ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS:

A CASE STUDY ON EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS THEY RELATE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

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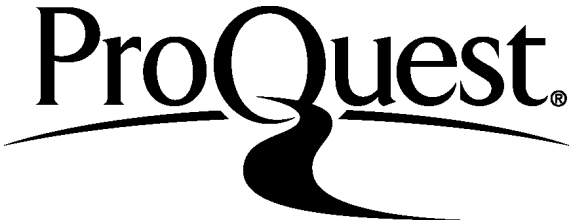

ABSTRACT

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By Leonard V. Greaney

Temple University, May 2016

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigated the reasons why educators initiate referrals of ELLs for special education services in a sample of three educational organizations near a major city in a mid-Atlantic state. This study addressed how and why educator perception influenced the referral process and identification of English language learners into special education programs. The intent of the study examined how perceptions of regular education teachers, special education teachers, teachers of English as a second language, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, and principals influence the referral of ELLs for special education programs based on the commonly shared knowledge.

Students receiving special education services have gone through a referral, assessment, and placement process. The special education process is initiated once a student is experiencing considerable difficulties in the general education programs despite a variety of implemented interventions. For English language learners (ELLs),

low English proficiency, gaps in educational experience and cultural differences influence the referral process. The reality is teachers have a tremendous impact on who is referred for special education services and who is not referred.

I employed a systematic, sequential approach while collecting data for this case study. A combination of interviews and observations provided a foundation for the collection of data. Interview participants from each district included regular education teachers, special education teachers, teachers of English as a second language, speech and language therapists, school psychologists, and principals. Board meeting observations, as well as artifact reviews, including Board policy and Administrative Regulations, were completed. The constant comparative method served as the primary mode of analysis for this case study.

Brisk (1998) states that good teachers of ELLs embrace their roles as language teachers and cultural facilitators. In a 2002 National Center for Education Statistics report, it was stated 42% of teachers indicated they had ELLs in their classrooms, but only 12.5 % of the teachers received more than eight hours of professional development specifically related to ELLs. Schools have often provided support for ELLs through special education or speech and language services, relying on the common sense premise that special education support is better than no support at all (Walker, Shafter, & Iiams, 2004).

The potential impact of this study may be considerable. Accountability derived from a district's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is significant. The increased presence of ELLs in our schools has the potential to create a subgroup impacting AYP. Often times, the creation of an ELL subgroup for AYP leads to the creation of a low

socioeconomic subgroup for AYP. The inappropriate special education referral and resulting placement yields an increase in the special education AYP subgroup.

Schools must be held accountable to educate all students, including ELLs. This study provides relevant recommendations for districts to utilize in order to equip all educators with a skill set to appropriately serve ELL learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my family. My mother has been my biggest cheerleader and supporter throughout this journey. She always said I could achieve anything with hard work and dedication. My husband, Sione, has provided unending love and support. He knew when to push me and when to let me be. The encouragement of my siblings, nieces, and nephews will always be cherished. I am grateful for such a wonderful and loving family!

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A CASE STUDY ON EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS THEY RELATE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Introduction

Sione is a 7th grade student who arrived to the United States from the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific two years ago. Tongan is Sione's native language. He also speaks English. Sione is struggling with understanding his academics and conveying his thoughts in the written form. Sione's teachers report they do not know how to help him because they have never had an English as a second language (ESL) student in their classes before. During a recent parent teacher conference, Sione's teachers indicated he should be referred for special education testing. Scenarios such as this are typical in schools today.

The demographics of students served in the public schools are continually changing. Teachers need to become as well prepared as possible to teach this changing population. As society's demographics change, educating English language learners can be a challenge; Greene (2013) suggests the Common Core State Standards call for all students, including ELLs, to master a variety of academic language practices that are critical to content areas achievement.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education 2014 enrollment data, there are 1,741,605 School Age students enrolled in Pennsylvania public schools. There are approximately 48,446 ELL students in Pennsylvania), speaking in 175 different languages. The 48, 446 LEP School Age students in Pennsylvania include 16, 078 identified as a LEP student with a disability receiving special education services. The

top two disability categories identified include specific learning disability (201 students) and speech or language impairment (101 students) (PA Department of Education, 2014). This qualitative case study will examine the impact teacher perception has on referrals of English Language Learners to special education programs.

Statement of the Problem

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 increase the accountability of school districts to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all special education students. As the demographics of society change, the result is seen in the classrooms of our schools. According to the United States 2010 census, Pennsylvania's population is 12,702, 379 people. The following chart captures the state population by race for 2010 as identified from 2010.census.gov.

Table 1.1 2010 Pennsylvania Total State Population by Race

RACE	PERCENT OF POPULATION	CHANGE 2000-2010
White alone	81.9%	-0.7%
Black or African American alone	10.8%	12.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	0.2%	46.3%
Asian alone	2.7%	58.8%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander alone	Represents zero; rounds to 0	6.9%
Some Other Race alone	2.4%	59.7%
Two or More Races	1.9%	67.2%
Hispanic or Latino	5.7%	82.6%

Pennsylvania had 1,741,605 students enrolled in K-12 public schools during the 2014-2015 school year. A breakdown of student demographics is captured in the following table

Table 1.2: 2014-2015 Pennsylvania School Age Population by Race

Race	Spec Ed	PA State
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%	0.1%
Asian	1.4%	3.5%
Black or African American	17.0%	15.0%
Hispanic	10.7%	10.1%
Multiracial	3.6%	3.0%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%
White	67.1%	68.2%

According to the U. S. Department of Education (2014) students identified as Limited English Proficient account for 2.78% of the total number of Pennsylvania students; students identified as having a disability account for 15.6% of Pennsylvania students.

As more and more demands are placed upon districts to reach proficiency on high stakes testing assessments, it is necessary for district educators to evaluate and determine if they have selected the most effective model of ELL education based on the needs of the districts' students and the districts' goals and priorities.

The growing diversity among today's school age children in terms of racial, ethnic, cultural, social, economic and linguistic backgrounds challenges educators to serve children well in increasingly complex classrooms (Lee et al., 2006). The changing demographics of suburban communities have created an increased concern about educators meeting the diverse needs of heterogeneous learners.

Often teachers do not know what to do with ELLs. One can hypothesize that educators without proper training for working with ELLs may or may not refer ELLs for special education services. The purpose of this study is to address educator perceptions as they relate to the referral of ELLs to special education programs. This study will also explore attitudes and perceptions related to providing support for ELLs that educators in three suburban school districts have regarding their job preparation produced by their teacher training program, their professional development opportunities, and their perception of the overall effectiveness of the English Language Learner and special education programs.

Educator perceptions include the desire to allow for academic progress on the part of the ELL. Samson and Lesaux (2009) studied over 20,000 students in a study addressing disproportionality of ELLs receiving special education services. Their research reveals educators often want to provide students with additional time to master standards and skills before referring to special education. Ortiz et al. (2011) suggest ELLs suspected of having a learning disability (LD) were referred in second grade and then third grade. Educators have an expectation that poor academic performance in second and third grade may be due to a disability and not acquisition. Educators also

perceive chronological and/or developmental age may influence the referral of ELLs for special education programs. Samson and Lesaux (2009) and Artiles et al. (2005) contend age may influence the referral of ELLs to special education. A recent study by Hibel and Jasper (2012) suggests educators defer initiating the referral of ELLs to special education in an attempt to allow the ELLs to fully develop their second language proficiency.

Educational leaders are faced with providing leadership to assure success for all students. From that perspective, educational leaders need to understand the many nuances that are involved in supporting ELLs. Ruth (2014) argues it is important for organizations to hire professionals to support the achievement of ELLs based on their qualifications and professional characteristics instead of the desire to just fill the position. Although one may argue the support for ELLs in public schools is an urban issue, the problem presented in this research study is the impact educator perception has on the varying processes and procedures for the referral of English Language Learners to special education programs for suburban students living in suburban communities near a major city in a mid-Atlantic state. This research study seeks to reveal how educators in some districts refer English Language Learners to special education programs. This study will determine how educational beliefs impact district educators' attitudes and behaviors about English language learners, English as a Second Language pedagogy and subsequent referral to special education programming.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a greater understanding of the influence educator perception has on the process by which educators refer ELLs to special education. This study will delve into the beliefs of building level educators, i.e.,

principals, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, regular educators, special educators, and English as a Second Language teachers, to ascertain their values, beliefs, and opinions about English language learners as they influence sub sequential placement in special education. Due to the ever-changing demographics of suburban communities, it is imperative for local decision makers to be fully informed and to confidently provide the best education for all learners, especially ELLs.

This study will focus on three suburban school districts located in near a major city in a mid-Atlantic state. All of the districts enroll English Language Learners. The research was based on interviews with educators involved in the education of ELLs including principals, special education teachers, regular education teachers, English as a Second Language teachers, school psychologists and speech and language specialists. The research also included a review of district documents such as Board policies and administrative directives, strategic plans, achievement data, English as a Second Language Curriculum, as well as district and school goals. Informal observations occurred in the field (i.e. informal classroom observations and ELL consortium meetings) to obtain data in the natural setting.

Specifically, the research concentrated on the educators' perceptions, opinions, and values related to English language learners and their referral to special education programs. The analysis of the data provided a description of the process used to reach the decision for referring ELLs to special education programs, the barriers for ESL pedagogy implementation, and the process and resources use by educators in seeking advice about programming.

This knowledge could serve as the foundation which informs effective intervention to support ELLs and potentially teacher education programs. Teacher perceptions were examined as they relate to referral of ELLs to special education programs. Data obtained through interviews, surveys, observations, and record reviews were used to illuminate patterns which may ultimately be used to inform professional development and ideally support adequate training of all educators and lead to appropriate referrals of ELLs for special education services. This, potentially, could positively impact subgroups contributing to AYP by decreasing the number of students in each subgroup. Without the minimum *n* for a subgroup, the subgroup would not exist but even more importantly students would be receiving the most appropriate educational services.

The outcome of this study on the perceptions, values, and opinions of suburban district educators with regards to ELL programs will add to the previous research by providing a framework for English Language Learner programs as they relate to decision making for referrals to special education programs. This study has the potential to offer district leaders and policymakers a decision making model to utilize when embarking on ELL programs.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this qualitative case study is "How might educator perception influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs?"

The following questions will facilitate the researcher delving deeper into the issue.

• How might educational and cultural background and knowledge influence the referral process of teachers?

• How might the quality of ELL curriculum and pedagogy impact and/or influence teacher perceptions in the referral process?

• How might the organization and district policy impact and/or influence teacher perceptions in the referral process?

• How might AYP subgroup accountability impact and/or influence teacher perceptions in the referral process?

Definitions

Definitions (taken in part from www.ed.gov.com)

1. Accountability – providing public data aligned to state standards to report, explain, and justify for states, local educational agencies (LEAs are school districts and county offices of education, direct funded charters, and statewide benefit charter agencies), schools, (including charter schools) and numerically significant subgroups.
2. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) – skills used in basic communication, i.e., "Hello" and "How are you?"; identification of family members and rote skills i.e., days of the week, numbers
3. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) – the use of higher level language skills used to access the curriculum
4. Curriculum – the subjects taught at an educational institution, or the topics taught within a subject.

5. Educator/teacher – professional school staff holding certification from a credentialing/licensing agency such as a regular education teacher, special education teacher, ESL teacher, speech and language specialist, school psychologist, or school administrator
6. English language learner – an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the U.S. to describe K–12 students; a student who is in the process of learning English as a second/additional language; those students assessed and placed into a program for English Language Learners
7. Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) - all children with disabilities aged 3 years to 21 years of age have the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school.
8. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – a Federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities
9. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Federal legislation enacted by Congress in 2001 requiring accountability of school districts for academic achievement
10. Pedagogy – the science of teaching; instructional methods
11. Second language acquisition –the process by which people learn a second language in addition to their native language
12. Special education program – educational program with specially designed instruction to meet the individualized needs of an exceptional learner

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in several respects. First, only three suburban local educational agencies were examined as part of the research. The middle class districts were selected from two counties near a major city in a mid-Atlantic state. This limited population may provide some explanation as to the identification of ELLs receiving special education services; it may not take into account varying developmental needs of the elementary and secondary students.

Second, the researcher's educational training, certifications, and professional experiences as a speech and language pathologist, special education teacher, school psychologist, school counselor, school administrator, and ELL educator may be a limitation to the study due to the potential for researcher bias. Third, this study restricted generalization since the sample size for collecting data was limited to three districts. The responses received from the participants interviewed in these districts may or may not be reflective of other school districts. The results of the study were entirely based on the data collected and analyzed about the three districts participating in the study.

The delimitations of this study are that the sample and methodology are typical for a qualitative case study. This study is typical in that it is a growing body of research of English language learners in Pennsylvania public schools, specifically suburban communities. A review of the current literature reveals most ELL research has been done in urban settings and in New York, Florida, Texas or California. That being said, the literature review of ELL research from major urban settings stands on its own as a valid insight into this specific group even if it may not be able to be generalized. Arguably, the

profile of an ELL is similar in both urban and suburban settings; however, the resources to support the ELL often differ between the two settings.

Significance of the Study

This study will provide other school district leaders with the information for building a framework for selecting, planning, and implementing ELL programs that best serve the needs of their district.

There are several factors that influence how well a school does in diagnosing ELLs' learning disabilities and avoiding overrepresentation and underrepresentation of ELLs in special education. One of the driving principles is ensuring all teachers have the knowledge and resources to support ELLs and other at risk students. Principals can have a direct impact in the process by creating a culturally proficient school culture (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006).

No Child Left Behind forces the issues of accountability and the need to provide access to the core curriculum for all students. In order to ensure this is occurring, professional development built around Federal, State, and local level implementation of educational regulations needs to be a priority. Districts need to ensure teachers have up to date resources, including appropriate ESL curriculum to support the pedagogy. The processes and procedures teachers are to follow when they notice ELLs are not making adequate progress also needs to be clearly identified.

It is my hypothesis that a framework to serve as a foundation is not consistent across educational organizations. This research was conducted to obtain an understanding of how teacher perceptions influence the referral process for identification

of ELLs in need of special education supports and services and perhaps aid in the development of the framework.

The study was designed in a manner to connect the major factors in relation to teacher perception. There are many factors including law, curriculum, classroom climate, school climate, home and community factors, as well as individual factors.

One major factor includes the law. The law, including State regulations, serves as one of the building blocks for supporting student achievement. Specially designed instructional strategies to support the delivery of ESL curriculum are derived from the law; additionally, specially designed instructional strategies to support the provision of special education services are derived from the law. Specially designed instructional strategies may include "Can Do Descriptors" from the WIDA Consortium, http://www.wida.us/standards/CAN_DOs/index.aspx, or the ELL Overlay from the Standards Aligned System from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website, www.pdesas.org. The referral for consideration of special education services typically comes from students not demonstrating adequate progress. The challenge is determining if the lack of progress is due to the abilities of the student, the abilities of the teacher, or both.

Professional development is an intervention to support teacher education. Teacher training programs are beginning to incorporate methods classes to train teachers in specific methodologies and instructional strategies to support the diverse learning styles present in the schools. Staff should also learn about the importance of primary language literacy as a predictor of second language literacy development. This last concept is needed to support language and literacy across all of the content areas and

grade levels as a way of avoiding unnecessary reading difficulties which often result in special education referrals.

This study will provide additional insight and information for policy makers and instructional leaders to better understand the impact educator perception has on the referral process of ELLs for special education supports. By breaking down and examining educator perceptions, the knowledge derived could be put in place to support educators and their interactions with diverse student populations, specifically ELLs.

Furthermore we need to know what makes an educator initiate a referral of an English language learner to a special education program. What do educators believe about English language learner programs? Who was involved in decisions about English language learner programs and what influence do they have on such programs?

In addition, it is necessary to know which instructional program methodologies are successful in supporting English language learners. This involves determining not only what programs, but what components of the program are effective, as well as, how and why? We also need to identify topics for appropriate professional development for educators working with ELLs.

In sum, the root of the issue deals with making sure the educator is afforded the knowledge, resources, and materials to provide ELLs with an appropriate educational experience. Understanding the difference between language acquisition and language-based learning disabilities is essential. What do educators believe ELLs have to offer? Who is involved in the referral process of ELLs to special education programs? What is their motive for the referral?

We need to understand why and how educators initiate and support the referral of ELLs to special education programs.

Theoretical Base

How do educational leaders begin to address policy and procedure to support the academic achievement of ELLs in our public schools? Educational leaders can use theories of decision making to facilitate the process. Two leading theories impacting ELL instruction in schools are second language acquisition, a predictive theory, and the rational comprehensive model, a descriptive theory.

Educational leaders, as well as all educators, need to understand second language acquisition theory in order to support the development and implementation of ELL programs. Second language acquisition refers to students learning a second language. When students learn a second language, they move through stages of development just as children move through stages when acquiring their native language. There are five stages of second language acquisition ELLs move through on their journey to English language proficiency. These stages include the preproduction stage, the early production stage, the speech emergence stage, the intermediate fluency stage, and the advance fluency stage (Hill & Flynn, 2006, p. 15)

Table 1.3: The Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame	Teacher Prompts
Preproduction	The student • Has minimal comprehension • Does not verbalize • Nods "Yes" and "No" • Draws and points	0-6 months	• Show me… • Circle the… • Where is…? • Who has…?
Early Production	The student • Has limited comprehension • Produces one –or-two-word responses • Participates using key works and familiar phrases • Uses present-tense verbs	6 months – 1 year	• Yes/no questions • Either/or questions • One –or – two-word answers • Lists • Labels
Speech Emergence	The student • Has good comprehension • Can produce simple sentences • Makes grammar and pronunciation errors • Frequently misunderstands jokes	1-3 years	• Why…? • How…? • Explain…? • Phrase or short sentence answers
Intermediate Fluency	The student • Has excellent comprehension • Makes few grammatical errors	3-5 years	• What would happen if…? • Why do you think…?
Advanced Fluency	The student has a near-native level of speech.	5-7 years	• Decide if… • Retell…

Source: Adapted from Krashen and Terell (1983). (Hill & Flynn, 2006, p. 15)

James Cummins (1984) separated the English language into two distinct domains- conversational language and academic language. Conversational English, or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), is everyday English, including pronunciation, grammar, and basic vocabulary. Conversational English is readily used when speaking informally with friends, family, and teachers. Conversational English is the language non-English speaking individuals develop after approximately two years of living in an English- speaking country.

Cummins (1984) contends academic English is also referred to as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This is the language used in our classrooms. When ELLs do not have access to academic language, the ability to understand and use textbooks, write papers, solve word problems, and take tests is compromised. Educational leaders need to assure support for CALP. Furthermore, students may experience difficulties in developing critical thinking and problem solving skills to support new and abstract concepts.

The following chart provides a simple organizational schema of concepts educators should be aware of along the BICS to CALP continuum.

Table 1.4.

Relationship Amid Conversational Language (BICS) and Academic Language (CALP)

Cognitive Process		**Language Process**
Knowledge		Pronunciation
Comprehension	*Conversational Proficiency*	Vocabulary
Application		Grammar
Analysis		
Synthesis	*Cognitive/Academic Proficiency*	Semantic Meaning
Evaluation		Functional Meaning

Source: Adapted from Cummins (1984)

Cummins' (1986) updated theory includes the Separate Underlying Proficiency Model (SUP) and the Common Underlying Proficiency Model (CUP). Cummins asserts language proficiencies are separate and cannot transfer between languages. The SUP establishes distinct L1 proficiency and L2 proficiency. The CUP establishes a common underlying proficiency between L1 and L2. Specific skills are not separate and may transfer between languages. Furthermore, Cummins (2000) states the conceptual knowledge from one language helps make the input in the second language comprehensible. For example, if a student understands the concept in their native language, the task at hand is for the student to learn the label for the concept in English. The task becomes more difficult is the student must acquire both the concept and label in the second language.

McGuire and Ikpa (2008) state the rational comprehensive model is a theoretical model of how public policy decisions are made. All possible options or approaches to solving the problem are identified; the costs and benefits of each option are assessed and compared with each other. Often the costs for implementation outweigh the benefits gained.

In theory, the rational comprehensive decision making model is ideal. Tensions, though, can impact the policy development depending on the political lens and stakeholders addressing the policy. ELLs have legislative support at the national, state, and local levels. Depending on the lens and stakeholder, consensus on policy development might be difficult to develop. For example, if the policy development is at the national level, consensus is difficult due to the varying geographic regions in the

United States and the population of each region thereby potentially impacting practice in support of ELLs.

Educator perception may be impacted by the rational comprehensive decision making model if the educator is not afforded the appropriate supports at the building level. Leaders at both the district and site level need to grow culturally proficient educators.

> Cultural bias is believed to be salient throughout the instructional practices promoted and executed by school teachers and administrators. What results from these culturally biased beliefs is an in-school cultural socialization process in which ethnically and culturally diverse students are exposed to instructional practices and learning activities that do not reflect their cultural-laden modes of learning and knowing (Perez, 2000, p.103).

Cultural bias and other stereotypes are hard to control throughout the process. McGuire and Ikpa (2008) suggest the costs for controlling bias may exceed the benefits to be gained in improved quality of decisions.

Teacher efficacy affects teachers' thoughts, their actions, their efforts, and the perseverance in improving student achievement (Paneque & Barbetta, 2006). The cultural proficiency level of the educators may significantly impact their interaction with ELLs thereby resulting in the inappropriate referral of an ELL for special education services. It is important for educators to integrate knowledge of the student's home culture into the instructional process.

