with one language throughout the day providing instruction while students changed from Spanish to English-speaking classrooms throughout the day, increasing the likelihood of teachers overlapping with different languages (Milliard, 2013). Closing the gap will empower ELL students to being aware of their contributions to this learning process.

The Can Do Descriptors, part of the WIDA (2014) program, use six levels of language proficiency, ranging from 1 to 6, with 6 being the goal of proficiency. Using WIDA's Can Do Descriptors, teachers are provided with information about what students are able to do in each of the five standards while providing a way for students to feel successful through the learning activities provided in content area classes; however, the delivery models for teaching ELLs changes from school to school.

### **ESOL Delivery Models**

Developing literacy skills for language development and reading is a prime concentration of ELL education in K-12. In elementary and middle schools, ESOL teachers use a variation of teaching models to provide language instruction to ELLs. ESOL teachers may use the pull-out, push-in, or coteaching to deliver English language instruction (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). The ESOL teacher consults regularly with the students' content teachers to align English language instruction with content instruction. Folorunsho (2014) conducted a study concerning instructional models for ELLs as contributors to the teacher's effectiveness. This

study determined that delivery models must be implemented on a continuous and systematic basis. Folorunsho discussed a usage of a blend of the pull-out and push-in models implemented, and the approach was not evidence based. The programs used were not adopted by the district because they were used haphazardly in response to the needs of the students. Due to the NCLB waiver there was a purposeful need for a more systematic evidence-based approach to ELL student pedagogy and curricula to inform teachers about teaching models (Folorunsho, 2014). The models must be applicable to the ELL students.

ESOL programs differ across the United States, and sometimes within districts within the same state (Georgia Department of Education, 2017) as standards are provided by WIDA without a required format for programs. However, the most common delivery methods used for educating ELLs in American schools are the pull-out, push-in, and sheltered instruction models (Spark, 2016; Stephens & Johnson, 2015). A rising model is the coteaching model, or collaborative model, which is like the push-in model as the ESOL teacher is in the classroom (Spark, 2016). The difference between the two models is instead of the ESOL teaching providing only language support for ELLs the ESOL teacher collaborates and partners with the content area teacher (DelliCarpini & Alonso, 2013; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2016). The Georgia Department of Education allows each district and individual schools to determine which ESOL delivery model to use (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). There are six standard models (i.e., pull-out model, push-in model, scheduled instruction, bilingual instruction, English-only instruction, sheltered instruction, and coteaching) and the flexibility to create an innovative delivery model (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). Three of the most common models used with ELL learners are pull-out model, push-in model, and sheltered instruction:

- ***The Pull-out model*** is the most common. Language support provided with the pull-out model, requires that students are removed from general education classes to receive small group instruction from an ESOL teacher (Sparks, 2016). However, this model is typically used in the elementary settings with students receiving language support in 30-minute segments (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). While this teaching model has been successful for ELLs, there are concerns about time lost during transitioning, a lack of understanding about what is taught in the content area class, and what happens with the ESOL teacher (Mamantov, 2013).
- ***Push-in model*** requires the ESOL teacher to go into the content area classes and provide language support while the content teacher provides the content instruction (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). This model does not involve collaboration between the two teachers, and the teachers have a distinct role within the classroom (Percy, Martin-Beltran, Silberman, & Nunn, 2015). As lessons are taught, the ESOL teacher provides differentiation and scaffolds for ELLs and many times for other students who are struggling within the class (Mamantov, 2013).
- ***Sheltered instruction*** is widely used and is known as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), or Sheltered Instruction (SI) (Sparks, 2016). According to CREDE (2010), a 7-year project was conducted to measure the impact of sheltered instruction, lead to the creation of the SIOP model. There are many variations associated with the sheltered model; however, it general provides teaching the English language while incorporating academic content. Commonly used formats for SI involve the ESOL teacher providing instruction and others involve content area teachers who are trained in

the model. With a classroom of ELLs, content teachers are responsible for providing language support and academic content (Stephens & Johnson, 2015).

Other formats for instruction with ELL learners can be effective if used in a systematic manner to support instruction. Each model is described based on its ability to impact the ELL programs for students:

- ***Scheduled Class*** period: Students receive both content and language support during the scheduled class period by an ESOL teacher (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).
- ***Bilingual instruction*** is referred to as dual-language immersion program is provided within the content area classes and involves the use of the student's native language and English (Sparks, 2016). Students who receive this method of instruction receive language support during the English portion of the school day (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). The use of this method continues to increase as it allows students to communicate in their native language to better understand the English language and activities within the academic classrooms. Bolos (2012) found that bilingual student's linguistic abilities should be treated differently from their peers and supported through differentiated instruction, which will provide accommodations while allowing them the use of both their native language and English.
- ***English-only instruction*** suggests that the best way for ELLs to obtain the English language is through interaction with their peers (WIDA, 2014). The U.S. English Foundation understands the need for some scaffolding, but it suggests that the scaffolding should be short-term and transitional. The Foundation also believes that

English should be the common language in the United States (U.S. English Foundation, 2016).

- **Coteaching** was first used in special education as a model to provide services within content area classes for students with learning disabilities. The seminal work of Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) found that coteaching was a way for special education educators and content teachers to share responsibility for teaching students with special education services. The researchers found that the model helped to provide differentiated instruction for students who struggled with academics and behavior.

DelliCarpini and Alonso (2013) argue that content area teachers have limited knowledge about how to teach ELLs and that the academic success of ELLs must equally involve language and content. The use of the co-teaching model for educating ELLs, serves as a way for content area teachers and ESOL teachers to collaborate concerning the demands of ELLs in content area classrooms. The model uses the expertise of both teachers to ensure that content and English are provided through a collaborative instructional cycle, which involves planning, teaching, assessment, and reflection (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2016). As many schools adopt the co-teaching method of instruction, the relationship among the two teachers is developed to promote co-teaching strategies, such as station teaching, parallel teaching, and/or co-planning (Hers, Horan, & Lewis, 2016).

Peercy et al. (2015) found that the use of a co-teaching model provided an avenue for content teachers and ESOL teachers to collaborate about instructional practices that helped shape future instruction. The use of an ESOL teacher in the classroom helped the content teacher

understand the linguistic struggles of the ELLs within the classroom and provided scaffolding of lessons and differentiation for students based on their individual needs. While co-teaching may not be the norm in most districts, it is essential that the partnership between the content area teacher and the ESOL teacher is established to ensure that effective scaffolding occurs for ELLs (McGriff & Protacio, 2015).

### **Best Practices for Teaching ELLs**

Most ELLs spend the entire day in classrooms that have most of the students as English as their first language (L1) and where teaching occurs only in English, which could be an unsettling situation for the ELL learners. The teachers are also faced with a challenge because they must prepare to teach students who come from diverse backgrounds. Harper and de Jong (2016) remarked that the viewing instruction for ELLs as equal to instruction provided to native English speakers is linked to a belief there is an equivalency of knowledge in L1 and L2. These authors suggest that professional development is needed to help teachers shed authenticity on this situation is not true. The idea that learning L1 and L2 are similar in nature is derived from two misconceptions of not defining the individual needs of ELLs in comparison to other diverse learners and making assumptions that learning a second language is a process of adaptation that is appropriate for most diverse learners. There are various misconceptions about teaching ELL learners. According to Harper and de Jong (2016), there are four basic misconceptions that exist among teachers: a) “exposure and interaction will result in English-language learning” (para. 1); b) “all ELLs learn English in the same way and at the same rate” (para. 5); c) “good teaching for native speakers is good teaching for ELLs” (para. 10); and d) “effective instruction means nonverbal support” (para. 15). Due to the different misconceptions concerning teaching ELL



learners, it is essential that content teachers prepare to scaffold their lessons and differentiate the assignments as the use of these methods are the basics for utilizing best practices for ELLs.

Instructional scaffolding is a process where the teacher provides extra resources and materials designed to add support and enhance learning in the mastery of tasks (IRIS Center, 2016). Teachers, who teach ELLs, must scaffold their lessons to ensure that students are working at an achievable level to gradually meet their academic goals. While it is essential to provide content knowledge, one must understand the importance of basic skills, and, at some point, they must be taught to ensure that students begin to read to learn verses learning to read (Wolf, Wang, Huang, & Blood, 2014). ELLs, who enter U.S. schools during the middle school years, may need more support and strategies to help them grasp the academic language for the content classes (Sparks, 2016).

Teaching strategies for content area teachers remains an issue for many teachers as they have been tasked with figuring out a way to ensure that the ELLs in their classrooms understand the content that they provide. As a means of providing quality instruction for ELLs, teachers must begin to “unpack” the standards to ensure that ELLs understand the concepts that are taught. While unpacking the standards, teachers can help ELLs identify the skills and tasks that are associated with the standards (Wolf et al., 2014). Subsequently, while ELLs vary in English Language Proficiency (ELP), scaffolding activities for ELLs is a must and begins with the standards.

There are many instructional practices that content area teachers can utilize while teaching content to ELLs. Pang (2013) suggests that to increase reading fluency for ELLs that basic phonics skills and oral proficiency is necessary as the goal is reading comprehension. As

phonics and oral proficiency increases, vocabulary and reading comprehension should follow.

Pre-teaching material serves as a great scaffold for content area classes (Berg & Wehby, 2013; Wolf et al., 2014).

Preteaching is an introduction of information prior to the learning experience that may be completed through many instructional strategies including vocabulary, graphic organizers, background knowledge, and activating prior knowledge (Berg & Wehby, 2013). The concept of preteaching serves as a scaffold that can be presented in small group, whole group, or individually. While preteaching is a common strategy used in education, it is essential that ELLs receive explicit preteaching to ensure comprehension of the content being taught. Areas that will enhance and facilitate learning are:

- ***Vocabulary***. Vocabulary is often used as a preteaching technique to build background knowledge prior to a lesson being taught and providing explicit vocabulary instruction (Berg & Wehby, 2013). Vocabulary instruction receives very little attention in middle and high school classrooms, even though it has a distinct connection to ELLs academic achievement (Gamez & Lesaux, 2012). A variety of activities that intensively teach content vocabulary over a series of days is a great way to incorporate scaffolding into vocabulary activities (Sparks, 2016). The use of intentional integration of academic vocabulary for ELLs in middle school classrooms should be systematic and rigorous (Nisbet & Tindall, 2015). Morphological instruction, breaking words into smaller units or chunking, are also strategies that have been found to be useful for ELLs in middle school (Pacheco & Goodwin, 2013). Once students understood the differences between root words, prefixes, and suffixes

that they could break unknown words apart and understand the meaning of the words as well as the text that they read (Bolos, 2012; Pacheco & Goodwin, 2013).

Embedded and extended vocabulary instruction helps with vocabulary acquisition have been proven to help increase the vocabulary of ELLs (August, Artizi, & Barr, 2015).

- ***Graphic Organizers and Visual Strategies.*** Graphic organizers and visual strategies must be pretaught as students must understand when and how to use graphic organizers (Berg & Wehby, 2013). Graphic organizers provide visuals for students as they work in their content classes. The use of such visuals provides students with the ability to organize their thoughts and summarize their learning (Pang, 2013). It is important to note that most reading comprehension strategies have graphic organizers already created that focus on problem solving, cause and effect, main idea, and supporting details.
- ***Cooperative Learning and Peer Tutoring.*** Cooperative learning activities benefit ELLs as it provides practice with both social and academic language. The use of groups allows students to make connections with others and enrich their English language development while focusing on academic language in an instructional manner (Almaguer & Esquierdo, 2013).
- ***Use of Native Language.*** The use of native language in content area classes has become a great way of teachers to guarantee that students use prior knowledge and make connections with the English language. While the use of ELLs native languages is not as encouraged in many settings, there are connections that have been made

between native language acquisition and second language acquisition. It is suggested that if students have knowledge from their native language, it helps them develop the second language (Bolos, 2012; Rios-Aguilar, Canche, & Moll, 2012).

As instructional models for teaching ELL students continue to change and evolve, it is essential that teaching practices do the same. Middle school students are tasked with passing end of year assessments regardless of their English proficiency levels to proceed to the next grade. It is crucial for instructional strategies to change and for collaboration to take place between content area teachers and ESOL teachers. WIDA (2014) program is the first move for teachers to incorporate the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to begin scaffolding lessons and differentiating student tasks. It is very unrealistic to expect the ESOL teacher to collaborate with all content area teachers who teach ELL students.

### **ELLs in the Main Stream Classroom/Pullout Sessions**

ELLs in American schools are growing rapidly (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). Bilingual Education is a necessary component when learning English, in order to support English Language development and native language (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2017) explained that ELLs should be provided with suitable programs of language support, like bilingual education, to help ensure that they attain English proficiency to achieve high levels of academic achievement. The challenge faced by ELLs is overcoming the difficulty that exists in communicating from a student's native language to English.

The nation's ELL students mainly migrated in from the west from different backgrounds and surroundings with different perceptions towards learning English. National Center for

Educational Statistics (2017) acknowledged the analysis in 2013–2014 and showed five of the six states with the highest percentages of ELL students in their public schools were in the West, mainly District of Columbia, Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. California had the highest percentage.

General education content area classrooms house learners from diverse backgrounds, which contributes to their means of understanding English language terms and concepts. Age variations could be a major issue for educators who use a pull-out model. There are some states that use grade bands for ESOL services, meaning ESOL teachers have students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade and sixth to eighth grade. The combination of multiple grade levels makes language development a challenging task, due to the combination of all students during the pullout sessions (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). While many believe that ELLs can function in content area general education classes, one must identify how services will be provided for students.

Casto (2017) thought that regular classroom teachers could provide instructional strategies including scaffolds to meet the academic needs for ELLs in both language and literacy with the assistance from instructional paraprofessionals who provide linguistic and academic support using an inclusion model. ELL students may receive ESOL services during intervention periods for an hour each day outside of the main classroom. The sessions consist of pullout time providing intensive language acquisition instruction. This instruction was implemented and delivered by a certified teacher.

Fostering literacy development with ELL learners is effective in learning a second language. Ford (2014) mentioned literacy instruction for ELLs focuses on the language in which

the instruction is provided. Ford also mentioned research has provided limited evidence to confine literacy instruction to L1 or L2 but linking phonological awareness and reading success will render gains in literacy development as scaffolds will provide native language benefits for students as they begin reading in L2.

Teaching oral language in the classroom provides the foundation for literacy development. Meltzer and Tamann (2005) mentioned ELL learners need daily opportunities, in the classroom and out of the classroom, to learn and practice oral English for literacy development. The authors suggest that ELLs learn English primarily by listening to peers and others utilize language when speaking while utilizing context clues to gain an understanding of what was spoken. The transfer of language aids in the input of data for learners to learn how to use new words to express themselves when speaking with others (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005).

Studies were conducted with ELL students who were in a mainstreamed setting versus sheltered instructional settings where content instruction is provided in an ELL only classroom (Stephens & Johnson, 2015). Johnston (2013) conducted a mixed study with English verbal interactions of seven third to sixth grade students. The students were observed in three instructional settings consisting of content classrooms, the sheltered instruction classroom, and an ESOL pullout. The study revealed how ELL learners feel more confident in sheltered situations involved with other ELL learners, and, when linked with native English speakers, they tend to withdraw and feel isolated in mainstream classrooms. There are many strategies a teacher could implement to help the ELL student feel part of the classroom environment and not isolated or existing as a separate entity. According to Lesaux and Harris (n.d.), ELL teachers should be trained to place emphasis on language, assessment, and how to utilize the background knowledge

of all students. Lesaux and Harris also believed that teachers should be encouraged to appreciate collaborative spaces and embed multicultural education throughout the curriculum.

### **Learning Challenges for ELLs**

Many classroom tasks are challenging for ELL students and may require that teachers spend quality time helping them find solutions. Guccione (2014) shared five key challenges associated with oral language development of ELLs, and methods of resolving the challenges in the classroom. Dr. Guccione is a second-grade teacher who was interested in helping ELL students make a successful transition with language acquisition. Guccione discovered the following challenge: a) Understanding the traits of ELLs at different levels of understanding in L2 is very important to language development. Modeling oral language for the ELL student and letting them practice oral reading in non-threatening environments is helpful; b) Differentiation is an essential part of providing effective instruction for all students at all proficiency levels to ensure that content is provided through a range of learning opportunities for students. Helpful strategies with differentiation are modifying the texts and creating group structures; c) Students hear and use their social language in every aspect of life, but only use academic language in a school setting. Developing social interactions for children to practice language transfer is good; d) Research has shown a link between the development of L1 and how it correlates to the development of L2; and e) the factors found necessary for obtaining proficiency in L2 are a low stress environments, repetition and role play.

