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Effective Characteristics of Rural English Learner Programs

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Effective Characteristics of Rural English Learner Programs

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**This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
the Educational Doctorate Degree
in Educational Leadership
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This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in a rural areas in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. The subjects in this study were English learner teachers and administrators from five micropolitan school districts in a rural Midwestern state. The school districts in this study were identified and recruited based on two specific criteria: a mircopolitan community and a student population of English language learners. The study utilized both survey and archival data. The survey was administered to all EL teachers and administrators in the five micropolitan districts. However, while the full archival data set was not released by the State Department of Education, a few observations were still made regarding the results of the study. Ultimately, the data indicated that when EL teachers and administrators have a similar understanding of their EL program, their English learner students benefit and score higher language proficiency growth scores.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background of the Problem

English language (EL) students are now enrolled in nearly three out of every four public schools in the nation and constitute nine percent of all public school students, and their numbers are steadily increasing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; United States Department of Civil Rights, 2015). In fact, more than 60 million people ages five and older speak a language other than English in their homes (United States Census Bureau, 2011). Specifically, in one rural Midwestern state the number of EL students has increased by 300 percent in the past 20 years, making them the fastest growing population among students (LEAPS Act, 2014). This growth highlights the importance of language education in schools as it is “crucial to the future of our nation that these students, and all students, have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential” (United States Department of Civil Rights, 2015, p. 1).

However, despite this unprecedented growth, the current inability of most U.S. schools to respond to the academic and linguistic needs of culturally diverse students is a national concern (Brisk, Burgos, & Hamerla, 2015; Samson & Collins, 2012). In some rural districts and schools, it can often be a struggle to provide even the most basic EL programs, services, and opportunities for students and families (Good, Masewicz, and Vogel, 2010). Yet, EL students remain faced with the enormous task of meeting grade-level standards and mastering academic content and skills while simultaneously reaching proficiency in English, a colossal expectation. In fact, according to the Department of

Education, nearly half of EL students do not graduate from high school (LEAPS Act, 2014). Ultimately, the vast range of educational needs that EL students bring to school are new territory, which requires an immensely different educational approach, some of which are not yet well defined or understood.

The educational options offered for EL students in states, districts, and schools are generally guided by federal guidelines. Ideally, the education of our country's children is reserved for the states, however, the federal government maintains some influence of power through the use of funding, legislation, and judicial action (Lessow-Hurley, 2013). As a result of this influence, the history of regularly changing federal laws that demand equitable educational opportunities for language learners has been well documented (Crawford, 2005; Lopez & McEneaney, 2012; Wiley & Wright, 2004).

The first legislation that addressed the rights of language-minority students was the Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968. This particular law did not mandate bilingual instruction for all students, but instead, it provided funding for the support of educational resources and teacher training in schools. As mentioned, participation in the program was voluntary for districts and schools, and as a result, it did not recommend any specific language acquisition programs for implementation. Following the BEA, language laws quickly changed due to the ruling of *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974 which cited that the lack of accommodations for students with limited English constituted a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Changes were quickly made that year once the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA) was enacted and prohibited segregation of students based on race, national origin, and also mandated school districts

to take action to overcome linguistic barriers. After the EEOA was enacted, there were amendments made to the BEA in order to clarify and strengthen the original legislation. At that point, the new amendments made to the BEA was the first time bilingual education was explicitly written in law. Over the course of the next several years, there were multiple reauthorizations of the BEA that changed the language of the law. Then, in 1981, the court of appeals interpreted the requirements of the EEOA in *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) and required English acquisition programs to follow three rules: 1) be scientifically based and supported by experts in the field 2) be implemented with adequate resources and personnel and 3) be evaluated for effectiveness.

In 2001, the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed into law, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB marked a shift in emphasis and support from the BEA, which funded programs that supported first languages, to programs that focus exclusively on English development. The NCLB required each state to develop English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and assessments designed to measure English learners' progress. The language assessment, as required by NCLB, was based on the four domains of language acquisition including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As a result of this requirement, a consortium of states created the World Class Design Instruction (WIDA) consortium was created which then implemented ELP standards and a language proficiency assessment called the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) for ELLs, which has been deemed an example for the rest of the

country. In 2011, the rural Midwest state adopted WIDA as the ELP standards and assessment framework for teaching and assessing ELs (Wright, 2010).

In 2015, President Obama signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This new ESSA replaced the NCLB of 2001 and includes many revisions to the previous statute including several changes to English learner education. A few of the major changes include alignment of standards, testing, Title I proficiency indicators, and common entrance and exit procedures. Yet, despite these changes, the new ESSA still falls short (Lindahl, 2015). While the above changes are positive for English learners and educators a few pieces are missing including professional development for all teachers, a proposal to increase the number of bilingual specialists, and limited support for bilingual education (Lindahl, 2015).

Much like during the first days of bilingual education, there is very little guidance from the ESSA in program recommendations for states. As a result, there are various “language instruction programs based on dissimilar philosophical frameworks...” (Lopez, McEneaney & Nieswandt, 2015, p. 422) in, and within, each state. With such little guidance, states across the country are making choices about their language programs and it seems some decisions are “...data driven although not actually data based” (Menken & Solorza, 2014, p.106). Generally, states require that English language programs must be in compliance with all federal and state mandates and accountability requirements. In addition, programs must be aligned with court findings regarding equitable education for ELs and must have clearly defined policies and procedures

ensuring effective implementation. In this specific rural Midwest state, program decisions are left up to the discretion of districts and schools with the directive that students who are identified as ELs “must be served in an instructional program designed for ELs, defined as either an English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual Education (BE) program” (State Department of Education, n.d.).

Ultimately, in most states, districts are free to choose an English language program that fits their needs, as long as the program is considered sound by experts in the field. This freedom, however, presents concerns about program implementation and fidelity as language programs are not uniform in character, and changes in the way in which a program is implemented may very likely change student achievement (Lopez & McEneaney, 2012). Program decisions and the implementation of programs are tricky tasks that must be done while keeping in mind the students’ languages, cultures, and special learning needs or schools have the “potential to fail language minority students through programming and pedagogy that disregard and devalue their needs” (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 401). Truly, a key to program success is its constant evaluation of effectiveness (Castaneda v. Pickard, 1981) and ongoing professional development in order to ensure that language learners are provided effective, high-quality education and with opportunities to achieve their full academic potential.

Purpose Statement

While English language program implementation and evaluation are an important topic for all schools to investigate, it is especially important for rural schools which have experienced an increase in immigrants from non-English speaking countries since the

2000 U.S. Census (United States Department of Education, 2013). For this reason, it was necessary to evaluate EL programs in rural areas as a measure of their ability to provide instruction that increases language proficiency growth in order to continue improving language education for all EL students in the rural Midwest's growing English language learner population.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in rural areas in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. As a result, the following hypotheses were to be tested:

- 1) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between strength of program vision and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 2) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between program placement and language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 3) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between curriculum and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 4) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between program monitoring and assessment and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.

- 5) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between access to support services and activities and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 6) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between staffing and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 7) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between degree of communication with students and families and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.

In addition to the hypotheses stated, the researcher asked two open-ended questions.

These open-ended questions were analyzed and organized into themes by frequency. The information gained helped to better understand and clarify the correlations hypothesized above based on the K-12 EL teachers' and administrators' expressed feelings towards their EL programs.

8a. What do you perceive to be the most important program elements that support the academic success of EL students?

8b. What would you change about EL programming if you had the power to do so?

Significance of the Research

This study contributed to research, practice, and policy of rural English learner students and English language programs. The study is of interest to district administrators, teachers, parents, and students in rural areas as they each evaluate the

effectiveness of the English language programs in their districts and schools, as determined by language proficiency and growth.

Methodological Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions. Due to the confidentiality of survey responses, it is assumed that the respondents will be truthful in their answers.

Limitations. A key limitation of this study is that the generalization of results are intended for rural EL programs.

Delimitations. Delimitations for this study include the inclusion of only rural schools in one Midwest state that are considered to be in micropolitan communities.

Ethical Assurances. Participation in the study will be voluntary. There will be no consequences for not participating. There are no known risks or consequences to participation in the study. All data collected from the study will be kept confidential. Any material containing potentially identifying information will be stored on a locked and password protected storage device. No participant will be identified in the study.

Definition of Key Terms

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) The state standardized test to measure proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Basic Interpersonal Communications (BICS) The cognitively undemanding language used on a daily basis with peers in social, non-academic settings.

Cognitive Academic Language (CALP) The cognitively demanding language used in academic settings.

English learner (EL) A student that is not a native speaker of English and is learning English as a new language. Other acronyms include: ESL, ELL, and LEP.

English Language Learner (ELL) A student that is not a native speaker of English and is learning English as a new language. Other acronyms include: ESL, EL, and LEP.

English language development (ELD) A method of language development and instruction designed to help English learners successfully acquire English.

English language proficiency (ELP) The level at which an English learner student is proficient in English.

English as a second language (ESL) Describes both students learning English as a new language as well as the English classes designed for language development of new English learners. Other acronyms include: ELL, EL, and LEP.

First Language (L1) The first language that a student learned in their home or in their country of origin.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Describes students who are learning English as a new language. This term usually refers to the subgroup created for results of high stakes tests under No Child Left Behind. Other acronyms include: ESL, ELL, and EL.

Second Language (L2) The language that a student learns after their first language.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) The process in which English learners develop their language skills in a second language.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) A research based instructional method that utilizes eight interrelated instructional components and has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners.

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) The framework and standards used by the rural Midwest school to teach and assess English language learners.

Organization of the Study

The literature review relevant to this study is presented in Chapter II and outlines the literature related to the legislative foundations of EL, language acquisition, EL program models, and EL programs methods. Chapter III describes the research design, methodology, and the procedures that will be used to gather and analyze the data from the study. The results from the study are outlined in Chapter IV and further discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to explore effective characteristics of teaching in the field of English Learner (EL) education. Specifically, this literature review addresses the legislative foundations governing EL, language acquisition, program models, English-only program methods, and characteristics of strong EL programs.

It is widely acknowledged that equitable education is essential in order to access economic and social advantage; indeed, is critical to the success of our students and nation. However, despite this knowledge, EL students remain widely underserved in the public education system of our nation's schools as demonstrated by a lack of positive academic outcomes (Brisk, Burgos, & Hamerla, 2015; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; LEAPS Act, 2014; Samson & Collins, 2012), a fact that is cause for alarm. In the last 40 years, the growth of the EL population has been unprecedented. EL students are now enrolled in nearly three out of every four public schools in the nation and constitute nine percent of all public school students, and their numbers are steadily increasing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016; United States Department of Civil Rights, 2015). In one rural Midwest state, the number of EL students has increased by 300 percent in the last 20 years, making them the fastest growing population. This means that more than 65,000 EL students are currently enrolled in the public school system (LEAPS, 2014). Additionally, part of this growth has been found in rural school districts. According to Common Core of Data, "The total number of students learning English in rural schools increased by nearly 50% in the three most recent years for which data is available, 2006-2007 to 2009-2010" (as cited in Rural Policy Matters, 2011, p.

11). Yet, despite this growth of EL students, limited amounts of change have taken place to meet their educational needs (LEAPS Act, 2014).

The United States Department of Civil (2015) Rights stated it best, “it is crucial to the future of our nation that these students, and all students, have equal access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential” (p. 1). As one can see, it is imperative that the nation, states, and districts work to meet the specialized needs of our growing EL population or there is a chance that the nation will fail to help all students achieve their full academic potential. In order to meet the specialized needs of our EL students in rural areas, districts, schools, and staff must self-assess their understanding of the foundations of language education, the process of language acquisition, the various program models, English-only methods, and strong EL program characteristics in order to effectively evaluate the strength of their own EL program.