Hayes (2002) contends the legal system functions around a set of established principles including

- Precedent, particularly clear in the holdings of the Supreme Court

- Due process under the law, which offers legal standing to interested parties and affords the chance to use litigation as a remedy: New and valiant policies get tied up in court.

As NCLB and IDEA are revisited and revised with new administrations, the legal system slows the process. As a result, policy becomes fragmented in its implementation. Educational leaders often experience conflict over values and ideology. The current state of political, social, or economic systems, coupled with values and ideology, impact the decision making process. McGuire and Ikpa (2008) argue change and stability are crucial elements of the policy process; ideas and images move in and out of the policy agenda over time.

In sum, the frameworks discussed above help strengthen the understanding of how educator perceptions influence the referrals of ELLs to special education programs. Second language acquisition assists educators in understanding the impact on the learning process from the language acquisition perspective and/or the language based learning disability perspective. The rational comprehensive model supports contentions surrounding the political impact that high stakes assessment may have on the referrals of ELLs to special education programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review provides the foundation for the study. This chapter reviews the literature surrounding English Language Learner programs and the impact educator perception has on the referral of ELLs to special education programs. Additionally, the literature review addresses four key areas that are critical to the context of this study: the history of English Language Learners, the legislative environment surrounding English Language learners, teacher preparation and school culture, and special education issues for English Language Learners.

The first portion of the literature review delves into the historical background of English language learners. This section of the literature review discusses characteristics of English language learners, Pennsylvania English language learners, and second language acquisition. The legislative environment will be reviewed, particularly influential Federal legislation, No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Act, English language learner program funding, and several regulations impacting English language learner programs.

The second section provides the current research in the field addressing school culture and teacher preparation. This portion of the literature review addresses the current perceptions of public school educators concerning the educational needs of English language learners. I will address the process as districts struggle with meeting the educational needs of English language learners who are simultaneously considered to be exceptional.

Finally, the last portion of the literature review will focus on the theoretical background for English language learner programs. This section will discuss culture and turbulence theory in relation to educational organizations and English language learner programs.

English Language Learners: A Description

English language learners are a growing population requiring support in our schools. English language learners may be labeled as needing special education services when they may actually only need English as a second language services (Ortiz, 2000). Layton and Lock (2002) believe the over-identification of students with linguistic and cultural differences for special education services is one of the most interesting and challenging issues in education. The lack of sensitivity to the differences in English language learner characteristics and those of learning disabilities has resulted in the over-identification of students with linguistic and cultural differences for special education services (Layton & Lock, 2002).

Learning disabilities are defined by the National Joint Committee of Learning Disabilities (2001) as "a general term that refers to homogeneous groups of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities." The learning profile of an English language learner may reflect academic challenges similar to those identified with a learning disability. As a result, teachers often refer the English language learner for special education services (Layton & Lock, 2002).

Ortiz and Garica (1995) share the concerns listed below when trying to discern the difference between language acquisition and language disorders (a) characteristics of second language learners and those of language disorders often mirror themselves; (b) teachers are unable to ascertain the difference between typical linguistic development from intrinsic processing disorders (learning disabilities); (c) failure to use a thorough language proficiency evaluation also contributes to inadequate assessment and identification; (d) the prevalence of inadequate practices in the evaluation process leads to inappropriate diagnosis.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) reports "The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English language learners was higher in school year 2012-2013 (9.2 percent or an estimated 4.4 million students) than in 2002-2003 (8.7 percent, or an estimated 4.1 million students)."

The following chart captures data regarding the projected change in the United States population according to ethnicity from 1997 through 2015. White, non-Hispanics are projected to be the ethnic group with the least growth. Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Eskimo, and Aleut are projected to demonstrate significant growth. With the projected growth comes an increase in languages other than English, resulting in a net increase of English language learners in the schools.

Table 2.1: Projected Change in US Population According to Ethnicity

ETHNICITY	1997	2015	% CHANGE
White, non-Hispanic	194,571	205,019	5.4
African-American, Non-Hispanic	2,298	39,512	22.3
Hispanic	29,348	46,705	59.1
Asian & Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	9,443	16,437	74.1
American Indian, Eskimo & Aleut, non-Hispanic	1976	2,461	24.5

Source: Pollard, K. (1999). 1999 US population Data Sheet, Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau

Pennsylvania English Language Learners

The demographics of students served in the Pennsylvania public schools are continually changing. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Acquisition (2006), in Pennsylvania, total student enrollment declined by 10.8% from 2,047,160 during the 1994-95 school year to 1,826,240 during the 2005-06 school year. While total student enrollment declined, students classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) rose by 106.6% from 19,889 during the 1994-95 school year to 41,097 during the 2005-06 school year.

The table below summarizes the top eleven languages spoken in Pennsylvania's public schools during the 2012-2013 school year.

Table 2.2: Top Eleven Languages Spoken in Pennsylvania Public Schools

	2012-2013 Top Eleven Languages	2012-2013 Total Number of PA Students by Language
1	Spanish	26,860
2	Chinese (Mandarin)	1983
3	Nepali	1852
4	English (Barbados)	1728
5	Arabic	1645
6	Vietnamese	1271
7	Russian	854
8	French	632
9	Khmer	512
10	Gujarati	441
11	Creoles and Pidgins (Other)	436

Source: http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/program_statistics/7532

Given the diversity of languages and cultures in Pennsylvania's public schools, ensuring the academic achievement of all students can be overwhelming. ELLs may be referred to special education services if administrators and/or teachers do not have the knowledge and/or experience in supporting ELLs in the academic setting.

Second Language Acquisition

Cummins (1984) states students may take five to seven years to become proficient in academic language to perform on academic tests in English, or seven to ten years for English language learners who have had little to no instruction in their native language. Time is no longer a luxury for English language learners to acquire English in isolated ESL programs. All stakeholders must engage in the process (Batts, 2008).

In each school district, ESL pedagogy and curriculum frames planned instruction addressing listening, speaking, reading and writing at different levels of proficiency (beginning, intermediate, and advanced). Pennsylvania's Department of Education (2002) states, "Standards must be addressed and objectives must be developed for ESL classes at all levels. Therefore, ESL replaces language arts/English instruction. At the secondary level, ESL replaces English classes required for graduation."

Batt (2008) contends all educators need to work to decrease the number of years in school needed by ELLs to demonstrate language proficiency and academic achievement. In addition mainstream teachers can make a significant contribution to the linguistic and academic growth of English learners by learning and using instructional language teaching methods and best practices. The research based methods and interventions required by Federal and State regulations can be applied to this target population of English Language Learners. The development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for an ELL without the appropriate data is a violation of the ELL's civil rights.

Educational leaders should incorporate the framework for second language acquisition into their leadership approach for supporting student achievement. The Council of Chief State School Officers (1996) suggests a new type of leadership in schools is required to respond to our more diverse society - racially, linguistically, and culturally.

Legal Environment

English Language Learner (ELL) programs changed in the public school system as a result of the *Lau v. Nichols* lawsuit in 1974. August and Hakuta (1997) state *Lau v.*

Nichols, a 1974 Supreme Court case ruled the San Francisco Unified School District violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act when it failed to provide support services to help Chinese-speaking students learn English. August and Hakuta (1997) further contended that bilingual education was not a mandate resulting from the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling; however, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare required schools to offer bilingual, multilingual, or transitional bilingual education for eligible participants. Due to the increasing performance and accountability demands placed upon educators, the focus on English as a Second Language programs has become more critical.

Layton and Lock (2002) argue eighty percent of referrals to special education are for reading problems. Teachers must distinguish between issues related to second language acquisition and intrinsic processing difficulties. All educators need to provide support and assistance when English language learners demonstrate learning difficulties before considering a referral to special education. Teachers who do not understand the difference and the demands of second language acquisition will refer to special education for assistance (Layton & Lock, 2002).

Influential Federal Legislation

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates that public schools in the United States provide equal educational opportunities for all students. English Language Learners (ELLs) are a subgroup of students whose right to necessary language support for access to educational opportunities must be ensured. Federal, state, and local mandates, coupled with accountability requirements serve as the foundation for ensuring such access.

The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) to the Constitution of the United States indicates, "No state shall…deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The Fourteenth Amendment provides the foundation from which the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is built (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2007).

Lau v. Nichols (1974) was a suit filed on behalf of Chinese parents in San Francisco, who claimed their child was unable to "access the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in school owing to his limited English. The Supreme Court ruled in this case that 'identical education does not constitute equal education under the Civil Rights Act." As a result, school districts were required to take 'affirmative steps' to address the educational challenges for ELLs. The United States Supreme Court's interpretation of the Civil Rights Act required local school districts and states to provide appropriate services to limited English proficient students unless it is not feasible to provide or administer such services.

Other legislation has addressed the identification and assessment of culturally and linguistically different exceptional students since 1979. Dyrica S. et al. v. Board of Education of the City of New York et al (1979), Larry P. v. Riles (1979), and Jose P. v. Amback (1979) are three such cases that address the cultural and sociolinguistic needs and the special education needs of diverse learners. (Collier, 2009, p. 11) Baca and Cervantes (2003) offer lessons learned from case law. The recommendations include:

1. Identification of students who need special education services must include the use of adequate bilingual resources.

2. Appropriate evaluation must include the establishment of school-based support teams to evaluate students in their own environment using a bilingual, nondiscriminatory evaluation process.

3. Appropriate programs in the least restrictive environment must include a comprehensive continuum of services with the provision of appropriate bilingual programs at each place on the continuum for students with limited English proficiency.

4. Due process and parental and student rights must include a native language version of a parents' rights booklet, which explains all of the due process rights of students and parents. Also included is the hiring of neighborhood workers to facilitate parental involvement in the evaluation and development of the individualized educational program.

5. Education personnel must conduct a language screening at the beginning of each school year to determine if the new students are exposed to or influenced by a language other than English (Lau v. Nichols, 414 US 563; 39 L. Ed. 2d 1, 945. Ct. 786; 1974).

6. If this initial language screening indicates the presence of a language other than English, school personnel must conduct an assessment of language dominance and proficiency (Lau v. Nichols).

7. School personnel must inform parents of all due process rights in their native or most proficient language. Schools must provide an interpreter at all meetings if parents cannot communicate effectively in English (Title VI, Civil Rights Act, U.S.C. 200d1964; P.L. 95-561 92 Stat. 2268 Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments 1978 (ESEA); The Education of All Handicapped Children's Act, P.L. 94-142, 1975).

8. When analyzing evaluation data for placement decisions, education professionals must draw information from a variety of sources, including socioeconomic and cultural background and adaptive behavior (P.L. 94-142: Section 504).

9. Education professionals must develop an IEP that reflects the student's linguistic and cultural needs if it is determined that a diverse student is disabled and has limited English proficiency (P.L. 94-142: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973; Title VI; Title VII, P.L. 95-561).

No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 "reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and is the main federal law impacting education from kindergarten through high school. Proposed by President Bush shortly after his inauguration, NCLB was signed into law on January 8th, 2002. NCLB is built on four principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research." NCLB, as an example of federal policy, was based on shared values, beliefs, meaning, understanding, and sense making. Among those beliefs was an emphasis on providing education for all groups of students, including English Language Learners (Morgan, 2006). According to Earle and Kruse (1999) schools must share the responsibility to effectively teach the next generation of students.

> Title III of NCLB includes the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, which mandates ELLs be included in state assessment systems for accountability purposes and requires that these students make 'adequate yearly progress' toward mastering academic content and English proficiency. (Hamanyan & Freeman, 2006, p.5)

NCLB implies promotion of an English only policy for America's schools. Districts stress English acquisition and require students to learn the English language as quickly as possible, something that has proven detrimental to ELLs' success (Thomas &

Collier, 1997). ELL programs, curriculum, and pedagogy will be discussed later in the literature review.

No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 increased the accountability of school districts to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all special education students. English Language Learners (ELLs) are often a subgroup needing educator support. NCLB forces the issues of accountability and the need to provide access to the core curriculum for all students. Prior to NCLB, Li and Zhang (2004) suggest ELLs were excluded from statewide assessments because they would "pull down" the average score of the class.

There is a strong body of research that has found standardized tests to be unethical and invalid when administered to ELLs. Neill (2005) reports on a variety of problems with the testing of ELL students, including unequal resources available to ELL students, changing composition of the ELL group, inconsistent LEP classification, flaws in achievement tests used with ELL students, and irrational sanctions under NCLB, to name a few. The purpose of this discussion is to reference the inequities for ELLs from a leadership perspective; a deeper dive into the research is available in the field of TESOL.

A strong emphasis on accountability for results is one of the cornerstones of the NCLB. The United States Department of Education (2003) states:

> Only if we hold schools and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) accountable for the improved achievement of all students will we meet the goal of leaving no child behind. As a result, the NCLB Act included very specific, rigorous requirements that States must implement to determine the AYP of each public school, LEA, and the State itself. In preparing the final regulations, the Secretary has faithfully implemented the statutory provisions governing AYP, addressing additional flexibility wherever possible.(www.ed.gov)

NCLB requires highly qualified teachers as well as adequate yearly progress. States must assure the high qualifications of educators who will be providing daily instruction to ELLs. In response, college and university programs prepare capable professionals who will have the responsibility for educating this challenging population. Special education programs are also being refined with courses differentiating between language acquisition and language disorders. Despite these changes, it needs to be noted that the problem of preparing teachers to work effectively with ELLs has not been fully solved. Teacher preparation will be discussed in more depth later in the literature review.

AYP simultaneously impacts educational organizations on many levels. As schools struggle to meet the AYP targets, districts and boards are faced with the responsibility of disaggregating the data to determine the specific groups not making the AYP target. ELLs need to be provided access to the core curriculum if they are to reach 'proficient' or 'advanced' on statewide assessments.

English Language Learner Program Funding

Most LEAs and educators recognize the urgency of meeting the needs of ELLs. Funding is an obstacle from the onset of program development. A long-range plan for development of an ELL program aligned with Federal and State regulations outlines the required stages of implementation and associated costs. In addition to Federal and District funding, other grant opportunities are plentiful and available to support the ELL program implementation process.

Title III funding of No Child Left Behind provides formula funded programs to support districts in meeting their obligation to educate ELLs. Formula grants provide a framework whereas "states perspective allotments are determined by the U.S. Department

of Education on the basis of two separate sets of data. Twenty percent of the total allotment is based on the immigrant student enrollment count submitted to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OLEA), U.S. Department of Education, for the preceding year. The U.S. Department of Education then determines the remaining 80 percent on the basis of data provided either by the Bureau of the Census of by the Department of Commerce's American Community Survey. These funds must be used to supplement existing programs and services and cannot be used to take the place of services the district and state are already required to support" (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006, p. 17). Hamayan and Freeman (2006) further state Title III grants ensure ELLs attain English proficiency while meeting state academic achievement standards with the effective use of language instruction programs.

Title I funding is a federal categorical program to ensure all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach minimum proficiency on the state content standards and assessments." Many districts with a large ELL population have some of the highest poverty schools. The intent of Title I funding is to meet the educational needs of low-achieving students enrolled in these schools. The next portion of this literature review provides a breakdown of various educational policy and regulations.

Title I Federal Regulations

On January 2, 2003 the United States Department of Education enacted Title I Regulation changes to The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I Regulations are also referred to as Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. Title I Regulations "are needed to implement statutory provisions

regarding State, local educational agency, and school accountability for the academic achievement of limited English proficient (LEP) students and are needed to implement changes to Title I of the ESEA made by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, NCLB Act" (www.ed.gov).

Furthermore, The United States Department of Education (www.ed.gov) states the following:

> The programs authorized by Title I of the ESEA, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, have as their goal the education of all students, including students who are economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, disabled, migratory, residing in institutions for neglected or delinquent youth and adults, or members of other groups typically considered ``at risk,'' so that they can achieve to challenging content and academic achievement standards. Thus, the benefits that will be obtained through the reauthorized Title I and its implementing regulations are those primarily of a more educated society. National data sets and studies by prominent researchers have demonstrated repeatedly that better education has major benefits, both economic and non-economic, not only for the individuals who receive it but for society as a whole. Nations that invest in quality education enjoy higher levels of growth and productivity, and a high-quality education system is an indispensable element of a strong economy and successful civil society.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Chapter 4 Regulations

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (2010) implemented Chapter 4 regulations to address academic standards and assessment. The Pennsylvania Department of Education asserts the purpose of Chapter 4 regulations is "to establish rigorous academic standards and assessments to facilitate the improvement of student achievement and to provide parents and communities a measure by which school performance can be determined" (www.pde.pa.state.us).

The Department of Education (2010) Chapter 4 regulations state "Every school district shall provide a program for each student whose dominant language is not English

for the purpose of facilitating the student's achievement of English proficiency and the academic standards under § 4.12 (relating to academic standards). Programs under this section shall include appropriate bilingual-bicultural or English as a second language (ESL) instruction" (www.pde.pa.state.us).

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Chapter 4 Impact on English Language Learners

In Pennsylvania, policy is being developed, implemented, evaluated, and refined to meet the unique needs of ELLs. The Basic Education Circular (22 Pa. Code 4.26), Educating Students with Limited English Proficiency and English Language Learners issued on July 1, 2001 states "The education of students whose dominant language is not English is the responsibility of every school district/charter school in the Commonwealth" (www.pde.state.pa.us)." Furthermore, Title 22, Chapter 4, Section 4.26 of the Curriculum Regulations states "every school district shall provide a program for each student whose dominant language is not English for the purpose of facilitating the student's achievement of English proficiency and the academic standard under 4.12 (relating to academic standards). Programs under this section shall include appropriate bilingual-bicultural or English as a second language (ESL) instruction" (www.pde.state.pa.us).

In response to Federal legislation, Pennsylvania Department of Education's BEC states any ELL curriculum implemented must meet a three-prong test. The three prongs of the test state the program must be: (1) based on sound educational and language learning theory; (2) implemented with sufficient resources and staffed by appropriately prepared personnel; and (3) periodically evaluated. A program that does not produce positive results does not meet the three-prong test (www.pde.state.pa.us).

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Chapter 14 Regulations

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania State Board of Education established Chapter 14 regulations to ensure children with disabilities be provided with quality special education services and programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education asserts the purpose of Chapter 14 regulations "requires satisfaction of the statutory requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C.A. §§ 1400—1482)" (www.pde.pa.state.us).

The Child Find mandate is a statutory requirement under the IDEA requiring all school districts to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child. The IDEA requires all States to develop and implement a practical method of determining which children with disabilities are receiving special education and related services and which children are not. (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(3); *Wrightslaw: Special Education Law*, pages 72, 206-207).

In addition to the requirements incorporated by reference in 34 CFR 300.111 (relating to child find), each school district shall adopt and use a public outreach awareness system to locate and identify children thought to be eligible for special education within the school district's jurisdiction (www.ed.gov). In Pennsylvania, when any child, including an English Language Learner, is suspected of having a disability school districts must document pre-referral and intervention strategies including, but not limited to, the following:

Each school district shall establish a system of screening, which may include early intervening services, to accomplish the following:

1. Identify and provide initial screening for students prior to referral for a special education evaluation.

2. Provide peer support for teachers and other staff members to assist them in working effectively with students in the general education curriculum. To provide this support, school districts may implement instructional support teams according to Department guidelines or use an alternative process.

3. Identify students who may need special education services and programs.

(a) The screening process must include:

1. Hearing and vision screening in accordance with section 1402 of the School Code (24 P. S. § 14-1402) for the purpose of identifying students with hearing or vision difficulty so that they can be referred for assistance or recommended for evaluation for special education.

2. Screening at reasonable intervals to determine whether all students are performing based on grade-appropriate standards in core academic subjects.

(b) Each school district may develop a program of early intervening services. In the case of school districts meeting the criteria in 34 CFR 300.646(b)(2) (relating to disproportionality), as established by the Department, the early intervening services are required and must include:

1. A verification that the student was provided with appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (20 U.S.C.A. § 6368(3)), and appropriate instruction in math.

2. For students with academic concerns, an assessment of the student's performance in relation to State-approved grade level standards.

3. For students with behavioral concerns, a systematic observation of the student's behavior in the school environment where the student is displaying difficulty.

4. A research-based intervention to increase the student's rate of learning or behavior change based on the results of the assessments under paragraph (2) or (3).

5. Repeated assessments of achievement or behavior, or both conducted at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal monitoring of student progress during the interventions.

6. A determination as to whether the student's assessed difficulties are the result of a lack of instruction or limited English proficiency.

7. A determination as to whether the student's needs exceed the functional ability of the regular education program to maintain the student at an appropriate instructional level.

8. Documentation that information about the student's progress as identified in paragraph (5) was periodically provided to the student's parents.

c. Screening or early intervening activities do not serve as a bar to the right of a parent to request an evaluation, at any time, including prior to or during

the conduct of early intervening activities" (www.pde.state.pa.us).

At the site level, educational leaders have the responsibility of implementing district policy based on PA regulations. All educators, including teachers, need to be engaged in the process to ensure students have access to needed and appropriate supports. The next portion of this literature review examines aspects of school culture, English Language Learner educational programming, and teacher preparation.

School Culture

Ladson-Billings (1994) contends the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education is related to the "broader disconnect between mainstream educational culture and of communities of color. Educational systems often reflect the knowledge, values, interests, and cultural orientations of white, middle-class cultural groups. Ladson-Billings (2004) argues education that fails to explicitly teach the codes and rules necessary for successful participation in unfamiliar cultural contexts, does not connect knowledge produced in schools to students' lived experiences, or ignores the foundational role of culture in knowledge production may provide a disservice to a variety of cultural groups. The cultural mismatch may produce referrals of various cultural groups to the special education assessment process resulting in special education services.