Literature is culture bound, therefore sharing common background information tends to bring a classroom environment closer. ELLs may come from cultures totally different from other students and feel they cannot brainstorm ideas, think creatively, or express opinions because of

their background. Story themes presented may not be a common element in their culture; therefore, it will be complicated to comprehend (Guccione, 2014).

### **Implications**

This qualitative case project study will seek to identify and understand the teaching practices and perceptions of general education teachers, who teach ELLs in content area classes, to identify which teaching strategies are being used and how they are implemented. For the wider educational context, this study will add to what is known about the education of ELLs by providing information on instructional practices of middle school content area teachers. The WIDA framework is widely used in 32 states in United States of American schools (WIDA, 2016). By examining how a group of teachers see their role in delivering education and understanding their own practices, it may assist similar schools with the investigation of practices of teachers. This study might lead to positive social change by providing an understanding of teaching practices used when educating ELLs in content area classes.

The findings of the study could be used to develop professional development workshops for teachers on instructional practices and the use of WIDA and differentiation to meet the needs of ELLs in content area classes. The observations and interviews could help shape a professional development workshop that will incorporate the WIDA and the Can Do Descriptors to help with differentiation of lessons for ELLs.

### **Summary**

The number of ELLs who are pushed out into general education classes continues to increase leaving content area teachers, who may or may not be certified to provide instruction for ELLs, to provide much needed instruction (Pawan & Craig, 2011). However, the local setting is



unsure of the practices utilized by content area teachers who teach ELLs. This qualitative case study will focus on middle school general education teachers' perceptions and instructional practices used when teaching ELLs, in content area classes. WIDA and differentiation provides ELLs with a way to learn on their language proficiency levels, which are based on individual needs (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008; WIDA, 2014). By exploring the teaching practices used in content area classes while teaching ELLs, the information can be used to improve instruction for ELLs in all classes.

Section 2 of this paper is a review of the methodology for obtaining data for this project. It will discuss the qualitative case study, suggested participants and criteria for obtaining participants, proposed sample, data collection processes, and data analysis.

## Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the teaching perceptions and practices of content area teachers when providing instruction for ELLs. Section 1 provides a comprehensive review of literature surrounding ELLs, teaching practices, differentiation, and WIDA. This section will discuss the proposed research method and the design. The participants, proposed sample, instruments, procedures, data collection and analysis are also discussed in this section.

### **Research Design and Approach**

#### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

A qualitative case study was used to explore the perceptions and teaching practices of the general education teachers who teach ELLs. The use of the research methodology provided the researcher with the capability to obtain a depth of knowledge from all participants in “real-life conditions,” when boundaries were not clear (Yin, 2011, p. 7). This methodology was selected to explore perceptions and teaching practices. The use of a case study best fits this research as it allowed me to gain insight into the practices of a group of teachers who provide general education instruction for ELLs. This study examined and investigated the perceptions and practices of a bounded system, as defined by Merriam (2009) who stated that a case study is used only with bounded systems. The bounded system in this case study consisted of the content area middle grades teachers within the target school.

The rationale for selecting a qualitative study over a quantitative design was based on the local problem. A qualitative design was selected over a quantitative or mixed-methods design because the problem focused on teacher practices. The study does not identify cause and effect of

variables nor does it form a hypothesis, but it does seek to provide insight into individuals who are a part of the phenomenon being researched as a qualitative study and to understand instructional practices of teachers (Merriam, 2009).

Other qualitative research designs (e.g., narrative inquiry, ethnography, and phenomenology) were not appropriate for the study. Narrative inquiry was not appropriate as the design seeks to tell a narrative story that focuses on a sequence of events (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). The ethnography design was not a suitable design as it specifically seeks to describe characteristics of a culture, and this study seeks to study a specific group of teachers (Lodico et al., 2010). Lodico et al. (2010) described phenomenological studies as studies that rely participants' experiences. Because this study focused less on the experiences of teachers and more on what they were doing, a phenomenological study was not fitting for this study.

### **Participants**

The criteria for participants in this study was any content area teacher (i.e., math, English language arts, science, or social studies), in any grade level 6th - 8th within the middle school setting who teaches ELLs. Any teacher who fit the criteria was asked to participate in the study. The use of typical sampling technique through purposeful sampling was utilized as the site was intentionally selected (Creswell, 2012). The sample size was six participants and was based on the number of teachers who teach ELLs in a content area class within the studied middle school. Teachers were recruited through work email and face-to-face invitations.

**Criteria for selecting participants.** Qualitative research allows the researcher to be selective in choosing participants as they must be directly related to the purpose of the study (Lodico et al., 2010). Creswell (2012) suggests that there are five to 25 participants in a single

case study. Purposeful sampling was used to select content area teachers who teach ELLs in general education classes.

**Procedures for gaining access to participants.** Procedures for obtaining access to participants within the school district included applying for approval to complete the research study from the school administrator through email communication. Upon obtaining approval from the District's Board of Education and Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to recruit participants, I obtained permission from the middle school principal to contact participants within the school. The entire pool for the study was six teachers as there were only six teachers who provided content instruction for ELLs. I began recruiting participants who teach English language arts, social studies, science, or math, through work email and face-to-face meetings after school, once all approvals were received. The teachers who agreed to participate in the study were provided with consent forms and information concerning whom to contact with any questions or concerns.

**Methods of establishing a researcher-participant working relationship.** I did not hold a supervisory position over any potential participants for this study. I did work with potential participants within the middle school as a middle school ELA and Social Studies teacher and the Student Support Team (SST) and 504 Coordinator, who are responsible for ensuring that students receive proper supports in the Response to Intervention (RTI) process and that the school is in compliance with Title II of the Disabilities Act (ADA). I do not have a previous relationship with any of the teachers in the school, as I am a new transfer to the district. I provided participants with a written explanation of the purpose of the study through an informed consent and with information concerning my role as the researcher. Through the written

explanation, questioning by potential participants, and individual meetings, a relationship and rapport was established with each participant. The relationship between researcher and participant for this study was collaborative, as the study required close contact with the participants to provide participants the ability to share stories concerning instructional strategies and methods (Lodico et al., 2010).

**Protection of Human Subjects.** A complete description of the research project was provided to participants prior to collecting data in email format and hard copy along with informed consents. To ensure protection and confidentiality, participants were identified using alpha- numbers instead of names throughout the data collection process. Grade levels and subject content will be excluded, and data was documented using an alpha-numeric code to ensure that the information was not traceable to specific teachers and to prevent incrimination of the participants. Upon completion of the study, all information was kept secured in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and shall remain for five years and then be destroyed.

### **Data Collection**

The methods for collecting data included different individuals who contributed through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Qualitative data collection includes observations, interviews, questionnaires, audio-visual material, and documents (Creswell, 2012). The case study provided the ability to collect data through observations, interviews, and questionnaires and the primary sources of data for this study were observations and interviews, as they provide insight into the perceptions and practices of content ELL teachers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

**Questionnaire.** The first data collection process involved the use of an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix C) on methods of instruction used to teach ELLs in general education classes, which was provided to the participants prior to the interview. The questionnaire was administered through paper and pencil at the beginning of the interview. The questionnaire helped guide the semistructured interview and identify areas for probing and inquiry (Merriam, 2009). These data provided insight into teaching practices and why the practices are used or not used, as well as information concerning familiarity and comfortability with using the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to instruct ELLs. This process aided in the understanding of the use of teaching practices and helped to guide the interview, as the questions were discussed to help gain an understanding of current views of teaching practices for ELLs. The questionnaire, adapted from Reeves (2006), was developed by Reeves and went through a pilot study prior to the use of the tool to ensure the readability and content validity prior to the use by the researcher. Based on the work conducted by Reeves, the questions utilized in the questionnaire have proven to be reliable, credible, and appropriate for this study.

**Interviews.** Data for this study included semistructured interviews of general education teachers who teach ELLs to gain clarity about how differentiation and the WIDA Can Do Descriptors were utilized when teaching ELLs. The interviews lasted 45-60 minutes and were conducted in a private office during after school hours in a closed room with a locked door. The semistructured interview (Appendix B) helped me gain insight into what happens within the general education content area classes from the teacher's perspective. The interviews provided answers to questions concerning perceptions and teaching practices that cannot be explained through the collection of field notes. The interview provided insight into the teacher perceptions

and practices used for scaffolding and differentiating lessons in general education classes who teach ELLs and who they see as responsible for ensuring that differentiation and scaffolds occur. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed listing the alpha- numeric code that was assigned to individual participants to ensure that the information is represented accurately. Confidentiality was assured through interviewing after school hours in a private office with a closed and locked door.

**Field Notes.** I collected field notes to identify specific practices utilized by general education teachers while teaching content to ELLs. The field notes identified the use of WIDA standards, how lessons and activities are differentiated, and the scaffolds that are used to provide instruction for ELLs while in content area classes. The data was collected using a t-chart to separate the identification of the use of WIDA and differentiation. Observational notes were also collected on teaching practices and student activities.

The field notes were collected in the target school, during school hours, at a random time throughout the day. Each participant had two observations during the study. The field notes helped me gain an understanding of teaching techniques of the participants while they were in their natural settings. These data helped identify if the teaching practices that teachers stated that they were using during the interview were evident in their classrooms and to identify other practices that were used. Finally, the use of field notes provided further insight into the practices used with ELLs in content area general education classrooms. Notes taken during the observations provided more information about teaching practices along with how differentiation and scaffolds were provided for ELLs in the content area classes of five teachers.

## Data Analysis

### Data Analysis

I used an inductive approach to analyze the data collected from the observational field notes. Through the inductive approach, I developed categories based on teaching practices, types of scaffolds seen during the observations, ways in which differentiation occurred during the class, and the use of WIDA Can Do Descriptors and standards. Data was collected in a circular method, and further processed and simplified through a five-phased cycle of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016). The data was collected and compiled to identify themes from categories (Thomas, 2006). The findings from the observational field notes were color coded through disassembling and reassembled with the use of the color codes to place data with appropriate themes. Upon completion of the reassembling, I interpreted the data and concluded the findings.

Data collected from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using the NVivo data analysis software. Interviews were transcribed into a Word document and shared with participants for member checking. I asked participants to check for accuracy of the transcription and return within seven days. Once member checking was concluded, the Word document was uploaded into the NVivo data analysis software. I used software to go through an auto-coding process to help classify data and identify themes within teacher perceptions, teaching practices, differentiation, scaffolding, and the use of the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. The data from the questionnaires, interviews, and observational field notes were interpreted to provide meaning of the data.



Data was organized in tables. These tables show the most common and least common teaching practices implemented when teaching ELLs and the usage of WIDA standards and differentiation. Teacher perceptions were organized into a table.

**Evidence of quality and procedures to assure the best possible accuracy and credibility of the findings.** To ensure that triangulation occurred in the data collection process I used multiple sources, including a questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations. Each participant reviewed their questionnaire prior to the interview to help with validity of interview responses. The participants were debriefed after observations to ensure that the information obtained was accurate. Participants participated in member checking to confirm that the statements recorded from the interviews represented the views that were recorded. The information from the observations and notes were compared to the information from the interviews and questionnaires to ensure that the information was not bias. Each data source was categorized and analyzed independent of the other sources.

**Procedures for dealing with discrepant cases.** Through member checking and debriefing, I hoped that any discrepancies would be removed through internal validity. However, due to the nature of this study, discrepant data became evident during the interviews. I included the discrepant data in the research findings. The use of member checking was used to ensure that the information obtained during the interview was transcribed correctly and represented the answers that the participants wanted to portray. Debriefing occurred after classroom observations to help clarify information obtained from the observation. However, any discrepant cases were acknowledged and reported in the data analysis.

## **Summary**

The methodology section outlined the case study and design that was used to explore the teaching practices of middle school content area teachers. The sample for this study included five content area teachers who provide instruction for ELLs in their classes. An overview of the data collection processes through interviews, observational field notes, and questionnaires were reviewed and explained. The description of the procedural processes was discussed to explain credibility and dealings with discrepant cases.

## **Data Analysis Results**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of middle grades content area teachers and their use of the WIDA standards and Can Do-Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold instruction for ELLs. The focus of this study was a rural middle school in a southeastern state, where ELLs were not making academic gains in content classes or on the end of year state assessment. This study explored the practices utilized by the teachers and their perceptions by answering two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the teaching practices and perceptions of content area teachers when providing instruction for ELLs in a rural middle school in a southeastern state?

Research Question 2: How do middle grades teachers use WIDA standards and practices in content area classes when differentiating and scaffolding lessons for ELLs in a rural school in a southeastern state?

During this study, I collected data through questionnaires, interviews, and two observations with field notes. Using the three data sources, I was able to triangulate information

to find themes within the research. The transcription of the data began by transcribing the interviews into a Word document within 24-48 hours after the interview, to ensure identification of emerging themes from the data. The interview included the semistructured interviews and clarification of questionnaire checklist answers. The classroom observations and questionnaires were also used to identify themes concerning the use of WIDA standards and practices to differentiate, and teaching practices and perceptions.

### **Participants**

The sample was taken from a rural middle school of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers, with varying years of experience teaching ELLs in content classes. Creswell (2012) noted that a researcher needs four to five participants in each sample for a case study. There were five of the six content teachers who taught ELLs who responded to the invitation to participate in the study. There were four female teachers and one male teacher with experience teaching ELLs ranging from having two ELLs in their teaching career to having 150. Of the five participants, only one was endorsed to teach ELLs. Table 1 presents the participants demographics and teaching experience.

Table 1

Participant	Age	Gender	Degree	Years of Experience Teaching	Approximate Number of ELLs Taught throughout Teaching Career	Current Number of ELLs
1AFL7	50	Female	Bachelor's Degree	6	50	9
1WFD8	47	Female	Master's Degree	10	100	12
2WFM7	46	Female	Bachelor's Degree	22	150	9
4WMD6	64	Male	Master's Degree	10	2	12
5WFK6	33	Female	Master's Degree	33	50+	12

### Overview of Findings

The concept of differentiation has been around for quite some time and is very well known about in the field of education, as teachers differentiate instruction for students in all grade levels (Washburne, 1953). However, the use of WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors have only been around since the implementation of NCLB and are not practiced in all states (WIDA, 2016). The research is focused on best practices for teaching ELLs, teaching models, differentiation, and scaffolds (Harper & de Jong, 2016; Pang, 2013; Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez, 2008; WIDA, 2016). The remainder of this segment will focus on a discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions. The questionnaire findings will be presented first. Followed by a discussion of the semistructured interview and concluded with the classroom observations finds.

## Questionnaire Findings and Themes

The purpose of the questionnaire for this qualitative case study was to provide the participants with the opportunity to write what their teaching practices are and to identify their perceptions as it relates to WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors, differentiation and scaffolds. The perceptions of the participants are noted in the interview findings, as many checklist items were reviewed during the interview as they relate to classroom practices, the impact of inclusion, and the support that they receive from administration and the ESOL team. For Research Question 1, participants were asked if they provide students with opportunities to use their native language in class, and how they monitored the usage. Participant 1AFL7 stated,

I know many ESOL teachers who say that we should provide ELLs opportunities to use their own language during school, but based on my own experience, I do not believe that it is productive. The more the ELL focuses on their native language, the less English will be learned. Becoming proficient in English requires the ELL to be immersed as much as possible at school.

The four remaining participants stated that ELLs may use their native language when working with lower level ELLs, when working with partners, or working with other ELLs. When participants were questioned about providing material for ELL students in native languages, all teachers stated that they allow the students to use Google Translate to translate material. However, sometimes translations aren't very good, Participant 1WFD8 replied, "I have tried to provide word problems translated into native languages, but often translations lose the meaning of the English version."