Legislative Foundations

Theoretically, the education of our country’s children is reserved for the states, however, the federal government maintains some influence of power through the use of funding, legislation, and judicial action (Lessow-Hurley, 2013). As a result of this influence, the history of regularly changing federal laws that demand equitable educational opportunities for language learners is well documented (Crawford, 2005; Lopez & McEneaney, 2012; Lessow-Hurley, 2013). However, over the course of years and changing laws, states and districts have found themselves working, and sometimes fumbling, to implement new language programming and requirements. As a result, in

order to better understand the context of state and language programs today, it is first important to understand the laws that are foundational to English language programs and learning in this country.

Federal Language Legislation

While not enacted to address EL programs, landmark legislation in 1954 did serve as an initial step for students of different languages. This landmark legislation was *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). In this ruling, the Supreme Court reversed the separate-but-equal doctrine set forth in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities for students of different races, by the very nature of being separate, was not equal at all. This ruling established that, the act of prohibiting certain students from access to all classes, developed the underlying assumption that not all students were worthy. So, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) established that segregation violates equal protection of the law and equal access to public facilities as assured under the 14th Amendment (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)).

In 1964, the historic Civil Rights Act, Title VI established the foundation for the delivery of equitable education. Under the Title VI, any type of discrimination against any person of any background receiving Federal money was forbidden. It stated that:

No person shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (Pub. L. 88–352, title VI, §601, July 2, 1964, 78 Stat. 252.)

Not long after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act, the 1968 Bilingual Education Act (BEA), Title VII solidified that EL students have unique needs. This particular law did not mandate bilingual instruction for all students, but instead, it provided funding for the support of educational resources and teacher training in schools. Again, participation in the program was voluntary for districts and schools, and therefore, it did not recommend any specific language acquisition programs for implementation.

In 1974, the Equal Education Opportunity Act (EEOA) extended the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include all schools, whether or not they received federal money. It stipulated that all school districts must take action to overcome linguistic barriers. Another major change in 1974 was the landmark *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) Supreme Court ruling that overturned a decision of a lower court and cited that the lack of accommodations for students with limited English constituted a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The *Lau v. Nichols* case was brought by Chinese American students living in San Francisco, California who had limited English proficiency. The students claimed that they were not receiving special help in school due to their inability to speak English, which they argued they were entitled to under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Finding that the lack of linguistically appropriate accommodations effectively denied the Chinese students equal educational opportunities on the basis of their ethnicity, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1974 ruled in favor of the students, thus expanding rights of students with limited English proficiency (Lessow-Hurley, 2013). The language in the decision was strong, and Justice William O. Douglas wrote:

There is no equality in treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that before a child can effectively participate in the educational program he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experience wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful. (*Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974))

Following *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) ruling, the court of appeals interpreted the requirements of the EEOA in *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981). This case was filed against the Raymondville Independent School District (RISD) in Texas by Roy Castañeda, the father of two Mexican-American children. Mr. Castañeda claimed that the RISD was discriminating against his children due to their ethnicity. He argued that the classroom his children were being taught in was segregated and that School District failed to establish sufficient bilingual education programs, which would have been helpful in overcoming the language barriers that prevented them from participating equally in the classroom. In 1981, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled in favor of the Castañedas (Wright, 2010). This ruling required English language acquisition programs to follow three rules: 1) be scientifically based and supported by experts in the field 2) be implemented with adequate resources and personnel and 3) be evaluated for effectiveness (*Castaneda v. Pickard* 648 F.2d 989 U.S. (1981)).

In 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was signed into law, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB marked a shift in emphasis and support from the Bilingual Education Act, which funded programs that supported first languages, to programs that focused exclusively on English development. The Bilingual Education Act was replaced by a new Title III, “Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant students” and the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs was changed to the “Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficiency Students” (Wright, 2010). Under the new Title III guidelines, there was no recognition of the personal and societal benefits of bilingual education and bilingualism. Ultimately, the NCLB required states and districts, at a minimum, to provide EL programs that ensured students would learn English at sufficiently high levels in order to reach academic achievement. It must be noted, however, that “although services are federally mandated, their quality and quantity vary at the school and district level” (Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller, & Frisco, 2009, p. 360).

In addition to providing English instruction, the NCLB required that all states measure student performance in reading and mathematics on an annual basis. The law required the inclusion of EL students in accountability program testing. States cannot opt-out of testing second language learners which caused many concerns regarding the efficacy and ethics of subjecting children to high-stakes tests in English when they have not been given sufficient time, or in many cases, appropriate educational opportunities to be compared to students for whom English is their primary language (Wiley & Wright,

2004; Menken, 2010). Ultimately, there is growing evidence which questions the reliability and validity of test scores for students who are not fully proficient in the language of the test.

The NCLB also required each state to develop English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards and assessments designed to measure English learners' progress. The assessment, as required by NCLB, was based on the four domains of language acquisition including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As a result of this requirement, the World Class Design Instruction (WIDA) consortium was created. This new consortium implemented new language standards and a proficiency assessment for its 38 member states, and was deemed an example for the rest of the country. In 2011, the rural Midwest state adopted WIDA as their language standards and assessment framework for teaching and assessing ELLs (Wright, 2010).

In 2015, former President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This new ESSA replaced the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and includes many revisions to the previous statute including several changes to English learners. A few of the major changes include alignment of standards, testing, Title I proficiency indicators, and common entrance and exit procedures.

One of the first changes noted in the law requires that states now demonstrate in their Title I plans that they have adopted English language proficiency (ELP) standards that cover the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In addition, states must ensure that the ELP standards are aligned with the state's academic

standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016). Also found in the new ESSA, states are required to ensure that all schools provide an annual assessment of the English proficiency of all ELs in their schools and that these assessments are aligned with the state's ELP standards. In the past, NCLB did have similar language but it did not require an alignment of the assessments with state ELP standards. Also, the new ESSA requires the inclusion of an English language proficiency indicator as part of AYP. Also in the past, Title III, had its own accountability system, however, ESSA now requires that each state's accountability system include "long-term goals and interim measures of progress for increases in the percentage of English learners who make progress in achieving English proficiency" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016, p. 8, National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.). And finally, the new law requires each state to establish and implement standardized English learner entrance and exit procedures, which must also include a requirement that all students who might be English learners are assessed for that status within 30 days of enrollment in a school within the state (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016).

Yet, despite these changes, the new ESSA still falls short. While the above changes are positive for English learners and educators a few pieces are missing including professional development for all teachers, a proposal to increase the number of bilingual specialists, and limited support for bilingual education (Lindahl, 2015). In addition, Lindahl (2015) states:

...some of the ESSA feels more like a finger-in-the-dike type of solution. In a country where 10% of the school-age population is classified as an ELL (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2015) and 85,000 refugees relocate annually (American Immigration Council, 2015), the real paradigm shift needs to occur in how and when we educate our teachers about language and how people best learn it. If schools of education and school districts continue to position ESL programs and ESL certification as an add-on or an extra to “mainstream” education, they will continue to marginalize English learners themselves. (p. 1)

Ultimately, with the continued absence of quality bilingual programs in the new ESSA, state and district leaders will need to continue to work on developing language policies that build on the assets of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, so that curriculum and teaching reflect the positive attributes that English learners bring to the school, district, and state.

State Language Legislation

Much like during the first days of bilingual education, neither the NCLB nor the ESSA stipulated the type of language program used by states. As a result, “there are various language instruction programs based on dissimilar philosophical frameworks...” (Lopez, McEneaney & Nieswandt, 2015, p. 422). With little guidance, states across the country seem to have made choices about their language programs that were “...data driven although not actually data based” (Menken & Solorza, 2014, p.106). In fact, several researchers claimed that the move away from bilingual education was based on a flawed analysis of academic failure among ELs that did not take into account the quality of implementation of the bilingual model (Wiley & Wright, 2004; Lopez & McEneaney, 2012).

A few states have already enacted language acquisition models and programs that are limiting, and even eliminating, bilingual education programs in a movement towards English-only laws. The first state to make this change was California in 1998 when Proposition 227 passed and required public schools to teach Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in special classes all in English, with these special classes lasting no more than one year (Proposition 227 *California* Education Code §§300–340 (1998)). Following California, Arizona passed Proposition 203 in 2000 that replaced bilingual education with Sheltered English Instruction (Proposition 203 A.R.S. § 15-751-755 (2001)). And finally, in 2006, Massachusetts passed Question 2 Massachusetts Question 2 G.L. c. 71A (2002), again eliminating bilingual education and implementing Structured English Immersion.

Despite such a drastic and comprehensive change toward English-only laws in a few states, most states have tasked the districts and schools themselves with the responsibility to educate their English language learners. In these cases, states have outlined that English language programs must be in compliance with all federal and state mandates and accountability requirements. In addition, programs must be aligned with court findings regarding equitable education for EL students and must have clearly defined policies and procedures ensuring effective implementation (Office of Civil Rights, 2014). In the rural Midwest state, the State Education Department has left program decisions up to the discretion of the districts and schools with the directive that students who are identified as English learners “must be served in an instructional program designed for EL students, defined as either an English as a Second Language

(ESL) or Bilingual Education (BE) program” (State Department of Education, n.d.). In addition, due to recent legislation called the Learning for English Academic Proficiency and Success Act (LEAP, 2014), schools must also support EL students in achieving both academic English proficiency and grade-level content knowledge, create programs that view students’ home language as an asset, and work to expand the multi-lingual skills of all EL students.

Ultimately, in most states, districts are free to choose an English language program that fits their needs, as long as the program is considered sound by experts in the field. This freedom, however, presents concerns about program implementation, fidelity, and research support as language acquisition programs are not uniform in character, and changes in the way in which a program is implemented may very likely change student achievement (Lopez & McEneaney, 2012). Implementation is a tricky task and it must be done with regard to students’ languages, cultures, and special learning needs or schools have the “potential to fail language minority students through programming and pedagogy that disregard and devalue their needs” (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 401). A key to program implementation and success is its constant evaluation of effectiveness (Castaneda v. Pickard, 1981) in order to ensure English learners are provided effective, high-quality education and opportunities to achieve their full academic potential.

Language Acquisition

We all learn a language, but the means in which we learn our first and second languages are different, and sometimes hotly debated topics, especially in the current politicized state of our nation. In reality, the understanding of language acquisition has

been an ongoing and complex discussion for decades. It is a discussion that one must generally comprehend in order to better understand the current state of language acquisition and education of language learners in our nation and rural schools today.

First Language Acquisition

There are two theories in first language acquisition that have evolved over time to explain the process of first language acquisition. The first is the Behaviorist perspective developed by the well-known psychologist B.F. Skinner and John Watson. This pair hypothesized that children learn their first language through imitation and positive reinforcement. This view was quite popular until Noam Chomsky challenged it in 1959 (Herrera & Murry, 2011; Lessow-Hurley, 2013; Wright, 2010). Chomsky, known as one of the world's most influential linguists, developed the Innatist perspective. He hypothesized that children have the innate ability to learn language. He suggested that there is the presence of a language acquisition device that enables children to figure out the rules and patterns of their own language. Chomsky's theories were revolutionary and led to the rejection of the Behaviorist perspectives within the field of language acquisition (Lessow-Hurley, 2013; Wright, 2010). Although his work remains influential, with most linguists agreeing that there is some form of innate language device embedded for acquiring the first language, new research emerging in the field of language acquisition challenges some of the findings from the Innatist perspective.

Since there is still an ongoing discussion about the way in which we learn our first language, it is obvious then, that there are still many unknowns about how people learn their second, third, fourth languages. Nonetheless, research in second language

acquisition (SLA) has produced several theories from which we can discuss second language acquisition. To guide the discussion, Lightbrown and Spada (2013) have identified four major perspectives from which theories of second language acquisition have emerge which include Behaviorism, Innatist perspective, Cognitive/developmental perspective, and Sociocultural perspectives.