Skiba (2008) proposes the implantation of best practices in instruction, education leadership, and academic and behavioral interventions, as well as research relating to culturally and linguistically responsive practice include teacher preparation, improved behavior management, prevention and early

intervention, pre-referral intervention/response to intervention, assessment, family and community involvement, and policy and systems reform recommendations.

Walker, Shafer, & Iiams (2004) believe "Teachers who hold negative, ethnocentric or racist attitudes about ELLs, or who believe in any of the numerous fallacies surrounding the education of language-minority students, often fail to meet the academic and social needs of these students" (p. 141). Pang (2001) states negative teacher attitudes about linguistically diverse students stems from racism and prejudice. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes cultural mismatch as teachers lacking the knowledge and skills to successfully interact with students who are different from themselves. This cultural disparity underscores the importance of teacher training in cultural responsive pedagogy.

Cloud (2000) states once an ELL is identified as needing special education services, the ELL should be taught in a setting with qualified teachers who can concurrently address their cultural, linguistic, and disability needs. In order to increase the success of working with ELLs in school, it is important to connect the efforts of school with home. Garcia (2002) states families of students from diverse linguistic and cultural groups should be involved in the assessment process to ensure that programs and services for children are appropriate and meet the intent of the law. Such an approach requires ongoing collaboration among educators, families, and the larger community. Barr et al. (2008) report it is important to acknowledge the role siblings play in assessment and intervention. Therefore, siblings and parents should routinely be included in the process. Involvement may take on many forms, including involvement in both the assessment and intervention with the student.

Parents need to be informed of their legal rights and responsibilities. Garcia (2002) argues in order for parents to meaningful participate in the process, parents must fully understand their rights and responsibilities. The cultural comfort zone of the family and the cross-cultural skills of school professionals also may impact the process.

Some families may not be comfortable with the level and type of participation expected of them. Others may subscribe to the belief that "the educator knows best." Still, in some cultures, parents may nod their head indicating they understand what is being said and not to signify agreement with what is said. (Garcia, 2002)

Kalyanpur and Harry (1999) suggest educators need to reflect upon their own cultural values, the values of their family and identify any differences in the two sets of values. Only then will they be able to consider how the school can acknowledge, respect, and accommodate the value system of the family. Creating a climate of trust supports the family in the process. Educators can work within the comfort zone of the family as the team moves through the process (Garcia, 2002).

Several factors influence how well a school does in diagnosing ELLs' learning disabilities and avoiding overrepresentation of ELLs in special education. Such factors include demonstrating an essential understanding of second language learning for teachers of ELLs, utilizing responsive pedagogical practices, willingness to learn about ELLs and what they offer as individuals and as a group, identification of language demands inherent in classroom tasks, and scaffolding learning for ELLs. Principals can have a direct impact in the process by ensuring teachers meet these expectations (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006).

Walker, Shafer, and Iiams (2004) state teachers hold school administrators accountable for the pervasiveness of negative teacher attitudes; principals can create a school culture that not only tolerates but promotes beliefs that ELLs are to blame for their own social and academic failures. How do educational leaders address this conflict? It is important that educational leaders become culturally proficient leaders. As society changes and medical advancements continue, more and more diverse students will be enrolled in our schools.

Educational leaders need to embrace the process of moving their school towards achieving the state of cultural proficiency. Cultural proficiency "is a way of being that enables both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them" (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003, p. 5). Lindsey et al. (2003) further state cultural competence is "a behavior aligned with standards that move an organization or an individual toward culturally proficient interactions" (p. 4).

ELLs are a subgroup needing educator support when addressing culture in schools. First, principals can create an environment at their schools that invites the students' languages and cultures into each class. Principals and other leaders can seek out and provide professional development opportunities for the staff related to second language learning. Staff should learn about the importance of primary language literacy as a predictor of second language literacy development. This concept is needed to support language and literacy across all of the content areas and grade levels as a way of avoiding unnecessary reading difficulties which often result in special education referrals.

Educational teams are charged with collectively addressing the needs of all students. Expectations for culturally proficient educators are vital in facilitating such success. Lindsey et al. (2003) state:

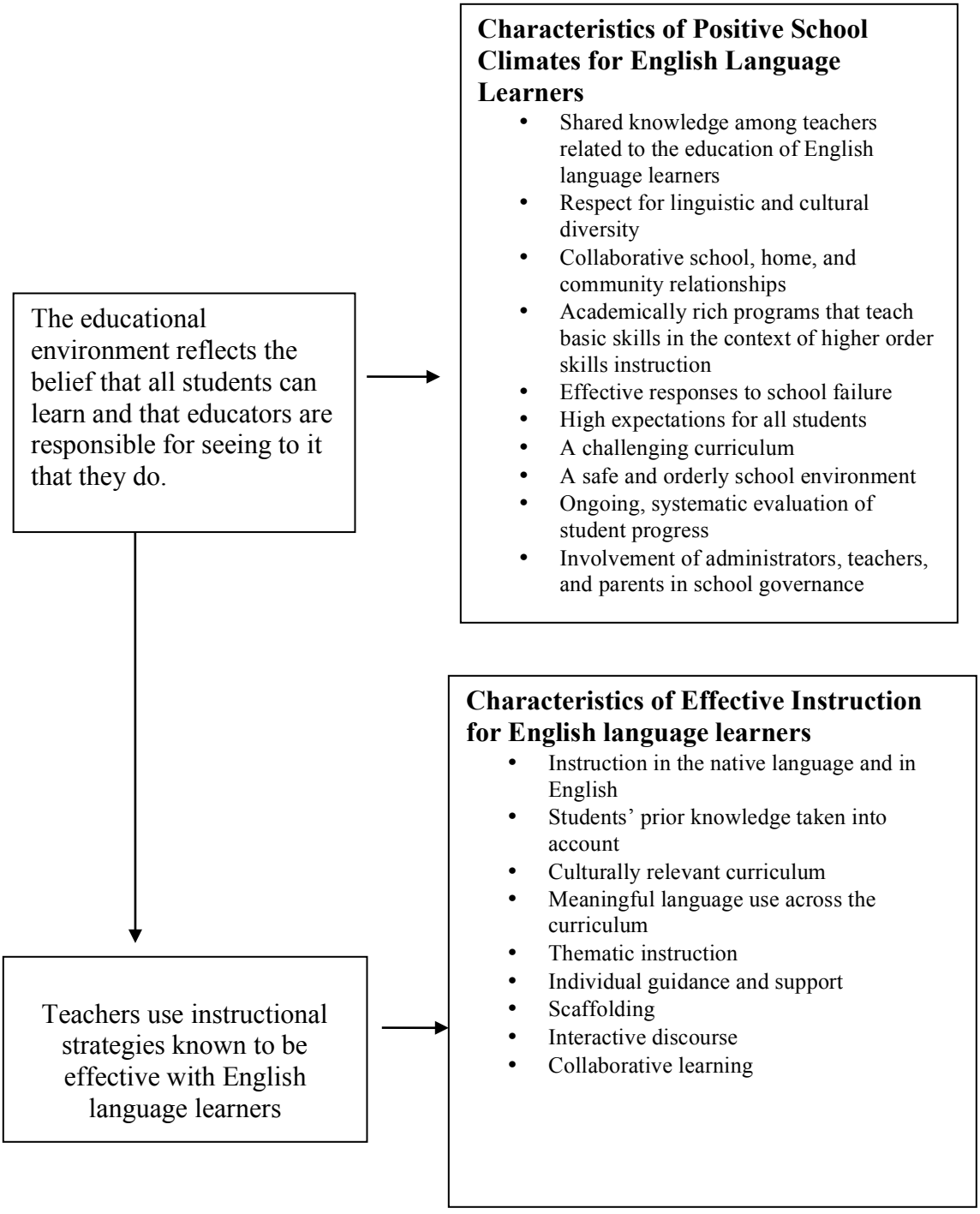
> Cultural proficiency is a way of being the enables one to effectively respond in a variety of cultural settings to the issues caused by diversity. A culturally proficient organization interacts effectively with its employees, its clients, and its community. Culturally proficient people may not know all there is to know about others who are different from them, but they know how to take advantage of teachable moments, how to ask questions without offending, and how to create an environment that is welcoming to diversity and change. (p. 84)

ELLs are as able to learn as any other student in the school. ESL classes must be demanding. An educator who views ESL classes as trivial are doomed to fail (Jesness, 2004).

ELL Programming Essential Components

Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik (1991) state "Prevention of failure among ELLs involves two critical elements: the creation of educational environments conducive to academic success and the use of instructional strategies known to be effective with these students" (p. 596). Educational leaders should incorporate the essential components from the research into their district and building level programs to support ELLs. The following diagram summarizes the key concepts related to the critical elements.

Table 2.3: Characteristics of Positive School Climates for English Language Learners



ELL educational programs are aligned with federal and state requirements. Educational programs contain "specific program factors and instructional characteristics to promote the academic success of ELLs" (Genesee et al., 2005, p. 371) including:

- A positive school environment.
- A curriculum that was meaningful and academically challenging, incorporated higher order thinking, was thematically integrated, established a clear alignment with standards and assessment, and was consistent and sustained over time.
- A program model that was grounded in sound theory and best practices associated with an enriched, not remedial, instructional model.
- Teachers in bilingual programs who understand theories about bilingualism and second language development as well as the goals and rationale for the model in which they were teaching.
- The use of cooperative learning and high-quality exchanges between teachers and pupils.

Development of educational programs that meet the needs of ELLs can prove to be an arduous task. Districts need to establish collaborative partnerships with other community organizations in the process of developing ELL programs. The fruits of such collaborative partnerships can yield effective ELL programming opportunities and decrease referrals for special education services.

Genesee et al. (2005) contend an enriched an consistent program that provides a challenging curriculum and incorporates language development components and appropriate assessment results in ELLs being more successful than when they participate

in mainstream English classrooms. The factors and characteristics Genesee et al. provide as a framework for ELL program development can be most effectively addressed through professional development opportunities for key stakeholders at each phase of implementation.

Teacher Preparation

In addition to the principal or educational leader at the site, teacher preparation also impacts ELL performance in school. O'Neal et al. (2008) contend "while 54% of teachers taught ELLs or culturally diverse students, only 20% felt adequately prepared to teach them" (p.9).Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) argue teachers exude greater confidence in their skills for working with ELLs when provided with greater preparation for teaching English language learners.

Teachers perceived that not all educators who work with ELLs in their schools were qualified to work with linguistic minority children. The lack of a teacher's knowledge and skills in educating ELLs coupled with a lack of diversity and multicultural education were identified as challenges (Batt, 2008).

> The problem in our schools is that the mainstream teachers and administrators don't understand LEP needs and how to teach them. We need some help here! The district's ESL program just doesn't have the staff resources, not to mention an adequate budget to do it alone. Everybody needs to own these kids. Require all staff members to attend classes on how to work with ESL and ELL students. I have people in my building that refer to my kids as 'them'. We need more consistency in our district from school to school. More…support from mainstream teachers toward ELL teachers and students. We still have a high number of staff who say things like 'They shouldn't be here,' 'Send them back to Mexico,' etc. (Batt, 2008, 40)

Walker et al. (2004) state teachers who reported being unprepared felt helpless and did not know where to begin providing the necessary supports to ELLs; eighty eight

percent of teachers nationwide report never having received any training or professional development in working with ELLs.

According to Batt (2008) "As demographics of English language learners increase and shortages of ESL and bilingual educators continue, all educators need the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively educate linguistic minority students. The success of ELL students cannot remain the sole responsibility of ESL and bilingual educators in the era of No Child Left Behind" (p. 40). Youngs and Youngs (2001) argue "even a little appropriate training can go a long way in preventing and improving negative teacher attitudes" (p. 112). In addition, Young and Young (2001) suggest teachers with some training are more likely to want ELLs in their classes, be more receptive to the idea that ELLs bring diversity to the school, and hold a stronger belief that mainstream teachers need to adapt their instruction for ELLs.

Batt (2008) conducted research to address teacher perception of the greatest challenges and needs for improvement of ELL education. She described the greatest challenges impeding effective education for ELLs as well as areas of professional development needed to overcome the identified challenges. Youngs (1999) suggests teachers may be concerned about the chronic lack of time to address ELLs' unique classroom needs and the possibility that ELLs will slow the class progress through the curriculum. Giltin, Buenda, Crosland, and Doumbia (2003) argue teachers maybe concerned about perceived increases in teacher workloads when ELLs are enrolled in mainstream classes. Verplaetse (1998) states teachers may have feelings of professional inadequacy to work with ELLs.

Teachers need to become as well prepared as possible to teach this changing population. Lee (2004) reports teachers feel unqualified to teach ESL; teacher education programs as well as professional development programs do not adequately prepare teachers to teach ELLs. As society's demographics change, educating English language learners can be a challenge if educators are not equipped with current research based methodologies and instructional strategies for this population. Walker et al. (2004) contend "Teachers who are uncomfortable with feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and helpless may in time begin to deflect their negative feelings onto their ELL students and begin to believe in the widespread deficit theories teachers hold regarding ELLs" (p. 149). Also, a lack of training often results in a referral for special education services, thereby increasing special education costs and district expense.

Currently in PA, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2015) reports "The ESL Program Specialist K-12 Program Guidelines are developed pursuant to Title 22 of the State Board of Education's regulations and follow the General Standards required for all certificated for State Approval of Professional Educator Programs." Additionally, the Department supports Walqui's (2009) work to be sure ESL instructors collaborate with content teachers to sustain academic rigor, hold high expectations, engage in quality interactions, sustain a language focus and develop quality curricula.

Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) contend the most successful ESL teachers have identifiable instructional and cultural practices and knowledge to support ELLs in the classroom setting. Such skills and knowledge include the ability to communicate with students, the ability to engage students' families, the knowledge of language uses, forms, mechanics, and how to teach these, and a feeling of efficacy with

regard to teaching ELLs. Furthermore, Gandara et al. (2005) state teachers play a central role in students' education. They argue that factors that contribute to effective instruction include knowledge of teaching and learning, deep content knowledge, experience, and full certification in the field.

Both ELL teachers and content area teachers need to be prepared to use research based instructional strategies when working with ELLs. There is limited research on teacher efficacy that addresses ELLs with special education needs. What is known is teacher efficacy affects teachers' thoughts, their actions, their efforts, and the perseverance in improving student achievement (Paneque & Barbetta, 2006).

As the demographics continue to change in America's schools, it becomes the responsibility of *all* teacher education programs to prepare *all* teachers to effectively educate the growing population of English language learners (O'Neal et al., 2008). Currently, most teachers obtain their ESL training through one-time workshops and/or professional development offered by their school district. O'Neal et al., (2008) contend "The most effective method of professional development makes ESL training an on-going process with a commitment from teachers and administrators to transfer the ESL knowledge into the classroom" (p. 9).

According to Batt (2008) the greatest challenges affecting ELL instruction include the qualifications of the educator, understaffing of ESL and bilingual educators, and extra duties. The certified teachers worked in a variety of regular education and ESL education models; some teachers taught in multiple models within their school or district.

In addition to an insufficient number of ESL and bilingual educators employed in districts, many teachers contend they are stretched too thin. There is not enough

recognized time in the workday to achieve the workload demands. Extra duties, including bus duty, lunch duty, and recess duty, for ESL teachers constrain ESL teacher effectiveness and create undue pressure and personal stress. An overwhelming experience of stress is identified in performing a big job solo as well as with many extra duties (Batt, 2008).

> I spend three hours on paperwork to every one hour of my teaching and prep time. I may leave after this year because it is too overwhelming, too much to do and little to no support from administrators! NCLB is changing the rules, but no one is helping to change the program for the students. (Batt, 2008, p. 41)

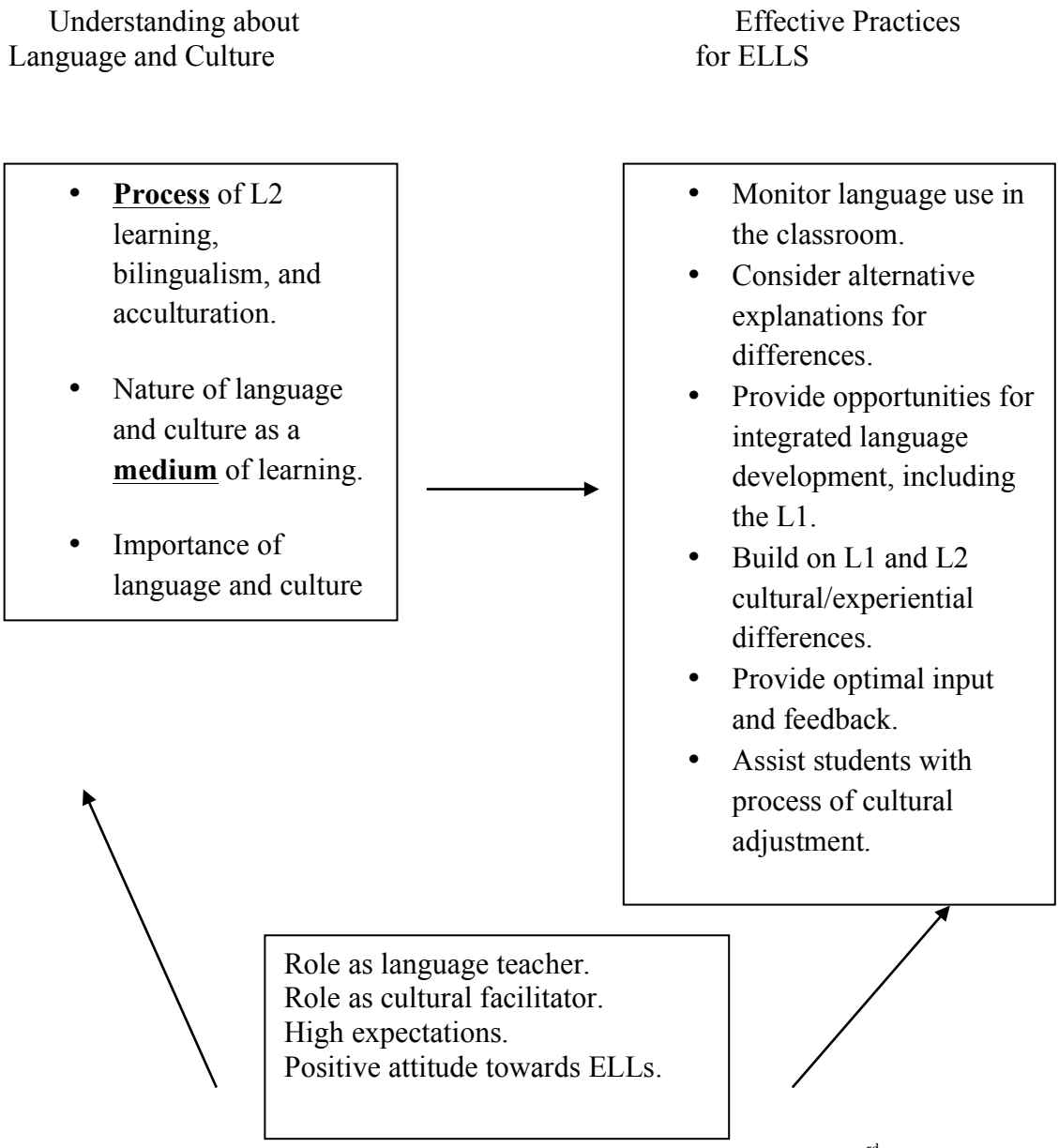
Administrators need to work to retain ESL teachers. Administrators should be concerned about teacher effectiveness when ESL teachers are given extra duties. Clerical assistants and interpreters should be hired to support the school so ESL teachers can effectively and efficiently teach the students (Batt, 2008).

Teacher training programs require a second look to ensure the training programs address the necessary needs for teachers to be effective in today's schools (Youngs & Youngs, 2001.) Batt (2008) suggests "Dialogue between professionals in schools and in teacher education programs is a necessary first step toward narrowing the gap between the skill set that teacher education currently imparts to pre-service teachers and the skills educators need in today's schools" (p. 41). Furthermore, a higher priority must be afforded for teacher preparation coursework to address diversity issues and ESL methods for all teachers. Often, students enrolled in teacher preparation programs view minimum program requirements as maximum program requirements (Batt, 2008).

Teacher preparation programs that do not include coursework to address diversity issues and ESL methods for all teachers produce teachers who are not prepared to properly educate today's students with critical skills to be successful. "Administrators are left with the costly and logistically difficult recourse of providing professional development to overcome the deficiency in skills needed by in-service educators to help ELLs succeed academically" (Batt, 2008, p. 3

The following chart highlights the importance of educators understanding about language and culture, as well as effective practices for ELLs. In order to move from 'just good teaching' to good teaching for all students, including ELLs, mainstream teachers need additional knowledge and skills.

Table 2.4: Teachers' Dispositions



Nieto, S. (2000). Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

In sum, "Teacher quality is critical to student learning; teacher preparation and expertise are part of the quality equation, but teachers of ELLs often lack the preparation and expertise" (Gandara et al., 2005, p. 13).