To help gain an understanding of teacher perceptions, participants were asked about how the inclusion of ELLs in their classes has impacted the way that they teach. Teachers noted that they are more conscious of their actions. Participant 2WFM7 stated, I am more conscious of needing to rephrase directions and higher-level vocabulary.” Participant 4WMD6 replied, “It makes me more conscious of my actions and student actions. I really have to think about what I am going to teach, and how I am going to do it.”

Participants were also asked about the kind of training that they have received to help ELLs in their content class, and whether the training was helpful. Every teacher stated that they had not received training at the school this year. Participant 2WFM7 stated, “Just a general training on ELLs and WIDA. It was a little helpful, but as a school we could use more.” Participant 5WFK6 remarked, “I haven’t received any training, that I can remember. It would be beneficial.” However, Participant 1AFL7 replied, “Everything that I use is from the ESOL Endorsement and from personal experience.” Table 2, presents the questionnaire questions, codes and themes for Research question 1.

Table 2

*Questionnaire Questions, Codes and Themes for Research Question 1*

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Questionnaire Questions	Codes	Broad Theme
Q5: Are students provided with opportunities to use their native language in your class? If so, how do you monitor the use?	When allowed	Native Language
Q6: Do you provide materials for ELL students in their native languages? Please explain.	Student led	Electronics
Q7: How has the inclusion of ELLs in your classes impacted the way that you teach?	More conscious of personal behaviors	Awareness
Q8: What kind of training have you received to help ELLs in your content class? Did you find the training helpful? Why or Why not?	Need for training	Training

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Research Question 2, participants shared their knowledge concerning the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors, as well as how they differentiate and scaffold lessons for ELLs in their content classes. When participants were asked about their familiarity with the WIDA standards and whether they incorporate the standards into class, 60% of the participants responded that they were not familiar with WIDA standards and that they had not received training or that the training was in the past. Participant 4WMD6 stated, “This is my initial encounter with WIDA, in Florida we did not use the WIDA standards. I have not had any training on WIDA.” Participant 2WFM7 replied, “I know there are WIDA standards, we have had training in the past, but not thoroughly.” Participant 1WFD8, replied “No, I am not familiar

with WIDA.” The remaining 40% who stated that they were familiar with WIDA, said that they use the standards or Can Do Descriptors. Participant 1AFL7 stated, “I try to put listening, speaking, writing, and reading into most lessons” and Participant 5WFK6 stated, “I try to incorporate 3 of the 5 standards into instruction. I use the social and instructional language standard, the language of Language Arts, and the language of Social Studies.”

When asked about how they scaffold and differentiate lessons for ELLs, 80% of them stated that they modify student work, in one way or another. Participant 5WFK6 stated, “I pre-teach vocabulary, read small sections of text, use Think-Alouds and then discuss... provide alternate lower level texts... and modifying the writing assignments.” Participant 4WMD6 stated that “portions of assignments are answered, pictures and videos are used when possible, and smaller assignments and choice of assignments are provided.” However, Participant 2WFM7, stated “I repeat directions, and double check with students who struggle with comprehension.” Table 3 presents the questionnaire questions, codes and themes for Research question 2.



Table 3

*Questionnaire Questions, Codes and Themes for Research Question 2*

Questionnaire Questions	Codes	Broad Theme
Q3: Are you familiar with the WIDA standards and how to utilize them in your class, when teaching ELLs? If so how do you incorporate the WIDA standards into your class? If no, have you received training on how to use the WIDA standards?	Familiar and incorporate standards; Familiar and do not incorporate standards; Not Familiar	WIDA Professional Development
Q4: How do you scaffold and differentiate your lessons for ELLs?	Graphic Organizers; Vocabulary; Partner Work; Lower level text; Modified assignments	Scaffolds; Differentiation

**Semistructured Interview Findings and Themes**

Following the completion of the questionnaire I proceeded to the semistructured interview, which included clarification to answers to some of the checklist responses from the questionnaire. The purpose for the interview was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of teachers who provide content area instruction to ELLs. A comparison and analysis of responses identified themes in the data.

For Research Question 1, during the interview, participants were asked what best practices they use to support ELLs in their classes and their responses varied. Participant 1AFL7 stated, "I utilize math foldables and interactive notebooks... graphic organizers, hands on... inquiry lessons to build background."

Three of the participants stated that they use students. Participant 5WFK6 stated, “Scaffolds, activators for background knowledge, highlighting, and check for understanding by using other English Language Learners.” Participant 1WFD8 stated, “Working with other students and the use of translators.” Participant 2WFM7 replied, “I use repetition of directions, asking students to repeat back to me, writing things on the board, asking student that I know really struggle personally repeat to me, the use of peer tutors as needed, and graphic organizers.

The checklist questions helped with understanding the perception of the participants, as it relates to their classroom practices, how they feel inclusion of ELLs has impacted their classrooms, and the support that they have received. 80% of participants noted that they allow ELLs more time to complete their coursework most or all the time, with 20% stating that they do some of the time. When asked about the amount of coursework given, 60% stated that some of the time they give students less course work, while the other 40% stated seldom or never. When Participant 2WFM7 was questioned why seldom or never was selected, and the response was, “we have to meet the standards and they need the practice...”

When Participant 1WFD8 was questioned about why ELLs are sometimes given less coursework than other students the participant replied, “If it’s a student who struggles with instructions or reading word problems or is not familiar with the math vocabulary, due to the language difference, instead of 5 problems I will give them 2.”

All participants stated that they sometimes allow ELLs to use their native language in class. 60% of the participants said that it was okay when helping others. Nevertheless, Participant 4WMD6 asserted, “I will try to make sure that they have a resource, but as much as they can, I want them to use the English language” and Participant 2WFM7 stated “I don’t want

them speaking Spanish or whatever all the time, but if they need the information again and I am working with someone else, I'm okay with them using it."

When questioned about providing material for ELLs in their native language most participants selected some of the time. Participant 2WFM7 stated, "When we take the standardized test it is in English, so they have to do it in English." Participant 1WFD8 stated, "When you convert a word problem electronically, it doesn't come out correctly or it doesn't ask the question as it was originally asked."

Participants were split on the statement of effort being more important than achievement when they grade ELLs. Forty percent of participants selected that some of the time that effort is more important, and 40% selected that most or all of the time that effort is more important. However, Participant 1WFD8, selected never and had this to say:

It is math, so getting the concepts is more important. A lot of it doesn't depend on whether they can speak the English or write the English. Most of the grading is whether or not the number is correct, or the skill is correct... or the algebra problem is laid out correctly. None of that has anything to do with whether or not they can speak English.

The checklist questions concerning the impact of inclusion in the participants content classes, responses were varied. Most of the participants selected that some of the time that the inclusion of ELLs in their classes increases their workload, with Participant 4WMD6 stating, "The increase will be in the planning and the preparation and getting some sheets together that I can differentiate a little bit from the others. Just the initial planning and preparation." However, Participant 2WFM7 specified, "I've had Special Ed. students in my class and having ELL student is not all that different from having Special Ed. Students, who need that repetition and things

scaffolded for them. I think you're doing the same accommodations for your ELLs as you are for your Sped kids.”

When participants answered whether ELL students required more of their time than other students, no participant selected most or all of the time, 60% selected some of the time and 40% selected seldom or never. The final question concerning the impact of inclusion asked about the inclusion of ELLs in their class affects the progress of the entire class, 80% of participants stated seldom or never and 20% selected some of the time. Follow up questions were not asked concerning these two questions.

The final section of the checklist focused on teacher support. Participants were asked about the support that they receive from school administration and the ESOL teacher. Most participants noted that they seldom or never receive support from administration when ELL students enroll in their classes. However, when questioned, Participant 1WFD8 stated,

Our administrator and I have had several conversations about what she expected of me and the ELL culture. She said, “Teach them the math, English is coming.” I’m very appreciative of that. It is not as challenging for me so it’s not as important or as challenging of needing administrative support. She has been very supportive every time I ask.

Participant 4WMD6 stated, “A little more support would be helpful. Students show up unannounced and you have no idea that they are coming.” Nonetheless, Participant 2WFM7 stated, “I don’t know that I fully understand the ACCESS scoring enough to really individualize what they are getting from me. I feel like there is not enough time to sit down and learn what we need to learn, to be able to 100% meet these kids where they are.”

The checklist question concerning the adequate support from the ESOL staff when ELL students enrolled in teachers' classes, provided some very interesting information. The participants were split on their responses, with 40% checking seldom or never, 20% checking some of the time, and 40% checking most or all of the time. Participant 2WFM7 stated, "The ESOL teacher is no longer in my room... I can't catch everything, because I can't see everything...students got more individualized help from her, I couldn't stop and explain something ten different ways."

Participant 4WMD6 concurred with statement from 2WFM7 stating, "She has been very helpful. She was in my 3<sup>rd</sup> period class for a 9-week time frame, after lunch. She shared a lot of things and would help if I needed her." Participant 1WFD8 selected that most or all of the time support was received from the ESOL teacher, but the response when asked for clarification did not match, the participant asserted,

Our ELL person is focused on helping each of the students' needs. I feel like she is asking me for support, more than the other way around. Maybe that is due to me being the math teacher. She is asking for answers, she's asking for examples, but I'm not getting any kind of support from her with assignments that include their native languages, or adaption of graphic organizers.

However, Participant 1AFL7 added, "She and I do not communicate, she never talks to me about our students." While Participant 5WFK6, didn't have anything to say, the participant did select seldom or never for support from the ESOL staff.

Due to only having one ESOL teacher in the building, most participants selected that they sometimes or seldom or never conference with the ESOL teacher. However, 2WFM7 did select most or all of the time due to the time in which the ESOL teacher was in her class.

For Research Question 2, participants responded to the use of WIDA Can Do Descriptors in their classes and how they differentiate instruction for ELLs in their content area classes.

Interview question 2, provided a strong theme where most participants stated that they do not use the WIDA Can Do Descriptors consistently or at all in their class. For example, Participant 1AFL7 stated, “I have it posted on the board... I try to tailor it, so it is embedded in the lesson plans... that’s a lot of standards. I do not do it 100% and I admit that.” However, Participant 1WFD8 replied, “I do not use WIDA intentionally. I have had no training on WIDA.”

Furthermore, Participant 2WFM7 professed, “I don't really use them having been teaching for 22 years. I feel like I know what my students need when they need it. And I try to meet them where they are academically.”

Interview Question 3 focused on how lessons are differentiated for ELLs in content classes and the responses exemplified an array of teaching strategies that support ELLs in content classes. Participant 4WMD6 stated, I will sometimes give them partial answers, or partial words in a sentence... partial aspects of the chart... a choice of things to do, so they can do what seems more comfortable to them.” Participant 5WFK6 added, “I use lower level materials with the same concepts, graphic organizers, different assessments, translate into native language when able.”

Table 4 provides interview questions, codes and themes for Research question 2.

Table 4

*Interview Questions, Codes and Themes for Research Question 2*

Interview Questions	Codes	Broad Theme
Q2: How do you use the WIDA Can Do-Descriptors in your class?	Familiar and incorporate standards; Familiar and do not incorporate standards; Not Familiar	WIDA Use
Q3: How do you differentiate instruction for ELLs in your content area class?	Leveled Text; Visuals; Hands on; Different Assessments; Native Language; Verbal Instructions	Scaffolds; Differentiation

**Participant Observation Findings**

The purpose of conducting observations of the participants for this qualitative case study was to examine the teaching practices of middle school content area teachers and the use of the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. Most participants were observed teaching each subject that they taught with ELLs in the class. From the two observations of each participant, I was able to identify teaching practices that were evident across content areas and grade levels. The field notes were typed and placed in connected charts so that data could be easily compared. The field notes were charted based on the observation number and differentiation and WIDA, and teaching practices. The data determined that teachers rarely use the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors to provide instruction for ELLs. However, in 2 out of 5 classrooms the WIDA standards were posted (See Appendix F).

For Research Question 1, the data that I collected from all observations showed that 60% of the time that teachers began instruction by reteaching content, reviewing content, or providing

vocabulary instruction while checking for understanding 90% of the time to ensure that students understood what was being taught. It is important to note that all teachers used direct instruction and modeling to help students, whether through modeling how to perform tasks or using guided practice 70% of the time, by having students practice on the Smart Board.

For Research Question 2, I looked very closely at how the participants used the WIDA standards and practices to differentiate or scaffold lessons. It was very hard to know whether teachers were using the WIDA standards, as lesson plans were not evaluated. However, the posting of the WIDA standards were noted in two classrooms. Two of the participants were observed using graphic organizers to scaffold lessons for students, and only 1 participant was observed modifying assignments through shortening or adjusting assignments for ELLs. There were 6 observations that displayed differentiation through student product and auditory and visual supports. Participants provided students with the ability to create and complete multiple tasks, use of choice boards, create stories, identifying and label different parts of a circle, create an Aboriginal Art piece, and write an argumentative essay of choice. Table 5 provides the coding categories from the observations and Table 6 provides the observational linked codes and the themes created from the codes.

Table 5

<i>Inductive Coding Categories for Observations</i>			
<b>Reteaching</b>	<b>Graphic Organizers</b>	<b>Student product</b>	<b>Anchor Charts</b>
Vocabulary Instruction	Modified Assignments	Visual Supports	Review
Questioning	Guided Practice	Auditory Supports	Reteach
Smart Board	Modeling	Whole Group	Videos
Cooperative Learning	Pairs	Small Group	Visual Supports

Table 6

*Themes Created from Observational Linked Codes*



<b>Teacher Practices</b>	<b>Scaffolds</b>	<b>Differentiation</b>	<b>WIDA</b>
Vocabulary Instruction	Modeling	Auditory Supports	Standards Posted
Questioning	Guided Practice	Student Product	Can Do Descriptors
Whole Group Instruction	Graphic Organizers	Visual Supports	
Smart Board (Technology)	Modified Assignments		

### **Evidence of Quality**

Due to the nature of qualitative research the researcher must establish the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2009). To ensure the evidence of quality, triangulation was used, through a combination of data, to validate the collected data. The methods for this study included the use of triangulation of data, member checking and member debriefing to verify data.

Triangulation was used through multiple data sources, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The use of two classroom observations verses the use of one, provided me with another opportunity to see the participants teaching in their natural setting to help validate the teaching practices found within the classroom.

I checked for accuracy of the interview data through member checking. I transcribed the recorded interviews into a Word document and made sure the information from the interviews noted exactly what the participants wanted to say. I conducted member checking through printed copies of the interview transcriptions, that were hand delivered to the participants with the instructions to respond within seven days of receiving the transcripts with any corrections. If there were no corrections to be made, the participant did not have to respond. Every participant responded, with one making corrections to the statements recorded to provide clarification, due to English being her second language.

I met with the participants to debrief within seven days following the second observation, to ensure that the fieldnotes represented what was taking place in the classrooms. I typed the

observational field notes into a chart within a Word document, to share with the participants. The data collected for the observations were accurate and portrayed what was happening in 100% of the classrooms. From the combination of the data, I was able to identify the teaching practices and perceptions of middle school content area teachers of ELLs, in the studied school. The themes that emerged from the data collection were WIDA, Teaching Practices, Scaffolds, Differentiation, Training, and Support.

### **Discrepant Cases**

Due to the nature of this study, it was my intention to include the perceptions and practices of all participants involved. Contradictory results from the study were included in the data analysis to provide a well-rounded view of the studied school. The discrepant data was identified when studying the participant with experience teaching ELLs as the ESOL teacher. While the data collected from the interview and questionnaire did not pose any discrepancies, the observational fieldnotes did. The data collected from this participant showed the use of differentiation, scaffolds and the use of WIDA to provide instruction for ELLs.

### **Summary**

The findings of this qualitative case study are interpreted based on the research questions and themes. The findings revealed the teaching practices and perceptions of five participants, when teaching ELLs in content area classes. The participants all utilized best practices as identified by the literature. There was evidence of the use of research-based strategies such as preteaching through vocabulary (Gamez & Lesaux, 2012), using graphic organizers (Pang, 2013), use of native language (Bolos, 2012; Rios-Aguilar, Canche, & Moll, 2012), and cooperative learning (Almaguer & Esquierdo, 2013), while providing instruction for ELLs in

content area classes. Differentiation was noted by Tomlinson (2014) to include modified assignments through content, process and product, as well as learning styles. Four of the five participants stated that they differentiate and scaffold lessons for ELLs through one of the ways mentioned by Tomlinson, and classroom observation fieldnotes noted such practices. The findings for WIDA and the use of WIDA practices did not hold the same findings, with three of the five participants stating that they were not familiar with WIDA. Two participants stated that they use WIDA, however only one participant was observed using scaffolded practices.