Second Language Acquisition

The first perspective in second language acquisition, as already discussed in first language acquisition, is the Behaviorist perspective. This perspective, as applied in SLA, follows the same ideas of imitation and positive and negative reinforcement (Lessow-Hurley, 2013; Lightbrown & Spada, 2013; Wright, 2010). Although, today, most SLA researchers have rejected the Behaviorist theory. The second perspective found in SLA today is the Innatist perspective, based on Chomsky's work. Again, this perspective is established on the same grounds as in first language acquisition, children are born with a language acquisition device that helps them acquire a language. One of the most influential models of SLA from the Innatist perspective includes five interrelated hypothesis developed by Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985, 1992). Krashen claimed that these five hypotheses support Chomsky's claims and connects them to SLA and include: acquisition-learning hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input (comprehension) hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (Wright, 2010).

Ultimately, Krashen (1985) pointed out that comprehensible input is essential and that:

People acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to allow the input in. When the filter is

down and appropriate comprehensible input is presented (and comprehended), acquisition is inevitable. It is, in fact, unavoidable and cannot be prevented. (p. 4)

Although Krashen's hypotheses are highly influential in SLA, they have also been criticized for their emphasis on acquisition over learning. And, despite the considerable progress that students can make through exposure to comprehensible input, language learners "may reach a point from which they fail to make further progress on some features of the second language unless they also have access to guided instruction" (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006, p. 38). In the end, there are critics to Krashen's theories who claim he has oversimplified the process of SLA, but regardless, his work has inspired a considerable amount of research in the field of SLA.

The third perspective that is highly recognized in SLA studies is the Cognitive and Developmental Perspective. In this theory, psychologists believe that there is no distinction in the brain between learning and acquisition, therefore, general theories of learning can account for language learning. The five primary models, theories, and hypotheses of this perspective include the Interaction Hypothesis, Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, Noticing Hypothesis, Processability Theory, and the Input Processing Model (Wright, 2010).

Finally, the fourth SLA perspective is the Sociocultural Perspective. This perspective stems from the work of Lev Vygotsky who claimed that learning is a social activity and knowledge is structured through interaction and collaboration with others. Vygotsky also identified the zone of proximal development which is defined as the difference between what a learner can do with and without help, and the ability for a

learner to reach a higher level of learning with the support of a more knowledgeable person, known as scaffolding (Wright, 2010).

As the discussion highlights, there are ongoing discussions regarding the various means of first and second language acquisition. While some perspectives are more well-known than others, each has its' own support for SLA, adding to the richness of discussion and research in the attempt to continue improving the understanding of language acquisition and growth for English learners.

In addition to the second language acquisition perspectives, there are also specific language frameworks for second language acquisition. As seen, the second language acquisition process is complex and often generates confusion within the learning community. Much of this confusion stems from the misunderstanding of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Landmark theoretical research conducted by James Cummins (1979, 1981) suggests that there are two levels of language proficiency, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). These two levels of language proficiency have been set as a cornerstone of SLA research.

First, BICS, refers to conversational fluency. BICS is generally acquired naturally out of interactions in which the language is used within highly contextualized situations. Learners who have reached a language proficiency level of BICS have the ability to communicate in familiar situations in which the context of the communication supports the meaning of the conversation (Herrera & Murray, 2011). Essentially, BICS

are the language skills that give the learner the ability to use general, everyday language and are acquired within one to three years. However, it is important to distinguish these basic skills from academic skills, as conversational fluency is not an indication of academic proficiency. This key distinction is often where educators confuse a learners' actual proficiency level (Cummins, 1981; Herrera & Murray, 2011).

Academic performance on the other hand, according to Cummins (1979, 1981), requires a higher level of language development known as CALP. CALP is the comprehension of language in context-reduced situations where there are no cues embedded to assist in meaning, often times the regular classroom setting. CALP is a level of language proficiency in which students can process complex language tasks such as comparison, synthesis, and analysis. Unlike BICS, children will not develop this academic proficiency on their own, they must be taught it. Cummins argued that CALP takes five to seven years to develop and takes this long due to the complexity of language needed in order to do well in school.

As can be seen, within the field of second language acquisition, Cummins concepts of BICS and CALP are generally widely accepted measures of the differing levels of language proficiency. However, these concepts have also found themselves subjected to substantial criticism. One argument includes the charge that the BICS and CALP concepts are an oversimplification of the complex construct of language proficiency. Specifically, from a sociocultural perspective, Wiley (Wright, 2010, p. 32) claims that the concept of academic language proficiency is too general and that much of what falls under academic language proficiency is really just academic socialization to

specific literacy practices. As a result, he claimed it is unhelpful to claim that there is a single construct called academic language. Nonetheless, Cummins's (1979, 1981) research has provided many researchers the foundation upon which to base and expand their own studies. According to Lenters (2004):

Cummins' (1979) seminal work on communicative competence, his theory of linguistic interdependence, and threshold hypothesis have provided an enduring theoretical framework for approaching bilingualism in education. (p.329)

Ultimately, the process of second language acquisition is complex and requires educators to keep in mind the parameters of language acquisition. If these parameters are disregarded, students will likely be inappropriately placed in basic or academic settings that do not meet their needs. Through his research Cummins's (1979, 1981) explanation of BICS and CALP has created a theoretical cornerstone for the process of language acquisition, one in which the field has been built.

Program Models for English Learners

There has been much research and debate surrounding the programs that are believed to be most beneficial for EL students. There are undoubtedly many sides to the discussion, however, there are two programs that stand-out, English Immersion and Bilingual Education. While bilingual programs seem to offer more effective instruction, the push towards English-only programs has led to the development of English Language Development (ELD) methods that, while seemingly not as effective as Bilingual programs, offer a chance at growth for districts who do not have the resources to fund bilingual education, which is the case in many rural areas.

English language learners are served in a wide variety of English language programs, from programs that are carefully designed and created to meet specific language and cultural needs to those in which little is done to accommodate them. There are many programs from which states, districts, and schools can choose, ranging from Bilingual education to English-only models. It is important to realize that “from the moment that ELLs enter US schools, the educational programming they receive has a longstanding and significant impact on their language skills and academic performance, as programs can either promote language loss or language maintenance and development over time” (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 400). For this reason, it is important that administrators and educators take serious the program choices they are making because students’ futures depend on it.

Bilingual Program Models

If as a nation, the goal is to close the achievement gap, then all types of language education programs must be analyzed with an un-biased lens in order to determine with facts and data the programs that create the most success. Krashen and McField (2005) stated, “For scientists, and one would hope, for policy makers, it is highly significant when reviews of the literature, conducted independently and examining different studies, reach similar conclusions. Such consistency provides strong evidence that research findings are reliable, rather than merely the result of chance” (p. 7). Looking at the data, there is evidence to support various types of programs, however, the programs with which EL students find most success will be noted.

There are many forms of bilingual education, and study after study has shown that students in bilingual education programs consistently outperform their counterparts in English-only programs on tests of academic achievement (Krashen & McField, 2005). However, there is one program that, not only closes the gap, but surpasses it. According to Collier and Thomas (2004), enrichment dual language programs, one-way and two-way, completely closed the academic achievement gap, and in some cases surpassed it, for both first and second language learners' initially below grade level. They also found that the programs closed the gap for all categories of students participating in it. This achievement was astonishing when it is realized that the program had brought about higher achievement for ELLs than that of native-English speakers being taught through their primary language. Ultimately, Thomas and Collier's (2004) results showed that English learners can outperform native-English learners year after year until they meet grade level requirements in their second language, when they are taught in a high-quality enrichment programs that teaches curriculum through the ELs primary language and through English. There is, however, contrary data which showed under particular circumstances and at specific grade levels, students in English-only programs may for a period perform better than enrichment bilingual students. Umanksy and Reardon (2014) found that in elementary school, larger portions of English-only students reached English proficiency compared to enrichment bilingual program students, but the early disadvantage disappeared over time as bilingual students surpassed English-only students towards the end of middle school. In the end, research seems to support the conclusion that ELL students face greater hurdles in acquiring school literacy in a second language

when they do not have an opportunity to develop initial literacy in their primary language.

Research has also shown that, on a larger scale, states with an emphasis on bilingual education show higher achievement outcomes. In particular, Lopez & McEneaney (2012) found that states with a strong bilingual emphasis had positive effects on Latino reading achievement scores across all models. This same study also found that the scores of Latino students who had never been designated EL were significantly higher than in states that minimized the use of bilingual education. Therefore, the effects of a chosen language program model extend beyond the English learners it serves and reaches those students who are indirectly influenced by the beliefs of the program and students (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Lopez, & McEneaney, 2012). This distinction is important to note as stated by the researchers, “the results suggest that laws prohibiting the use of students’ native language in instruction support the formation of school cultures that are internalized even by students who are not directly targeted” (Lopez & McEneaney, 2012, p. 451). It is important, however, to remember that the ways in which the programs are implemented can influence the rate at which the EL students can close the gap.

Despite the repeated research that shows the benefits of bilingual education, states and districts are moving away from this program option. Many researchers would claim that this move away from Bilingual education is a direct cause of the implementation of the NCLB (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009; López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015; Menken & Solorza, 2014; Wiley & Wright, 2004). In fact, Wiley and Wright claimed:

...federal education policy for language-minority students in need of English language development no longer mandates, nor even encourages bilingual education. Although it does not directly outlaw it, the funding mechanisms that give complete discretion to the states, and the accountability provisions of the NCLB, are likely to discourage bilingual education programs and encourage English-only programs. (p.162)

Yet, regardless of these serious concerns about federal policy limiting and even eliminating bilingual education, there are also other factors that are a cause of program failure or success. In reality, bilingual education can be a difficult program to implement and maintain. This difficulty is due to funding, shortages of teachers with appropriate bilingual training, and an increasing number of different languages spoken by students which all together make bilingual education programs tricky to support. While there is no doubt that bilingual education is hugely beneficial for students, for some school districts it simply is not an option due to the complexity of needs. Nevertheless, if Bilingual education is not fully supported at this time, there must be reflection on the research surrounding the current programs that are being supported and implemented across the nation.

English-only Program Models

Generally, states outline that English language programs must be in compliance with all federal and state mandates and accountability requirements. In addition, programs must be aligned with court findings regarding equitable education for EL students and must have clearly defined policies and procedures ensuring effective

implementation. Overall, this leaves open the ability for districts and schools to choose a program that they believe best works for them. In this case, there has been a nation-wide trend towards English-only programs, specifically, in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. While the drastic move toward English-only programs have yielded little change in the gap (Parrish et al., 2006; Guo & Koretz, 2013; Téllez & Manthey, 2015), there have been schools who found success while using the English-only models.

The power of a strong English language education program at a school cannot be underestimated. Evidence for this claim is supported by a statewide study collected in the years following the implementation of California's Proposition 227 English-only law as well as Massachusetts Question 2. At that time, it was revealed that bilingual approaches, which had been dismantled in favor of English-only laws, and sheltered English instruction were not statistically different in terms of improving EL performance (Parrish et al., 2006; Guo & Koretz, 2013). And, although the study did not provide any evidence of superiority of one EL instructional program over another, it did show that the quality of the EL program was critical in EL growth and success. Additionally, Elfers and Stritikus (2014) also found that schools that had in place a program of explicit, quality instruction for ELs, as well as access to content area materials, was profoundly important to the students' language development. In general, based on the initial study completed by Parish et al. (2006), four features were identified as the most important in language learning and academic gains included staff capacity to address EL needs, a school-wide focus on ELD and standards-based instruction, shared priorities and

expectations in regard to educating ELs, and systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision making.

Massachusetts also passed an English-only law that limited the use of bilingual education. In doing so, it forced several schools to get creative in their programing and instruction in order to provide solid language education. After the passage of Question 2, the English-only Law, Smith, Coggins, and Cardoso (2008) analyzed three Massachusetts schools that had shown growth and success with their EL students in the post-Question 2 era. The results showed that the schools in the study were not typical schools. Each of the schools in its own way had “moved to fill the gaps” (p. 306) found in the English-only laws. The goal of the three schools was not to “subvert a focus on moving ELLs to English-based learning but rather to do so using proven, responsive methods, so as not to sacrifice high-quality approaches to ensure an equitable education for ELLs” (p. 306). The study also revealed several common traits between the three schools which mirrored the study conducted by Parish et al. (2006) in California. These common traits included: multiple types of programs to accommodate varying needs, positive attitudes, values and beliefs regarding immigrant students, constant attention to data, use of research and outside resources, and highly skilled teachers and leaders.