Professional Development

Professional development needs to be purposeful and linked to the district initiatives. Professional development topics can not only address the factors and characteristics previously identified by Genesee et al., (2004) but they can also be used to strengthen relationships within the local community thereby allowing for opportunities to move up the social ladder into an integrated society. Hamayan and Freeman (2006) offer a list of suggestions that include the following:

- Let the native language play a significant role within the school
- Make it easier for parents to attend events at school
- Offer classes for parents
- Encourage participation in school governance
- Encourage home visits
- Recruit parents as volunteers
- Hold activities that integrate the English-speaking and ELL communities (p. 126)

A task force can be developed to assist the organization with establishing relationships among key stakeholders from the community. Hamayan and Freeman's suggestions may manifest in relationships established with community organizations, community leaders, local colleges and universities, and key members of the educational institution.

Professional development is critical to ensure organizations implement policies and procedures with fidelity. Professional development topics may include, but not be limited to the following – legal mandates, administrative knowledge and skills, and

effective instructional strategies. "Classroom based opportunities, engagement with a network of peers, sustained and intensive experiences, and a solid foundation in research and methodologies derived from and addressed to teachers, their practice, and their students" as the most effective types of professional development for staff (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006 p. 121).

Professional development has the ability to make a difference in how confident teachers feel meeting the challenge of teaching ELLs. Gandara et al. (2005) suggest "teachers with any professional development that focused on increasing skills for teaching ELLs rated themselves significantly more able to teach these students across all categories of instruction than teachers with no such training" (p. 16).

Batt (2008) proposed specific solutions related to professional development and program restructuring as two major responses to overcome the greatest challenges. Areas of professional development identified include: parent involvement (30 percent); ESL curriculum development (29 percent); Spanish language class (28 percent); first and second language literacy methods (26 percent); sheltered English instruction (25 percent); ESL methods (24 percent); and establishment of a newcomer center (24 percent).

Professional development is not the sole requirement for ESL teachers. ESL teachers and bilingual educators must collaborate with both mainstream teachers and administrators to meet the multiple challenges of educating English Language Learners. Teachers with language-teaching skills need to be integrated into the workforce. The hiring of teachers in specialized areas can be challenging in the highly qualified teacher status era (Batt, 2008).

In conclusion, both elementary and secondary teachers cite professional development as a venue from which they learned about the developmental and other characteristics of ELLs to be the most useful. Teachers with various certifications agreed the topics that would most help them improve their teaching of ELLs include: second language reading/writing, various teaching strategies to support ELLs, and English language development (Gandara et al., 2005).

ELL Programs, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

Most teachers are aware that their specific content area uses specialized language. Teachers use graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities to make their instruction more accessible to ELLs. Krashen (1985) says comprehensible input is necessary but not sufficient for ELLs. Gibbons (1998) states "unlike curriculum planning for native English speakers, for L2 learners the construction of new curriculum knowledge must go hand-in-hand with the development of the second language" (p. 99).

Hamayan and Freeman (2006) state all English language learners are not homogeneous. They differ in socioeconomic status, background, languages they speak, English proficiency, and in many other ways. The diverse and complex needs to English language learners can be met through several instructional delivery models. Two- way immersion programs, developmental bilingual programs, transitional bilingual programs, and newcomer programs are models used in districts to meet the unique needs of the English language learners.

Two-way immersion programs provide instruction to English language learners who speak a common language as well as native English speakers. Genesee (1999) suggests students develop in an environment in which both languages are valued and

developed, and academic content is learned through two languages. The goals for both the English language learners and native English speakers are to develop high levels of first and second language proficiency, academic development, and cross-cultural understanding. High levels of proficiency in English as well as the native language of the student are hallmarks of a developmental bilingual program. Strong academic development is essential. Students served are primarily English language learners. Academic instruction is provided in both languages. Students generally participate in a developmental bilingual program for five to six years (Genesee, 1999).

A transitional bilingual program is a program emphasizing native language academic instruction concurrently with English academic instruction. As students demonstrate academic proficiency in English, the students move to all-English, mainstream classes. Participation in a transitional bilingual program may last one to three years (Genesee, 1999).

Genesee (1999) states newcomer programs are programs specifically designed to support recent arrivals to the United States who have no or low English proficiency and often limited literacy in their native language. The goal is to accelerate the acquisition of language and academic skills and to orient them to the United States and U.S. schools. English language learners in newcomer programs participate in such programs for one to one and a half year.

Districts develop and adopt policy and procedures for addressing ELL curriculum and instruction. Li and Zhang (2004) argue "The lack of ESL training for teachers was reflected not only in their use of instructional methods but also in their selection of materials" (p. 95). The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was developed

by Jane Echevarria, Mary Ellen Vogt, and Deborah Short in the mid 1990's to address the unique needs of English Language Learners. The SIOP Model is implemented in districts throughout all 50 states in the United States, and in numerous other countries. (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010, p. xi) The following discussion highlights the essential framework of the SIOP Model.

Echevarria et al. (2010) developed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP Model, to "operationalize sheltered instruction by offering teachers a model for lesson planning and implementation that provides English Language Learners with access to grade-level content standards" (p. 257). The SIOP model provides the comprehensive framework of instruction to prepare teachers to work with English Language Learners. A combination of classroom observation, coaching, discussion, and reflection serve as key pillars of the SIOP model.

Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice and Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review and Assessment are the eight essential components of the SIOP Model. The eight components of the SIOP model, when used appropriately, increase academic achievement for English Language Learners (ELL). The following discussion will highlight the critical aspects of each pillar. The eight components can be used simultaneously as students progress through the stages of language development from Pre-Vocabulary Production, Early Vocabulary Production, Early Sentence/Speech Emergence, Intermediate Sentence/Speech, Early Advanced, and Advanced (Vogt & Echevarria, 2007).

Lesson Preparation is critical to the success of both the teacher and the student. It enables students to make connections between their own knowledge and experiences and

the new information that is being taught. Appropriate motivating materials and activities foster real life application of concepts (Echevarria et al., 2010, p.26) .

According to Echevarria et al., (2010) the six features of Lesson Preparation include:

- Content Objectives Clearly Defined, Displayed, and Reviewed with Students
- Language Objectives Clearly Defined, Displayed, and Reviewed with Students
- Content Concepts Appropriate for Age and Educational Background
- Supplementary Materials Used to a High Degree
- Adaptation of Content to All Levels of Student Proficiency
- Meaningful Activities that Integrate Lesson Concepts with Language Practice Opportunities

English language learners need to be prepared for learning by being able to communicate about the learning experience. ELLs need to be able to ask for help when needed. Learning a new language mirrors the process when acquiring a first language. English learners typically start with a pre-production, or silent period, when first introduced to English. During this period, students begin to comprehend English, but do not yet attempt to speak it. This period can last from a few days to many months, depending on the student. As ELLs continue to learn English, they begin to produce one or two word phrases, and then move to sentences. As students are acquiring English, they will often struggle with grammar and pronunciation, but our emphasis should be on conveying meaning, not grammatical perfection (Echevarria et al., 2010).Krashen (1985) contends a disconnect exists between what a student learned and

experienced and the concepts the teacher. Taking students from where they are and leading them to a higher level of understanding is the result of effective teaching. Building background addresses this mismatch. Echevarria et al. (210) suggests three features in Building Background:

- Concepts Explicitly Linked to Students' Background Experiences
- Links Explicitly Made Between Past Learning and New Concepts
- Key Vocabulary Emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see)

The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2008) suggests teachers can build background connections for ELLs by making purposeful connections to prior learning, by teaching the most important vocabulary, and by trying to connect the content to something the student may have already experienced. Teachers build background with the use of KWL Charts, Pre-reading activities, student journals, personal dictionaries, or other such methods.

Echevarria et al. (2010) argue an effective SIOP teacher considers the unique characteristics of English learners. For these students, the teacher makes verbal communication more understandable by consciously attending to students' linguistic development. Making the message understandable for students is referred to as comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985).

When addressing comprehensible input, teachers make assignments clear by using vocabulary students can understand and by providing a variety of instructional experiences. Echevarria et al. (2010) identify three features to address comprehensive input:

- Speech Appropriate for Students' Proficiency Levels
- Clear Explanation of Academic Tasks
- A Variety of Techniques Used to Make Content Concepts Clear

Krashen (1983) suggests English language learners can achieve from knowing specific strategies to use that increase comprehension. Furthermore, Echevarria et al. (2010) state students can "access information from memory, connect what they know to what they are learning, assist in problem solving, and promote retention of newly learned information. This involves explicit teaching of learning strategies and skills that support the desired learning outcome. Key features for strategies include:

- Ample Opportunities Provided for Students to Use Learning Strategies
- Scaffolding Techniques Consistently Used, Assisting and Supporting Student Understanding
- A Variety of Questions or Tasks That Promote Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Echevarria et al. (2010) contend that all teachers are teachers of English, even if their content specialization is science, math, or social studies. Teachers must create ample opportunities to practice using *academic* language, not just social language. Sufficient wait time, group consensus, and academic relays are various ways in which student/teacher and student/student interactions are enhanced. Interaction features include:

- Frequent Opportunities for Interaction and Discussion
- Grouping Configurations Support Language ad Content Objectives f the Lesson
- Sufficient Wait Time for Student Responses Consistently Provided

- Ample Opportunity for Students to Clarify key Concepts I L1 (Native Language

English language learners need hands-on materials and opportunities to practice and apply newly learned concepts and skills. The teacher provides oversight as the students demonstrate how well they are learning the new material. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are integrated into the activities (Echavarria et al., 2010). Practice and Application features include:

- Hands-On Materials and/or Manipulatives Provided for Students to Practice Using New Content Knowledge
- Activities Provided for Students to Apply Content and Language Knowledge
- Activities Integrate All Language Skills

Effective lessons clearly state both content standards and language standards for English language learners. Lesson delivery is closely related to lesson preparation. Echevarria et al. (2010) argue the preparation that took place on the part of the teacher before the student entered the classroom can be directly linked to the level of student participation, how clearly information is communicated, and the students' level of understanding as reflected in the quality of their work. The four features of lesson delivery include:

- Content Objectives Clearly Supported by Lesson Delivery
- Language Objectives Clearly Supported by Lesson Delivery
- Students Engaged Approximately 90% to 100% of the Period
- Pacing of the Lesson Appropriate to Students' Ability Levels

The Review and assessment portion of the SIOP Model provides a comprehensive and deliberate review of vocabulary, key content area concepts, and language standards

to enable English Language Learners to demonstrate mastery of skills and concepts. Echevarria et al. (2010) contend "Effective teachers use assessment findings to plan their lessons according to student needs and strengths, and to evaluate how effectively their lessons have been delivered. Effective teachers also recognize the importance of ongoing and continuous assessment of a lesson's content and language objectives throughout the lesson" (p. 303). Review and assessment characteristics include:

- Comprehensive Review of Key Vocabulary
- Comprehensive Review of Key Content Concepts
- Regular Feedback Provided to Students on Their Output
- Assessment of Student Comprehension and Learning of All Lesson Objectives Throughout the Lesson

The authors of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model have captured the key features of the eight pillars in a user an administrator/teacher friendly format. The data collection tool provides a tool to capture essential data to reflect upon the effectiveness of planning, instruction, and assessment for supporting ELLs. This tool is reflected in Appendix F.

Problem of ELLs in Special Education Settings

The demographics of students served in the public schools are continually changing. Teachers need to become as well prepared as possible to teach this changing population. As society's demographics change, educating English language learners (ELLs) can be a challenge if educators are not equipped with current research based methodologies and instructional strategies for this population. Orosco and Klingner (2010) argue many teachers did not have the expertise from teacher education programs

and professional development to differentiate instruction for ELLs. This lack of training often results in a referral for special education services.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 increase the accountability of school districts to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all special education students. As the demographics of society change, the result is seen in the classrooms of our schools. Students whose native language is other than English are increasing when we look at a school's profile. Often teachers do not know what to do with English Language Learners.

Echevarria et al. (2010) claim teaching English Language Learners to read can be difficult due to challenges associated with reading and writing a language that is often not understood by the ELL. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) states:

> Many older English learners, including those who are native-born Americans, have been schooled almost exclusively in the United States, yet their home language differs from the language of instruction. A large number of these students are not fully literate in either their L1 or English, and most have not been successful in school. Sadly, 30 percent of secondary students are failing to graduate in even higher numbers. Eighty percent of the English learners in the United States are Hispanic, and of these only 52 percent graduate from high school.

Vogt and Shearer (2007) acknowledged a number of discrepancies between teachers' attitudes and practices toward middle and high school low-achieving and high-achieving students. For example, higher-performing students, compared to opportunities given to their lower-performing peers:

- Spend more classroom time engaged in silent rather than oral reading.
- Are provided with more instructional time related to comprehension.

- Are given more opportunities to engage in higher levels of thinking and strategic learning and more independent research and synthesis projects.
- Are asked questions requiring higher levels of thinking, followed by more wait time.
- Are provided with richer, comprehensive, grade level texts and supplemental materials.
- Are offered greater opportunities for leadership.

Literacy development in the native language (L1) of an ELL directly correlates to literacy development in English (L2). Tabors and Snow (2005) state students who immigrate to the United States with well-developed L1 reading skills have mastered the essentials of reading. The students know print has meaning, sounds have symbols, and when the symbols are put together create words and meaning. The knowledge of syntax in L1 can be used to make connections to English. August (2006) argues students who read satisfactorily in their primary language and demonstrate native language literacy do not have to relearn how to read or write.

Inadequacies in practice, as well as bias, can contribute to disparities in the special education process. It all begins at the stage of initial classroom referral. Teachers referred minority children more often than nonminority children (Skiba et. al., 2008). Gravois and Rosenfield (2006) suggest "Schools using an instructional consultation model significantly reduced both their overall rate of special education referral and identification *and* reduced racial/ethnic discrepancies in rates of referral and identification." (p. 48).

Given identical referral information, both general and special education teachers demonstrate a greater willingness to recommend minority students for special education. Furthermore, some teachers rated students of minority backgrounds different from their own as more appropriate for special education identification (Skiba et al., 2008). McCardle et al. (2005) state it is uncertain how specific types of learning disabilities will appear in different languages. The assessment process to determine whether or not an ELL has a learning disability requires the use of valid assessment tools. There are a limited number of assessment tools to address academic achievement for ELLs, including the Bateria Woodcock-Munoz-Revisada assessment. Artiles and Ortiz (2002) argue "the use of translated tests, no matter how well done, should be disallowed. Rigorous attempts to produce psychometrically valid and comparable dual-language versions of test have concluded that the effort may well be impossible" (p. 73). There are two choices for educators working with ELLs: become highly proficient bilinguals or look for another way to determine why some ELLs do not make satisfactory academic progress (Artiles and Ortiz, 2002).

During the assessment process, psychologists and other professionals may choose to use accommodations in the testing process, including extended time, breaks offered between sessions, directions read in the student's native language, or use of a scribe. The accommodations are to ensure the structure of the assessment tool does not impede the ELLs' mastery of their skills or content knowledge. In addition to the standardized measures, McCardle et al. (2005) suggest classroom teachers can develop classroom assessments that incorporate the students, their culture, and their home with school.

No matter what assessment is used, it is critical to make sure ELLs are assessed for English proficiency, academic achievement, or the presence of a learning disability, and that they are assessed in their native language as well as in English. The data gained from this process are important when considering appropriate educational placement and intervention (McCardle et al., 2005; Oetting et al., 2008).

Skiba et al. (2008) report "A number of characteristics of disproportionality have been noted. Disproportionate representation is greater in the judgmental or invisible disability categories of MR, ED, or LD than in the nonjudgmental or visible disability categories, such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, or orthopedic impairment. Appendix A captures Provisions of IDEA 2004 With Respect to Minority Disproportionality in Special Education.

Echevarria et al. (2010) site the work of numerous ELL experts and argue factors "contributing to the disproportionate number of minority students referred to and placed in special education include:

- Teachers and administrators in general education often fail to provide effective instruction in fundamental subjects of reading and math
- A mismatch between minority-learner characteristics and the materials and teaching methods presented in school
- Students who are culturally and linguistically diverse may not have the requisite background knowledge and experience to perform well academically
- Culturally and linguistically diverse students may not have the behaviors that are consistent with the values of school (Cormer, 1984);

- Effects of poverty (Smith, 2006);
- Low teacher expectations (Callahan, 2005);
- Poor study habits and poor time management (Ford, 1998)
- Cultural differences in students' and teachers' behavioral expectations (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest 2003);
- Language differences (Cummins,1984; Echeverria & Graves, 2007; Genesee, 1994).

Table 2.5: Risk Ratios for All Disability Categories

Disability	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black (not Hispanic)	Hispanic	White (not Hispanic)
SLD	1.53	0.39	1.34	1.10	0.86
S/L	1.18	0.67	1.06	0.86	1.11
MR	1.10	0.45	3.04	0.60	0.61
SED	1.30	0.28	2.25	0.52	0.86
OHI	1.08	0.35	1.05	0.44	1.63
Autism	0.63	1.24	1.11	0.53	1.26
DD	2.89	0.68	1.59	0.43	1.06
All	1.35	0.48	1.46	0.87	0.92

Note: Soft disability categories drawn from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2006), 26th annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 2004.

Key:
SLD= Specific Learning Disability
S/L = Speech and Language Impairment
MR = Mental Retardation
SED = Serious Emotional Disturbance
OHI = Other Health Impairment
Autism = Autism
DD = Developmental Delay
All = All Disabilities, including both "soft" and "hard" disability categories

Some state and district based studies have shown Latino overrepresentation in special education. National data reveal the most common finding of *underrepresentation*

of Latino students in overall special education services and in most disability categories (National Center on Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, NCCRESt, 2006). Data from the above table suggest American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic overrepresentation in LD. The discrepant overrepresentation may be due, in part, to the tendency for overrepresentation to become more pronounced as minority students represent larger proportions of the population. The difficulty in accurately distinguishing between language acquisition difficulties for English Language Learners and a language disability also complicates assessment and identification issues (Barrera, 2006).

Brownell, Sindelar, Kiely and Danielson (2010) suggest "Special education teacher preparation has evolved over the last 150 years, since special education teachers were first prepared in residential settings. Shifting perspectives on disabilities, effective practice, and providing services to students with disabilities has led to changes in how special education is conceptualized and organized, and, consequently, how special education preparation programs are structured" (p. 357). Goe (2006) takes it a step further stating "special education teacher preparation has lost focus, and there is enormous heterogeneity among programs" (p. 15).

Brownell et al. (2010) state "Special education teacher educators must rethink what makes a quality special education teacher, and that process should be informed by the field's history and by the trends in policy, service delivery, and research that have shaped special education and teacher education practice" (p. 358). This in turn will enable the creation of a framework for redesigning teacher education to fit the current educational context.

The Individuals with Education Disabilities Act (IDEA), a policy that works hand- in- hand with NCLB, clearly illustrates the need for an observation checklist to capture the alignment between policy and implementation. A search of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) website reveals 1,112 results for an "IDEA compliance checklist" search on the PDE site. States and school districts use the compliance monitoring tools to collect data as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of current practices.

Special education is an area in the field of education that focuses on how educational policy is best aligned with the metaphor of a machine. Everything from timelines, evaluation, assessment tools, reporting, instruction, and discipline are part of the "if this, then that" arm of the machine lens. Detailed structures of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process are outlined in comprehensive flowcharts used throughout the United States.

Whether policy regards regular education or special education, Morgan (2006) stated Frederick Taylor advocated five simple principles:

- *Shift all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker to the manager*;
- *Use scientific methods*, specifying the *precise* way in which the work is to be done;
- *Select* the best person to perform the job;
- *Train* the worker to do the work efficiently;
- *Monitor* worker performance to ensure appropriate work procedures are followed.

His scientific approach called for detailed observation and measurement of even the most routine work to find the optimum mode of performance." (p. 23).

The Office of Special Education Programs (2002) reports disproportionate representation of minority students in special education is most pronounced among the mild and moderate disability categories, such as learning disabilities and speech and language disorders. The characteristics of students in these disability categories are not as easily identifiable as they are in students with more significant disabilities. Klinger and Harry (2006) suggest it is difficult for school personnel to distinguish between the challenges associated with acquiring a second language and a language based learning disability.

Theoretical Policy Frameworks

The last section of the literature review discusses the theoretical bases for English language learner referrals to special education programs. Morgan's (1997) theory of organizations as cultures will be discussed as one possible theory to determine educators' decisions in the referral process of English Language Learners to special education programs. The second possible theory is Gross' (2007) turbulence theory which describes organizational response to the changing demographics in schools.

Morgan's theory of organizations as cultures guides this research as a descriptive theory. Morgan (1997) contends "When we talk about culture we are usually referring to the pattern of development reflected in a society's system of knowledge, ideology, values, laws, and day-to-day ritual" (p.21). The descriptive theory provides a useful foundation to determine educators' decisions in the referral process of English Language

Learners to special education programs. Through reflection, educators can use this pattern of data to help guide the referral process.

Gross' turbulence theory guides this research as a predictive theory. Gross (2007) states "Each successful metaphor illuminates an aspect of reality. Coinciding with this illumination, however, each metaphor simultaneously obscures something of reality. Turbulence theory illuminates levels of change in our organizations and helps us frame them" (p. 49). This predictive theory frames educators' reactions to such change in the referral process of English language learners to special education programs.

Morgan's Theory of Organizations as Cultures

"Important dimensions of modern culture are rooted in the structure of industrial society" (Morgan, 1997, p. 118). In order to maximize the collective outcome, everyone is expected to perform to the best of his or her ability. Interdependence, shared concerns, and mutual help are key aspects of the collaborative spirit shared among a community (Morgan, 1997).