Middle grades content area teachers in this qualitative case study provided an array of practices and knowledge, concerning the teaching practices utilized when teaching ELLs. The classroom observations confirmed the information collected in the interviews, concerning teaching practices and differentiation. Participants understood differentiation but struggled with using the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold lessons for ELLs. The participants proposed that there was a need for more training on WIDA and how to use it in their classrooms, as well as a need for more support from administration and ESOL staff.

The findings are used to help teachers implement the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. The findings suggest a need for professional development (PD), educator training, concerning language acquisition and the use of WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold lessons. I have designed a 3-day PD workshop to help teachers gain an understanding of ELLs using WIDA, use the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold lessons, and implementation of a PLC to build confidence through administrative support.

In this Section, I described the qualitative case study through an explanation of the research design, data collection and analysis. The findings for the three data collection sources, questionnaire, interview, and observational field notes were presented. Section 3, introduces the project, the project goals, rationale for the project, a literature review supporting the selection of the project.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

Section 3 is a description of a professional development plan created to address the concerns found from researching a rural middle school in a Southeastern state. The findings provide insights into the teaching practices used to differentiate instruction for ELLs, teacher perceptions when educating ELLs in content area classes, and the use of WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. With this study I sought to identify what content teachers were doing in their classrooms and why, it provided insight into the perceptions of the teachers. Some of the teaching practices identified in the questionnaire and interview were evident during the observations. However, the use of WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors were not stated on all questionnaires or during interviews. Teachers noted that they could use more training on WIDA and how to provide instruction for ELLs. While most teachers provided forms of differentiation, it was not evident that the scaffolds or differentiation were related to the use of WIDA Can Do Descriptors.

### **Description of Goals**

The project joins the adult learning theories and the expectancy of professional development for educators. The project correlates the desires of the middle grades teachers and their need for professional development, to help them better assist ELLs in their content area classes and with the implementation of the use of the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. The professional development workshops will focus on (a) developing an understanding of ELLs using WIDA, (b) differentiating and scaffolding lessons using the WIDA Can Do Descriptors, and (c) moving students from one level to the next. When teachers understand theory it helps

them to make the necessary changes needed in the classroom (Choi & Morrison, 2014). The workshop will occur over a 3-day period and will include a professional learning cycle to ensure that transformation occurs within the classrooms containing ELLs. Following the completion of the workshops, teachers will (a) begin implementation of things learned in the workshops, (b) observe and be observed by other teachers, administrators, and the workshop coordinator, (c) meet again with the workshop coordinator to discuss progress and further needs.

The first goal for the workshop is to help teachers obtain a better understanding of how language develops. The session will discuss (a) myths and realities concerning teaching ELLs, (b) a discussion of the data from the state, local, and school levels, and (c) factors that affect language development. For teachers to understand how to teach ELLs, it is essential that they are provided with an understanding of how language is developed. During this session time, teachers will practice matching activities to Can Do Descriptors based off the language proficiency levels of students.

The second goal will be to facilitate teachers while they create scaffolded and differentiated lessons using the WIDA Can Do Descriptors for their content area classes. While teachers were aware of ways to scaffold and differentiate instruction in their classrooms, they were not aware of how to use the Can Do Descriptors. By providing teachers with the opportunity to create lessons together as a content area, it will allow them to obtain leveled activities for multiple lessons to teach different concepts. Furthermore, with the statement that planning lessons and activities is an issue, this will provide the support needed for those teachers who are not familiar with WIDA and how to implement the concepts into their classes.

The third goal is the creation of a PLC for content area teachers of ELLs and to bring administrators and ESOL staff together to provide teachers with the support that they seek from all involved in teaching ELLs. This session will involve all parties to bridge the gap between goals of the administration and the use of WIDA for differentiation and scaffolding for ELLs. The skills addressed in this session will include lesson planning and professional learning communities. This goal is important as it will allow administrators and teachers the ability to communicate and address concerns to ensure equity in education for all students. This final day will begin the ongoing professional learning cycle, where teachers within their contents, will address student needs and strategies to help with deficits in the performance of ELLs in content area classes.

### **Rationale**

Developing a professional development workshop series for this project study evolved from teachers in the school experiencing a 1-day professional development on how to teach ELLs and from teachers who have not had any training at all. To ensure that teachers understand WIDA and how to incorporate it into their classes to differentiate and scaffold lessons, it is essential that effective professional development occurs. Learning Forward (n.d.) found that effective professional development is continuous, everyone has a collective responsibility towards meeting the goals, the development is aligned to the goals, uses data to drive the development, and assesses and evaluates professional development.

The professional development cycle used in this project will take a different approach to help ensure that teacher monitoring is occurring and that teachers receive meaningful feedback from classroom observations. Effective professional development “requires prioritizing,

monitoring, and coordinating resources” (Learning Forward, n.d. p. 2). This project study will go through a data cycle where teachers will have the opportunity to be observed, observe other teachers, and meet with the trainer to discuss observations and any concerns of the teacher. The supportive professional development model will help build relationships with the teachers while helping them transform their practices to ensure that ELLs receive scaffolded and differentiated instruction that correlates with the WIDA framework.

### **Review of the Literature**

The literature examined for this review includes research from peer reviewed journals, Education Source, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Teacher Reference Center, Education Research Complete, and the search engine Google Scholar. The research focused on information during the years of 2013-2018. Information was also gathered from websites and books that focus on learning theories, professional development and professional learning communities. The review of literature focused on identifying the following terms: *adult learning theory*, *transformative learning theory*, *professional development*, *professional learning*, and *professional learning communities*.

There is an array of research surrounding PD for educators, however the gap in literature tends to focus around the difference between PD and professional learning (PL). Often, the literature concerning PD is referred to as PL. PD and PL have been used interchangeably, as researchers aim to make distinctions between the two. However, PL, as noted by Thacker (2017), is when teachers work together to discuss common problems and work on ways to address concerns as they reply to student needs. The best way to decipher between PD and PL is to recognize that PL focuses on improving student learning and PD is the means of bringing goals



closer to completion (Livingston, 2012). Almuhammadi (2017) noted that PD “goes beyond the learning experience to the level of having an implementation of the new knowledge afterwards” (p. 119). For the purposes of this literature review, PD will be used to address educator training, whether job-embedded through school or other personal training.

PD gives teachers the resources and training that they need to improve their skills as educators and, when it is combined with feedback concerning their teaching practices, it helps to generate changes in practice and sometimes in perceptions (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). While PLCs provide an ongoing cycle of teachers working together to not only identify the needs of students, but to create avenues for improvement (Stewart, 2014). Furthermore, the way in which instruction is provided to adult learners must be understood, as teachers are professionals and not children.

The PD project selected to address the results from the research is useful as it will address student data, provide training for teachers on WIDA and how to scaffold and differentiate according to Can Do Descriptors, and a continuous cycle of support for teachers. This project combines PD with PLCs, to ensure that such support occurs within the teachers work environment. Nonetheless, to understand what is needed for teachers to see a change in their teaching practices, adult learning theories must be acknowledged.

### **Adult Learning Theories**

For years researchers have focused on adult learning and have come up with different frameworks to try to explain the way that adults learn. The concept of adult learning begins with the term *andragogy*, which was made popular by Knowles (1984) and the six assumptions of how adults learn, known as the adult learning theory (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) focused on six assumptions that affect adult learning: the need to know why they should learn; a self-concept of being accountable and responsible for themselves; quality of experiences; eagerness to learn; life centered orientation to learning; and external motivators for learning. While the assumptions presented by Knowles (1984) provide information about how adults learn, the framework does not provide insight into how to help change behaviors as most adult learning is stated to be self-directed. Mezirow (1991) founded the transformation theory as an adult learning theory. When incorporating the seminal work of Knowles (1984) and Mezirow (1991) the adult learning theory becomes more assessable and helps one understand how adults learn while changing and transforming mindsets.

**Transformational Theory.** The transformation theory focuses on a philosophy that looks at how adults learn from experiences. Mezirow (1996) defined transformative learning as “the process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (p. 162). Mezirow (1997) expanded on the definition, stating transformative learning as “the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience – associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses – frames of reference that define their life world” (p. 1). Adult learning should assist adults with understanding their potential for becoming more open-minded, “socially responsible” and independent learners (Mezirow, 2012, p. 92). Mezirow created 10 phases of transformational learning: a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, a critical assessment of assumptions, awareness that others share this experience, exploration of options, planning a course of action, acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement plans, provisionally trying new roles, building self-confidence and competence, and a reintegration into

one's life on new terms. (Mezirow, 1991). He asserted that transformations followed a variation of the phases for meaning be clarified (Mezirow, 2000). Furthermore, Erickson (2007) believed that transformational learning should be conceptualized and developmentally built to provide adult learners the ability to meet their students where they are academically and to see when student growth has occurred. The adult learning theory of transformational learning provides insight into how adults learn, and why they may act differently when being exposed to new information.

### **Professional Development**

While most agree that PD is necessary to evoke change in the teaching field, there still seems to be different ways of defining what PD encompasses. According to Hoyle and John (1995). PD is a process in which educators obtain information to build knowledge and skills that will improve the way instruction is provided to students. Killion and Roy (2009) defined PD as a “comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement,” while taking equal responsibility for student success through the means of a continuous cycle of improvement through professional learning (p. 18). According to Livingston (2012), PD at the school level should begin with identifying individual teacher’s learning needs and then ensure that the teachers have a supportive environment where they can be vigorous, more thoughtful, and control the PD activities that they experience with colleagues. PD occurs in a multitude of ways: one day workshops or multiple day workshops, meetings during school hours or after school hours, furthering education through college courses, and conferences (Crowley, 2017).

When school districts and schools want to ensure change in education, they typically implement a PD, as it is one of the crucial aspects for educational restructuring (Thacker, 2017). PD in school districts and individual schools are mostly the reflection of a new mandate or initiatives that are being implemented (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). It is to link skills obtained in training to the classroom that will increase student achievement (Choi & Morrison, 2014). PD ensures that teachers receive the necessary skills needed to understand their students learning (Lee, Longhurst, & Campbell, 2017). The use of such practice helps to improve student achievement (Wennergren, 2016). While PD has been noted to improve student achievement, it is also noteworthy to mention that not all professional developments have a good impact on teachers or participants.

**Effective Professional Development.** Effective PD refers to the usefulness of the training received by teachers. It is important to note that PD should support the daily activities of teachers and address the curriculum or teaching practices (Livingston, 2012). PD should be ongoing as it exposes teachers to new ideas (Choi & Morrison, 2014; Jones & Dexter, 2014). Fives and Gill (2015) believed that if PD is to cause change in practice that teachers should be provided with opportunities to observe others, implement and experience the skills learned, and reflect on the process and experiences. Fives and Gill also believed that when change occurs teacher beliefs are altered and open for learning, but only when the teachers are provided with the correct tools. Choi and Morrison (2014) added that effective PD must be ongoing to evoke change and support the development of teachers. According to Bayar (2014), teachers believed that effective professional developments were based off teacher needs, organized, and conducted over a long period of time. When the learning occurs over a period of time and focuses on the

needs of the school and specific content, the PD is most effective (Hansen-Thomas, Casey, & Grosso, 2013). Almuhammadi (2017) suggested that PD for adults should be lengthy, require resources, ongoing feedback, and evaluation, but most importantly it requires time. To induce change in education and teaching practices schools need to be seen as communities. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) explained, “A community of practice is defined as a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). PD should continue overtime with a community of learners to ensure that learning transpires, and such practices make professional development effective.

***Components of Effective Professional Development.*** PD includes many things to be considered effective. Bayar (2014) stated that there were six elements that were essential for PD effectiveness:

The first component was to ensure that the professional development matched the needs of the teachers; secondly the professional development needs to meet the needs of the school; thirdly teachers need to be a part of designing and planning of the professional development; fourth the professional development must allow for participants to actively participate in the activities; fifth the professional development must be long-term and lastly; the instructors must be high qualified and knowledgeable about the topic (p. 323).

However, the approach used during one day of PD may not be suitable for others (Campbell, 2017). Effective PD is ongoing and incorporates the views and ideas of the teachers.

## **Professional Learning Communities**

Moving from PD to PLC involves a change in mindset for teachers. PLCs are collaborative and involves active participation from teachers (Wennergren, 2017). The activities incorporate analyzing student assessments, to improve student achievement, while continually improving teachers teaching techniques (Well & Feun, 2013). PLCs are designed to bridge teacher practices to research (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016). Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Fulmer, and Trucano (2018) call PLCs ambitious, due to the focus on changing a school's culture. Through the use of PLCs districts and schools are able to improve the effectiveness of teachers.

When schools and districts aim to establish PLCs, they are often trying to establish change, to increase teacher effectiveness (Willis & Templeton, 2017). DuFour and Fullan (2013) stated that incorporating PLCs requires change in the school culture and how teachers relate to one another. Changing the culture of a school or any organization is often necessary to ensure that the much-needed change happens. The fundamental change surrounding PLCs is to improve student achievement, as teachers work collaboratively to discuss assessment data and strategies to increase student performance, with all conversations centering around such (Wells & Feun, 2013). However, PLCs need to go through the three phases of a PLC to see changes: developing, implementing, and sustaining (Jones & Thessin, 2015, 2017). The finding of Jones and Thessin (2017) revealed that most of the PLCs were in the developing stage and very few had moved into the implementation or sustaining stages, due to a lack of understanding the vision of the leadership. The functioning level of the PLCs are related to the members perceptions of the administrative support that they received or did not receive (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017).

**Effective Professional Learning Communities.** Effective PLCs encourage and support the learning for all teachers and administrators within a school, while maintaining a common purpose to enhance student performance and change educator's instructional strategies (Turner et al., 2018; Wennergren, 2017). These PLCs also look at student achievement and what teachers are doing (Easton, 2015). Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017) stated that for PLCs to be effective that there must be shared visions, a collaborative culture, the use of data to analyze student performance, and that everyone must work together to create common assessments and lessons, as the focus is on student learning and success. Effective PLCs also provide teachers with the ability to reflect on their practices and how their practices impact the performance of their students (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016) while trusting those who are a part of the PLC.

Trust is a vital part of effective PLCs, as teachers must allow themselves to be vulnerable around colleagues as they discuss what they may see as weaknesses in their teaching practices (Zheng, Yin, Lui, & Ke, 2016). Through trust, teachers can build collaborative inquiry within the PLCs, as collaborative inquiry in the PLCs provides teachers with the ability to share ideas and practices that enabled them to change their teaching practices, thus helping them improve student performance (Carpenter, 2017). Through trust, student data is discussed and used to guide the PLCs. Data analysis is a process and involves more than comparing teacher's data and moving forward. Data analysis involves 11 steps: gathering data, analyzing data, summarizing data, brainstorming possible causes, collecting additional data when needed, analyzing and interpreting the additional data, identifying the goal for the data, determining an action plan, acting, and repeating the data collection (Killion & Roy, 2009). Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017)

found that many PLCs did not move past looking at assessment data, to change teaching practices.

PLCs require building administrators and even district leaders to understand the process and roles of PLCs for them to be successful (Wells & Feun, 2013). Wennergren (2017) notes that the changes made through the implementation of PLCs are sustained throughout the entire school, with appropriate training. Training needs to incorporate the daily activities of teachers, to ensure that the training is specific and not too general (Evers, Kreijns, & Van der Heijden, 2016). Thessin (2015) suggests that districts and principals should pre-assess the readiness of the schools before implementing PLCs and provide the necessary supports that are differentiated, to the needs of those within each school building. Low- functioning PLCs have been found to be displeased, while high-functioning PLCs are able to get to a place where what they did in their PLC meetings, transferred into classroom practices (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). While transforming teacher practices, PLCs can transform student achievement.