Regardless of this success, it is also important to keep in mind the potential limitations of English-only, remedial programs. According to Collier and Thomas (2004), “Once students leave a special remedial program and join the curricular mainstream, at best, they make one year’s progress each school year....thus maintaining, but not further closing the gap. Often the gap widens again as students move into the

cognitive challenges of the secondary years where former EL students begin to make less than one year's progress per year" (p. 1-2). In addition, Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, Callahan (2003) claimed that "by eleventh grade, current and former English learners are 4.5 years behind their peers" (p. 7). But, as Goldenberg (2008) stated:

There will probably never be a formula for educating ELLs, just as there is not formula for educating students who already know English. What we can do is provide guidelines based on our strongest research about effective practices for ELLs. It is time to move beyond charged debates and all-too-certain answers. It is best for educators to know what existing research cannot support...and what has been reasonably well-established. (p.8)

In reality, schools and districts must look for the program that best supports their EL students. Not all districts and schools have the ability to provide bilingual schooling options, such as rural school districts, in which case, the districts and schools should work to implement the research supported methods for English- only language programs in order to provide the best education possible for their EL students.

Methods for English-only Programs

With the many different needs of our EL students, it is essential to build programs, staff development, and instructional practices that are founded on research-based, best practice methods. However, just as important as understanding their needs, is also the importance of recognizing the assets they bring to schools. The nation cannot "overlook the fact that immigrant students also bring assets, not just needs. All have linguistic and cultural resources that can be built on, and many have hopefulness and the

desire to take advantage of opportunities in their new settings” (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009, p. 763). This balance requires well-informed decisions that could lead to linguistic, cultural, and academic success, a balance that has found some success and some failure in its’ growth.

English Language Development (ELD)

It is well known that a persistent achievement gap is a major factor in the school experience of ELs. As a group, they continue to perform below that of their English-speaking peers their entire school career (Gandara et al., 2003). If we are, indeed, going to close this gap and offer all students the ability to succeed, the education system will need to begin to take some of the recommendations more seriously. In order to provide this more balanced educational experience, several different reports and studies have been completed in order to support the states, districts, and schools.

In order to provide more focused EL programing, the Council of the Great City Schools (2014) came together in order to develop a framework to strengthen EL programs and instruction. This document has circulated the nation offering recommendations for states and districts to follow. In the document, two topics were highlighted, a framework for acquiring English and reaching content mastery across the grades and specific criteria for helping administrators and teachers determine appropriate curriculum and materials. Specifically, in regards to instruction, the framework attempts to simultaneously create access to the Common Core and English Language Development (ELD). It is suggested in the framework that:

...language lives within – not apart from – the overall efforts to raise the rigor of language and content instruction, ensuring that all students achieve the expectation of the Common Core. Therefore, ELD must be embedded in and delivered through effective instructional practices that are guided by instructional shifts and content standards. Instruction must fully engage EL students, accelerating language acquisition and learning across the day. (Council of Great City Schools, 2014, p. 4)

The framework can be viewed as one step towards improving the quality of EL instruction in our districts and schools. It is a means to encourage discussion, offer ideas, and support educators in their endeavor to improve EL programs and instruction. The framework, however, is not alone in its attempt to offer recommendations.

Another document that worked to provide a framework for EL instruction was developed by Stanford University based on the conference proceedings from their 2012 Understanding Language Conference. In this document, there were six key principles identified to guide states, districts and schools in their EL instruction. The key principles included:

...instruction focuses on providing ELLs with the opportunities to engage in discipline-specific practices; instruction leverages ELLs' home language(s), cultural assets, and prior knowledge; standards-aligned instruction for ELLs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate scaffolds; instruction moves ELLs forward by taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling; instruction fosters ELLs' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary

to comprehend and use language in a variety of setting; diagnostic tools and formative assessment practices are employed to measure students' content knowledge, academic language competence, and participation in disciplinary practices. (Understanding Languages Conference, 2013, p. 1)

The frameworks and principles have been developed using empirical studies with which data supports their claims.

Additionally, Saunders, Goldenberg, and Marcelletti (2013) offered several specific guidelines for ELD instruction. In their meta-analysis, they stated “using existing research to identify effective guidelines for ELD instruction is problematic. There is little that focuses specifically on K–12 ELD instruction for ELs in US schools. In the absence of a comprehensive body of research, the field of ELD instruction has been driven mostly by theory” (p. 13). As a result of this limited research and guidance in the area of ELD, the meta-analysis yielded fourteen different guidelines for the implementation and use of ELD. These guidelines included:

1. providing ELD instruction is better than not providing it
2. ELD instruction should continue at least until ELs attain advanced English language ability
3. the likelihood of establishing and sustaining an effective ELD instructional program increases when schools and districts make it a priority
4. a separate and daily block of time should be devoted to ELD instruction

5. ELLs should be carefully grouped by proficiency level for ELD instruction but not segregated throughout the rest of the day
6. ELD instruction should explicitly teach forms of English
7. ELD instruction should emphasize academic and conversational language
8. ELD instruction should incorporate reading and writing but should emphasize listening and speaking
9. ELD should integrate meaning and communication to support explicit language teaching
10. ELD should be planned and delivered with a specific language objective in mind
11. use of English during ELD should be maximized
12. ELD should include interactive activities
13. ELD should provide students with corrective feedback on form
14. teachers should attend to communication and learning-learning strategies

Ultimately, in ELD instruction, the primary focus is based on the forms and functions while the secondary focus is content (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013).

Sheltered Observation Instructional Protocol (SIOP)

Another well-known method for improving instruction for ELLs is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). SIOP is a research based instructional method that has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners. SIOP is an acknowledged method for developing academic English and providing English learners access to core content coursework (Echevarria & Graves, 2015; Echevarria,

Vogt, & Short, 2017). In sheltered instruction, content-area teachers deliver grade-level standards in English through modified instruction that makes the information comprehensible to English learners as they work to increase their English and academic knowledge. In the SIOP method, there are eight interrelated components that must be followed in order to successfully implement the instructional method. They are lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment. Research shows that when teachers fully implement the SIOP Model, English learners' academic performance improves (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). Additionally, teachers report that SIOP-based teaching benefits all students, not just those who are learning English as an additional language.

There are also several studies whose data further support the recommendations of these key frameworks, principles, and methods (Calderon, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011; Téllez, & Manthey, 2015; Williams et al, 2007). Across the various studies, a list of five common components were found in language programs that had positive language achievement outcomes. These common components included using ongoing assessment and data-driven decision making, ensuring the availability of resources and staff capacity to address EL needs, implementing a school-wide focus on ELD instruction programs and standards-based curriculum, and prioritizing student achievement contributed to the highest growth of EL students in the districts analyzed. Ultimately, all of these components are needed in order to build strong EL programs and instruction because they

are designed to create a high quality of instruction, the most important factor of all (Calderon, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011; Téllez, & Manthey, 2015; Williams et al, 2007).

Additive Language Environment

One factor that could determine a program's success or failure is based on the additive or subtractive language environment embedded in the culture of the district, the school, and the staff. Undeniably, research reveals the importance of strong additive language acquisition models. Menken and Klyen (2010) found that the United States tends to have a subtractive language model, causing students to lose pieces of their primary language and culture, while ultimately creating negative outcomes on their acquisition of English. López and McEneaney (2012) also added that "One of the key issues contributing to the failure to address the needs of English language learners is that the implementation of language acquisition models depends much on the political and ideological context of individual school systems and on the part of individual educators" (p. 419). Ultimately, students' languages and cultures must be considered by states, districts, and schools or they run the risk of creating a subtractive language acquisition environments, leading to smaller growth and limited success in English acquisition.

In addition, in Arizona after the Proposition 203 English-only laws took effect, researchers found that the English-only environment managed to change teachers' opinions of language learning towards the subtractive methods within which they were working. In particular, Heineke (2015) studied Maravilla school, a school that once housed a Dual-language program. Following the transition to English-only, Heineke found that "...teachers came to espouse the cultural models that English was the only

language that was essential and most teachers exhibited a negative stance toward bilingual education” (p. 856). Teachers came to assert that the best place for primary language use was outside of the school, and ultimately, embraced a subtractive, English-only language mindset. These studies demonstrate that a subtractive language environment can be detrimental to the success of our EL students. Ultimately, when the focus on acquiring English occurs in an additive environment where linguistically and culturally diverse students are viewed as assets as opposed to a subtractive language environment that views English learners as deficient, EL achievement is more likely.

Ineffective Methods

Yet, despite the seemingly straightforward frameworks, principles, and studies there remains an ongoing struggle to provide the support needed to help EL students achieve success. It seems there is disconnect between recommendations and actual practice within districts and schools. Again, this disconnect can be found in the persistent achievement gap around the nation.

As discussed, in school systems across the nation, EL students are faced with the enormous task of meeting grade-level standards and mastering academic skills and content while simultaneously reaching proficiency in English. This is an enormous task for all ELLs who find themselves stuck in a persistent achievement gap behind English-speaking students their entire school career. The difficulty of meeting these expectations is increased even more when students arrive to school at the secondary level as they have less time to acquire both English and academic skills prior to high school graduation and college (Gandara et al., 2003). Ultimately, the recommendations that have been

discussed in order to help students reach success are missing in many districts and schools.

In a study completed by Gandara et al. (2003) it was stated, "...with such a large population of English learners, it is surprising how little attention is actually paid to the basic learning resources these students receive..." (p. 2). The research conducted by Gandara et al. (2003) highlighted seven concerns found within the school systems and programs, which include: inequitable access to appropriately trained teachers, inadequate professional development opportunities to help teachers address the instructional needs of English learners, inequitable access to appropriate assessment to measure EL achievement, inadequate instructional time to accomplish learning goals, inequitable access to instructional materials and curriculum, inadequate access to adequate facilities, and intense segregation into schools and classrooms that place them at particularly high risk for educational failure. Ultimately, these are concerns that can be found in many different states, districts, and schools. EL leaders must be aware of the potential downfalls of current programs, if improvements are going to be made.

Indeed, these identified downfalls likely cause harm to the academic achievement of our language learners. In addition to program downfalls, there is also the potential for negative effects on language learners due to inaccurate or invalid criteria used to identify and reclassify EL students (Ragan, Crafters, Lesaux, 2006). The reality remains that the achievement gap is an ongoing struggle for both ELL students and programs and "...although it would be easy to blame ELLs for their own self-elimination, we need to consider the position they were assigned within the school from which they perceived

their chances” (Kanno & Kangas, 2014, p. 867). Often times, simply by being labeled as EL, students get assigned to low-track classes, not by choice, but by placement. In fact, Kanno and Kangas (2014) found that when EL students were tracked, they had a much lower rate of attendance, success, and college acceptance. The study also found that EL students who were tracked, no matter the language proficiency level, were all tracked with negative consequences and once students were tracked into remedial or low level courses, they rarely ever broke out of that track and took college level courses. In fact, they made the claim that only 9% of EL students advanced to four-year universities directly from high school in comparison to 45% of monolingual English-speaking students (Kanno & Kangas, 2014).

Callahan, Wilkinson, Muller and Frisco (2009) completed a similar study and found that EL placement had a definite effect on students’ ability to achieve in high school, be placed in advanced courses, and gain entrance into 4-year colleges. “Many immigrant students, regardless of school composition, generational status, or ESL placement, struggle to achieve at levels sufficient for acceptance into 4-year universities” (Callahan et al., 2009, p. 355). In general, the tracking of students has been condemned for its discriminatory practice and, in particular, for causing damage to underrepresented population (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Therefore, if the nation is going to move forward in the advancement of ELL students and programs, districts and schools must be aware of each practice that is set within their program, because each decision can have an impact on the success of students.