Morgan contends, "It is difficult to judge a culture from the outside. What seems unacceptable from a Western viewpoint may be completely acceptable from within" (p. 121). The quality of the organization is shaped by culture. Viewing differences provides an opportunity to appreciate diversity and allows for gaining a better appreciation of what we offer (Morgan, 1997). Furthermore, Morgan (1997) states, "There is considerable value in adopting the standpoint of the cultural stranger because, in becoming aware of the stranger's point of view, we can see our own in a refreshingly new perspective" (p. 125). In terms of supporting English Language Learners, educators need to consider the ELL's perspective in their new educational environment.

Subcultures exist within each culture. Among subcultures, "shared patterns of beliefs, operating norms and rituals can exert a decisive influence on the overall ability of the organization to deal with the challenges that it faces" (Morgan, 1997, p. 125). Many educational organizations say one thing and do another. According to Morgan (1997) educators need to be "aware of the patterns of interaction between individuals, the language that is used, the images and themes explored in conversation, and the various rituals of daily routine" (p. 125).

"Culture is not something that can be imposed on a social setting. Rather, it develops during the course of social interaction" (Morgan, 1997, p. 132). In addition to gender, race, language, and ethnicity, religious, socioeconomic, friendship, and professional groups may have a decisive impact on culture. Any group may provide different norms and patterns of behavior which impacts daily functions (Morgan, 1997). Within a school environment, all stakeholders are active in building the culture of the school.

Those in power have the ability to shape the values that guide an organization (Morgan, 1997). Morgan (1997) believes "The idea of building a team of integrated players is a powerful one" (p. 131). Educational organizations must expect the team working with English Language Learners to view the experience as an opportunity instead of a deficit.

Morgan (1997) states "Shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture" (p. 134). Morgan's (1997) perspective of understanding the patterns helps to cope with the situation and provides a basis for making our own behavior sensible and meaningful. In

the case of English Language Learners, educators can celebrate the individuality ELLs offer to the educational environment and respond with a welcoming approach to provide all students with opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with diverse classmates.

Gross' Turbulence Theory

"The purpose of Turbulence Theory transcends the need to describe the sudden and sometimes wrenching changes; it is meant to help us gain perspective on the movement, see potential benefits, and retain needed flexibility" (Gross, 2014, p. 246). According to Gross (2014) the intention of turbulence theory is to add a new dimension to understand organizational life.

Gross (2014) identifies four levels of turbulence, including light, moderate, severe, and extreme. Light turbulence is characterized by no immediate existence of a crisis; however the situation requires a series of responses and regular monitoring. In moderate turbulence, it is not a case as business as usual but a specific issue requires focused attention. With moderate turbulence cases require action, sensitivity, and creativity (Gross, 2014). According to Gross (2014) "existing committee structures called to action in time and given clear focus can respond to this level of turbulence" (p. 247).

With severe turbulence, the entire organization is at risk. New leaders and new responses are needed. The use of existing organizational structures could not help to support the situation. Destruction is imminent (Gross, 2014). In cases of extreme turbulence the condition "creates a crisis to which even the inventiveness of talented school and community leader may not be equal" (Gross, 2014, p. 248).

Positionality, the effect of cascading, and stability, or volatility of the organization, are three underlying dynamics of turbulence. A meaningful and constant understanding of positionality within an organization is beneficial. With regard to positionality, Gross (2014) contends all turbulence is not felt to the same degree by everyone in the organization. Gross (2014) states "Understanding cascading is a matter of understanding context and the force of a series of turbulent conditions" (p. 250). Gross (2014) argues "This means not only attempting to be empathetic to the turbulence as students might experience it, but also acknowledging that groups of students (as organized by gender, race, age, socioeconomic status (SES), or years in the community, for instance) may experience it differently" (p. 248).

Additionally, Gross (2014) states "Cascading describes the cumulative impact of turbulent forces." When supporting ELLs, educational leaders acknowledge the diverse groups of students and are challenged to respond accordingly to such diversity. The diversity each ELL brings to the table may magnify the cascading impact on gender, race, SES, etc.

Finally, Gross (2014) argues stability is the third force impacting turbulence. In reference to ELLs, school boards, district leadership, educators, and districts as a whole, are challenged to respond to the tensions creating the turbulence. Districts with resources are positioned to respond positively thereby increasing stability. Districts without resources are not positioned to respond positively thereby decreasing stability.

When researching the influence that teacher perception might have on the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs, the following chart serves as a turbulence gauge.

Table 2.6: The Turbulence Gauge

Degree of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to This Situation
Light	Little of no disruption	Federal, State, and Local entities have implemented well-defined regulations and procedures to support the educational needs of ELLs. We are not concerned.
Moderate	**Widespread awareness of the issue**	**Federal, State, and Local entities develop regulations and procedures to address educational needs of ELLs; everyone is involved in all stages of the process.**
Severe	A sense of crisis	Federal, State, and Local entities do not have regulations and procedures developed to address the educational needs of ELLs. No one knows what will happen next.
Extreme	Structural damage to reform	No one knows what to do; ELLs are not provided with an appropriate education.

Current Federal, State, and Local governing bodies recognize the value English Language Learners provide to the educational community. The Federal government, as well as State Departments of Education, challenge local school districts to enrich the experience of all students by ensuring policies and procedures are in place to support the growing population of English Language Learners.

Educational leaders may influence the outcome of various educational initiatives, including those that support ELLs. Educational leaders, including principals, school psychologists, speech and language therapists, regular education teachers, special education teachers, and ESL teachers have a role and responsibility in the process.

Policy, regulation, administrative directives, and methodologies are at the core of what educators do to support ELLs.

In addition to the legislative environment surrounding ELLs, teacher preparation and school culture will serve as a vital aspect in this study. The methodology section of this research will frame the investigation to dive deeper into understanding how educator perception helps educators decide to refer, or not to refer, ELLs for special education services.

When examining the issue through the lens of an educational leader, it is important to maintain a balance between the four theories reviewed earlier in this chapter. Depending on the status along the continuum, each one of the four theories may lead the process. For example, at times, the rational comprehensive model may lead the process when stakeholders are considering all aspects that may potentially influence the process. The two models of language acquisition may have more influence for the educational leader when considering job embedded professional development for staff. Morgan's theory of organizations as cultures establishes connections across and within various layers of the organization. Educational leaders need to be aware of potential outcomes as a result of any decisions related to the issue. Gross' turbulence theory impacts the considerations of an education leader when the leader is completing the feedback loop. Evaluation and analysis are key considerations for identifying next steps in the process and updating the level of turbulence. In sum, educational leaders are continually engaged in a balancing act and need to rely on the four theories to help guide decisions impacting their educational leadership.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

This qualitative research study focused on how educators' perceptions influenced the referral of ELLs to special education programs in three mid -Atlantic state suburban school districts. The study sought to elicit the perspectives of educators involved with supporting ELLs and their educational programs. Educator roles and responsibilities in the referral of ELLs to special education programs were explored. The study also sought educators' perspectives regarding the influence on the process based on their job preparation and training, as well as their opportunity for professional development. I attempted to elicit the attitudes and perspectives of administrators, ESL teachers, regular education teachers, speech and language specialists, school psychologists and special education teachers concerning their experiences with the process, their individual roles and responsibilities, and their opinions regarding the most important factors to influence the referrals of ELLs to special education programs.

I used qualitative research as the process to understand the phenomenon because of its ability to define the quality of the program, and its ability to offer meaningful insight into the issues surrounding the process. The selection of a case study design was appropriate in order to collect data on the perceptions, values, and beliefs of educators as they pertained to the referral of English language learners to special education programming. "Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). The main

expectation of this qualitative research was for me to understand how educators build meaning and make sense of their experiences with decision making about referrals of English language learners to special education programming. "In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). As this study considered educator perception it lent itself to a qualitative research methodology.

The rationale for such a study lies in the uniqueness of the referral process for English language learners to special education programs. Merriam (1998) states the following about qualitative research: "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the features of qualitative research in the following way:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. (p. 3)

Additionally, Maxwell (1996) suggests that qualitative research studies are particularly suited for "understanding the particular context within which the participants act… identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating grounded theories about the latter… it helps to expose the process by which events and actions take place…and, it can be useful in developing causal explanations" (pp. 19-20).

I focused on how and why questions, not questions addressing who and how much. This study relied on information in the form of interviews and observations to yield richly descriptive data. Throughout the course of the study, interviews with administrators, ELL teachers, special education teachers, regular education teachers, school psychologists, and speech and language specialists from various districts were conducted to gather data related to specific evaluation processes for students suspected of being exceptional. On -site observations also served as a means of collecting data. Interviews were conducted with the previously identified stakeholders to gain their perspective on the issues.

The case study design is well-suited with the goals of the study, the research questions, and the events outlined to conduct the case study. The driving force of this case study was to examine the basis by which educators make difficult decisions regarding the referral of ELLs to special education programs. Yin (2003) explains that the value of a case study is that it "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p.2). The case study design allowed me to derive meaning from the participants' perceptions and actions observed throughout the course of the study. The case study design allowed me to better understand the reality of these three districts by digging deeper into their ideals and beliefs about ELL programs. It is critical for me to make meaning of these perceptions so that I could answer the research questions and provide thickly descriptive reports from many perspectives.

The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). A sample of eighteen district educators from three suburban districts in a mid-Atlantic state

were selected for this case study. Interviews with key stakeholders such as regular education teachers, special education teachers, ESL teachers, speech and language specialists, school psychologists, and principals were conducted. Interviews were essential to this process because they provided the rich data to answer the research questions. Merriam (1998) suggests interview participants have the possibility to add to the expansion of insight and understanding related to the topic. I developed an interview protocol for the interview process consisting of nineteen specific interview questions. The prepared questions served as a guide to perform the interviews in a natural and conversational manner.

I reviewed district documents such as mission and vision statements, strategic plans, curriculum, demographic data, achievement data, and special education data as part of the data analysis. These data served as other data points for me to consider when attempting to respond to the research questions associated with this study. Merriam (1998) suggests "Documentary data are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies because they ground an investigation in the context of the problem to be investigated" (p. 126).

Field observations, including attendance at Board meetings, were crucial for obtaining a reliable and valid means to assess whether or not LEAs truly value providing an appropriate education for all students. Merriam (1998) contends the firsthand account allows for a holistic perspective. I provided access by the local education agency (LEA); other observations, including school site and individual classroom observations, provided additional meaningful data.

Interviews with identified participants, coupled with the document review and field observation associated with this case study, produced thickly descriptive reports providing a complete report of the case from many perspectives and identifying many variables. I gathered data about the ELL's experience in school that yielded the need for specially designed instruction and special education services. This is not to imply that a specific process or procedure resulted in the placement of ELLs in special education programs. My desire was to learn as much as I could from immersion in these sites. An investigation into the phenomenon may reveal valuable insight to others who might examine the research seeking to understand how and when to better refer ELLs to special education programs.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I was a doctoral student at an urban public research university in Pennsylvania. At the time of the study, I was employed as a Director of Pupil Services in a suburban school district in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Having spent my professional career as an educator in the public education systems in an urban California school district and a suburban Pennsylvania school district, I have a degree of familiarity with public educational administration.

I have a significant interest in English language learners, special education, and the relationship between the two. My entire career has been in the field of special education, mostly dealing with multicultural student populations.

Initially, I obtained a Master's degree in speech and language pathology. This led to State teaching certification for speech language pathology, State teaching certification as a special education teacher for language impaired students, State professional license

as a speech and language pathologist, and National certification as a speech and language pathologist.

Further academic studies resulting in me earning a Master's degree in Pupil Personnel Services and a third Master's degree in Educational Administration. State teaching certification for guidance counselor, school psychologist, and school administrator were also obtained. Most recently, I obtained the English language learner endorsement from the State Department of Education, as well as Superintendent Letter of Eligibility.

As a result of my experience and education, I have biases related to the research topic. I believe public school teachers lack the training and experience in distinguishing between language acquisition, a language disability and a learning disability and an over-identification of English language learners in special education programs. I also believe inadequate assessments support the referral of English language learners to special education programs.

Merriam (1998) states, the investigator's "role in qualitative research can be compared to that of a detective" who has no personal stake in the outcome of the study (p. 21). My diverse background lends itself to understanding the theory and application associated with English language learners and special education. The knowledge of theory and experience serves as a foundation to enable me to delve deeper in understanding how teacher perception influences the referral and identification of ELLs in special education programs.

It is important that any researcher recognizes biases based on knowledge and experience and to ensure the biases do not influence the case study process.

My professional experiences in dealing with multicultural, multilingual populations in North Orange County, California may influence the process. I also have a possible bias concerning the referral of English language learners to special education programs. My bias is that proper educator training and professional development will decrease the inappropriate referral of English language learners to special education programs. This bias is due to my experience and training as a speech and language therapist and special educator.

To control for bias, I was precise as possible while conducting the research and reporting the findings while remaining open to opposing findings. My bias must not be evident or it will create distortion and limit the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state, "This is very important because once the interviewer's presentational self is 'cast', it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has great influence of the success of the study (or lack thereof)" (p. 707). I strove to overcome this bias by maintaining a neutral perspective while conducting interviews with program participants.
Due to my direct contact in the field and years of experience with both ELLs and special education students, I needed to be aware of my own biases about my perceptions, values, and opinions relating to the referral of English Language Learners to special education programs. My role as a speech language pathologist, school psychologist, special education teacher, ESL teacher, and public school administrator could create limitations by presenting my beliefs directly to the participants. If the participants are aware of my position in education and vast experiences, honest responses from the participants may be limited.

Population and Sample

In this case study, I enlisted the support of three LEAs near a major city in a mid-Atlantic state to serve as the sample for this case study. The three LEAs were comprised of school districts of various sizes. All three districts were diverse and varied in size and economic status.

The selection of LEAs was based on proximity to a large urban city in a mid - Atlantic state, as well as availability of study participants. In addition to the proximity to a large urban city in a mid- Atlantic state, all three were suburban districts; one district was more rural in make-up and two districts were "typical" suburbia in make-up. All three districts were experiencing population and demographic changes which include a more culturally and linguistically diverse population. All districts received commensurate Title I funding and IDEA funding.

The varied responses from the participants in the study allowed me to draw conclusions pertaining to the referral of English Language Learners to special education programs. Within the varying demographics and needs of each district, I attempted to conclude common trends, patterns, and policies from each district to identify overall commonalities among LEAs. The districts selected for the study were Panthers School District, Pirates School District, and Knights School District.

Eighteen informants were interviewed for the study; six from each district. Educators included principals, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, regular education teachers, special education teachers, and English as a second language learner teachers. Sixteen were female; two were male. Five of the informants had earned doctorates in educational/organizational leadership, school psychology, or special

education; thirteen earned a master's degree in speech and language pathology, English, elementary education, special education, human development, literacy, or school psychology. Five of the eighteen informants also earned the English as a Second Language Endorsement from the State Department of Education. Two of the informants have been in education for up to five years; five informants for up to ten years; four informants for up to fifteen years; one informant for up to twenty-five years; three informants for thirty years; and three informants for greater than thirty years.

Panther School District

The six informants who participated in interviews from the Panther School District included an elementary school principal (Kelsey), a school psychologist (Anita), a regular education high school English teacher (Matt), an elementary special education teacher (Kelly), a speech and language pathologist (Karla), and an elementary ELL teacher (John).

Pirate School District

The six informants who participated in interviews from the Pirate School District included an elementary school principal (Judy), a school psychologist (Heidi), a regular education elementary teacher (Terry), an elementary special education teacher (Kristine), a speech and language pathologist (Mary), and an elementary ELL teacher (Kayla).

Knight School District

The six informants who participated in interviews from the Knight School District included an elementary school principal (Barbra), a school psychologist (Anne), a regular education elementary teacher (Deborah), an elementary special education teacher

(Rachel), a speech and language pathologist (Jackie), and an elementary ELL teacher (Dolores).

Table 3.1Characteristics of Participants in the Study

District	Name	Years in Education	Role	ESL Certification	Education
Panther SD	Kelsey	32 years	Elementary Principal	Yes	Doctorate; Educational Leadership
Panther SD	Anita	7 years	School Psychologist	No	Doctorate; School Psychology
Panther SD	Karla	13 years	Speech and Language Pathologist	No	Master's; Speech and Language Pathology
Panther SD	Matt	26 years	Regular Education Teacher	No	Master's; English
Panther SD	Kelly	11 years	Special Education Teacher	No	Doctorate; Special Education
Panther SD	John	8 years	ESL Teacher	Yes	Master's; Elementary Education
Pirate SD	Judy	32 years	Elementary Principal	No	Master's; Special Education
Pirate SD	Heidi	6 years	School Psychologist	No	Master's; Human Development
Pirate SD	Mary	13 years	Speech and Language Pathologist	No	Master's; Speech and Language Pathologist
Pirate SD	Terry	8 years	Regular Education Teacher	No	Master's; Education
Pirate SD	Kristine	11 years	Special Education Teacher	No	Master's; Literacy
Pirate SD	Kayla	30 years	ESL Teacher	Yes	Master's; Elementary Education
Knight SD	Barbra	27 years	Elementary Principal	No	Doctorate; Educational Leadership
Knight SD	Anne	5 years	School Psychologist	No	Master's; School Psychology
Knight SD	Jackie	9 years	Speech and Language Pathologist	No	Master's; Speech and Language Pathology
Knight SD	Deborah	32 years	Regular Education Teacher	Yes	Master's; Education

Knight SD	Rachel	5 years	Special Education Teacher	No	Master's; Special Education
Knight SD	Dolores	25 years	ESL Teacher	Yes	Doctorate; Organizational Leadership

Panthers School District was selected due to the current shift in demographics from a predominantly white community to a multicultural and ethnically diverse community. Pirates School District was selected due to the rural make- up of the community. Knights School District was selected due to the multicultural and multiethnic demographic makeup of the community.

Panthers School District is located approximately 40 miles north of a major city in a mid-Atlantic state (http://www.qcsd.org). The district has a population of 32,500 residents and serves approximately 5500 students (http://www.qcsd.org). The district is comprised of seven elementary schools, grades K-5; two middle schools, grades 6-8; one Freshman Center, and one high school, grades 10-12. Panthers School District currently employs approximately 380 teachers. The Panthers School District operating budget for the 2010-2011 school year is $89.8 million. The Panthers School District operates both English Language Learner programs and special education programs.

Pirates School District is located approximately 45 miles outside of a major city in a mid-Atlantic state. The district has a population of approximately 12,000 residents. The student enrollment is approximately 1900 students with a configuration of three elementary schools, grades K-5; one middle school, grades 6-8; and one high school, grades 9-12. The budget for the 2010-2011 school year is approximately $37.6 million. The Pirates School District currently employs approximately 150 teachers

(http://www.palisadessd.org). The Pirates School District operates both English Language Learner programs and special education programs.

Knights School District is located in a rapidly expanding area within 20 miles of a major city in a mid- Atlantic state. The district is comprised of thirteen elementary schools, grades K-6; three middle schools, grades 7-9 and one high school, grades 10-12 (http://npenn.org). Student enrollment is approximately 12,757 district-wide. The district has approximately 1000 teachers. (http://www.npenn.org). The budget for the 2010-2011 school year is $125 million. The Knights School District operates both English Language Learner programs and special education programs.

Data Collection

Qualitative methods provide detailed and descriptive data necessary to understand the referral of ELLs to special education programs. I gathered data from interviews, a review of written documents, and informal observations. Data were reviewed throughout the study to strengthen the understanding of educator perceptions and how they relate to the referral of ELLs to special education programs.

Superintendents from the selected LEAs received a Consent Form and Introductory Letter about the study. Each superintendent indicated to me his or her interest and permission to conduct the study in the district. After approval was granted from the superintendent, each participant received a General Consent Form that had to be signed prior to his or her participation in the interviews. I insured confidentiality of the participants in the study by coding and concealing their identity. Pseudonyms were created for the site and participants.

A combination of six district educators from each LEA, including principals, ESL teachers, regular education teachers, special education teachers, school psychologists and speech and language therapists were interviewed for approximately forty five minutes to one hour. The interview protocol consisted of nineteen questions to serve as a frame in the interview process. At the end of the interview process, eighteen interviews had been conducted. The data collection procedures for this case included the use of semi-structured interviews and researchers' field notes from the interview process.

Each participant was interviewed over a single session or over two sessions at a time that was convenient to the study participant. If the participant was interviewed over two sessions, the second session was scheduled within two weeks of the initial contact. The two-session model provided a level of comfort for participants. It also allowed the participant the opportunity to reflect upon the experience from the initial contact and provide clarification to initial responses during the second interview session. I requested follow-up interviews with the participants, as needed, in order to obtain clarification or to expand on the participant's initial responses.

Interviews were audiotaped and completely transcribed. The interviews occurred in a one-to-one setting in a private room within the school, during the school day. Each interview began with open-ended "tell me about yourself" questions to put the interviewee at ease with the process. As the interview progressed I continued with open-ended questions with a focus on obtaining information about the participants' perceptions of the referral of ELLs to special

education programs. Special care had been given to the format of the interview questions in a style that was appropriate to the participants' role in the referral process.

A review of lesson plans, in addition to classroom observations and observations of professional development opportunities, also served as rich data. The informal observations of team meetings or consortium meetings provided me with another method of gathering rich data about English Language Learners. Attendance at Board meetings for each LEA also highlighted where ELLs align with District priorities. I took notes to document the observations and attendance at Board meetings.