Using the transformational learning theory to alter teacher practices in the classroom, with PLCs, teachers are provided with the necessary supports to change. The purpose of the PLCs is to reconstruct what teachers are doing to improve student performance, through the use open-mindedness and self-evaluations (Mezirow, 1996; Well & Feun, 2013). PLCs were created to transform teachers, and when used with Mezirow's phases of transformational learning, teachers are provided with the tools that they need to meet their students where they are (Mezirow, 1991).



## **Project Description**

This qualitative case study involved researching middle grades content area teachers and their teaching practices, when educating ELLs. The professional development workshops and the implementation of professional learning communities, derived from the completion of questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations of content area teachers who provide direct instruction for ELLs. The analysis and authentication of the data showed findings that answered the following questions: What are the teaching practices and perceptions of content area teachers when providing instruction for ELLs in a rural middle school in a southeastern state? How do middle grades teachers use WIDA standards and practices in content area classes when differentiating and scaffolding lessons for ELLs in a rural school in a southeastern state? The data analysis provided two goals that needed to be addressed. The goals were:

Goal 1: Identify teacher practices and perceptions of content area teachers of ELLs

Goal 2: Identify how the WIDA standards and practices are used to differentiate and scaffold lessons for ELLs.

Goals 1 and 2 were met and achieved during the data analysis in Section 2.

Because of the data findings, a Professional Development Plan (PDP) was created, to help teachers of ELLs with the implementation of WIDA for differentiation and scaffolding lessons. The PDP walks teachers through language acquisition and understanding ACCESS scores and individualized Can Do Descriptors. The PDP also incorporates the initiation of a professional learning community for content area teachers of ELLs within the middle school.

**Needed Resources**

The implementation of the workshop will require a fee of approximately \$100 to make and print handouts and for participant resources. However, if the material is printed and copied at the school, there will not be a fee for handouts and resources. If the workshop is not held in the school and lacks the support of the school, participants will be asked to pay a registration fee to help cover the cost of facilities and documents. The fee could be covered by the schools being represented, through their PD funds.

Secondly, the workshop may require that I have assistants to assist with the implementation of the workshop. Assistance could be helpful with setup and breakdown of equipment, arranging tables and chairs into a more collaborative atmosphere, handing out documents, and working at the registration table. The assistants will also be important to the monitoring and facilitating of discussions while teachers work in groups, during the workshop.

**Existing Supports**

The school administrator from the school, where the case study was conducted has been very supportive during the research process and interested in understanding the teaching practices of content area teachers who provide instruction for ELLs. With one of the School Improvement goals surrounding the performance of ELLs, the administrator has become very interested in implementing a professional development for teachers concerning the WIDA framework and the use of Can Do Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold lessons. I will need to continue to communicate with the school administrator to facilitate the workshop.

### **Potential Barriers**

A possible barrier for implementing this project is a conflict of time and having teachers participate in a PD a few days before preplanning. This barrier may affect the number of participants. Not having enough participants will affect the activities designed for content areas to collaborate, thus changing the structure of the professional development workshops. Lastly, if the administrators do not wish to move on to the next step of implementing PLCs for content teachers of ELLs and provide observations and continual support, there will not be a way of monitoring the impact of the professional development on teacher practices.

### **Solutions to Barriers**

Possible solutions to the barrier of teachers returning a few days before preplanning could be compensation for participation in the PD. When schools or school districts require teacher attendance for PD, teachers receive a stipend for attending. The solution to the number of participants could be to open the PD up to the district, for all content area teachers of ELLs. Allowing the entire district to participate will provide the district with continuity between schools as students go from level to the next. However, if the administrators do not want to implement the professional learning communities, there is no solution, and the teachers only receive partial training.

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

The timeframe for the implementation of the PD workshop is for teachers prior to preplanning at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. The proposed location of the 3-day workshop is at the rural middle school located in a southeastern state, that participated in the qualitative case study. However, permission from the school administrator will have to be

obtained before the workshop could occur. Beginning the workshops during this time will allow teachers the ability to view data from the end of grade state assessments and from the ACCESS for ELLs prior to students entering their classrooms. The workshops will occur in July 2018, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Participants will receive two 15-minute breaks and a 1-hour lunch break each day of the PD workshop. All snacks, beverages, and lunches will be paid for by the participants.

PLCs will begin meeting in September after all content areas have given their benchmark assessments and will continue throughout the rest of the school year. Classroom observations will begin in October and conferences will happen subsequently and continue through the remaining months in school.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The responsibility of arranging and setting up the PD workshop will be my responsibility. I will contact the district board of education and the middle school's administrator; distribute flyers concerning the workshop model and PLC implementation; communicate with school and district level personnel who are assigned to assist during the workshop. All modifications and updates will be my responsibility, as well as analyzing feedback at the end of the workshop. However, the implementation of the PLCs will be the responsibility of the school administrator.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

Evaluations focus on concluding the successfulness or lack of success of programs. The project evaluation will be formative for the purposes of the PD workshop. Teachers will complete daily evaluations during the 3-day PD workshop. At the end of each session, teachers

will provide feedback on what they learned, what they found useful, and questions that they still have concerning the topics covered. This information will be gathered electronically, through a Google survey, so that responses are anonymous. On the final day of the PD workshop, teachers will be asked to evaluate the entire PD rating the effectiveness of the delivery of information, knowledge of the presenter, the material presented and provided, and the activities used to help participants comprehend the concepts. Teachers will also be asked for suggestions to help improve future PD sessions (See Appendix A).

The project evaluation will take place over the course of a school year. Through the ongoing process of the project, after the completion of the PD workshops, observations will provide information concerning teaching practices and the methods used to demonstrate comprehension of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors to scaffold and differentiate lessons. This evaluation will be conducted using teacher lesson plans during classroom observations. Teachers will meet with the observer to discuss the findings, and to discuss “glows” and “growths.” This process will provide teachers with the ability to speak about their concerns and areas that they feel that they need more help.

The last part of the evaluation process will involve the PLCs. The PLCs will evaluate how the implementation of PLCs for content teachers of ELLs has impacted their teaching practices and how they utilize the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. Teachers will complete a Google Survey and open-ended questions to rate the usefulness of their PLCs (See Appendix A). The use of online evaluations will provide for a simplified way to analyze participant responses, as well as make modifications to materials as needed to ensure that the PD is effective for those taking part in the PD.

### **Project Implications for Social Change**

The possible social change implications from this project are related to the use of PD, followed by the implementation of PLCs to equip teachers with the necessary tools to provide adequate instruction for ELLs. The project goes beyond traditional PD and adds next steps to help with the full implementation of the WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors. This project is expected to open a range of opportunities for content teachers to help them scaffold and differentiate their lessons based off what students can do, while moving them forward into new knowledge. While most PDs end after one to three days, this project suggests the use of PLCs for middle grades content area teachers who teach ELLs. After the completion of the PD, monitoring of progress will continue through observations to ensure continual support.

This project is important because of the continual growth of ELLs in U.S. schools. It is imperative that these students are provided with the tools necessary for success in U.S. schools. Ensuring that ELLs are supported by content area teachers could help with linguistic and academic success (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). Teachers are provided with PD opportunities all year, but the PD does not focus on how to teach ELLs. Local stakeholders will be able to see the progress of teachers as well as students. This project allows stakeholders (i.e., district level personnel, school personnel, parents, and students) the ability to see student growth, based on teaching practices in the classroom and on assessments before end of year assessments and ACCESS for ELLs occurs.

### **Conclusion**

Section 3 provides information concerning the project study as it relates to Section 1 and Section 2, a literature review and rationale. The information provided in Section 3 encompasses

the foundation for the development of the PD workshop on the use of WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors, and teaching practices, available in Appendix A. The section incorporates the use of the adult learning theory, as noted in the transformative learning theory, combined with PD and the cyclic process of PLCs. I discussed the project study and implications for social change. In Section 4, I will address the strengths and limitations of the project, leadership and change, reflections, and implications for future research.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

The project study provides teachers with the necessary support they need to provide instruction to ELLs. In this section, I evaluate the complete research project, identifying what I learned about the process, discussing limitations and alternative approaches, strengths and weaknesses. Scholarship, project development, the evaluation, and leadership and change will also be discussed. Additionally, an analysis of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer, the potential for social change, implications, applications, and directions for future research are discussed in this section.

The purpose for this case study was to identify how content area teachers differentiate and scaffold lessons for ELLs. The data collected in this qualitative case study revealed that content area teachers of ELLs used a variety of differentiation and scaffolding methods, but that they did not know how to utilize the WIDA Standards and Can Do Descriptors to scaffold and differentiate lessons based off student's language proficiency levels.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

#### **Strengths**

The strengths of this project involve the ability to attend to the findings from the data analysis, addressing the understanding of WIDA through training and support. The project provides teachers with a face-to-face PD, where teachers will not only learn about language acquisition and WIDA but will have the opportunity to create lessons for students together in each of the language proficiency levels for each content area class. Creating lessons during the PD allows teachers the ability to have lessons already created before the school year begins. The



second strength of the project is the opportunity for teachers to receive feedback on any questions from the daily workshops and receive answers to questions from the previous day's session. The use of the questions from the evaluations will help tie the information for each session together to ensure understanding.

The project study takes PD to a new level by incorporating PLCs, continual observations, and postconferences to discuss how WIDA standards and Can Do Descriptors are used to supply instruction for ELLs in content area classes. The PLCs may not only strengthen teachers' abilities to incorporate the WIDA framework into their teaching practices, but it will provide teachers with support needed as they work on meeting the needs of ELLs in their classes. Teachers will have the opportunity to learn from their peers and know the expectations of the administration as they continue to move forward towards ensuring equity in education for all students.

### **Limitations**

A major limitation of the project is its sample size and the number of ELLs served within the school. The researched school has the highest number of ELLs in district and is the only school that practices the push-out model, placing ELLs in content area classes (site administrator, personal communication, January 218). The findings are specific to one location and are not able to be generalized for an entire population, as the findings in a rural middle school may be different from those of an urban middle school. Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood (2015) suggested that there could be bias within a study with a small sample size that used purposeful sampling and direct contact with the participants.

A second limitation of the project study involves finding a day during the week where the content area teachers of ELLs can meet during the school day because of the content area grade level meetings. The school would have to restructure the way in which PLCs are formed or provide a day where the content area teachers of ELLs PLCs could meet. The current planning schedule does not provide time for another PLC to meet. Since this project requires a year of constant observations and meetings, it is essential for such teachers to be able to meet to discuss data and strategies. Teachers will also have to take initiative to ensure that they are meeting with observers after observations and request to observe another teacher while providing instruction for ELLs.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

One way of addressing the problem differently could be the use of continual PD where teachers meet once a month to go over teaching strategies and WIDA. During this time, teachers could be provided with the opportunity to teach one another something that they have used in their classes. The PD could also focus on looking at student data to see if students are making progress in the content area classes, based off content area benchmarks.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

During this academic adventure, there have been many lessons and adventures that have pushed me to be the best that I can, as a student, an educator, a coach, and a wife. When I began this journey, I had no idea that it would take every spare moment that I possessed. However, through the continuous support from friends, family, coworkers, professors, classmates, and even my own students, I learned that this journey is not one that anyone takes alone. The remainder of this section will focus on my reflection as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

### **Self-Reflection as a Scholar**

The first reflection of myself as a scholar is the challenge of simplifying my research topic. I knew what I wanted to research, but I struggled with putting the idea into manageable concepts. Once I changed my focus to include issues that directly affected my school district, I was able to not only put my ideas on paper, but get my prospectus approved.

The next issue that I faced was analyzing qualitative data. I had received some training on SPSS, in one of my courses but never anything on qualitative analysis. I attempted to use NVivo to analyze the data collected from the interviews to identify themes; however, the program was so complex that I resorted to hand coding. To prevent my classmates from suffering the same fate, I have encouraged them to learn the program in advance to ensure that their data analysis goes smoothly.

Most importantly, I have learned that in general, most people want to be helpful. The participants that agreed to participate in my research study were excited about having an opportunity to be involved in a study that could potentially benefit them. Being the new person in a school is not always easy and people can sometimes be hesitant to get involved because of fear and them not knowing you. But, these teachers were supportive and wanted to see this research carried out.

### **Reflection as a Practitioner**

As a practitioner, the most valuable lesson that I learned dealt with the time management of all my jobs and duties. My first year in a new school, teaching two content area classes, being the SST & 504 Coordinator, and head softball coach at the high school required a lot of time. Planning two content courses and providing students with meaningful feedback

sometimes requires things to be completed at home. Serving as the SST & 504 Coordinator requires me to get to work early and stay late to accommodate parents who must be in attendance in meetings. Being the head coach of the high school softball team required me to travel long distances, causing me to get home around midnight several times a week. Once I realized how my duties were affecting my progress with completing this degree, I stepped down as the coach of the seventh grade basketball team, and due to the time consumed from coaching softball, I knew that if I wanted to finish this degree that I had to step down from the position.

In every aspect of my life I have become a practitioner who looks beyond what is said and identifies details that some would never notice. I have found myself looking very critically at information posted on Facebook that is stated to be supported by research. On many occasions I have suggested to my friends that they find more recent research, as the research quoted is more than five years old.

### **Reflection as a Project Developer**

As a project developer, with previous experience creating PDs for teachers, I knew that I needed the perceptions of teachers. I used the checklist information concerning support from administrators and ESOL staff, and the lack of understanding concerning WIDA, to create a 3-day PD workshop. I also knew that PDs needed to involve the use of data and be correlated to areas of concern in the district and schools.

I determined that based off the findings that teachers would benefit from understanding the WIDA framework and how to use the Can Do Descriptors to differentiate and scaffold lessons. I also found that most teachers did not understand how to provide instruction to ELLs. As a result, I incorporated the implementation of a PLC for content teachers of ELLs, that took

them through the data cycle to ensure that they are using proficiency level strategies to scaffold instruction for ELLs. Due to such a strong sense of needing support, administrators, academic coaches, and ESOL staff will be invited to help bring the four groups together for ensuring that ELLs receive the education and support needed to be successful.

### **Reflection on Leadership and Change**

Through the construction of this project study, I have a better understanding of the impact of leadership on change. In schools, the leadership determines what remains the same and what changes. Seeing the ESOL program change mid-year showed that the administration was looking for a change and for the change to happen, the administration had to make it happen. It was through the concerns voiced by the instructional coach and other administrators that change came about. When leadership listens to the needs and concerns of others, things change. President Barack Obama says it best, “Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek” (Obama, 2008). As a result of seeing the need for change, I have decided to be a part of the change that needs to come.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

The importance of this project’s overall effect on social change, begins with school administrators, then the teachers, and the most important of all, the students. As this project focuses to change teaching practices, by providing continual support, it increases the student’s ability to be successful. Through an open dialogue created by the PLCs, teachers, coaches, and administrators will begin to have conversations concerning the ELLs in content area classes at the middle school level.

Through a continual system of support, teachers will feel more confident in their practices and will have the ability to move students from one level to the next. As students begin to move from one level to the next, there is an increase in student performance, not only in the classroom, but on end of year assessments and on the ACCESS for ELLs. An increase in the achievement of middle grades ELLs is likely to occur with informed teachers and support received from administrators and ESOL staff. Thus, providing ELLs with the ability to not only be successful in middle school, but throughout their academic career.

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

Because content area teachers are faced with providing a quality education to ELLs and are seeking assistance on how to help students, I believe that it is important to not only acknowledge their needs, but to address them. As found by the questionnaire and interview questions, teachers enjoy having ELLs in their content class, but they struggle with ensuring that they are meeting the needs of the students. I believe that by providing middle school content area teachers with PD that teaches them about the WIDA framework and how to use the Can Do Descriptors, to provide differentiated and scaffolded work based off the student's English proficiency level that teachers will gain some confidence in their teaching. With the added benefit of the formation of a PLC, that practices the use of data cycles and a continual support cycle, middle grades content area teachers will finally have the tools needed to help ELLs make academic progress. I also believe that the use of such a model will be supported within the studied district, and others like it.

As the number of ELLs continue to increase in American schools, I hope that other researchers will take interest in the middle school framework and how ELLs are supported.