Needless to say, in a system where there are recommendations for building success, there are also negligent programs resulting in failure. With the information that the field of education has regarding EL students, there must be a drastic move forward, an embracing of a new way, in order to help all students find success in their schools, their careers, and their lives. Overall, it is imperative that English-only programs choose research-based programs to implement in their districts and schools. Especially in rural school districts, where English-only programs are often the only option, programs and methods must be chosen with careful precision and then evaluate in order to ensure they are meeting the needs of English learners.

Characteristics of Strong EL Programs

As the English learner student population continues to grow across the nation, so too is the population growing in rural areas. According to Common Core of Data, “The total number of students learning English in rural schools increased by nearly 50% in the three most recent years for which data is available, 2006-2007 to 2009-2010” (as cited in Rural Policy Matters, 2011, p. 11). With such drastic growth of the English learner population, many rural communities are finding themselves unprepared to meet the needs of language learners in a variety of ways (Samson & Collins, 2012). For some districts and schools, it is a struggle to provide even the most basic EL programs, services, and opportunities for students and families. According to Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010), schools are struggling with communication gaps, culture clashes, lack of a systematic EL plan, teacher preparation in multiculturalism, language acquisition, EL instructional strategies, and support systems for families in transition to a new

environment and culture. However, rural districts and schools can overcome the current deficiency in their services of EL students by investing time and effort into the understanding and learning of legislative foundations governing EL, the process of language acquisition, the various program models, effective English-only program methods, and characteristics of strong EL programs including teacher efficacy, professional development, and organizational support.

Teacher Efficacy

“Teacher efficacy is a simple idea with significant implications” (Tschannen-Moran & Wolfolk-Hoy, 2001, p 783). In early foundational studies, as well as more recent, teacher efficacy has been shown to be powerfully related to student outcomes and achievement (Armor et al., 1976; Gandara, Jolly, and Driscoll, 2005; Samson and Collins, 2012; Téllez & Manthey, 2015). In fact, according to Berman & Mclaughlin’s (1977) foundational analysis of Title III projects created by the 1965 ESSA, the most important determinant of effectiveness was a teacher’s sense of efficacy – a belief that they could help all students. As a result, high teacher efficacy has been strongly connected to student achievement and outcomes and has been identified as a key factor in accounting for differences in teaching effectiveness (Armor et al., 1976; Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

With such a strong connection to student achievement, it is important to further understand the concept of teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is based on the belief of a teacher’s judgement of his or her own ability to help students reach the desired outcomes for student engagement and learning, even while working with the most difficult students

(Armor et al., 1976; Bandura, 1977). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) add that “self-efficacy is different from other understandings of self, such as self-concept, self-worth, and self-esteem” (p. 210). Self-efficacy has to do with self-perception of competence rather than actual level of competence. According to Bandura (1997), low teacher efficacy leads to low academic achievement, which then causes an even further decline in teacher efficacy. Additionally, Bandura (1997) found that a low sense of efficacy can be contagious among teachers, creating a “self-defeating and demoralizing cycle of failure” (p. 222). As can be seen, building and maintaining high levels of teacher efficacy plays a crucial role in the achievement of students, including the growth and achievement of English language learners. But, despite this knowledge, it seems there has been little done to support the efficacy of teachers working with English language learners, including new and pre-service teachers.

In a study of pre-services teachers completed by Yucesan Durgunoglu & Hughes (2010), they found that pre-service teachers did not feel prepared to educate the EL students they encountered in their classrooms. It was found in the study that preservice teachers with low knowledge scores regarding EL students had more negative attitudes; likewise, preservice teachers who felt less prepared also had more negative attitudes towards EL students. To improve upon the grim findings from their study, Yucesan Durgunoglu & Hughes (2010) offered some guidance as an attempt to being building the efficacy of preservice teachers in their work with ELL students. They recommend that programs and schools focus on:

1. Sensitizing pre-service teachers to cultural and linguistic differences they can expect to encounter.
2. Mentoring and veteran teachers seem to need in-service support regarding ELLs so that they can become better mentors for pre-service teachers. With the current lack of training, mentor teachers provided the pre-service teacher with insufficient mentoring about ELLs.
3. Coordinating efforts between the ESL and regular classroom teachers to integrate language and content instruction.

As discussed by Yucesan Durgunoglu & Hughes (2010) effective teachers deliver their instruction confidently, which is why teacher preparation is essential in building teacher efficacy. According to Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005), “greater teacher preparation for teaching English language learners equated to greater teacher confidence in their skills for working with these students successfully” (p.12). However, current data again suggest that teachers actually lack confidence in teaching English learners. Samson and Collins (2012) claimed that the rapid growth in the EL population has not been matched by sufficient growth in teachers’ understanding of how to best educate English language learners. As a result, they have found that districts across the country are failing as they try to meet the needs of EL students who are not demonstrating proficiency in academic areas such as reading, writing, and math. This slow growth in skills and confidence is alarming since the population of rural EL students continues to grow.

Cummins (1997) also claimed that greater teacher confidence in working with ELLs also depends on teachers being familiar and comfortable working with students of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, having a solid understanding of language acquisition as well as an understanding of social and academic language. Specifically, Cummins states, “teacher education institutions have sent new teachers into the classroom with minimal information regarding patterns of language and social development among such pupils and few pedagogical strategies for helping pupils learn” (p. 110). In fact, several researchers have found that the most successful teachers of EL students had identifiable pedagogical and cultural skills and knowledge including the ability to communicate effectively with students and to engage their families (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Samson & Collins, 2012).

In addition to the growth of individual teacher efficacy, school-wide support and efficacy are also a key to the development of our English learners. In a study completed by Téllez and Manthey (2015) they found that school-wide efficacy for teaching EL students was greater than individual efficacy and, as a result, suggested that EL students and “their specific needs become a focus of teacher learning communities...and that schools must reimagine ELLs in the center of our learning communities, not the margins” (p. 124). The outcome of the Téllez and Manthey (2015) study suggests that school-wide reforms designed to improve EL instruction might yield greater collective efficacy which creates improved outcomes for English learners. As a result of this research, it is understood that building teacher efficacy while working with EL students is a key to providing a program and instruction in which English language learners can grow.

Yet, despite this information, there are still major challenges to building teacher and school-wide efficacy for working with EL students in rural districts. Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) found in their study that teachers in rural areas felt the most challenged when working with ELL students. Specifically, the study found that teachers in rural and small schools struggled with many of the same challenges as urban schools, however, the challenge was often greater in rural and small schools because they often did not have “the same resources, such as access to universities, that provide professional development and prospective teachers” (p. 11). As a result, many rural schools struggle to meet the basic needs of ELL students.

Realistically, it is the state, districts, and school’s duty to provide teachers with enough training and support to create a positive school culture in which teachers are confident in their collective and individual skills to serve EL students. With more training comes higher individual and collective efficacy, creating an environment that is made for EL success.

Professional Development

Professional development is imperative for the improvement of English language learner education. In order to provide successful English language education, districts schools, and teachers must be familiar with the process of language acquisition, social and academic language, additive language environments, and best practices and programs. Ultimately, training is essential, in fact, Hansen-Thomas, Richins, Kukkar, and Okeyo (2016) even suggest that “all teachers – regardless of their background –

require appropriate training to adequately help students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (p. 311).

As discussed, rural teachers often feel unprepared to meet the needs of ELL students. In fact, of practicing teachers working with ELL students, only 25% percent of the teachers felt prepared while 75 % stated they were not (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Despite these bleak numbers research does indicate that rural teachers want to improve their English language education skills. In a study conducted by Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) they found that rural school teachers, especially those with limited or no EL training, “want and need professional development in order to successfully work with their ELLs” (319). They also found that teachers who had two or more college courses viewed themselves as being more effective while working with the English learners than those who had less training. Teachers with more training also showed a greater understanding of the cultural and language diversity seen in the EL classroom than those who did not (Faez, 2012; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Overall, more professional development has equated to greater teacher preparation and greater confidence in teachers’ skills while working with ELL students successfully, which leads to greater student results and success (Faez, 2012; Gandara, et al., 2005; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

While attending more courses helps individual teachers feel more confident while working with English learner students, districts need to also provide training district wide. Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) noted that professional development is one of the top school and district factors for EL students’ academic success. Yet, in order to

achieve greater EL student results and success, professional development must be presented and practiced over the course of time, not just a one-shot workshop. With the need for ongoing training, Tong, Luo, Irby, Lara-Alecio, and Rivera (2015) have identified several key components to effective professional development. These components include structured workshops, content focus, active learning, follow-up and feedback, and consistency. Providing teachers with ongoing opportunities for quality professional development shaped teacher efficacy and provided the opportunity for increased efficacy.

However, despite the importance of professional development, several concerns must be noted regarding the length and quality of instruction. According to Gandara et al. (2005) study, teachers noted that their EL in-service was taught by a “presenter with very limited knowledge and experience with EL students and thus did not provide adequate or appropriate information to help teachers improve English learner instruction” (p. 13). In addition, O’Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez (2008) found that most in-service teachers are receiving their training through “one time workshops and professional development offered by their school” (p. 6). Ringler et al. (2013) adds that when training is provided in rural districts, it is often a one-day training that leaves teachers on their own to try and correctly implement the information provided. As a result, this one-time approach only provides superficial support on the topic and has little impact on changing the teaching pedagogy of those in attendance (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009) or on the impact of changing English language learner education in rural areas. And as Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) point out, “professional development is more

effective when schools approach it not in isolation (as in the traditional one-shot workshop) but rather as a coherent part of a school reform effort.” The one shot approach gives this topic superficial attention and the most effective EL training is an on-going process with a commitment from teachers and administrators to transfer the EL knowledge to the classroom.

This one shot approach has lead Guskey (2000) to believe that a narrow view of professional development has been adopted by many professionals. He explains that, traditionally, professional development has been viewed as a workshop or training that lasted only a few days during the school year or was a means to obtain an advanced degree or move ahead on the district scale. However, this narrow view does not necessarily mean workshops or presentations are an ineffective means of providing professional learning. Instead, he claims that in order to make every professional development successful there must always be follow-up and support of the learning and activities. Without follow-up and district support, the workshops and professional development trainings lose their strength.

In order to help with follow-up and support, Judith Wilde, in the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2010), highlights specific ways in which professional development in the field of EL can be effective. Wilde outlines five principles to follow that can lead to “successful productive professional development” (p. 5) which include:

1. Build on foundation of skills, knowledge, and expertise.
2. Engage participants as learners.

3. Provide practice, feedback, and follow-up.
4. Measure changes in teacher knowledge and skills.
5. Measure changes in student performance.

Additionally, according to Wilde, professional development is a cultural, not a delivery, concept and it must:

1. Be ongoing, flexible, and supportive.
2. Be developed with the educational personnel instead of for them.
3. Fit within the institutional context of the educational personnel.

Overall, the data seem to suggest that rural school teachers, especially those with limited or no English learner training, need on-going professional development in order to increase teacher efficacy and provide better instruction for our English language learners. Ultimately, regardless of teacher experience, the research indicates that on-going training can benefit English learners.

Organizational Leadership

Leadership also plays an important role in the outcome of EL student success (McGee, A., Haworth, P., & Macintyre, L., 2014). Around the world, there has been a growing interest in educational leadership and its effect on student learning. As the data has been collected a significant relationship between leadership and the success of teaching and learning has been established (McGee, A., Haworth, P., & Macintyre, L., 2014). As a result, through leadership, districts and schools can work to improve the education of English language learners. Strong school leadership ranges from the district to building level, both of which play a crucial role “in creating and sustaining systems of

support for classroom teachers working with EL students” (Elfers and Stritikus, 2014, p. 318).

In order to create a program in which English learners and teachers can be successful, it must start at the district level. According to Wrigley (2000), at the district level it takes an “open-minded, positive leader who did the groundwork necessary to implement a well-researched program, can set the district on the right path for years to come” (p. 3-4). McGee et al. (2014) found that successful EL practices included “establishing goals and direction, enabling leaders to be role models with credibility through knowledge of ESL, providing ESL professional learning for teachers and those in leadership, and empowering ESL teaching and learning” (p. 101). None of these practices can be whimsically implemented but instead must be meticulously research, planned, and prepared in order to develop a solid, successful program for ELL students for years to come.