Data collection consisted of a review of other District documents. I sought other data points including characteristics of ELLs in the target group, achievement levels of ELLs, teacher perceptions regarding implementation of instructional strategies for addressing needs of at risk populations, and district referral processes and procedures for special education referrals.

Data Analysis

In an endeavor to examine the participants' perceptions regarding the referral of English Language Learners to special education programs, the research participants were audiotaped to preserve their responses from the interview session. I transcribed and frequently reviewed the audiotapes of the interview to retain the content of the gathered data. Existing research of available data related to teacher perceptions of English Language Learners were reviewed by me to learn of other researchers' methods and procedures for analysis.

At the onset of the data analysis process, a very systematic and methodical review of field notes, transcribed interviews, and other documents occurred. I had some initial ideas and conceptions about the overall organization in this case study. Emerging themes and trends linked to the literature and theory were documented. The data were coded into themes and then categories. The categories and themes facilitated comparison within and between categories that contribute to the development of concepts of theory.

Coding allowed me to sort and facilitate the comparison within and between categories. Most researchers conducting qualitative research use coding to serve as an initial step toward an investigative lens of the data. Colored poster board was used to organize interviewee responses into emerging themes. Direct quotes from each interviewee were identified and posted on the corresponding colored poster board to support that theme.

"Coding occurs at two levels - identifying information about the data and interpretive constructs related to analysis; the coding system can be simple, as in identifying a theme that can be illustrated with numerous incidents, quotes, and so on" (Merriam, 1998, p. 164). Tuckman (1999) contends, Coding "identifies a number of facts as well as some of the data on which these facts are based. These facts are conclusions or generalizations based on the specific answers participants gave to the researcher's questions" (p.417).

I used the constant comparative method as the primary strategy for data analysis. I continually immersed myself in the data by constantly comparing and analyzing emerging data for an evolving theory. The constant comparative method of analysis was

used and the data generated from this study were examined on an ongoing basis for common themes and significant patterns. Merriam (1998) suggests the data serve as the driving force for the incorporation and fine-tuning of categories, properties, and hypotheses. The constant comparing of data facilitates the emergence of the primary themes associated with the case study questions.

I used the constant comparative method for data analysis because it allowed for data to be compared determining similarities and differences among data sources. Data obtained from interviews, surveys, observations, and record reviews were manipulated and synthesized to determine patterns and relationships among the data. Gay and Airasian (2003) contend the constant comparative method "narrows the focus of the topic and leads increasingly to understanding and integrating the participants' key views of the topic studied." Furthermore, the approach "involves the constant comparison of identified data and concepts to determine their distinctive characteristics so they can be placed in different and appropriate categories. As each new concept or piece of data is identified, it is compared to existing categories (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 233).

Descriptive statistics were used to explain the data. Descriptive data may include, but not be limited to, the following: charts capturing student populations, percentage of non-English speaking population, demographics of interview participants, etc. Through this analysis I discovered comparisons and correlations in the data produced from the transcribed interviews and document review. I compared the patterns and relationships that developed in the data during this analysis with the evidence in the literature review and the theoretical background.

I believed simple correlations could develop that will modify or add to the literature review and theory.

Methods of Verification

In an effort not to influence or control the research outcome, I attempted to approach the data collection and analysis of this study with a neutral and unbiased perspective. Although it is logical to assume that I held a degree of personal and professional judgment about the research topic, I identified these values at the onset of the process. I actively monitored and restricted these values throughout the research process to assure the participants did not respond to what they believed was expected and/or wanted from them by me.

I collected rich data through immersing myself in the research and literature relevant to this study. Qualitative research assumes reality is holistic, multi-dimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research (Merriam, 1998).

I maintained a neutral view on English language learner pedagogy and assessment when interviewing participants in the study. I shared analysis with participants for feedback, and offered the participants opportunities to clarify any of their responses in order to aid me in controlling bias and accurately interpreting the data. I controlled for bias by "reporting preliminary findings to two critical colleagues who should offer alternative explanations and suggestions for data collection" (Yin, 2003, p. 62). I engaged in a peer review of the findings. The peer review with a neutral colleague, such as fellow Director of Pupil Services, Curriculum Director, and other professional involved with English language learner programs helped me stay aware of possible biases.

Merriam (1998) contends human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research; interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. I became immersed in the study by being present in the identified school districts to conduct interviews and observations of key respondents such as principals, special education teachers, regular education teachers, English as a second language teachers, school psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. I immersed myself in the review of district documents including district strategic plans, achievement data, school plans, and curricular documents in order to obtain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the English Language Learner program in each district.

Merriam (1998) suggests, "Taking the data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 204). As such, I shared the interview transcripts with the corresponding participants to afford them the opportunity to verify interview data to establish accurate and correct information. Participants were given the opportunity to eliminate any misconceptions about their responses and interpretation of those responses.

Yin (2003) contends "A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many sources of evidence." In an attempt to construct validity and to produce a comprehensive understanding of the data, the information obtained from each research participant was triangulated. Triangulated data included, but was not limited to, responses from participant interviews, field observations, and the LEA strategic plan and/or policy. "Any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing

and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode" (Yin, 2003, p. 98).

Finally, I discussed preliminary and final findings with experts in the field who were familiar with the type of data being utilized and had a working knowledge of English language learner programs to ensure validity. Such experts included fellow colleague Directors of Pupil Services and Directors of Special Education, Curriculum Directors, Learning Facilitators, and other professionals involved in English language learner programs.

I planned to continually examine each piece of data as it was collected. I sought constant and on-going communication with my dissertation chair for advice, guidance, and editing as I continued through the study.

Ethical Issues

The ethical treatment of the study participants and study results was of the utmost importance to me. I strove for accuracy throughout the entire case study. I conducted myself professionally at all times and established a relationship with subjects as the investigator. Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants who agreed to contribute to the research were fully informed of its purpose, rationale and potential benefit to future school administrators. All participants of the study were required to sign a consent form stating their understanding of the conditions of the study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) proper respect for human freedom usually includes two necessary conditions: 1) subjects must agree voluntarily to participate, 2) their agreement must be based on full and open information (p. 144).

Throughout the entire qualitative case study process, I was mindful of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guiding principles. Initially, I obtained IRB approval to conduct the research. I fully disclosed to study participants my goals, motives, and intentions. This included how I planned to use the gathered data as well as how I planned to distribute the data. Confidentiality measures were also explained to study participants. Study participants were informed of interview logistics for participation in the study.

The issue of confidentiality was observed by securely retaining all qualitative data including field notes, interview transcripts, names and other types of identifying information under close supervision. Professional etiquette uniformly concurs that no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of insensitive research practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Pseudonyms were created for the various sites and all participants remained anonymous. All materials relevant to the study were kept in a locked filing cabinet only accessible to me.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Background of the Study

This study focused on educator perceptions related to the referral of English Language Learners to special education programs. The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was "To what extent might teacher perception influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs?"

The following questions facilitated delving deeper into the issue.

- To what extent might background and knowledge influence the referral process of teachers?
- To what extent might the quality of ELL curriculum and pedagogy impact and/or influence referrals?
- To what extent might the organization and district policy impact and/or influence referrals?
- To what extent might AYP subgroup accountability impact and/or influence referrals?

Throughout the study, I was immersed with various educators who support English Language Learner programs and special education programs. Interviewing the various educators individually served as the primary method of data collection. Coupled with individual interviews, I completed personal observations of Board meetings, and reviewed key documents in order to gather a broad outlook of educator perceptions related to the research topic.

In Fall 2010, I electronically mailed consent forms and the purpose of the study to three suburban district superintendents located in one section of a county from a mid-Atlantic state. One superintendent declined the opportunity to have the District participate in the study; therefore, another district from a neighboring county was selected for participation. The superintendent from the district in the neighboring county consented to participate in the study.

The three districts were willing and eager to participate in the study. Access to the district personnel and documents was achieved within a timely fashion. Interviews began in July 2011 and were completed by December 2011.

Throughout the interview process, five themes emerged from review of the primary data source transcripts. The themes include (1) shared leadership; (2) job embedded professional development; (3) problematic assessment; (4) beliefs; and (5) misconceptions.

Throughout the coding process, the above stated themes and trends emerged from participant responses. The emerging themes aligned to the research questions to provide insight into aspects for consideration by educational leaders who provide support to ELLs and their achievement.

Shared Leadership

The following discussion addresses the theme of leadership. Shared leadership, or leadership at several levels, including the board, the superintendent, principal, teacher, and parent levels were identified. In all three districts, most participants identified leadership as an important factor for supporting ELLs in the general education setting and

decreasing the need for a referral to special education. Participants representing each of the stakeholder groups identified leadership as an important factor for consideration.

Shared leadership, as defined by Bolden (2011), is leadership that is broadly distributed, such that people within a team and organization lead each other. Shared leadership is a community undertaking resulting in the leadership as the professional work of everyone in the school.

Participants from the three school districts believed shared leadership was an important factor in providing appropriate support for students. All three principal participants, at least one speech and language pathologist participant, and two ELL teachers referenced the importance of leadership in providing appropriate support for all students. When asked to discuss the single most important thing a school can do to ensure ELLs and special education students were successful, participant responses were generally the same in regards to leadership.

Mary, the SLP from Pirate School District, responded:

> A team approach is best; everybody is working together from different entities, giving their input on how to best service this child and then executing it appropriately in the appropriate amount of time. A good team is a team that's willing to meet and discuss and share each other's professional opinions, and then be able to come together and meet the needs of the student where they're at and bring them forward.

Participants from the larger, diverse, suburban school districted expressed a heightened awareness of the need to be culturally competent educators. Dolores, the ELL teacher from Knight School District stated:

> We have some pretty strong leaders in ESL. We are a part of the Strategic Plan because our population is extremely diverse and we're trying to increase cultural competency as well as diversity of our curriculum and meeting the needs for a diverse population. The District's well aware of it and our demographics are changing dramatically across the board so we don't

> have a choice." The Knight School District regular educator, Deborah, stated "The superintendent expects it. I also think the principal in the building has an awful lot to do with how hard you're going to work towards that goal. We are being held accountable.

School psychologist, Anne, from the Knight School District agreed. She noted "The support of our culturally diverse student is important to the board and the superintendent."

Rachel, a Knight School District special educator agreed stating "The number one goal of the district is making sure all students of every culture, of every background, are accepted and understood, and that they can feel comfortable and safe to learn."

All principals noted some level of responsibility in assuring the needs of ELLs, and other at risk students, were being met. The principal from Panther School District shared the importance of understanding the child as a whole and not solely on a traditional academic level. Kelsey stated:

> If you're an administrator you really have to dig down and understand on so many more levels. There are so many pieces of family and culture even with socially economically disadvantaged students, that you have to understand what is their life and step into their shoes and really go beyond just being their teacher, but being comprehensive of your understanding of their environment, the expectations, the values system.

Panther School District school psychologist, Anita, agreed. She contended "I feel like it's administratively based. The administration drives that."

Several participants indicated teachers, in addition to district and building level leaders, have an important leadership role in the process. Anita, Panther School Psychologist, reported "It tends to be the principal and teachers, regular education, instructional support, reading specialist, and the ELL teacher, that have multiple conferences over time and talk about strategies prior to referring" the student.

Karla, a SLP in Panther School District, agreed and stated:

> I think the IST (Instructional Support Teacher) process really helps to weed out those students who are able to just do it with a little bit of intervention and then those who really need a deeper level of going back to the basics. The IST often leads that process.

John, the ELL teacher from Panther School District, had a similar view point as his colleagues, Anita and Karla, in terms of the leadership role teachers have in the process. He contended:

> The ESL teacher serves in a leadership role by working with the reading specialists, the classroom teachers, and any paraprofessionals that work with the student, and give pointers as to what you can expect and how staff can be very intentional with their language so not to speak over the heads of the student, but push them forward so they make the expected gains.

All three building level leaders shared a belief that in order to meet the needs of ELLs, and others, it is their responsibility to support implementation of appropriate curriculum. The three principals provided a minimum of fourteen references addressing the importance for access to appropriate curriculum. In addition to having leadership insight, building level leaders must also be knowledgeable of curriculum and available resources.

Knight School District Building Principal, Barbra, stated:

> I'm responsible for the whole instructional piece of making sure that the curriculum is being implemented and being taught. I also look at the school's data and analyze that data. That leads me to making sure the professional development for the teachers is in place.

Kelsey, Panther School District Principal, concurs and expands the claim to include the need to select a curriculum aligned to the needs identified through a review of available data. Kelsey shared:

> We look at all the data that we have on the students with the benchmarks and guided reading levels. Since we are a Title I school, we have a lot of

> additional reading assessments that we run, particularly in the primary grades. We also look at the ACCESS testing. Looking at all of that information we begin the RTI model and start tiering out. This supports the alignment of our curriculum to the standards." Furthermore, Kelsey stated "About ten years ago the State really began looking at the ESL numbers and started to gather data and information on ESL programs, ESL instructional products, and certification opportunities. That's when it became evident we were going to have to confront this in a different way.

Through the interviews with district participants, twelve of the eighteen educators were able to identify specific curriculum available within the district to support ELLs, including all of the regular education teachers and special education teachers. Additionally, it was found the three building level leaders were able to articulate the link between available resources to support ELLs and the rationale for the selection of specific curriculum.

Barbra, Knight School District principal, stated:

> We have two programs that we run. For math we use *Everyday Mathematics* and in language arts we use *Trophies*. They align to the curriculum. They have program guides and resources for ELL students. The programs have all of the materials and everything that we need to use for supporting our ELLs. The ELL students are receiving the same curriculum, but in a different way. That's all under our strategic plan.

All of the study participants agreed it was important to have the right members of the team in place to provide the identified supports. Appropriate staffing also supports building the leadership capacity among the team.

Kelsey, principal in the Panther School District believed:

> I feel an effective school would be one that has people, or staff, that are knowledgeable and certified as ESL instructors. That comprehensive understanding of language acquisition, acquisition concerns of a child, the cultural things that a child brings to school that you might not have ever known, understood, or delved into yourself. The staff also needs that perseverance, or that love for working with at-risk kids.

Heidi, Pirates School Psychologist, added "I would think it comes down to the support that they're offered; that it's a qualified person that is knowledgeable in their content area and knows what they're doing."

John, the ELL teacher from Panther School District personalized the importance of staffing. He claimed:

> Regarding staffing, we have things in place. We have a program director of the ESL program who oversees it and is able to keep in contact with us about resources and supplies, professional development, etc. And then we have myself who serves as a coordinator for the program. I look out for the district's ELL population as a whole. I work with the ELL teachers at the schools.

Lastly, in the area of leadership, school leaders need to include parents in the process. The interviews with participants revealed parents have a lot of information to share with the team. Engaging the parents in the process can be a challenge.

Rachel, the Knight School District special educator stated:

> It's not every single person for themselves but the fact that we all work Everyone in a leadership role needs to spread the idea of teamwork. together for the common goal. Parents are an important part of that team. Parents know their children and what they are capable of. School leaders need to access that information by asking the right questions.

Deborah, a regular educator in the Knight School District, reported "Parents can help the team learn about different cultures and the things you need to do to create a successful environment for the ELLs. Many times we just need to ask."

In sum, shared leadership is an integral component of assuring the appropriate policies, procedures, material, and staff are available for educators to access. No matter the specific discipline of the educator, study participants share the importance of background knowledge and training to support the success of ELLs without the need to refer to a special education program. Experience with ESL curriculum and pedagogy

plays an important role for all educators to provide appropriate supports and leadership. Analysis of the leadership theme revealed Dolores, the Knight School District ELL teacher, summed up the overarching theme well. Dolores stated:

> Watching them succeed so much, knowing that they have so much to overcome and they have to be bi-literate, bicultural, and bilingual, it's a huge mountain for some of them to climb, but, with the scaffolds in place, they can do it, so it's exciting to watch them grow" as learners.

Heidi, School Psychologist from Pirates School District, expanded and shared that as educators "We need for them to share about where they're from and to be proud of it and not necessarily shun them or make them feel different."

Analysis of participant responses reveals shared leadership is an important component in supporting English language learners and attempts to defer the referral of English language learners to special education programs. It is important to maintain focus on the students and their success. In order to accomplish this goal, everyone supporting the students and their educational program needs to maintain that focus. Participants shared those educators providing direct service to the student have the benefit of real time data and feedback regarding the instructional practices and strategies. Those data need not be ignored if all members of the team are to share in the process for providing support to all students, including English language learners.

Additionally, instructional leaders specifically voiced the need to be culturally competent and responsive to the students who enter their building each day. Strategic planning, at both the site level and district level, were important components of ensuring student success. A consistent element in the strategic planning process included the participation of the parents. Parental knowledge of student strengths and weaknesses needs to be capitalized. Varying stages of development were noted from building level

principals. Principals serving in larger, suburban districts shared more specificity regarding the process than principals serving in smaller, rural districts.

Lastly, all participant groups noted the importance of the Board sharing in the vision and belief that all students have the ability to learn and that it is the responsibility of the Board to embrace that belief. The Board needs to send the message that they are committed to supporting all learners - through policy, staff, resources, materials, etc.

Job Embedded Professional Development

The following discussion addresses the theme of professional development. In all three districts, participants identified job embedded professional development as a need to support ELLs in the general education setting and decreasing the need for a referral to special education.

Job embedded professional development is appropriate, specifically for ELLs, because it enables educators to seize the opportunity for expanding their knowledge of diverse learners at the time when the educator is working with the ELL. The real time impact of enhancing the educator's teaching can directly improve student learning. The immediacy of the professional development limits the potential for delayed implementation in the classroom setting. Also, Districts are able to provide the immediate deployment of resources into the classroom where educators practice daily, thereby positively impacting outcomes for students.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) contend that job-embedded professional development refers to teacher learning that is rooted in day-to-day teaching practice with a purpose to strengthen teachers' content-specific instructional practices that results in improving student learning. It is primarily school or classroom based and

is integrated into the workday. Teachers assess and find solutions for authentic and immediate everyday challenges as part of a cycle of continuous improvement (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The Minnesota Department of Education (2011) argues professional development not focused on the immediate work of teaching one's assigned students is not effective. Furthermore, leaders "need to create a school culture, support structures, systems and dedicated time to make job embedded professional development an intrinsic part of the educator's workday".

Knowledge of the individual student, as well as his/her culture, second language acquisition, curricular modifications, and what educators are able to do on their own or in collaboration with colleagues were common themes identified as professional development needs. Ignorance is not an option when educating our youth.

Knight SLP, Jackie, argues:

> This is a big deal. To tell someone that their child has a learning disability, you better be sure that that's really the case, because it not just saying, 'You have a cold,' or 'you need glasses.' It is really important. I think we have to make sure we try everything we can. It's a last resort to say that a child has a disability, because it's a big responsibility to be able to tell a parent. You need to be able to back it up. I think, sometimes, it is taken too lightly.

Professional development is one means of addressing the need. Principals from all three school districts, clearly and explicitly, identified a need for professional development regarding research based best practices to support ELLs.

Knight School District Principal, Barbra, stated:

> I think we could be more effective if we had global training, if the District provided appropriate professional development. One of the things we are doing this year is beginning to partner with the intermediate unit to address inclusionary practices for at risk students, including both special education students and ELLs. Currently, there is a gap in our practice. I also think we could be more effective if we

> continue to train our teachers through professional development opportunities on how to work with different populations of students in the regular education setting.

Judy, a principal with Pirates School District, emphasized the importance of leadership to identify and provide access to appropriate professional development. It begins with leadership. Judy argues it is essential to "form a team with the family and the school to support the child and use what resources you have to meet their needs."

Kelsey, a principal with Panther School District, expands the idea and states the educator "who is successful with ELLs will have empathy for the student and their family, but they're not sympathetic. A resilient teacher has a personal relationship with the child that is appropriately adult to child; the child never wants to disappoint them."

As with any decision educational organizations address, leaders struggle with making decisions about specific programs. Responding to the various tensions related to policy, staff, curriculum, materials, and the like, is unique to each school district. The common thread relates to the importance of the issue to the local school board and their commitment to provide the necessary resources.

Knights Principal, Barbra, emphasizes the need to have ELL programming and resources as a core value of the Board. She claimed:

> Districts need "to be responsible and accountable to serving ELLs. It's part of our professional development plan. A lens of cultural proficiency is part of the PD plan. We actually have a team at our school; it is part of our culture – a cultural proficiency team and we work on different sessions that we do during staff meetings or in-service days. It's a continuous theme. It's something that you just don't package and say we'll do X amount of days. That's going to go on forever. I think the more we continue to build that up in our teachers and recognize that we are all different and to accept our differences, but that we do have similarities as well. I think that is what helps in the classroom.

Special education teacher, Kelly, from Panther School District, shared a similar perspective from the classroom level. She argued, "It seems like there are more English Language Learners, so I think schools have a greater responsibility to provide appropriate services. The change in demographics forces teachers to really learn how to appropriately accommodate for all students with effective instructional strategies."

Dolores, ELL teacher from Knight School District, agrees and was more specific in her argument. She believes teachers should have a voice in the process of designing professional development. Dolores states "The drive is coming from the teachers in the District. I think a lot of teachers, ESL, regular ed, and special ed, say staff need training; they need something to help them teach the students."