Future research on the middle school framework and its effect on ELLs, as well as, the support for content area teachers on a larger scale within a metropolitan area could provide great insight. It is my hope that the social change that is stimulated through this research and those to come that schools, school districts, and states begin to focus on supporting middle schools as they serve ELLs.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative case study allowed me to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of middle grades content area teachers, who provide instruction for ELLs in a rural Southeastern school. I also explored their use of the WIDA framework to scaffold and differentiate lessons for ELLs. Through research, questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and field notes from classroom observations I was able to obtain a clear understanding of what happens in such classrooms. Through this process, I have gained a great deal of knowledge about teacher perceptions of the support that they receive as they aim to provide instruction for ELLs. This study has opened lines of communication between myself and other teachers, that would have never occurred. I am seeing a fire ignite within them as they focus on helping ELLs be successful in their classrooms, and that excites me. The PDP that I have created will help connect administration, academic coaches, and teachers as they focus on meeting the needs of ELLs throughout the building and community.

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## Appendix A: The Project

**Professional Development Plan:****Professional Development for Content Area Teachers of English Language Learners**

**Goal 1:** Teachers will obtain an understanding of the WIDA framework, Language Acquisition and Development.

<b>Day One: Language Acquisition and Development</b>			
<b>Session Objective:</b>	<b>Session Agenda:</b>		
<p>- Develop understanding of English Language Learners through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding Language Development</li> <li>• Understanding the differences between social and academic language</li> <li>• Creating an environment conducive for English Language Learners</li> </ul>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
	8:00 - 8:30	Welcome and Overview	✓ Establish norms, ground rules and expectations
	8:30 - 9:00	Ice Breaker: Turn and Talk	✓ Share subjects taught and grade levels
	9:00 – 9:30	Professional Development Objectives and Purpose	✓ The facilitator will share the purpose of the professional development and Session 1. The facilitator will share the session objectives.
	9:30 – 10:15	Myths and Realities of teaching ELLs	✓ Uncover perceptions and misconceptions of ELLs
	10:15 – 10:30	Break	
	10:30 – 11:00	Discuss State, District, and School Data	✓ Identify trends and gaps between the state, district and school data
	11:00 – 12:00	Language Acquisition: Stages of Second Language Acquisition	✓ Discuss the levels of language acquisition and language development
	12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	



	1:00 – 1:30	Who are English Language Learners?	✓ Familiarize the staff with the WIDA standards and proficiency levels, and Can Do Descriptors
	1:30 – 2:30	Group Activity: Match Activity to Can Do Descriptors	✓ Provide teachers with knowledge and practice to use skills and to implement prior knowledge
	2:30 – 2:45	Break	
	2:45 – 3:30	Factors that Affect Language	✓ Develop teacher's knowledge of outside issues that affect language acquisition
	3:30 – 3:45	BICS vs. CALP	✓ Develop teacher's understanding of Cummin's Model of Academic Language
	3:45 – 4:00	Wrap Up Complete Evaluation	✓ Discussion of objectives and what was learned concerning language acquisition.
	4:00	Dismissal	

## Day 2 Agenda

**Goal 2:** Teachers will gain an understanding of how to differentiate and scaffold lessons based off ACCESS for ELLs and Can Do Descriptors, and create lessons and activities based on English Proficiency Levels and Can Do Descriptors.

<b>Day 2: Scaffolds and Differentiation with WIDA</b>			
<b>Session Objective:</b>	<b>Session Agenda:</b>		
	Time	Activity	Outcomes
<p>- Develop an understanding of WIDA and how to use Can Do Descriptors through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation and Scaffolds</li> <li>• Viewing student data</li> <li>• Creating scaffolded and differentiated lessons using Can Do Descriptors</li> </ul>	8:00 - 8:30	Welcome, Overview and Questions from Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish norms, ground rules and expectations</li> <li>✓ Address any questions from Day 1 PD</li> </ul>
	8:30 - 9:00	Breaker: German translation activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide teachers with a personal experience to help them relate to student experiences.</li> </ul>
	9:00 – 9:45	Differentiation and Scaffolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish how to differentiate and scaffold lessons</li> </ul>
	9:45 – 10:15	Dissect ACCESS for ELLs, by grade levels. What does the data say?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify new/upcoming student's proficiency levels.</li> </ul>
	10:15 – 10:30	Break	
	10:30 – 11:30	Work on level 1 activities for each content area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use Can Do descriptors for level 1 ELLs, to differentiate and scaffold lessons in each content area</li> </ul>
	11:30 – 12:00	Share lessons and how the activities use Can Do Descriptors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Compare General Ed. Activities to that of Level 1 ELLs</li> </ul>

	12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	
	1:00 – 1:30	Work on level 2 activities for the same lesson in content area	✓ Use Can Do descriptors for level 2 ELLs, to differentiate and scaffold lessons in each content area
	1:30 – 2:00	Share lessons and how the activities use Can Do Descriptors.	✓ Compare General Ed. Activities to that of Level 2 ELLs
	2:00 – 2:30	Work on level 3 activities for the same lesson in content area	✓ Use Can Do descriptors for level 3 ELLs, to differentiate and scaffold lessons in each content area
	2:30 – 3:00	Share lessons and how the activities use Can Do Descriptors.	✓ Compare General Ed. Activities to that of Level 3 ELLs
	3:00 – 3:15	Break	
	3:15 – 3:45	Work on levels 4 and 5 activities for the same lesson in content area	✓ Use Can Do descriptors for levels 4 and 5 ELLs, to differentiate and scaffold lessons in each content area
	3:45 – 4:00	Share lessons and how the activities use Can Do Descriptors.	✓ Compare General Ed. Activities to that of Levels 4 and 5 ELLs
	4:00 – 4:15	Wrap Up Complete Evaluation Dismissal	✓ Discussion of objectives and what was learned concerning language acquisition.

### Day 3 Agenda

**Goal 3:** Principals, Academic Coaches, ESOL Staff, and Content Area Teachers will collaborate to create a Professional Learning Community that will involve a continuous cycle of support that uses student data to drive instruction for ELLs.

<b>Day 3: Professional Learning Communities for Content Area Teachers of ELLs</b>			
<b>Session Objective:</b>	<b>Session Agenda:</b>		
<p>- Develop understanding of Professional Learning Communities and their purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development norms for Content PLCs of ELLs</li> <li>• Create roles for members of the PLC</li> <li>• Creating an environment of comfort and support for teachers from administrators, academic coaches, and ESOL staff.</li> </ul>	Time	Activity	Outcomes
	8:00 - 8:30	Welcome and Overview Questions from Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establish norms, ground rules and expectations</li> <li>✓ Address any questions or concerns from Day 2 PD</li> </ul>
	8:30 - 8:45	Ice Breaker: What are PLCs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Gain an understanding of teacher's perceptions of PLCs</li> </ul>
	8:45 - 9:15	PLCs and Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide guidance into the purpose of PLCs and how they are meant to function.</li> </ul>
	9:15 – 10:00	Trusting Relationships. “Relationships are Important” and participate in “The Human Knot”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Participants will gain an understanding of the importance of relationships for students and teachers.</li> <li>✓ This game requires communication that will help build teamwork and trust.</li> </ul>
	10:00 – 10:15	Break	
	10:15 – 10:45	PLC Norms and Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Each content area will gather and create norms for their PLC and identify the roles of each participant in the PLC. Administrators will join Math &amp; Science; Academic Coaches will join Social</li> </ul>

			Studies; ESOL staff will join ELA
10:45 – 11:00	Groups will share the norms and roles that they created with their content area.	✓	Each potential PLC will be able to hear other groups ideas, before finalizing their PLC norms and roles. This will give an opportunity for groups to adjust and take notes on changes to their roles and norms.
11:00 - 11:30	Data Cycle	✓	Participants will be introduced to the data cycle and the importance of data for the PLC.
11:30 – 12:00	Evaluate Data and create content area goals. Place needs and goals on chart paper and place on the wall.	✓	Content groups with the assigned (administrator, coach, or ESOL staff) will begin the data cycle by evaluating ACCESS data and End of Grade data from the previous year to identify needs and to create a goal.
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch		
1:00 – 1:30	Gallery Walk (All members will walk around the room and take notes on needs and goals created by each group. Identifying similarities and differences.)	✓	All participants will have a better understanding of how students performed in each content and see the goals that were developed to help students be successful in the new year.

	1:30 – 2:00	Best Practices for ELLs	✓ Teachers will collaborate and come up with strategies to implement to help meet the goals that they created.
	2:30 – 3:00	Presentation of Strategies to help ELLs	✓ Teachers will be provided with an opportunity to share thoughts on strategies to address to help move students to the next level.
	3:00 – 3:10	Break	
	3:10 – 3:40	ESOL PLC	✓ Now that data has been analyzed and strategies identified, the group will prepare for monthly meetings to discuss data and progress of ELLs and next steps moving through the data cycle of PLCs.
	3:40 – 4:00	Wrap Up & Evaluation Dismissal	✓ All participants will complete the online summative evaluation on the professional development and the implementation of PLCs.

Slide 1



PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT FOR  
CONTENT AREA  
TEACHERS OF ELLS

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MRS DAMIAN ELDER

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Slide 2



LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND  
DEVELOPMENT

---

Day One

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Slide 3



Slide 4

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

---

- Norms
- Ground Rules
- Professional Development Expectations
  
- Introductions
- Grade Level
- Subject Areas



Slide 5

OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE

---

- Develop understanding of English Language Learners by:
  - Understanding Language Development
  - Understanding the difference between social and academic language
  - Creating an environment conducive for English Language Learners

Slide 6




ICE BREAKER

---

SHARE SUBJECT TAUGHT, GRADE LEVELS  
AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

## Slide 7

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

A photograph of Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, smiling with his arms crossed. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. The background shows the American flag and the Presidential Seal.

Obama, 2008

## Slide 8

### MYTHS AND REALITIES

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- Teachers should discourage students from speaking in their native language.
- The use of native languages helps increase cognitive development and academic growth as students learn to make connections between both languages.
- Students will learn more if the ESOL teacher pulls them and focuses on teaching the English Language.
- ELLs should not attend content area classes until they learn the English language.
- All subjects are important and exposure to all classes increases language development.
- When students begin to speak with fluency, they should be able to complete all class assignments.
- Social language is basic and takes around 2 years, where academic language requires more time for development.

## Slide 9

## DATA

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- The 2017 ELA Milestone Assessment showed a decrease in proficiency of English Language Learners.
- There was a 0% distinguished and proficiency in students in both 6th, 7th and 8th grades
- Bartow County has the low number of ELLs exiting the ESOL program every year.

## Slide 10

## 5 STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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- Stage 1- Preproduction (Non-verbal)
- Stage 2- Early Production (Isolated words, short sentences)
- Stage 3- Speech Emergence (Conversations, simple stories)
- Stage 4- Intermediate Fluency (Increased comprehension of reading material)
- Stage 5- Advanced Fluency (Students perform on the same level as native English speakers)

## Slide 11

## WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

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- Discuss with your group, your understanding of English Language Learners (ELLs).
  
- How can we identify them in your class?
  
- How do you insure that they receive the accommodations and recommendations needed in your class?

## Slide 12

## WIDA STADNARDS

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Standard	Abbreviation	
English Language Development Standard 1	English language learners <b>communicate</b> for <b>Social and Instructional</b> purposes within the school setting	Social and Instructional language
English Language Development Standard 2	English language learners <b>communicate</b> information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of <b>Language Arts</b>	The language of Language Arts
English Language Development Standard 3	English language learners <b>communicate</b> information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of <b>Mathematics</b>	The language of Mathematics
English Language Development Standard 4	English language learners <b>communicate</b> information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of <b>Science</b>	The language of Science
English Language Development Standard 5	English language learners <b>communicate</b> information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of <b>Social Studies</b>	The language of Social Studies

Slide 13

### CAN-DO DESCRIPTORS

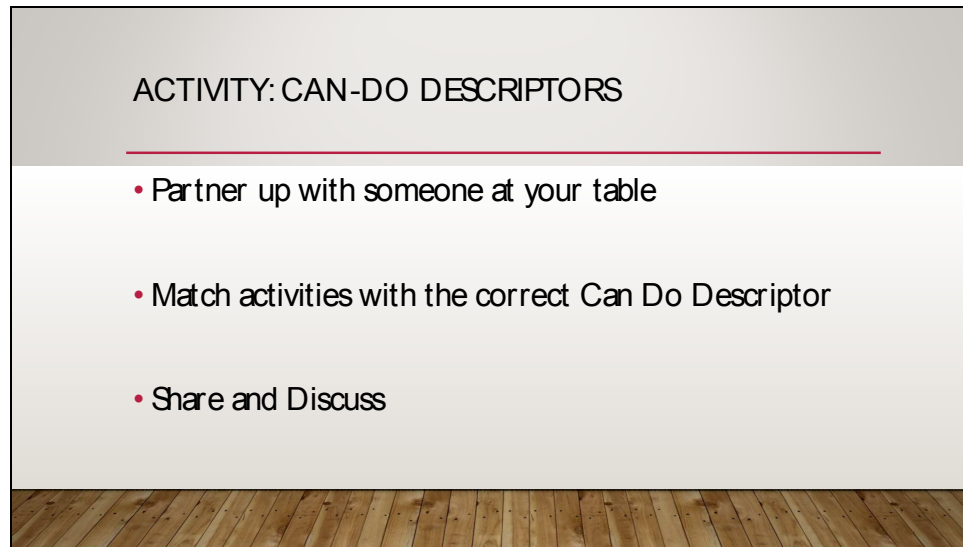
	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 Reaching
LISTENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow one-step oral commands/instructions</li> <li>Match social language to visual/graphic displays</li> <li>Identify objects, people, or places from oral statements/questions using gestures (e.g., pointing)</li> <li>Match instructional language with visual representation (e.g., "Use a sharpened pencil.")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow multi-step oral commands/instructions</li> <li>Classify/sort content-related visuals per oral directions</li> <li>Sequence visuals per oral directions</li> <li>Identify information on charts or tables based on oral statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Categorize content-based examples from oral directions</li> <li>Match main ideas of familiar text read aloud to visuals</li> <li>Use learning strategies described orally</li> <li>Identify everyday examples of content-based concepts described orally</li> <li>Associate oral language with different time frames (e.g., past, present, future)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify main ideas and details of oral discourse</li> <li>Complete content-related tasks or assignments based on oral discourse</li> <li>Apply learning strategies to new situations</li> <li>Role play, dramatize, or re-enact scenarios from oral reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use oral information to accomplish grade-level tasks</li> <li>Evaluate intent of speech and act accordingly</li> <li>Make inferences from grade-level text read aloud</li> <li>Discriminate among multiple genres read orally</li> </ul>	
SPEAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer yes/no and choice questions</li> <li>Begin to use general and high frequency vocabulary</li> <li>Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks</li> <li>Answer select WH-questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") within context of lessons or personal experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convey content through high frequency words/phrases</li> <li>State big/main ideas of classroom conversation</li> <li>Describe situations from modeled sentences</li> <li>Describe routines and everyday events</li> <li>Express everyday needs and wants</li> <li>Communicate in social situations</li> <li>Make requests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin to express time through multiple tenses</li> <li>Retell/rephrase ideas from speech</li> <li>Give brief oral content-based presentations</li> <li>State opinions</li> <li>Connect ideas in discourse using transitions (e.g., "but," "then")</li> <li>Use different registers inside and outside of class</li> <li>State big/main ideas with some supporting details</li> <li>Ask for clarification (e.g., self-monitor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paraphrase and summarize ideas presented orally</li> <li>Defend a point of view</li> <li>Explain outcomes</li> <li>Explain and compare content-based concepts</li> <li>Connect ideas with supporting details/evidence</li> <li>Substantiate opinions with reasons and evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defend a point of view and give reasons</li> <li>Use and explain metaphors and similes</li> <li>Communicate with fluency in social and academic contexts</li> <li>Negotiate meaning in group discussions</li> <li>Discuss and give examples of abstract, content-based ideas (e.g., democracy, justice)</li> </ul>	