It is also important to note that Elfers and Stritikus (2014) found that leadership at the central office played a prominent role in how districts organized supports. In their study, they found that the districts in which EL programs were treated as special programs, and not included in general decision-making regarding curriculum or instruction, had a more difficult time developing inclusive systems of support. For this reason, they pointed out that a way for districts to move beyond the difficulties was by being closely involved with teaching and learning at the ground level. Ultimately, leadership, which starts at the district level, plays a key role in the success of English learner programs and supports for students and teachers.

Beyond the district office, there is also a need for strong building leadership. Wrigley (2000) believes there is a need for strong building level leadership because, although the district can provide support and guidance, it is the building level leadership which can really affect change in the schools. Wrigley states:

Schools that are successfully helping their English learners have principals with positive attitudes towards their new population, arrange training sessions for all staff on cultural awareness, schedule ongoing training sessions for mainstream teachers on ESL strategies, actively recruit ethnically diverse teachers and staff, encourage collaboration between mainstream and ESL teachers, support extended-day opportunities for English learners, purchase classroom and library resources that broaden student understanding of different cultures, and reach out to parents using their native language. (p. 4)

DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2016) also maintain that principals are in a central position to advocate for the change needed in their particular schools and situations which can be accomplished through their own professional development. Various studies have shown that principals must lead their staff in the EL learning and growing process through professional development (Ringler, O'Neal, Rawls, & Cumiskey, 2012; Hansuvadha & Slater, 2012, McGee et al., 2014). A principal's own understanding of EL professional development is essential in leading teachers in the implementation of innovation and facilitating school change. Ringler et al. (2013) found that successful principals were present and active participants in every training session that teachers attended and, as a result, teachers saw their principals as learners and felt they were learning together.

McGee et al. (2014) also point out that successful leadership provides opportunities for learning and “creates conditions and opportunities to support teaching and learning” (p. 104). More specifically, they claimed that successful leaders establish goals and direction for EL, enable leaders to be role models of EL, provide EL professional learning for teachers and leaders, ensure all educators are aware of English learner needs and have the resources to meet them, and empower EL teaching and learning in order to support the needs of English language learners. Through training and understanding, principals have the ability to positively affect the efficacy of teachers working with ELL students which in return positively impacts the achievement and outcomes of English language learners in their schools.

It is also important to understand that principals play a key role in the environment that is established in the school building. Hansuvadha and Slater (2012) state, “If school administrators do not monitor and model attitudes and practices that promote cultural diversity, then the likelihood of addressing students’ needs is slim” (p. 175). In a study completed by DeMatthews and Izquierdo (2016) it was found that in a linguistically and culturally positive environment, principals:

1. Built relationships with teachers and families and lead in ways that encouraged dialogue, reflection, the development of professional identity, and mutual respect.
2. Learned about parent perspectives and used those insights to support students, teachers, and parents.

3. Engaged in a variety of practices to help address misconceptions and shared relevant and important information.
4. Actively sought to understand perspectives of stakeholders, particularly when they were engaged in equity-oriented reforms

In the end, it is realistic to believe that by improving the culture of a school, the quality of classroom instruction, and the inclusion of students' language and culture will improve the educational outcomes of our nations' ELL students.

As research indicates effective schools for English learners demonstrate that high-quality leadership is crucial for success. Yet, despite this knowledge, there are still a variety of difficulties for leaders in rural areas as leaders are often fulfilling multiple roles at one time. Reeves and VanTuyle (2014) found that in some rural areas, the leader of the EL program may also be the principal of a second school or might serve an additional role such as that of superintendent which suggests that "many rural districts may not currently have the capacity necessary to administer a high-quality ELL program" (p. 3). The multiple roles held by some leaders in rural districts can make it difficult to focus their attention on one specific area of need. However, as research demonstrates, strong leadership and support makes a difference in the growth of English language learners.

Educators in rural districts have an enormous challenge as they strive to meet the needs of English learners. Ultimately, the districts, schools, administrators, and teachers will need to continue working and learning together in order to provide the best possible services for the success of our EL students.

Summary

It is widely acknowledged that equitable education is essential in order to access economic and social advantage; indeed, is critical to the success of our students and nation. As the population of our English language learners continues to grow at rapid rates, the nation must embrace this change in order to provide an education that will help all students achieve their highest potential. If we are able to reach this goal, our nation, our cities, our students and families will prosper in a way in which is yet to be seen.

Legislation has laid the foundation for what has become our English language education today. From the very beginning of the Civil Rights movement, to *Lau v. Nichols*, *Castaneda v. Pickard*, and the NCLB, language education has been shaped and molded by the legislation and policy decisions of our lawmakers. As we move ahead into the future with *All Children Succeed*, language policymakers and educators will surely continue to fight for their beliefs of what language education should look like in this nation, which will hopefully lead to continued improvements in the education of our language learners.

Along with the legislative foundation of our language laws, it is also essential to continue building upon the work of landmark studies and researchers in the field of second language acquisition. Each framework, hypothesis, and theory has brought the field of language education one step closer to better understanding the development and growth of language learners. As a result, it is imperative that these works continued to be discussed and analyzed in our continued work today.

There are also a variety of programs and best practice methods that are used and recommended within the field of language education today. Specifically, the use of ongoing assessment and data-driven decision making, availability of resources and staff capacity, school-wide focus on ELD instruction and standards-based curriculum, and the prioritization of student achievement. There is also a plethora of English language programs available which can make it difficult for districts and schools to choose the program that best fits their needs, and with little guidance from the federal and state governments, each district and school must make careful decisions regarding their programs. Ultimately, all of these recommendations are the building blocks from which the field of language education will continue to grow.

Finally, as research has shown, there is an overwhelming need for ongoing professional development. Ongoing professional development can change the way an organization implements and evaluates their EL program. In addition, professional development builds strong teacher efficacy and organizational leadership. If districts continue to work on implementing ongoing and supportive professional development they will be able to effectively evaluate their EL program based on new research, provide administrators with the tools needed to guide the EL program and support the EL teachers, and build teachers' confidence in the skills they have which will be reflected in the language acquisition and educational content of their students. Ultimately, professional development is a key to strong EL program evaluation.

From the moment that English learners enter our schools, the education they receive has a long-lasting and significant impact on both their language skills and

academic performance. All students in our nation deserve a chance to participate in our educational system and achieve school success. The reality is that the education our English language learner students receive will be the most powerful factor in their future achievement and our nation's positive growth.

The next chapter will address the methods used for the study.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. As a result, the following hypotheses were to be tested:

- 1) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between strength of program vision and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 2) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between program placement and language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 3) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between curriculum and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 4) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between program monitoring and assessment and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 5) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between access to support services and activities and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.

- 6) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between staffing and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.
- 7) It is hypothesized that there will exist a relationship between degree of communication with students and families and average language proficiency growth score among K-12 EL students in micropolitan communities.

In addition to the hypotheses stated, the researcher asked two open-ended questions. These open-ended questions were analyzed and organized into themes based on frequency. The information gained helped to understand and clarify the correlations hypothesized above based on the K-12 EL teachers' and administrators' expressed feelings towards their EL programs.

8a. What do you perceive to be the most important program elements that support the academic success of EL students?

8b. What would you change about EL programming if you had the power to do so?

Subjects

The subjects in this study were English learner teachers and administrators from five micropolitan school districts in a rural Midwestern school. The school districts in this study were identified and recruited based on two specific criteria: a micropolitan community and a student population of English language learners. The researcher contacted administrators in each of the five school districts and inquired about possible interest in participating in the study. From those contacts, each of the five school districts agreed to participate in the study.

The community and school data for each district are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Community and School Demographics

Population of Community	Population of District	Population of EL students	Number of elementary schools in the district	Number of middle/junior high schools in the district	Number of high schools in the district	Number of EL Teachers K-12	Number of Admin K-12	Total Number of Participants
17,674	3,502	271	4	1	1	8	6	2
13,652	2,535	401	2	1	1	13	8	11
25,725	4,976	499	4	2	1	12	12	19
19,638	4,271	1,008	3	1	1	25	17	7
13,090	3,327	1,044	1	1	1	28	8	11

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; SDE Report Card, 2017; Personal Contact with District Administration, 2017)

Measures

This quantitative study examined specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. The first data type was a survey and was administered to EL teachers and administrators. The second type of data was archival data collected from the State Department of Education (SDE).

Survey Data

The survey that was used for this study was developed by Belknap and Zantal-Wiener (2015) and recommended for use by the US Department of Education to self-assess EL programs. The survey was created based on a variety of state and local program self-assessments. It measured seven different program areas and asked a total of

23 questions regarding EL programs. The different areas included: vision, program placement, curriculum, assessment and monitoring, access to support services and activities, staffing, and communication with students and families. The survey questions in each of the seven areas were based on a five point Likert scale. In addition, there were two open-ended questions on the survey used to build a clearer understanding of the EL teachers' and administrators' feelings and beliefs towards the self-assessment of their EL program.

According to Cozby and Bates (2015) surveys are a research tool that acquire participant information including attitudes and beliefs, demographics, and past or intended future behaviors. Creswell (2014) added that survey research provides a “quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 13). In addition, from the data collected through surveys, generalizations or inferences can be made about the population surveyed. Surveys can be administered either as an interview or as a written questionnaire. For the purposes of this study, the survey was administered as a written online questionnaire, which Cozby and Bates (2015) claimed is becoming increasingly more common in academic research.

In survey research, according to Creswell (2014), there are two threats to validity that need to be addressed. The first threat is to the internal validity of the study. This threat is created by the difficulty in determining the cause and effect of variable relationships thus making it difficult to say which variable causes the other (Creswell, 2014). A second threat to internal validity is the is danger of a third-variable problem,

meaning that a third variable could potentially alternate the relationship between the primary two variables being measured and ultimately be responsible for the observed relationship (Cozby & Bates, 2015). For these reasons, it was essential that the study be developed with clear construct validity meaning that it accurately measured what it intended to measure.

The concerns for validity in survey research were addressed by outlining a clear, step by step process for identifying participants, clear administration of the previously validated surveys, and a thorough understanding of the data so that it was appropriately generalized in order to increase external validity. By ensuring these processes were followed, the researcher improved the internal and external validity of the study.

The researcher also collected demographic data using a survey format. The demographic data will include gender, age, race, K-12 licenses, mainstream teaching experience, year of overall teaching experience, EL methods used, and professional development hours. This data was collected in order to ensure there were no confounding variable concerns.

Archival Data

During the initial design of the study the researcher contacted the Midwestern state education department and received approval that the requested archival data would be released for the specific purpose of this study. As the researcher conducted the study, representatives from the state education department changed their position on the release of the requested data and the researcher was denied release of all the archival data needed to implement the initial design of the study. The archival data requested from the SDE

measured English language proficiency growth in each of the five school districts participating in the study. This specific archival data are collected by the SDE on an annual basis. The archival data are known as the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) test. This data is collected in order to measure the language proficiency growth of English language learners across the state. Specifically, this data measure four specific language proficiency areas including: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

The ACCESS test, as stated by WIDA is:

...is a secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment administered to Kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs). It is given annually in WIDA Consortium member states to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. ACCESS for ELLs is aligned with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. (2017)

Cozby and Bates (2015) stated that archival data uses previously compiled data or information to answer research questions. When using archival data, the researcher does not collect the original data, but instead simply analyzes the data that are part of public record. Cozby and Bates (2015) also stated that “the use of archival data allows researchers to study interesting questions, some of which could not be studied any other way” (p. 128). Specifically, in this study, archival records were attempted to be used.

In archival research, as Cozby and Bates (2015) stated, the researcher can never be completely sure of the accuracy of information collected by someone else. However, in this research study, both WIDA and the rural Midwest state have worked to create a valid and reliable assessment that has been standardized and used across the nation in the WIDA consortium of states. In fact, per WIDA (2011), “the WIDA Consortium is dedicated to an ongoing research program into the validity of the use of scores on ACCESS for ELLs” (p. 26). Thus, there was improved confidence regarding the use of this archival data used in this study.