In addition to having a voice in the professional development process, along with having knowledge and ease with appropriate resources to teach students, educators need to have access to professional development regarding the need to understand students as individuals. Keeping the focus on the student is vital. Knight ELL teacher, Dolores, stresses the importance of knowing "the student inside out, backwards, forwards—everything about that child and enhance their strengths and fill in their gaps. I think if you know your children, you can make them succeed, and that is wholeheartedly."

The ELL teachers from the three school districts emphasized the need for educators to understand the student as a whole – who they are, where they come from, and where they are going. ELL teachers can then help bridge the gap between the student and educational performance for other members of the team.

John, Panther ELL teacher stated:

> All educators have a responsibility to the student. The biggest impact teachers can have is to look at the student's data. Drill it down. Through teamwork with special education, reading specialists, regular education teachers, ESL teachers, principals, and families can help address the student's needs on multiple fronts.

Despite all of the efforts, educators do not know all they need to know to support the ELL. Educators need to be reflective practitioners and identify holes in their knowledge base. For some, it may be related to cultural differences, for others it may be curricular modifications.

Mary, a SLP in Pirates School District, stated:

> As a teacher, it's our job. I think it is our job as educators, when we don't know something we need to look into it. We need to teach ourselves. If we don't know it, we go to our principal or colleague to find out the information. You need to think outside the box and if you can't get the information yourself, you have to go forward and find it. We ask our kids to do that. We, as educators, should do that, too.

Capitalizing on teachable moments is an important aspect of what educators do on a daily basis with students. Capitalizing on teachable moments for educators is just as important.

Pirates School District ELL teacher, Kayla, expanded that concept and suggested inviting the ELL and/or their family to be part of the process. Opportunities to include the ELL and/or his/her family in classroom lessons builds upon the diversity of the experience.

> We need to embrace their diversity. Do things in the classroom; incorporate their culture into the lesson. As educators we need to encourage them to bring their culture into the classroom; embed it into the everyday practice of teaching. By recognizing we have such diversity and finding ways to incorporate it into teachable moments so the whole class can benefit from it.

Knowledge of second language acquisition is vital to providing appropriate supports for the English Language Learner in the regular education setting. In addition to job embedded professional development to address differences in student populations, student needs, and curriculum, educators need a solid foundation regarding second language acquisition. Second language acquisition knowledge helps in the identification of appropriate supports, whether ELL supports or special education supports. Karla, Panther SLP, suggested:

> There is a lack of understanding. Referrals for support come from regular education teachers who don't necessarily understand the process of learning a language. They don't understand there is a period of silence, where the student is absorbing everything and it may take them a long time to actually speak the language. It is important to assure the teachers that this is a normal process. It is not a language disorder; it's a language difference.

John, Panther ESL teacher, agrees. "It is challenging to tease out language because when you're looking at students who are at the very beginning levels of proficiency, it's a lot harder to determine where the special education needs may start and the ESL needs end."

Professional development does not necessarily need to address specific, tangible tasks. Professional development may also address 'soft skills' that often are not teachable. Collaboration among colleagues to model appropriate interactions that are sensitive to the populations present in the classroom can be just as powerful.

When it comes to the art of teaching diverse, heterogeneous groups of students, teachers providing direct instruction may have a greater impact. Matt, a regular education teacher in the Panther School District, asserted:

> I think the most important thing in any teaching job is you have to be a good example first as a person. That is universal, no matter what the language is. If you're kind and you're patient, and you're willing to help, that is the first part of communication.

Dolores, an ESL teacher in Knight School District agreed. She argued:

> I think it is important to make connections. Whatever you are teaching, either the child has learned it already or they have a connection to it from their home country. I often think of Social Studies when they are teaching the Revolutionary War, for example. A lot of our children have come from war torn countries recently. Asking them to share their experience from the revolution that occurred in their home country can help make some of the connections. We have kids from Egypt, Burma, and Liberia. We have Iraqi refugees. They can provide a huge connection to the content. The impact for everyone can be huge.

Matt, a regular education teacher from Panther School District concurred. When educators are able to make the connection, both at the human level and the content level, the learning process is powerful. Matt shared:

> In a sense, you're activating their prior knowledge and their background knowledge to help them make that link to the current content you're studying. From my perspective, it's been a good experience for the most part. The students are a little fearful in the beginning because the class seems like it's a little fast paced, but once they realize you're there to assist them, they're a little more comfortable with it.

Anne, a school psychologist from Knight School District, best sums up the experience of working with ELLs. She contends,

> Actually, the whole experience of working with ELLs has been a professional development focus of mine because I have noticed how challenging it is and I wanted to improve my ability in that area. What I find valuable is the fact that it sort of made me question and have to go back through a lot of aspects of my training that I've taken for granted, and sort of look at them again, and find new ways to answer the questions that we're trying to answer for English Language Learners.

DuFour (2004) argues educators need to engage their responsibility for their own learning as well as the learning of their colleagues. Job embedded professional

development, or professional learning communities, can provide the framework. A shift in the focus on teaching to a focus on learning has the potential for significant impact on both educator effectiveness and student achievement.

Barbra, Knight School District Principal, agreed. She stated "It continually goes back to professional development. If it's meaningful professional development geared towards the teachers being able to implement it in the classroom, it is worthwhile."

In Pennsylvania, professional development is a mandated portion of a local education agency's strategic plan submitted to the State Department of Education. Professional learning communities are replacing the traditional in-service opportunities where, in the past, staff would have left the district to attend a seminar; then return to the district with the information and try to make meaning of the learned material.

Today, districts are working with over- arching initiatives from the United States Department of Education, as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to address student achievement. Participants revealed a shift to capitalizing on addressing the educational initiatives at both the classroom level and building site level. Classroom educators are studying the educational initiatives in real time as they apply to the classroom of students entrusted to their care at the present time.

For teachers supporting English language learners, this means they address the initiatives while providing support to the English language learners in their classroom. Collaboration among the regular education teacher, the ESL teacher, the district specialists, educational leaders, and parents may occur in real time. Professional learning communities have the ability to employ the implementation of the mandated initiatives through the lens of the current student demographics in their buildings and specific

classrooms. Participants argue this provides more meaningful support to all students and their individualized success.

Study participants shared a similar belief that job embedded professional development is beneficial when supported by the building level leader. All three building level leaders in this study acknowledged the importance of professional development as a support for educators assigned to their respective buildings. While all three acknowledged the importance of professional development, aside from aligning the professional development to the needs of the student and school community, a specific, common framework for job embedded professional development was not shared by building level principals.

Problematic Assessments

The following discussion addresses the theme of problematic high stakes assessments. Neill (2005) identifies problematic assessments for ELLs to include assessments with unequal resources to ELL students, different starting points for AYP, changing composition of the ELL group, inconsistent LEP classifications, flaws in achievement tests, and irrational sanctions under NCLB. In all three districts, participants identified appropriate assessments as an important factor for supporting ELLs in the general education setting and decreasing the need for a referral to special education. In their discussions, study participants shared how assessments may be problematic.

For purposes of providing background information, it is important to provide basic guidance educators need to consider when contemplating the provision of services for ELLs. Upon registration in the local school district in Pennsylvania, parents must

complete a home language survey. If the parent chooses to disclose a home language other than English, the local educational agency must assess English language proficiency. If the parent chooses to report English to be the only language spoken in the home, the local educational agency need not assess English language proficiency.

At times, there is confusion between the WIDA ACCESS and the W-APT. The ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) assessment is an annual assessment given to ELLs in Pennsylvania as part of NCLB requirements. The W-APT is the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test. It is given only once and measures English language proficiency. It determines whether or not a child is in need of English language instruction and at what level. This may be a challenge for local educational agencies, as educators may "know" that English is not the primary language spoken in the home.

Individualized assessments were identified as having more influence than statewide, high stakes assessments. Individualized assessments are defined to include teacher-made, classroom-based assessments. Determining the difference between a language acquisition issue and a learning difference for an ELL can be a challenge. Karla, the SLP from Panther School District reported, "In the beginning, they look the same. An ELL may look like a student with a learning disability. We need to use a portfolio of various individualized assessment tools to accurately discern the difference."

When study participants were asked about whether or not performance on State Assessments influenced the referral of ELLs to special education programs, the consistent response was "NO" from all of the participants. "No, not at all. No, we don't." stated Kayla, the ELL teacher from Pirates School District. Kelly, the special educator from

Panther School District, shared "No, I wouldn't think so. I mean that would be terrible if they did just for one test; hopefully, they would be looking at the whole profile of the child." Barbra, the building principal from Knight School District, stated, "We wouldn't rush to that. We would not refer students for special ed based on basic or below basic scores" on State Assessments.

Participants from all three school districts were able to share a specific process that is utilized when determining whether or not to make a referral of any student for special education services. The triangulation of multiple data sources, both individualized assessments and high stakes assessments, was a constant that was addressed in the explanation of each process. Teacher-made, classroom- based assessments, curricular-based assessments, norm-referenced assessments, criterion-referenced assessments, educational file reviews, and student/classroom observations are used to make decisions.

Special education teachers, school psychologists, and speech-language pathologists from the three districts identified the need to understand the population included in the norming process for any standardized assessment, both individualized assessments and high-stakes assessments. Jackie, Knight School District SLP, reported "If the norming population does not include ELLs speaking a specific language, is it really valid? I mean, I need to know if there was an ELL, did they speak the language of the student I'm working with?"

Dolores, the ELL teacher from Knight School District reported:

> I have students who score 6.0 on the ACCESS test and they are still below basic on the high stakes assessment. I then look at their grades and their lexile levels. This is where I feel the high stakes assessments are culturally biased and they are only one look at a child. I look at the test before I

> hand it out and I pray for a lot of non-fiction. If there is a lot of non-fiction, I know my students can fare fairly well but when there's a lot of fiction and a lot of cultural innuendo, idioms, and multiple meaning works I know my students won't do as well.

School psychologists agree. Anita, from the Panther School District, indicated, "In my experience, it hasn't necessarily been that they haven't done well on the high stakes exams and that's why they're being referred."

Heidi, the school psychologist from Pirates School District concurred. She stated:

> I think it's like the same use of standardized IQ tests for kids that are not culturally raised here. All of a sudden we have a lot of low IQs. They may not know some of the pictures from the verbal section of the assessment. It's a bias. I think State Assessments have the same type of impact because it is not in their native language. We're asking them to perform on skills that may be above where they have progressed with their language acquisition. I think it's probably largely an unfair measure of where they are able to perform.

Speech pathologists offered an interesting perspective related specifically to cultural bias. Karla, SLP from Panther School District, stated:

> Are the assessments appropriate? Even if they are translated, is that really valid? Probably not. We need to have assessments that are culturally appropriate. The student may not be able to do any of the assessments that they are given. Aside from high stakes assessments, a lot of determining student levels will be done by teacher observation, report card reporting at that time, looking at where the student has progressed, etc. Something like the high stakes assessment, cultural bias or experiential bias may occur. The assessments are talking about things these students may not have experienced.

Jackie, the SLP from Knight School District, referenced the need to assure educator bias does not influence the referral process. She stated:

> We need to look at whether there is a discrepancy in their first language versus English. That's very hard to come by sometimes, especially if you don't have someone that can evaluate the child in their native language. It's not about the high stakes assessments. It's a combination of teacher input, our experience, and looking at the whole child.

Throughout this research experience, participants have stated that high stakes assessments do not solely influence the referral of ELLs to special education programs. The process in each district reflected the uniqueness of each district based on available resources. The type of assessments utilized in determining whether or not an ELL gets referred for a special education assessment varied from district to district.

Anne, the school psychologist from Knight School District, stated:

> We place much less emphasis on high stakes assessments in determining our referral for special education services because I see the high stakes assessments as one of the highest levels of learning that students can get to. The biggest challenge is ruling out which aspects of their struggle are due to limited English exposure or cultural differences and which are due to actual learning differences.

Rachel, the Knight School District special educator, suggested:

> I don't think the idea of having to take the PSSA test is going to impact whether or not a student gets identified. We need to look at all of the available data as part of the comprehensive assessment. Let's think about what the students' needs are. Let's identify them and put them in a program that's going to help them succeed; then we'll worry about the high stakes assessments.

Mary, the SLP from Pirates School District agreed. She states "Let's look at this kid and their individual needs; we'll go from there."

Karla, the SLP from Panther School District, suggested the challenge can be addressed by working with the team. She suggested part of the assessment is getting someone who is fluent in the child's native language to sit down and have a conversation with the child. She argued:

> Let the team know it may be a long process. Let the team know what to expect regarding the stages of language acquisition. We need to let the student be quiet for a while and let him absorb the language. He'll figure it out when he wants to start talking. It will happen on his own. And if it doesn't, then we need to think about appropriate interventions. What does he sound like in his native language, just his spontaneous speech? If he is able to carry on a fluent conversation in his native language, there most

> likely would not be a learning difference, rather a language acquisition issue. High stakes assessments and resulting AYP data do not provide that differentiation.

An analysis of participant data reveals high stakes assessments do not appear to have a significant impact on the referral of English language learners to special education programs. The data from the study participants revealed that high stakes testing was not a factor in considering a referral of an ELL to a special education program. While there may be a lot of literature on the problems associated with high stakes testing, the concept of the tests themselves were not intended to be part of the study, rather whether or not the educators referred based on results of high stakes testing. Participants stressed the importance of supporting each student as an individual and avoiding gross generalizations. A combination of formative assessments, summative assessments, standardized assessments, curricular based assessments, and qualitative assessments paint a student centered picture of individual student achievement.

A Case of Contrary Beliefs and Misconceptions

The following discussion addresses the theme of beliefs. In all three districts, participants identified beliefs as an important factor for supporting ELLs in the general education setting and decreasing the need for a referral to special education.

Educator actions are rooted in their beliefs (Genesee et al., 2005). The analysis of educator perceptions related to the referral of English language learners to special education programs revealed three core beliefs. The core beliefs include the following: all students are capable of learning; parent engagement in their child's education; and educator engagement in the student's education.

All students are capable of learning. In an attempt to support that basic belief, educators need to ask themselves what role they have in supporting that belief.

Anne, Knight School District School Psychologist, asserted "The single most important thing is making sure they're comfortable and they feel accepted and they're presented with materials on their level, so when they're comfortable enough, they're going to be ready to learn."

Kristine, a special educator from Pirate School District agreed that each student needs to be viewed as an individual with a unique skill set. Kristine believed:

> Each kid is their own individual, and things are going to need to be adjusted to fit each child. Our job as educators is to meet the child at their level and provide the structure to help them grow. Some people are more likely to not dumb it down but make it too easy for them when they're really pretty capable; they just need some support to get through it.

The second belief addresses parent engagement in their child's education. Deborah, a regular education teacher from Knight School District contended "Whether you speak English or not, it's challenging for parents."

Not only is it challenging to engage parents, but educational teams need to engage parents in a meaningful manner and at a level at which they will understand. Anita, a school psychologist from Panther School District agreed with the challenges associated with engaging parents. Anita stated:

> I think the most challenging part is always communicating the information to the parents in a way that they understand, because you're working with interpreters and I don't know the language. So when the interpreter is sharing the information I don't know exactly what they're saying. I'm hoping they're saying what I've just shared. It is all built on trust. We need to trust each other and the fact that we all want what's best for the student.

Kelly, a Special Education teacher from Panther School District, stated "Parents feel like the school is the expert. They seem to trust the school. I've had to work on

clearly communicating the expectations in a manner that was meaningful for the parents so they could provide the necessary support at home."

The third belief addresses educator engagement in the child's education. Educators need to model and demonstrate appropriate means of engaging students, parents and colleagues in the process. The expectation of modeling and demonstrating appropriate means of engagement applies to ALL educators.

Barbra, a Principal with Knight School District, stated:

> As the leader, I need to work with the staff to build trust among everyone. It's a partnership. Teachers need to implement meaningful strategies in the classroom and parents need to help with the generalization to the home. We are all working for the same goal, the success of the student.

Dolores, ELL Teacher from Knight School District agreed. She stated:

> I have to know the student inside-out, backwards, forwards, everything I can about the child to enhance their strengths and fill in their gaps. If you know your children, you can help them succeed. Parents can help fill in the blanks in this process.

Trust and respect are essential components in the process of engaging any stakeholder group. Kayla, ELL Teacher from Pirate School District believed:

> I need to offer them the best; treat them as if they were any other child. I have to expect their best, and also treat them as an individual. I have to respect them and expect the most from them, but work with them from where they are and move them along. I can't really push them; I need to view them as an individual.

When building a trusting relationship with anyone, it is important to demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to change your perspective. As humans we need to be open to change and embracing diverse views. Flexible thoughts and a willingness to consider an opposing view can help facilitate the building of a trusting, engaging relationship.

Heidi, Pirate School District School Psychologist offered a personal reflection on what she has done to build a meaningful relationship. Heidi stated:

> I need to do my research on the different cultures and expectations for the families of students with whom I work. I want to be sure what I'm doing is not offensive, or at least not deliberately offensive; that can set the whole dynamic of the whole tone for how your relationship with the student and family can be.

John, ELL teacher in Panther School District offered an insight into a process he uses to engage various groups. John stated:

> I need to be flexible when working with students and families, especially for ELLs." Things are always changing, the needs of the students are always changing. There are very specific, individual needs, and because of that, your role shifts. I am constantly modifying what I do to make sure everybody's need are being met.

Kelly, Panther School District special education teacher shared:

> There is always more to learn. I think we've come a long way, but there's even more to learn; these students can be successful. It takes a lot of time and creativity and risk taking to really implement different strategies to meet all of the needs.

Several of the interview participants revealed common misconceptions, including lack of support, the existence of a language disability, and difficulties with academics. Misconceptions ranged from global misconceptions to more specific misconceptions. This next section discusses these misconceptions.

Global misconceptions covered the spectrum. Misconceptions ranged from the need to increase your volume when speaking with an ELL, to "they don't understand English so why bother", to ELLs are lazy and they should be able to do the work.

Judy, the principal from Pirates School District shared "I have, in years past, heard people speak loudly to them. Like increasing the loudness is going to make them understand."

Mary, the SLP from Pirates School District stated:

> I was told don't worry; he's an ELL student. He's getting support from the ELL teacher. 'Oh, well they don't get it. They can't get it. They don't understand anything I'm saying.' I think that's a complete misconception, because they're receptively getting so much more from their day than realized.

Kayla, the ELL teacher in Pirate School District shared a common misconception she often hears. "They should just be able to do it. Why can't they do it? Why can't they just read?"

John, the ELL teacher from Panther School District, suggested there might be misconceptions associated with varying stages of language acquisition through which the ELL advances. John believed:

> The most common misconception typically occurs in the early stages when students are kind of still in that silent period or that pre-emerging language period, where they're building their receptive language, but they're not building their expressive language. Because they're not speaking, people sometimes feel like they're not understanding anything, when, in reality, they are starting to understand, but they're just not able to produce.

Participants from all three districts shared the misconception that ELLs must not have the proper supports at home to be successful. Assumptions are made that because the parents may not be fluent English speakers that they are not able to provide the necessary supports at home.

Jackie, the SLP from Knight School District shared:

> People think they're not getting support at home, automatically, maybe because the parents can't support them, but many of the parents realize they can't support their child and might have tutors for them. People think they don't have support, there is no one to support them, and that they are on their own. I believe you need to expect great things from them.

One needs to consider what role we, as educators and educational leaders, have in the process of perpetuating the misconceptions. As educators, we can be our own worst

enemy. District leadership needs to stress the importance of tackling our challenges head on. Misconceptions need to be identified and addressed. Anita, the school psychologist from Panther School District stated:

> The misconception is that they don't have support. There may not be the kind of support at home that they might need with respect to the actual academic instruction. I have found that families tend to want to be very supportive and understand what is happening in the school setting and support them the way that they can. Most parents tend to want to be involved with the schools and know the information that we have to share. We need to show them how.

Terry, the regular education teachers from Pirates School District shared a similar perspective with misconceptions associated with her rural school district. Terry addressed the misconception surrounding an ELL's ability to be successful with mastering English if their parents do not speak English. Terry shared:

> The misconception is that the ELL student will not be able to do it because their parents do not speak English. In reality, that has nothing to do with it. The ELL is no different than any other learner you have in the classroom. We need to just make the accommodations and use the available services. It is important to know that those students are not different from any other student you would have in your class.

Additionally, Terry shared a challenge of engaging parents in the process. Terry stated:

> I think educators are afraid of ELL students, because they don't know how to relate to them. And then it becomes 'I don't know what to do, because you're not understanding me.' I think that becomes a handicap for educators. I also think educators struggle with communicating with parents, because parents of ELLs tend to stay away from the school, because they're not welcomed to come into the school.

Addressing available resources is another common misconception associated with providing necessary supports for ELLs. Kelsey, a principal from Panthers School District commented on getting more resources for families. Kelsey stated:

> As far as frustrations educationally or within the school, it is an education for some people outside of our school to understand what needs are different.

> The biggest challenge right now is to find ways to assist the parents and the younger siblings; to increase that comfort level of our population that this school is a resource and a safe resource for them.

The other big misconception addressed the possible existence of a language disability. All educators need to understand the difference between language acquisition and language disability. Matt, a regular education teacher from Panther School District stated "The perception is that maybe they're more special ed than they are regular education."

Karla, the SLP from Panther School District was more specific. Karla stated:

> Often teacher think that the student is not learning the language fast enough and that they must have a language or learning disability. Once you understand that there's a difference between a language disorder and a language difference, the process for providing support makes sense.