Slide 14

### CAN-DO DESCRIPTORS CONTINUED

	Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Beginning	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging	Level 6 Reaching
READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate letters with sounds and objects</li> <li>Match content-related objects/pictures to words</li> <li>Identify common symbols, signs, and words</li> <li>Recognize concepts of print</li> <li>Find single word responses to WH-questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") related to illustrated text</li> <li>Use picture dictionaries/illustrated glossaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequence illustrated text of fictional and non-fictional events</li> <li>Locate main ideas in a series of simple sentences</li> <li>Find information from text structure (e.g., titles, graphs, glossary)</li> <li>Follow text read aloud (e.g., tapes, teacher, paired-readings)</li> <li>Sort/group pre-taught words/phrases</li> <li>Use pre-taught vocabulary (e.g., word banks) to complete simple sentences</li> <li>Use L1 to support L2 (e.g., cognates)</li> <li>Use bilingual dictionaries and glossaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify topic sentences, main ideas, and details in paragraphs</li> <li>Identify multiple meanings of words in context (e.g., "cell," "table")</li> <li>Use context clues</li> <li>Make predictions based on illustrated text</li> <li>Identify frequently used affixes and root words to make/extract meaning (e.g., "un-," "re-," "-ed")</li> <li>Differentiate between fact and opinion</li> <li>Answer questions about explicit information in texts</li> <li>Use English dictionaries and glossaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Order paragraphs of essays</li> <li>Identify figurative language (e.g., "dark as night")</li> <li>Interpret adapted classics or modified text</li> <li>Match cause to effect</li> <li>Identify specific language of different genres and informational texts</li> <li>Use an array of strategies (e.g., skim and scan for information)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differentiate and apply multiple meanings of words/phrases</li> <li>Apply strategies to new situations</li> <li>Infer meaning from modified grade-level text</li> <li>Critique material and support argument</li> <li>Sort grade-level text by genre</li> </ul>	
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draw content-related pictures</li> <li>Produce high frequency words</li> <li>Label pictures and graphs</li> <li>Create vocabulary/concept cards</li> <li>Generate lists from pre-taught words/phrases and word banks (e.g., create menu from list of food groups)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete pattern sentences</li> <li>Extend "sentence starters" with original ideas</li> <li>Connect simple sentences</li> <li>Complete graphic organizers/forms with personal information</li> <li>Respond to yes/no, choice, and some WH-questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce short paragraphs with main idea and some details (e.g., column notes)</li> <li>Create compound sentences (e.g., with conjunctions)</li> <li>Explain steps in problem-solving</li> <li>Compare/contrast information, events, character</li> <li>Give opinions, preferences, and reactions along with reasons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create multiple-paragraph essays</li> <li>Justify ideas</li> <li>Produce content-related reports</li> <li>Use details/examples to support ideas</li> <li>Use transition words to create cohesive passages</li> <li>Compose intro/body/conclusion</li> <li>Paraphrase or summarize text</li> <li>Take notes (e.g., for research)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create expository text to explain graphs/charts</li> <li>Produce research reports using multiple sources/citations</li> <li>Begin using analogies</li> <li>Critique literary essays or articles</li> </ul>	

Slide 15



ACTIVITY: CAN-DO DESCRIPTORS

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- Partner up with someone at your table
- Match activities with the correct Can Do Descriptor
- Share and Discuss

Slide 16

## FACTORS THAT AFFECT LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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- Home life
- Language spoken in the home
- Motivation
- Quality of Instruction provide
- Language Proficiency in native language and in English

Slide 17

## CUMMIN'S MODEL OF ACADEMIC LANGUAGE

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- **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)**
- Social and Conversational language
- Develops first
- Everyday language
  
- **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)**
- Academic Language
- Takes longer to develop
- Strategies:
- Visuals, graphics, manipulatives, study guides, guided notes, prior knowledge, interactions

Slide 18





## REFERENCES

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- Cummins, J (1991). Language development and academic learning. Language, Culture and Cognition. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- WIDA. (2016). Wida standards. Retrieved from [https://www.wida.us/standards/CAN\\_DOs/](https://www.wida.us/standards/CAN_DOs/)

Slide 20

## EVALUATION

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What I learned today...	What I found useful...	Questions I still have...
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

Slide 21



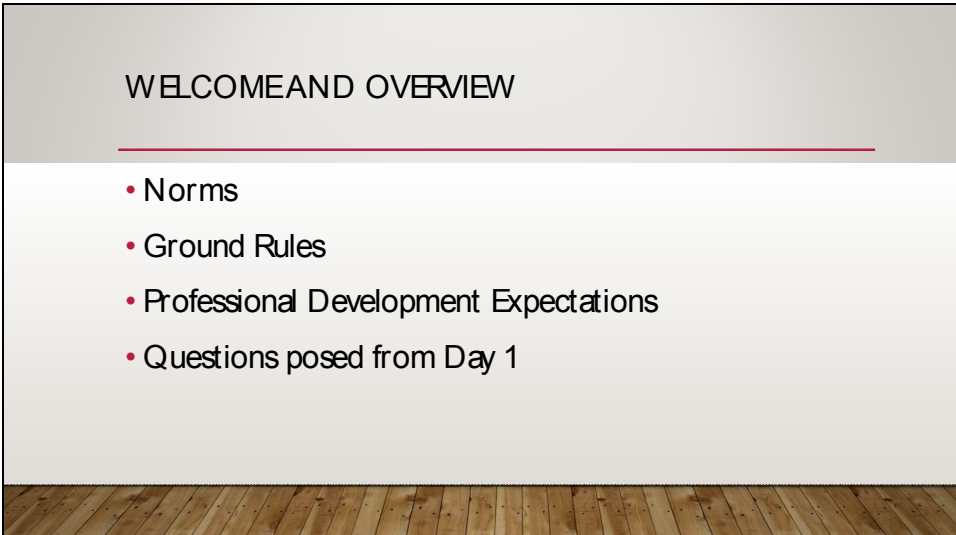
**SCAFFOLDS AND  
DIFFERENTIATION WITH WIDA**

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Day Two

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Slide 22



**WELCOME AND OVERVIEW**

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- Norms
- Ground Rules
- Professional Development Expectations
- Questions posed from Day 1

The slide features a light gray header, a white main content area with a red horizontal line, and a wooden floor graphic at the bottom.

## Slide 23

**OBJECTIVE**

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- Develop an understanding of WIDA and how to use Can-Do Descriptors through:
  - Differentiation and Scaffolds
  - Viewing student data
  - Creating scaffolded and differentiated lessons using Can-Do Descriptors

## Slide 24

**ICE BREAKER**

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- German Translation Activity
- What did she say?
  - Take a few minute and write what you think she said.

## Slide 25

## TRANSLATION

---

- Thank you. Thank you. Everybody, I'm so nervous. I left my speech over there on the floor. What a great time we are living in. I was a waitress, cleaner, and a dog groomer. Who would have thought that me working in all of those career choices would have placed me on the acting stage. This is the best proof, the audiences have become so tolerable, that people like me have a chance. My mother always told me to be original and to myself. Because my mom always said be yourself, it always made me crazy. Now I understand what she meant by it. She was before her time, and I thank God that she taught me how to have that mentality, before she passed away. Thank you...
- Translated by Thomas Elder

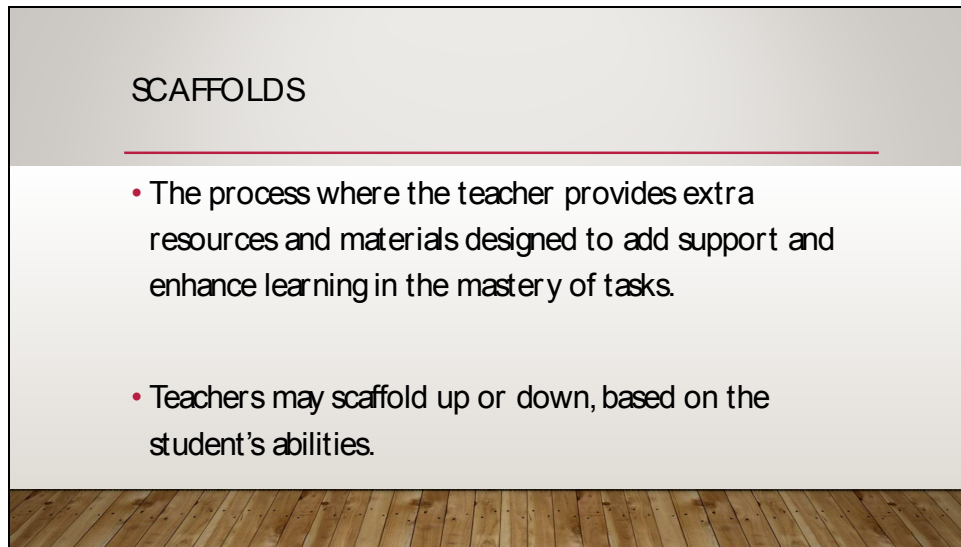
## Slide 26

## DIFFERENTIATION

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- Ways to differentiate
- Content
- Process
- Product
- Interest
- Readiness
- Learning Styles
  - Visual
  - Tactile
  - Auditory

Slide 27



SCAFFOLDS

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- The process where the teacher provides extra resources and materials designed to add support and enhance learning in the mastery of tasks.
- Teachers may scaffold up or down, based on the student's abilities.

The slide features a light gray header with the title 'SCAFFOLDS' in all caps. A thin red horizontal line separates the header from the main content area. The main content area has a white background and contains two bullet points. The bottom of the slide is decorated with a wooden floor texture.

Slide 28



Slide 29

## LEVEL 1

- Separate by Content Area
- Create a lesson and use the WIDA Can-Do Descriptors to modify the lesson for ELLs with a proficiency level of 1
- Share scaffolds made for the lesson for Level 1 ELLs

Slide 30

## LEVEL 2

---

- Separate by Content Area
- Create a lesson and use the WIDA Can-Do Descriptors to modify the lesson for ELLs with a proficiency level of 2
- Share scaffolds made for the lesson for Level 2 ELLs

Slide 31

## LEVEL 3

---

- Separate by Content Area
- Create a lesson and use the WIDA Can-Do Descriptors to modify the lesson for ELLs with a proficiency level of 3
- Share scaffolds made for the lesson for Level 3 ELLs

Slide 32

## LEVEL 4 AND LEVEL 5

---

- Separate by Content Area
- Create a lesson and use the WIDA Can-Do Descriptors to modify the lesson for ELLs with a proficiency level of 4 and level 5
- Share scaffolds made for the lesson for Level 4 and 5 ELLs

Slide 33

## RECAP, WARP UP AND QUESTIONS

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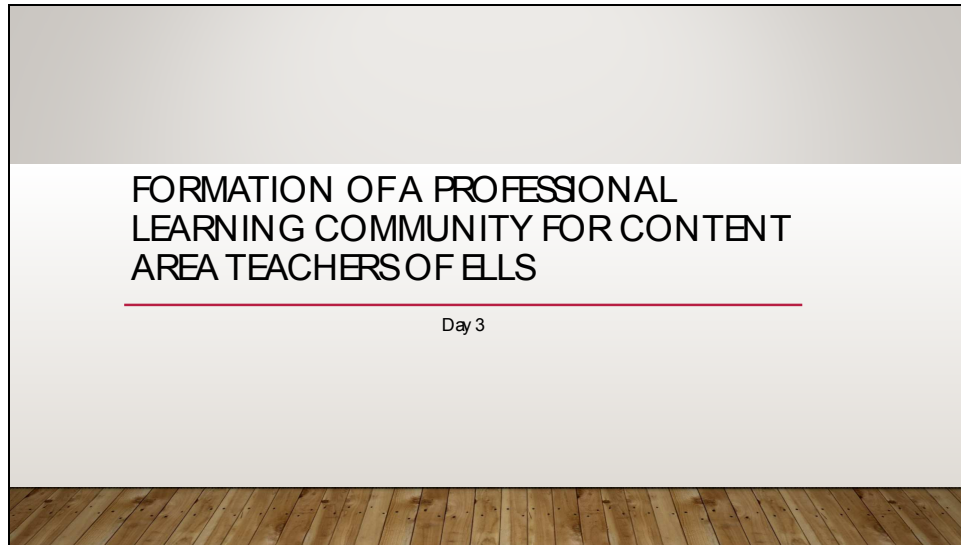




Slide 34

COMPLETE EVALUATION		
What I learned today...	What I found useful...	Questions I still have...
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

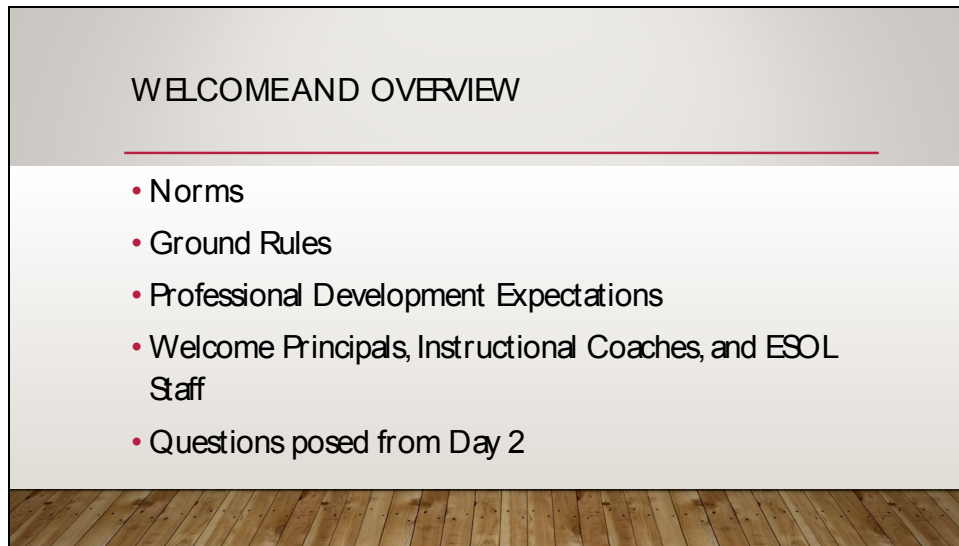
Slide 35



Slide 36



Slide 37



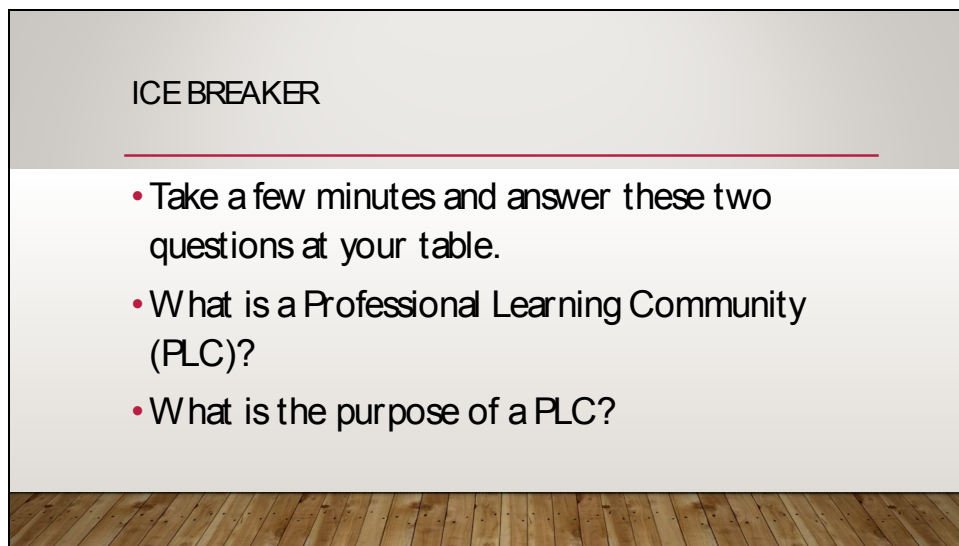
WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

---

- Norms
- Ground Rules
- Professional Development Expectations
- Welcome Principals, Instructional Coaches, and ESOL Staff
- Questions posed from Day 2

The slide features a light gray header with the title 'WELCOME AND OVERVIEW' in all caps. A thin red horizontal line separates the header from the main content area. The main content area is white and contains a bulleted list of five items. The bottom of the slide has a decorative wooden floor texture.