Procedure for Data Collection

This study used both survey and archival data to measure specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners.

Survey Data Collection

The researcher worked with a primary administrative contact in each of the five participating school districts in order to have the administrator forward an explanatory email and the link to the survey to all EL teachers and administrators. In the email, the researcher explained the study, provided consent information, and provided a link to the survey with notation that by clicking on the link consent was given to participate in the study. Then after allowing two weeks for the survey to be completed, the researcher sent out a reminder notice to complete the survey via email through the administrative contact and allowed two more weeks for additional surveys to be completed.

Archival Data Collection

The researcher also contacted the Data and Analytics Department at the SDE in order to apply and obtain access to the ACCESS assessment data for the five participating districts. The researcher wanted to use scale scores, as provided by the SDE and WIDA, to measure language proficiency growth over time. According to WIDA (2016) scale scores provide:

...a psychometrically derived score (accounting for all tier and grade level differences) for each language domain (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) and are reported on a scale from 100–600. Scale scores provide a way to monitor student growth over time. Scale scores are reported in a consistent way to take into account differences in item difficulty between test administrations. Because they are reported on a consistent scale, they allow stakeholders to compare scores across periods of time and between students (p. 6).

However, after following the formal data application process per data privacy to the State Department of Education (SDE), the SDE changed its initial position and was unwilling to release the specific data originally requested. Nonetheless, the SDE did provide some limited data regarding each districts' English language learner growth scores from which the researcher could make a few limited observations.

Overall, this study used both survey and archival data to measure the specific characteristics of English learner programs in rural Midwest areas in order to determine which, if any, generated higher English language proficiency growth for English learners.

Procedure for Data Analysis

In this study, the researcher sought to identify the occurrence of relationships between student language proficiency scores and each of the seven teacher-reported survey scores: (a) strength of program vision, (b) degree of program organization, (c) access to grade-level standards, (d) program monitoring and assessment, (e) access to support services and extra-curricular activities, (f) administrative support, and (g) degree of communication with students and families.

In sticking with the quantitative research method, the researcher identified and reported the frequency of key words in the open-ended responses shared by the participating EL teachers and administrators. Based on the frequency of these key words, the researcher discussed themes of the words reported.

Summary

This chapter discussed the procedure for collecting and analyzing quantitative data regarding the specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine which, if any, generated higher English language proficiency growth for English learners.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. This study was to be completed through survey and archival data. In the collection of the archival data, the researcher worked with the State Department of Education (SDE) to obtain language proficiency growth scale scores to measure language proficiency growth over time. However, ultimately, the archival data could only be included in a very limited analysis as the scale score data that was needed to run correlational analyses was not released by the SDE for the study. As a result, the course of the study was forced to change, but still yielded information that can be discussed and considered in rural districts in order to better inform their English learner program decisions.

Archival Data

As previously discussed, the full archival data set that was needed from the State Department of Education to run the correlational analyses was not released. As a result, the researcher used the data that was provided by the SDE in order to make simple observations about the survey data and archival data relating to language proficiency growth of English learner students.

In the observation, it was found that the English learner teachers in District 2 had the highest average survey score at a 4.06 and the administrators had the third highest average survey score at a 4.04. Most notable, the EL teachers and administrators in

District 2 had the least variability of survey scores between the EL teachers and administrators at $\pm .014$ SD. In addition, based on the language proficiency growth scores the district had the highest intermediate proficiency growth score and the second highest beginning intermediate proficiency growth score.

In contrast, District 5 had the lowest average survey score for EL teachers at 3.42 but the highest average survey score for administrators at 4.55. District 5 also had the most variability between EL teachers and administrators at $\pm .79$ SD. However, District 5 still had the third highest proficiency growth score for both intermediate and beginning proficiency.

Another observation is that District 4 had the highest proficiency growth rate for beginning English learners, yet had the lowest proficiency growth rate for intermediate learners. This is notable because, while the English learner teachers had the second highest average survey score, there were no survey responses from administrators. Ultimately, only simple observations were made regarding the survey data and archival data.

Table 2

Language Proficiency Growth per the SDE

	Vision	Program Placement	Curriculum	Assessment and Monitoring	Access to Support Services and Activities	Staffing	Communication with Students and Families	Beginning	Intermediate
Teachers									
District 1	4.34	3.5	5	4	4	3.67	3	0.545	0.613
District 2	4.03	3.56	4.45	4.27	4.55	4.06	3.5	0.750	0.698
District 3	3.55	3.34	3.64	3.73	3.95	3.03	3.5	0.665	0.656
District 4	4.24	3.93	4.21	4.14	4.5	3.48	3.5	0.772	0.590
District 5	3.3	3.75	4.2	3.73	2.2	3.77	3	0.724	0.620
Administration									
District 1	4	4	5	4.677	5	5	4	0.545	0.613
District 2	3.56	3.61	4.34	4.34	4.5	4.11	3.83	0.750	0.698
District 3	3.17	3.85	3.81	3.79	3.94	3.71	3.375	0.665	0.656
District 4								0.772	0.590
District 5	4.34	4	5	4.677	5	4.34	4.5	0.724	0.620

Survey Data

Five micropolitan districts were included in the survey data collection. The Self-Monitoring survey (Belknap & Zantal-Wiener, 2015) measured seven different program related characteristics including vision, program placement, curriculum, assessment and monitoring, access to support services and activities, staffing, and communication with students and families. A total of 40 English learner teachers returned a complete survey equaling about a 48% return rate while a total of 13 administrators returned a complete survey equaling about a 25% return rate.

English Learner Teacher Data

Of the surveys that were administered to all English learner teachers, 40 surveys were submitted and complete and, as a result, used in the analysis of data. The first step of the analysis was to look at the demographic data of the survey participants. The demographic data collected in the survey showed a homogenous demographic surveyed. To begin, of the 40 participants, 37 were female and 3 were male. All 40 participants were white. The total years of teaching ranged greatly, from one year of experience to 37 years of experience. In addition, the total number of years teaching English learners ranged greatly, from one year of experience to 25 years of experience. The data also showed that only three of the 40 participants did not currently have an English learner license but were working under a variance while pursuing their license in EL education. Overall, there were very few surprises amongst the demographic information of the participants.

Following the demographic analysis, the responses from each of the seven characteristics from the survey were analyzed. The first section of the survey pertained to the vision of each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated the vision of their EL programs as a $3.89 \pm .44$ SD. The average score of 3.89 was the third highest average score of the seven characteristics and had the fifth most variability in responses at a $\pm .44$ SD.

The second section of the survey addressed program placement for each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated program placement as a $3.61 \pm .23$ SD. An average score of 3.61, as rated by the EL teachers, was the third lowest

average score of the seven characteristics. However, it had the least variability in responses at a $\pm .23$ SD.

The third section of the survey focused on the curriculum used in each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated curriculum as a $4.30 \pm .49$ SD. With a 4.30 average score, curriculum had the highest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it had the second most variability in responses at a $\pm .49$ SD.

The fourth section was in regards to assessment and monitoring within each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated assessment and monitoring as a $3.96 \pm .24$ SD. At an average score of 3.96, assessment and monitoring had the second highest average score of the seven characteristics. It also had the second least variability in responses at a $\pm .24$ SD.

The fifth section of the survey addressed access to support services and activities found in each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated support services and activities as a $3.84 \pm .96$ SD. With an average score of 3.84, access to support services and activities was the fourth highest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it also had the most variability in responses at a $\pm .96$ SD.

The sixth section of the survey focused on staffing in each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated staffing as a $3.60 \pm .38$ SD. At an average score of 3.60, staffing within EL programs was the sixth lowest average score of the seven characteristics. It also had the fourth least variability in responses at a $\pm .38$ SD.

The seventh section of the survey addressed communication with students and families in each districts English learner program. On average, EL teachers rated communication with students and families as a $3.3 \pm .27$ SD. The average score of 3.3 was the lowest average score of the seven characteristics. It had the third least variability in responses at a $\pm .27$ SD.

Table 3

English Learner Teacher Average Score and Standard Deviation

Vision	Program Placement	Curriculum	Assessment and Monitoring	Access to Support Service and Activities	Staffing	Communication with Students and Families
3.89	3.61	4.30	3.98	3.84	3.60	3.3
± 0.45	± 0.23	± 0.49	± 0.24	± 0.96	± 0.38	± 0.27

In addition to the seven characteristics surveyed there were two open-ended questions. The first question asked about the successes that teachers perceived in each of their district's EL programs. The three most common district successes, according to the EL teachers, listed in order of greatest to least most reported included: collaboration, small groups, and parent connections. The second open-ended question asked about desired changes based on EL teacher perception in each district's EL program. The three most common desired changes, according to EL teachers, listed in order of greatest to least most reported included: more qualified EL teaching staff, more training, and curriculum.

English Learner Administrator Data

Of the surveys that were emailed to all administrators, 13 administrators surveys were complete and, as a result, used in the analysis of data. Again, the first step of the

analysis was to look at the demographic data of the survey participants. The demographic data collected in the survey showed a homogenous demographic surveyed. To begin, of the 13 participants, 8 were female and 5 were male. All 13 participants were white. Overall, there were very few surprises amongst the demographic information of the participants.

Following the demographic analysis, the responses from each of the seven characteristics from the survey were analyzed. The first section of the survey pertained to the vision of each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated the vision of their EL program as a $3.76 \pm .51$ SD for their programs. The average score of 3.76 was the lowest average score of the seven characteristics and had the fifth most variability in responses at a $\pm .51$ SD.

The second section of the survey addressed program placement for each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated program placement as a $3.87 \pm .18$ SD. An average score of 3.87, as rated by administrators, was the second lowest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it had the least variability in responses at a $\pm .18$ SD.

The third section of the survey focused on the curriculum used in each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated curriculum as a $4.54 \pm .58$ SD. At a 4.54, curriculum within EL programs amongst administrators was the second highest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it had the most variability in responses at a $\pm .58$ SD.

The fourth section was regarding assessment and monitoring within each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated assessment and monitoring as a $3.36 \pm .44$ SD. At an average score of 3.36, assessment and monitoring within EL programs amongst administrators was the third highest average score of the seven characteristics. In addition, it had the second least variability in responses at a $\pm .44$ SD.

The fifth section of the survey addressed access to support services and activities found in each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated support services and activities as a $4.61 \pm .51$ SD. With an average of 4.61, access to support services and activities was the highest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it also had the fourth most variability in responses at a $\pm .51$ SD.

The sixth section of the survey focused on staffing in each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated staffing as a $4.29 \pm .54$ SD. At an average score of 4.29, staffing in the EL programs was the fourth highest average score of the seven characteristics but it had the second most variability in responses at a $\pm .54$ SD.

The seventh section of the survey addressed communication with students and families in each districts English learner program. On average, administrators rated communication with students and families a $3.93 \pm .46$ SD. At a 3.93, communication with students and families was the fifth lowest average score of the seven characteristics. However, it had the third least variability in responses at a $\pm .46$ SD.

Table 4

Administrators Average Score and Standard Deviation

Vision	Program Placement	Curriculum	Assessment and Monitoring	Access to Support Service and Activities	Staffing	Communication with Students and Families
3.76	3.87	4.54	4.36	4.61	4.29	3.93
±0.51	±0.18	±0.58	±0.41	±0.51	±0.54	±0.46

In addition to the seven characteristics surveyed, there were two open-ended questions. The first question asked about perceived successes that administrators had in each of their district's EL program. The two most common district successes, according to administrators, listed in order of greatest to least most reported included: training and collaboration. The second open-ended question asked about desired changes based on the administrators' perceptions of each district's EL program. The three most common desired changes across the districts included: hiring additional staff, more professional development, and co-teaching.