Slide 38



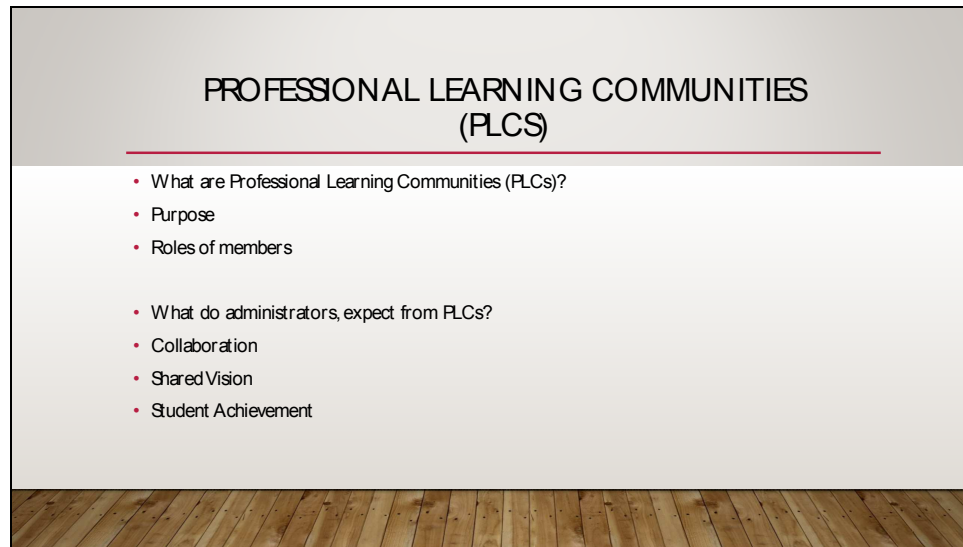
ICE BREAKER

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- Take a few minutes and answer these two questions at your table.
- What is a Professional Learning Community (PLC)?
- What is the purpose of a PLC?

The slide features a light gray header with the title 'ICE BREAKER' in all caps. A thin red horizontal line separates the header from the main content area. The main content area is white and contains a bulleted list of three items. The bottom of the slide has a decorative wooden floor texture.

Slide 39

A presentation slide titled "PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCS)". The title is centered in a grey header bar. Below the title, a red horizontal line separates the header from the main content area. The main content area is white and contains two bulleted lists. The bottom of the slide features a wooden floor texture.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCS)

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- What are Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)?
- Purpose
- Roles of members

- What do administrators expect from PLCs?
- Collaboration
- Shared Vision
- Student Achievement

Slide 40

RELATIONSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT

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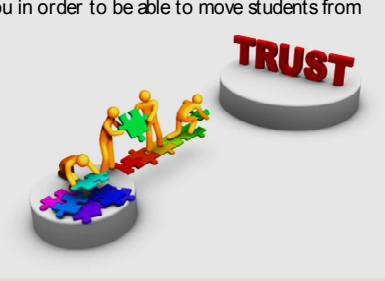


## Slide 41

## TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

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- Just as students require trusting relationships, it is essential that you trust the people that are a part of the PLC, and that they trust you in order to be able to move students from one place to the next.

An illustration showing a path of colorful puzzle pieces leading from a circular base on the left to a circular base on the right. The word "TRUST" is written in red, 3D letters on the right base. Several stylized human figures are shown interacting with the puzzle pieces, symbolizing the process of building trust through collaboration and shared experiences.


The illustration is set against a light gray background with a wooden floor texture at the bottom.

## Slide 42

## TRUST BUILDING ACTIVITY: THE HUMAN KNOT

---

- Split into two groups.
- Stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder
- Put your right hand out and grab anyone's hand across from you
- Put out your left hand and grab a different person's hand across from you
- Now untangle yourselves without releasing anyone's hand.

A simple illustration of a wooden floor texture at the bottom of the slide, indicating the activity is to be performed on the ground.

The illustration is set against a light gray background with a wooden floor texture at the bottom.

Slide 43

### PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES (PLCS)

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- The purpose of PLCs is to evoke change in the culture of a school and the practices of all who work in the school.
- PLCs are collaborative and involves active participation
- Analysis of student assessments, to improve student achievement while continually improving teaching practices

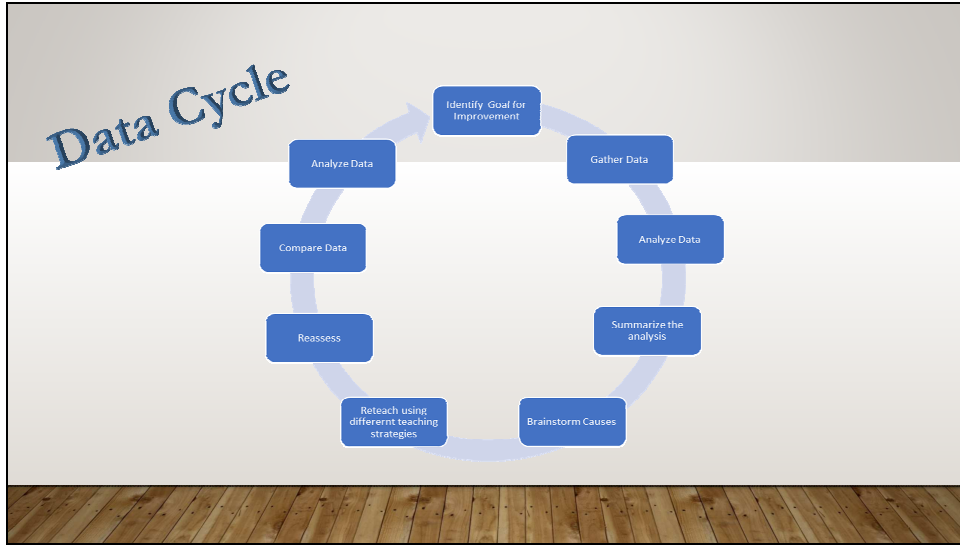
Slide 44

### PLC PARTICIPANT ROLES

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- The PLC Leader
- Time Keeper & Redirector
- Note Taker/ Recorder
- Add additional Roles as needed

Slide 45



Slide 46



## WHAT DOES YOUR DATA SHOW ?

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- Create goals for your content
- Chart and place goals on the walls for the Gallery Walk
- Identify similarities and differences in the needs and goals during the Gallery Walk

Slide 47

## WHAT STRATEGY WILL YOU USE FIRST, TO HELP MEET YOUR GOAL FOR YOUR CONTENT?

---

### Teaching Strategies



Slide 48

## THE FORMATION OF ESOL PLC FRAMEWORK

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- Create a Goal for all subjects, and how they will be carried out.
- Monthly Meetings together as an ESOL PLC will occur after school.
- Meetings will be lead by the academic instructional coach.
- Data will be discussed from the Content Area ESOL PLCs, and their data cycles
- A discussion and presentation of strategies used will help determine if the strategies are being implemented with fidelity throughout the PLC.

Slide 49

## REFERENCES

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- Wells, C. M. & Feun, L. (2013). Educational change and professional learning communities: A study of two districts. *Journal of Education Change*, 14, 233-257. Doi:10.1007/s10833-012-9202-5
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## EVALUATION

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## PLC Norms Handout

Content Area: \_\_\_\_\_

### PLC Norms

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### PLC Participants and Roles

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

## Data Cycle



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

**Evaluation Tool**

Day One:

What I learned today...	What I found useful...	Questions I still have...
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

**Evaluation Tool**

Day Two:

What I learned today...	What I found useful...	Questions I still have...
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

### Summative Evaluation of the Professional Development

Rate the Professional Development	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The professional development's objectives were clear.					
The professional development's objectives were met.					
The delivery of information for professional development was effective.					
The activities during the professional development were appropriate and helped with understanding how to provide content instruction for ELLs.					
The presenter was knowledgeable about the WIDA framework.					
The presenter was knowledgeable about teaching strategies for teaching subject content to ELLs.					
The facilitator addressed questions and concerns from the previous day.					

Suggestions on how to improve the professional development:

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Please list any questions or supports where assistance is still needed.

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### Classroom Observation Protocol

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Content: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson Plan Notes:**

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**Classroom Observation:**

What was the teacher doing?

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What were the students doing?

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**Glows** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Growths** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix B: Semistructured Interview Questions

1. How comfortable do you feel teaching ELLs in your classroom? Explain.
2. How do you use the WIDA Can Do Descriptors in your class?
3. How do you differentiate instruction for ELLs in your content area class?
4. What best practices do you use, to support ELLs in your class?
5. What do you see as the greatest challenge of having ELLs in your content area class? Explain.
6. What is your greatest strength working with ELLs in your content area class? Explain.
7. What are some areas that you feel, that you could use more assistance when providing instruction for ELLs in your content class?

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

1. How many ELLs were enrolled in your classes during this school year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximately how many ELLs have enrolled in your classes throughout your teaching career?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you familiar with the WIDA standards and how to utilize them in your class, when teaching ELLs? If so, how do you incorporate the WIDA standards into your class? If no, have you received training on how to use the WIDA standards?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you scaffold and differentiate your lessons for ELLs?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Are students provided with opportunities to use their native language in your class? If so, how do you monitor the use?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you provide materials for ELL students in their native languages? Please explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How has the inclusion of ELLs in your classes impact the way that you teach?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What kind of training have you received to help ELLs in your content class? Did you find the training helpful? Why or Why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Section B

Which, if any, of the following are descriptive of your classes when ELLs are enrolled? Please indicate the extent to which each of the following apply in your classes.

	<b>Seldom or never</b>	<b>Some of the time</b>	<b>Most or all of the time</b>
<b>Classroom Practices</b>			
1. I allow ELL students more time to complete their coursework.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I give ELL students less coursework than other students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I allow ELL students to use his/her native language in my class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I provide materials for ELL students in their native languages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Effort is more important to me than achievement when I grade ELL students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Impact of Inclusion</b>			
6. The inclusion of ELL students in my classes increase my workload.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. ELL students require more of my time than other students require.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. The inclusion of ELL students in my class slows the progress of the entire class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Teacher Support</b>			
9. I received adequate support from school administration when ELL students enrolled in my classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I receive adequate support from the ESOL staff when ELL students are enrolled in my classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I conference with the ESOL teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Adapted from Reeves (2006)

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

## Appendix D : Permission to use Questionnaire Tool

**ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: A Survey of Teachers**

3 messages

Wed, Feb 15, 2017 at 10:37 AM



Good Morning Dr. Reeves,

My name is Damian Elder, and I am currently working on my Doctorate of Education at Walden University. I am writing on "Middle School Teacher Practices when Educating English Language Learners in Content Area Classes". I am writing to seek permission to use your survey as a data point in study, particularly parts B and C as they focus on classroom practices and benefits and challenges of having ELLs in content classes.

Dr. Reeves, may I have permission to utilize your survey in my study?

Respectfully,

*Mrs. Damian Elder*



Thu, Feb 16, 2017 at 9:27 AM



Hello Damian,

Yes, you have my permission to use my survey for your own research. Feel free to adapt it as necessary. Please cite my work where applicable. And, I'd love to hear what you find out!

Best,

Jenelle Reeves

**Subject:** ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: A Survey of Teachers

[Quoted text hidden]



Fri, Feb 17, 2017 at 2:41 PM

Thank you Dr. Reeves,  
I will keep you posted.

Sent from my iPhone

[Quoted text hidden]

## Appendix E: IRB Approval

Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-11-17-0514810.

## Appendix F: Data collected from Observations

	1AFL7	1WFD8	2WFM7	4WMD6	5WFK6
Observations	Math Lesson	Math Lesson	ELA Lesson	Math Lesson	Social Studies
Number #1-Differentiation	<p>Differentiation was provided through visual, auditory and visual supports. Students listened to and watched a video of the "Song of a Circle," on YouTube. Students created their own circle identifying and labeling the different parts of a circle. Support was provided to struggling students through walking around the classroom to provide individualized help. WIDA Standards were posted in the front of the classroom and was evident that the standards were used, but not the Can Do Descriptors.</p>	<p>No differentiation noticed. No WIDA Standards posted or evidence of use of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors.</p>	<p>Differentiation was provided through student paced work. Some students were writing essays, while other finished answering questions. No WIDA Standards posted or evidence of use of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors</p>	<p>No Differentiation noticed. WIDA Standards were posted, but no evidence of use of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors.</p>	<p>Differentiation was noticed in the student product, as students created an Aboriginal Art piece. No evidence of the WIDA Standards or the use of the Can Do Descriptors.</p>
Number #1-Practices	<p>Re-teaching of vertical angles, with teacher modeling how to solve equations through guided</p>	<p>Teacher reviewed and retaught slope. Teacher modeled using guided</p>	<p>Teacher modeled how to identify the claim of an argument essay, and how</p>	<p>Teacher modeled how to find the area of a rectangle on the</p>	<p>The teacher questions students on vocabulary and students raised their hands to</p>

	<p>practice with the use of the Smart Board. Student checking was used with students going to the board to figure out the answers to the math problems. Example: <math>2x=74</math> The teacher asked- "Does this make sense? Does it make sense, now?" Anchor charts were posted for students to refer to, when answering questions concerning. Students used their laptops to review the Circle YouTube song, and identified vocabulary to place on their graphic organizers.</p>	<p>practice on how to find slope, on a graph. Visual supports were available on anchor charts posted in the room. The teacher used verbal questioning and walking around the room to check student learning and understanding. Vocabulary instruction was provided for slope. Example- <math>y=mx+b</math>, <math>m=\text{rise/run}</math>. The teacher used the Smart Board for demonstration.</p>	<p>to structure argument essay paragraphs using IXL on the Smartboard. The teacher guided students through identifying the elements of an argumentative essay on the Smart Board. Verbal questioning was used about the sections of the essay. the teacher was led around the classroom to help and correct misconceptions concerning writing the essay. Students were provided with a graphic organizer and handout on how to write an argumentative essay. Students used their laptops to type their personal essay into a word document.</p>	<p>Smartboard. Guided practice was used when working on finding the square root of a triangle. The teacher used verbal questioning to check if students were understanding the concept. Total Group Response was used, "thumbs up if you understand. Visual supports with examples were on the board, the teacher used a 10 minute video to teach how to find the square root of a triangle, which also taught vocabulary.</p>	<p>answer. Teacher provided a visual picture of an Aboriginal art piece. The teacher walked around to check student learning and verbally questioned students. The lesson began whole group and went into small groups or pairs. Once students completed their Aboriginal Art work, they were to work on their WebQuest.</p>

	1AFL7	1WFD8	2WFM7	4WMD6	5WFK6
Observations	Science Lesson	Math Lesson	Social Studies Lesson	Science Lesson	ELA Lesson
Number #2-Differentiation	The student product was differentiated, Students created a self-story of how food is digested, as if they were the food. Students were to Express and Illustrate the journey through the digestive system. Scaffolds were provided for students through a simplified assignment... for ELLs who needed it. WIDA standards were posted, and leveled work was provided for students.	No differentiation noticed. No WIDA standards noticed.	No differentiation noticed. No WIDA standards noticed.	Students were working on multiple tasks. WIDA standards posted, but no evidence of use in the lesson or student work.	The product was differentiated, and students were provided with a choice of choosing their favorite super hero to write about. Some students were completing other tasks as well.
Number #2-Practices	The teacher reviewed vocabulary, allowing students to get to the board to match terms to definitions through guided practice. Students were instructed to match the structures of the digestive system	Teacher reviewed homework over slope, and had students work questions out, while asking questions to ensure that they understood the homework. Students were provided with	Teacher showed CNN news on current news. The teacher provided Cornell notes for students to copy from a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher questioned students on the Apartheid and	Vocabulary practice was taught and guided on how to create an acrostic using the vocabulary words. Multiple tasks were taking place, students were completing magazine readings and	The teacher reviewed who Wonder Woman was and how she originated. The teacher used questioning to reteach the text. The teacher reviewed the R.A.C.E. writing format. The teacher walked around



	to their functions. The teacher questioned students verbally and made references to the previous day's lesson video to check prior knowledge.	guided practice as they worked in groups to solve for slope. The teacher provided students with feedback and walked around monitoring the lesson while checking for understanding.	their understanding of Gandhi. Students conducted research on their laptops on Gandhi.	answering questions on icebergs, others were working on vocabulary.	and monitored and helped students as they worked.
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