In addition to analyzing EL teacher and administrator survey data separately, there are also some analyses to make of the data together. The first most notable is that of the seven characteristics surveyed, administrators scored a higher average score in six of the seven areas, all but vision. The data also showed that EL teachers' highest average score was curriculum while administrators' highest average score was support services and activities. EL teachers' lowest average score was communication with students and families while administrators' was vision.

Table 5

English Learner Teachers and Administrators Comparison

	Vision	Program Placement	Curriculum	Assessment and Monitoring	Access to Support Services and Activities	Staffing	Communication with Students and Families
Teachers Average	3.89	3.61	4.30	3.98	3.84	3.60	3.3
Teachers SD	±0.45	±0.23	±0.49	±0.24	±0.96	±0.38	±0.27
Administrators Average	3.76	3.87	4.54	4.36	4.61	4.29	3.93
Administrators SD	±0.51	±0.18	±0.58	±0.41	±0.51	±0.54	±0.46

Overall, the results show that there are some subtle difference between English learner teachers and administrators with regard to their views of the English learner programs in their respective districts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. While the researcher was still able to analyze the survey data for differences in characteristics, the archival data from the State Department of Education (SDE) was only included in a very limited analysis as the data that was needed to run the correlational matrix was not released by the SDE for the study. As a result, the course of the study was forced to change, but still yielded information that can be discussed in rural districts in order to better inform their English learner program decisions.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine specific characteristics of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners. In the study, both survey and archival data were used. The Self-Monitoring survey (Belknap and Zantal-Wiener, 2015) was recommended for use by the US Department of Education to self-assess EL programs. The survey was created based on a variety of state and local program self-assessments. It was used to measure seven different program areas including: vision, program placement, curriculum, assessment and monitoring, access to support services and activities, staffing, and communication with students and families. The researcher also intended to use archival data in the form of scale scores, as provided by the State Department of Education (SDE) and WIDA, to measure language proficiency growth over time. However, the archival data from the SDE was only included in a very limited analysis. This limited archival data analysis was caused by the refusal of the SDE to release the data that was requested, and needed, in order to run the correlational analyses. As a result, the course of the study was forced to change but still yielded information that was analyzed. The analysis was designed to support and encourage conversations in rural districts regarding their English learner programs and language proficiency growth in order to better inform English learner program decisions.

Data Discussion

Survey and archival data. There were a few observations made regarding the survey and archival data. First, the survey was administered to English learner teachers

and administrators in five micropolitan school districts. The survey was sent to a total of 86 English learner teachers and 51 administrators. In all, a total of 40 English learner teachers returned a complete survey equaling about a 48% return rate while a total of 13 administrators returned a complete survey equaling only about a 25% return rate. The response rate for both English learner teachers and administrators was limited but, as noted, the response rate from administrators was extremely limited.

The low administrator response rate seemed to contradict the data from the survey. Based on the survey data, administrators scored a higher average score than teachers in six of the seven program characteristics measured, all but vision. This seemed to suggest that administrators felt quite positive about their EL programs. However, as mentioned, of the 51 administrators surveyed only 13 administrators responded to the survey. Those 13 administrators who responded felt that their districts English learner programs were better “most of the time” yet there were still 38 other administrators that did not respond. This limited could indicate that most administrators did not feel invested in the English learner program in their district. While this statement is inconclusive the data is concerning because research shows that successful principals who are present and active participants in their programs can lead their teachers and create a team mentality to build their EL programs (Ringler et al., 2013).

In addition, there were also differences between the administrators’ and teachers views of the EL program. In general, the 13 administrators saw their EL programs as providing and supporting each program characteristic “most of the time” whereas the EL teachers saw their EL programs as providing and supporting each program characteristic

only “some of the time”. As discussed, if there is a disconnected understanding between EL teachers and administrators regarding their EL program, the result will likely affect the language proficiency growth scores of English learners. In fact, Wrigley (2000) stated that an “open-minded, positive leader who laid the groundwork necessary to implement a well-researched program, can set the district on the right path for years to come” (p. 3-4). Without those kind of invested leaders, our English learner students will likely show lower English language proficiency growth.

The importance of a similar understanding between EL teachers and administrators continues to be highlighted. Again, research has shown that leadership plays an important role in the outcome of EL student success with a significant relationship between leadership and the success of teaching and learning established (McGee, A., Haworth, P., & Macintyre, L., 2014). To highlight this point, data from District 2 showed that their EL teachers had the highest average survey score at a 4.06 while their administrators had the third highest average survey score at a 4.04. However, the most notable data point regarding District 2 is that the EL teachers and administrators had the least variability of survey scores between the EL teachers and administrators at $\pm .014$ SD, meaning the EL teachers and administrators shared a fairly common understanding of their EL program. As a result, District 2 had the highest intermediate proficiency growth scores for their English learners and the second highest beginning proficiency growth scores for their English learners, which seems to show the positive language proficiency growth scores that students can achieve when administrators and EL teachers are working under a similar understanding of their EL program.

Ultimately, the data indicated that when EL teachers and administrators have a similar understanding of their EL program, their English learner students benefit and score higher language proficiency growth scores.

Open-ended Questions. There were also some differences noted between EL teachers and administrators in the open-ended questions. While EL teachers believed that an area of their EL programs that could be changed or improved was the need for more training, administrators, on the other hand, felt that the amount of training in the district was a success. As such, EL teachers and administrators are at odds about the amount of training being provided in their districts. The desire for more training, as indicated by EL teachers, is supported by research which shows that more professional development has equated to greater teacher preparation and greater confidence in teachers' skills while working with ELL students successfully, which lead to greater student results and success (Faez, 2012; Gandara, et al., 2005; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). As a result, it might be beneficial for districts to hold a conversation between EL teachers and administrators regarding the amount and quality of the training being provided in order to better support the needs of the English learner students.

However, there does seem to be one thing EL teachers and administrators agree on, which is that districts are lacking qualified staff to teach English learner classes. As discussed, providing more opportunities for teachers to receive professional development helps individual teachers feel more confident while working with English learner students. It is also important to provide the training district wide. Coleman and Goldenberg (2010) noted that professional development is one of the top school and

district factors for EL students' academic success. As a result, if consistent, district-wide training was taking place, perhaps there would be an increase in the number of qualified staff available to teach EL classes.

Overall, while the researcher is unable to make sweeping generalizations from the data, the data does still allow for some important observations to be made. These observations all point in the direction of increasing conversations between EL teachers and administrators in order to set a common vision and goal.

Implications

Overall, EL teachers and administrators view their EL programs differently, which may have an effect on their students' language growth proficiency rate. As a result, this study reflects that when EL teachers and administrators view their EL programs similarly and are working together to move forward in one direction it may result in higher language proficiency growth for EL students.

As a result, EL teachers and administrators should hold ongoing conversations in regard to their EL programs, continually addressing each of the seven characteristics of this study, in order to ensure that they are indeed sharing similar understanding of their EL programs.

Discussion for Further Research

There are a few areas in which further research can be done. To begin, study should include a larger participant group which could be done by including more school districts in the study which would increase the number of EL teachers and administrators

available to participate. The study could include all micropolitan districts across the rural Midwest and not just in one specific Midwest state.

In addition to including more school districts, it would also be beneficial to incorporate focus groups in a few of the school districts as a replacement for the data that was not released from the SDE. By holding focus groups in various districts, it would allow the researcher to further understand and clarify the similarities and differences in the survey responses between the administrators and EL teachers.

Additionally, the researcher may want to consider looking at measures of academic growth instead of simply relying on language proficiency growth. Academic growth data could include graduation rates, grade point averages, and state academic growth scores. Combing academic data points such as these could help build a better understanding of growth as a replacement for the lack of language proficiency growth scores provided. It would also be beneficial to research the methods in which states, other than specific Midwest states, collect and utilize language proficiency data to measure growth, which could possibly provide another means to determine language proficiency growth for our students in the rural Midwest.

Overall, these possible changes to the study could yield an even better understanding of English learner programs in the rural Midwest in order to determine possible factors that promoted higher English language proficiency growth for English learners.

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APPENDIX A

EL Teacher Background Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer the following questions that relate to your personal and professional background.

Please circle the appropriate answer:

1. What is your position? EL Teacher / Administration
2. Sex: Male Female
3. Age: 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 55+
4. Race/Ethnicity: Black Hispanic/Latino Asian White Other _____
5. What district do you work for? _____
6. What school do you work for in your school district? _____
7. What level of school do you work for? Elementary school/Middle Junior High school/High school
8. Do you have a K-12 EL license? Yes/No
9. If you do not have a K-12 EL license, do you have a variance to teach ESL? Yes/No
10. What K-12 licenses do you hold (list all)? _____
11. Including this year, how many total years have you taught? _____
12. How many years have you taught EL? _____
13. Have you taught in a mainstream classroom? Yes/No If yes, how many years did you teach in mainstream? _____
14. Does your school use a specific EL program method? If so, which one?

APPENDIX B

Self-Monitoring

(Belknap & Zantal-Wiener, 2015)

The following tool is a self-monitoring aid that schools, LEAs, and SEAs can use to determine if ELs are unnecessarily segregated from their non-EL peers. The sample tool is based on current Local Education Agency's (LEA) and State Education Agency (SEA) tools. The form begins with key guidelines for creating an inclusive environment for ELs.

	All of the Time 5	Most of the Time 4	Some of the Time 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
Vision					
1. The school values and celebrates student diversity as reflected in its organizational vision or mission statement.					
2. Leadership is knowledgeable about civil rights laws as they pertain to ELs.					
3. The school has a plan of action to facilitate an inclusive school culture and climate.					
Program Placement					
4. The school's enrollment forms does inquire about students' or their parents' immigration status.					
5. The school does segregate EL students from their English-speaking peers, except where programmatically necessary, to implement an educationally sound and effective EL education program.					

6. If it is programmatically necessary to separate ELs from their English-speaking peers for part of the school day, the school provides guidance on the amount of time that is instructionally appropriate for each program model and the ELs' English language proficiency level, time, and progress in the program.					
7. ELs participate fully with their non-EL peers in subjects like physical education, art, music, or other activity periods outside of classroom instruction (e.g., recess, lunch, and assemblies).					
8. The school ensures that participating in an EL program is voluntary by informing parents of their right to opt their children out of EL programs and services.					
9. Program facilities and resources are comparable to the facilities and resources of the non-EL student population.					
Curriculum					
10. The school ensures that ELs have access to the same academic standards and rigorous curriculum as their non-EL peers.					
11. The school ensures that EL students have the opportunity to enter academically advanced classes, receive credit for work done, and have access to the					

full range of programs as non-EL students.					
Assessment & Monitoring					
12. ELs are included in required state and local assessments.					
13. Classroom assessments are culturally and linguistically appropriate.					
14. The school regularly monitors EL placement patterns to ensure that placement decisions are based on each student's level of English language proficiency, time, and progress in the EL program.					
Access to Support Services and Activities					
15. The school provides access to the full range of academic instruction and supports including special education and/or related aids and services for eligible students with disabilities under the <i>Individuals With Disabilities Education Act</i> and <i>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</i> , Title I services, career and technical education, magnet programs, and any other services and supports available to non-EL students.					
16. The school ensures that ELs have equal access to all co-curricular and extracurricular activities.					
Staffing					

17. The EL program is staffed with teachers who are qualified to provide EL services, core-content teachers who are highly qualified in their field as well as trained to support EL students, and trained administrators who can evaluate these teachers.					
18. The school provides resources to support the professional learning of all staff in the requirements for EL inclusion and effective EL instructional practices.					
19. The school provides appropriate administrative support for implementing inclusive practices for ELs.					
Communication with Students and Families					
20. Parents of ELs are provided information in a language they understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to their attention.					
21. Parents of ELs are involved as members of school committees and engaged in decision-making activities affecting their children's education.					
22. The school reaches out to families and engage them as partners in their children's education.					

23. The school provides parents with information, training, and support that are respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity.					
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Open-ended Questions

8a. What do you perceive to be the most important program elements that support the academic success of EL students?

8b. What would you change about EL programming if you had the power to do so?