Other participants offered other perspectives. Dolores, the ELL teacher from Knight School District, said colleagues have shared "Because they don't speak English they're stupid." Dolores's regular education colleague, Deborah, from the Knight School District expanded "Some teachers have "an attitude that they don't have the intelligence, the same intelligence, as someone who can speak English." These colleagues need to be reminded, "our ELLs are extremely capable, if you give them the tools that they need to be able to be successful."

Knowing what is involved in the language acquisition process is helpful when working with ELLs. Having a working knowledge of the various stages of language acquisition may help allay some of the fears educators express. Having knowledge of second language acquisition can provide an educator with appropriate interventions, based on second language acquisition, to support the ELL.

Jackie, the SLP from Knight School District, stated:

> It's very eye opening, because there is that grey area where they don't qualify for services in ESL, but it doesn't mean that they are at the level of their peers. I think that sometimes that's a misconception that teachers might say to us, referring them to speech. 'Well, they're really struggling with vocabulary. They're really struggling with grammar. They didn't qualify for ESL.' I think, sometimes, if there was more professional development provided to us, they might understand a little more clearly that there is that time period where, yes, they are at a level where they don't need ESL services but they do need additional support in the classroom in place, before you come to us and say, 'They need your help.'

Rachel, the special education teacher from Knight School District shared:

> People assume that the intellectual or ability level is less than one of their peers due to that inability to speak the language, when, a lot of times, the students coming here and needing to learn English, are brilliant! Thinking they must be levels below just because we can't understand what they're trying to say, or they can't put it in a manner in which we're able to understand what they're saying is ignorant.

In addition to language acquisition misconceptions and ability misconceptions, there are academic misconceptions. Regarding academic misconceptions, Kelsey, a principal in Panther School District, stated:

> The challenge is never taking for granted that the base knowledge, or the background knowledge, was there. It's being so cognizant of it that you begin to read through everything and say, 'Oh maybe I need a video clip of this. Maybe they don't know what Iceland really looks like. Maybe they have no knowledge of snow because they are from Puerto Rico.' As an educator, I need to have that experience with them.

Anne, the school psychologist from Knight School District, says many of her peers believe:

> If a child can have a conversation with his friend, tell the teacher he had a nice day, get out his book on time, that he's actually able to learn at that level that the rest of the class is learning at. Those basic functional skills are not the same as what you need to succeed with the academics.

When addressing academics and ELLs, it is essential to have an understanding of BICS and CALP. To highlight a common misconception associated with BICS and CALP, Kelsey, the principal from Panther School District, stated:

> With English language learners, it's basically the BICS that they have. The basic language. They're talking and talking and talking. But, it's the CALP that you need for academic success. They don't have the content language yet. The academic language that we need to teach kids; we need that prior connection. Academic language is at a whole other level for the kids to learn.

For clarification purposes, BICS refers to the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. Cummins (1984) defines BICS as "language skills needed in social situation; the day to day language needed to interact socially with other people. They are not very demanding cognitively. The language required is not specialized. These language skills usually develop within six months to two years after arrival in the United States. In educational settings, problems arise when teachers and administrators thing that a child is proficient in a language when they demonstrate good social English."

On the other hand, Cummins (1984) defines Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as:

> Formal academic learning, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. Students need time and support to become proficient in academic areas. This usually takes five to seven years. The language becomes cognitively demanding.

Whether the misconception relates to lack of support, the existence of a language disability, and difficulties with academics, many participants shared a common misconception. Heidi, the school psychologist from Pirate School District summed it up best. Heidi argues:

> It's really easy to pick up the English language. If the child is speaking English very proficiently, they can't be having a problem. Language acquisition is a huge concept. I think the pacing of second language acquisition is a large piece of the process. Many teachers say 'They're only a couple of years behind. They'll catch up.' Nothing can be further from the truth. Research does not support that contention.

The global misconceptions discussed such as parents don't speak English, lack of appropriate supports at home, and fear of relating to students because they are different, are misconceptions that need to be addressed. To some, these global misconceptions may appear as excuses. To others, the misconceptions create tension with the beliefs that all students can learn as described earlier in this chapter. Whatever the case, educators must embrace misconceptions by engaging in courageous conversations and address the misconceptions, including the potential misalignment to stated belief systems so solutions can be found to better serve all students.

Data obtained through the interview process was triangulated with other data sources. All three districts had Board policy addressing ELLs and their unique needs. Panther School District explicitly had ELLs addressed in the curriculum cycle adoption process on their Board agenda. Additionally, the Knight School District principal was able to share upcoming professional development opportunities addressing cultural competence for her staff. The multi-year approach began with a book study and evolved to including meaningful activities designed specifically for the school.

Summary of Findings

As discussed at the onset of Chapter 4, the overarching research question for this qualitative case study was "To what extent might teacher perception influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs?"

The following questions facilitated delving deeper into the issue.

- To what extent might background and knowledge influence the referral process of teachers?
- To what extent might the quality of ELL curriculum and pedagogy impact and/or influence referrals?
- To what extent might the organization and district policy impact and/or influence referrals?
- To what extent might AYP subgroup accountability impact and/or influence referrals?

An analysis of the study findings identified five major themes. The themes included (1) shared leadership; (2) job embedded professional development; (3) problematic assessment; (4) beliefs; and (5) misconceptions.

A lack of background and knowledge can influence the referral process of teachers. When some educators do not have rich, diverse cultural experiences with students unlike themselves, some educators do not know how to appropriately support students. It may appear that the lack of some educator's personal experience with diverse cultures or a lack of job embedded professional development may result in an over referral of students to special education programs.

Quality ELL curriculum and pedagogy have a direct impact on the referral of ELLs to special education programs. Through my findings, the ELL curriculum varied across the three districts. It appears the variance is due to the level of need. For example, in Pirates School District, a rural school district with a very small ELL population, the need is not as strong as in Knight School District, a large suburban school district with a

large ELL population. One thing is evident; ALL school districts are considering the ELL population in upcoming curriculum adoption cycles. Through the curriculum review process, districts will closely examine the needs of ALL students, including ELLs and students identified with exceptionalities, as they revise curricula frameworks.

Organization and District policy have a direct impact/influence on referrals of ELLs to special education programs. Educational reform at the Federal level has impacted the specificity at both the State and local level. In response to PA State Department of Education mandates, local districts have become more explicit with their policy development to address the inclusion of ELLs and other at risk populations. As a result, Districts are now obligated to state how they will support ELLs through both the lens of curriculum and pedagogy, as well as the lens of assessment and referral to special education programs. Inappropriate referrals of ELLs to special education programs can result in violations of an ELL's civil rights.

AYP subgroup accountability does not have an impact and/or influence on referrals of ELLs to special education programs. Prior to this study, I believed AYP subgroup accountability had a more significant impact on the referral process. Through the analysis of study findings, it was evident that was not the case. Study participants were emphatic in stating they, as educators, wanted to do what was best for students; however, they did not always have the knowledge, resources, or support to do what was best. As a result of not having the necessary tools and resources, educators would refer ELLs to special education programs without any thought related to AYP accountability measures.

To conclude my findings, I revisit my overarching research study question. To what extent might educator perception influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs? Educator perception does influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs. Participants from each of the three districts shared the need for their local district to value all students and provide opportunities and resources allowing all students to achieve. Each process is a local decision that needs regulations grounded in educational research and policy. As stated earlier, to address these perceptions there is a need for shared leadership with meaningful job embedded professional development to refute problematic assessments along with educator beliefs and misconceptions.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The final chapter of this dissertation provides an overview of the study, including restating the purpose, research questions, and methodology. The data collected through participant interviews, review of artifacts, and observation of Board meetings provided insight into possible responses to the initial research questions.

This research study was conducted in three suburban school districts of a large metropolitan city in a mid-Atlantic state. One school district was a rural school district, one school district was a suburban school district, and the other school district was a large suburban school district.

A qualitative case study protocol was utilized in this study. Data sources included interviews and the examination of archival records. Interviews provided the majority of data and were supported and validated by the examination of archival records.

The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was "How might teacher perception influence the referral process and identification of English Language Learners into special education programs?"

The following questions facilitated delving deeper into the issue.

- How might background and knowledge influence the referral process of teachers?
- How might the quality of ELL curriculum and pedagogy impact and/or influence referrals?

- How might the organization and district policy impact and/or influence referrals?
- How might AYP subgroup accountability impact and/or influence referrals?

The discussion that follows will expand upon the findings from the previous chapter in which each of the research questions was addressed.

Limitations to the Study

There were a few limitations associated with this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the findings apply to the specific sample group that was utilized during the study. The sample consisted of three school districts from two suburban counties of a large city in a mid-Atlantic state. Initially, three districts from one suburban county were identified; however, the superintendent from one district declined the opportunity to participate resulting in the need to seek input from a neighboring district across county lines. Sixteen of the participants were female and two of the participants were male. As I worked in one of the districts participating in the study, I worked closely with six of the participants. I had familiarity with three of the remaining twelve participants.

Relation to Rational Comprehensive Model

In the current state of educational reform, Congress is reexamining NCLB and proposing legislative changes as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As Congress debates the new legislation, all possible options or approaches are considered in the adoption of the ESSA. As laws change, the rational comprehensive model helps

lawmakers consider all options; the development of the ESSA is a dynamic process and should not be static.

Table 5.1:

Relation to Gross' Turbulence Theory

The Turbulence Gauge

Degree of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to This Situation
Light	Little of no disruption	Federal, State, and Local entities have implemented well defined regulations and procedures to support the educational needs of ELLs. We are not concerned.
Moderate	**Widespread awareness of the issue**	**Federal, State, and Local entities develop regulations and procedures to address educational needs of ELLs; everyone is involved in all stages of the process.**
Severe	A sense of crisis	Federal, State, and Local entities do not have regulations and procedures developed to address the educational needs of ELLs. No one knows what will happen next.
Extreme	Structural damage to reform	No one knows what to do; ELLs are not provided with an appropriate education.

Gross' (2008) Turbulence Theory states "Position mattered in organizational turbulence" (p. 44). In regards to the moderate level of turbulence identified in this qualitative study, a moderate level of turbulence meant different things to different

stakeholders. Not only does the organization need to be aware of the turbulence and respond appropriately, but the organization also needs to be aware of the variations among the stakeholders.

For example, positionality of the educators working directly with the ELLs created a higher level of urgency for initiating a referral due to their daily interactions and close proximity to the learning process. Those on the periphery were exposed to students through the review of data, team meetings, and structured observations in the classroom setting. The periphery experience did not lead to the same level of urgency for initiating a referral for special education services.

Gross (2008) argues the level of turbulence faced by the organization is escalated from one downturn to the next. Furthermore, Gross (2008) states "it is important to consider forces in the environment that may propel that turbulence to higher levels. Understanding cascading is a matter of understanding context and the force of a series of turbulent conditions" (p. 47).

In regards to educators making referrals of ELLs for special education services, there is a moderate degree of turbulence with widespread awareness of the issue. Federal, State, and Local entities are developing regulations and procedures to address the educational needs of ELLs. Everyone is involved in all stages of the process.

In this case, cascading is representing those educators on the periphery who are serving in administrative roles. In the administrative roles, these educators are responsible for ensuring the implementation of policy and have direct impact on the momentum associated with the cascade. Educators in administrative roles have closer

proximity to the policy development at the District level than the educators working directly with students on a daily basis.

Changing demographics of the suburban school districts are a force that is at play in the current study. Knight School District, the large diverse suburban school district is poised to respond to the change in cascade due to a larger enrollment of ELLs. On the other hand, Pirate School District, the small rural school district with limited diversity is not as well poised to respond to the change in cascade. The need and level of urgency is not the same.

In this study, both positionality and cascading are interwoven and dependent upon each other. A slight impact on either positionality or cascading could impact the level of turbulence. As Gross (2008) contends, "The purpose of Turbulence Theory transcends the need to describe these sudden and sometimes wrenching changes, it is meant to help us gain perspective on this movement, see potential benefits, and retain needed flexibility" (p. 52).

Relation to Morgan's Theory of Organizations as Cultures

Morgan (2006) contends

> Culture shapes the character of an organization. By understanding the cultural factors that shape organizations we have a means of understanding important differences in organizational behavior. One of the characteristics of culture is that is creates a form of ethnocentricism. In providing taken for-granted codes of action we recognize as 'normal,' it leads us to see activities that do not conform as abnormal. A full awareness of the nature of culture, however, shows us that we are all equally abnormal in this regard. (p. 120).

In this qualitative study, each organization had a unique culture. Knight School District, the large suburban diverse school district had a unique culture with deeper subcultures. Educators working in Knight School District not only had to be aware of the

culture of the district as a whole, but also the culture of each ELL subgroup and other student demographic subgroups.

For example, educators working in a specific building within Knight School District may have daily experience working with ELLs of Hispanic descent as well as ELLs of Asian descent. Interactions with the ELLs from varying backgrounds may lend itself to a differentiated intervention model. Additionally, interactions with the parents of the ELLs from varying backgrounds may again lend itself to a differentiated intervention model.

Educational leaders in Knight School District identified the need to ensure educators had the understanding of the various cultures represented in the Knight School District community so that the educators could respond appropriately to the students and provide appropriate interventions. Barbra, a building level administrator in Knight School District, had the foresight to ensure her staff was consistently afforded the opportunity for cultural proficiency professional development opportunities.

Barbra argues,

> I think we could be more effective if we had global training, if the District provided appropriate professional development. Currently, there is a gap in our practice. I think we could be more effective if we, as a District and not every building doing their own thing, continue to train our teachers through professional development opportunities on how to work with different populations of students in the regular education setting.

The multiple lenses from which the educators view each unique situation can be very complex, cumbersome, and taxing.

On the other hand, Pirate School District, the small rural school district with a limited diverse student population, does not have the same need. Educators working in

Pirate School District generally had to be aware of the culture of the district as a whole, without any particular attention to various ELL subgroups and other student demographic subgroups.

Although study participants from Pirate School District did not have a similar need as their colleagues in Knight School District, Pirate School District educators consistently identified the changing student demographic on the horizon. Educational leaders in Pirate School District are now poised to tackle the issue by identifying appropriate interventions and job embedded professional development opportunities for the staff. Educators from both school districts admittedly agreed that continuous improvement in curriculum design and professional development was needed.

Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Theory and Literature

The primary literature ideas connected to this study included the current description of ELLs, the change in the United States population according to ethnicity, second language acquisition, influential Federal legislation, school culture, teacher preparation, professional development along with two theoretical frameworks, Morgan's theory of organizations as culture and Gross' turbulence theory. The following discussion provides the connection to the existing research and the contribution of this study.

The discussion in the literature review provides the reader with a perspective on why America's public schools need to provide a change in educational practices for ELLs. As educators understand the ELL and second language acquisition theory they may be better prepared to support the educational needs of this unique population of learners. The contribution of this

study may provide educational leaders with insight into the extent to which perceptions of educators were influenced by the Federal and State mandates for providing appropriate educational services for ELLs. The contribution of this study may also demonstrate to what extent some educators embrace working with ELLs as opportunities for strengthening cultural proficiency instead of viewing the opportunity as a deficit model for the culture of a school.

This study sought to determine how participant educators supporting English Language Learners perceive their role in the referral of ELLs to special education programs. Knowledge gained from the study of the phenomenon was used to develop and review the current policies and procedures to support the referral of ELLs to special education programs.

I contend that many educators do not know how to provide support for ELLs in their classrooms due to lack of professional training, lack of professional development, and costs associated with resources, including salaries and materials. The Board of Education for the district, as well as the district superintendent, need to embrace the legislation of NCLB and its intent. Recognizing the sense of urgency to educate ALL of our children needs to be a priority in the age of accountability and AYP. Do districts reflect upon their current practice to determine whether or not the current practice is aligned to best practice? Do districts conduct an analysis of their ELL and special education programs to determine if appropriate services for ELLs are provided based on data? Do districts provide reactive interventions in response to litigation versus providing proactive interventions aligned to current legislation?

There is a significant amount of literature about working with ELLs and supporting their academic achievement. However the literature on referral of ELLs to special education programs that is investigative and evaluative is not as abundant. This study sought to create a new perspective that is investigative and evaluative based on the attitudes and perceptions of these program participants concerning their job preparation and administrative support.

The study attempted to clarify the structures and procedures believed to be effective for the study's participants in their own job preparation for their roles supporting ELLs. Morgan's theory of organizations as cultures stresses the importance of shared values and beliefs among the team to celebrate the unique opportunity ELLs offer to a school. Gross' turbulence theory stresses the need for educators to step out of their comfort zone and reexamine their current practice. Current practice may need to be modified to incorporate some of the ELL's native culture into the learning experience.

This study adds these components to the literature on available supports for English Language Learners. A task force can be developed to assist the organization with establishing relationships among key stakeholders from the community. Hamayan and Freeman's (2006) suggestions may manifest in relationships established with community organizations, community leaders, local colleges and universities, and key members of the educational institution.

Finally, this study offers district educators with data related to decision making as it relates to the referral of ELLs to special education programs. Current research reveals the positive influence properly trained educators have in supporting ELLs when provided with appropriate materials, including professional development. Since the research was

limited on educator perceptions of ELLs as it relates to special education services, this study provides some data on educator perception from three mid Atlantic state LEAs. Educators are responsible for ensuring the educational needs of ALL students are being met.

Applications of Study to Practice

As a professional, this study had significant meaning for me. My interest in this topic was piqued at the onset of my career as a speech and language pathologist in Anaheim, CA. At that time, I served as a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom for junior high school students with both specific learning disability and language impairment. The dual diagnosis was fascinating to me. I was curious as to how students could present with both specific learning disability and language impairment. And to highlight the curiosity, ninety percent of my students were bilingual – speaking English and coming from a Spanish-speaking dominant home.

I was honored and privileged to serve as the teacher for my students. The challenges of teaching core content from a language based perspective, coupled with assuring the students' English language learner needs were addressed, was overwhelming at times. Collaborating with regular education colleagues at my school provided me the experience to use grade level materials with accommodations to allow access. My daily work led to more and more questions to feed my thirst for increasing my knowledge on the topic.

The result led to me continuing my education tying my speech and language foundation to school psychology and school counseling. Throughout my studies, many educators with whom I had experience did not necessarily know how to best support the

ELLs in their schools. As I gained administrative experience I needed a more in- depth understanding for educators providing appropriate supports to English language learners.

As a result of this study, my understanding has expanded to better understand how perception of educators influence the referrals of English language learners to special education programs. As an educational leader, it is important to respond to the needs of all learners.

In order to respond to the needs of all learners, it is essential for educational leaders to work within the culture of the district along with the associated subcultures. Specific subcultures may include the culture of the specific building, the culture of the community being served, the culture of the classroom, and the culture of the student. As educational leaders we also need to be ready to navigate the turbulence that may arise as a result of tensions between the overall culture and various subcultures.

Educator perceptions are influential. Educators must share the belief that ALL students are capable of learning. Rooted in their beliefs should be the intrinsic sense that ALL students, despite their exceptionalities, are honored and valued in their learning environment. In addition, parent engagement in their child's education is vital. Schools must do whatever it takes to ensure parent engagement is paramount to involve them in their child's education. Schools must be creative in their outreach efforts to parents so they can feel that true sense of belonging to the school community. Educator engagement in the student's education is powerful. Educators must network together to demonstrate to students that all staff support the learning, development and progress of each individual student. In essence, educator engagement means all staff takes ownership for the success and outcomes for all students.

As the field of education responds to the changing demographics in today's schools, all educators, including educational leaders, need to be advocates of educational policy and its impact on student achievement. Advocacy, in this case, has a specific lens impacting the subgroup of English language learners and those identified with exceptionalities. Federal, State, and Local policy development needs to include perspectives from the voice of educators working directly with this population. From my research, I learned that educators want what is best for students. At times, educators may not have the tools and resources to accomplish this task.

Shared leadership is an essential premise when advocating. Educational leaders need to listen to the educators working in the field who can represent the needs of the students. The shared responsibility among policy makers, educational leaders, educators, parents, and students can be powerful in producing meaningful outcomes.

In an attempt to provide some type of support to the student, referrals of English language learners for special education services is made. Job embedded professional development is a natural outcome that is able to provide "in the moment" support for all educators. Each educator, depending on the perspective from which they view the situation, has the ability and responsibility to find an answer to the challenge faced.

For me, this idea resounds loudly. Over the years, my direct contact with English language learners and students identified with special needs has become less and less direct. As my role and responsibilities shifted, the type of job embedded professional development shifted. Early in my career, the job embedded professional development was focused on instructional practice and resources. In the recent past, the job embedded professional development was focused on legal implications, policy, and curriculum

adoption. In addition, I had the responsibility to ensure opportunities for job embedded professional development were available and appropriate for colleagues working more directly with students.

At the onset of my research, I had a bias that high stakes assessments had an influence on the referral of ELLs for special education services. Much to my surprise, an outcome of my research provided me with data to deny educators refer ELLs to special education services for purposes of influencing high stakes assessment data. Rather, educators reported high stakes assessment did not impact the decision to refer the ELL to special education services. In my current work, this is valuable information in that it allows the focus to remain on providing the most meaningful shared leadership and job embedded professional development for my colleagues.

In sum, support for ELLs is simple, yet complex. English language learners may not only need support with language acquisition, but also with expectations for American schooling. As educators, we need to reflect on our own instructional strengths and challenges and ask for support as needed. Everyone has the ability to learn at their own level. Our job as educators is to tap into that ability to meet students where they are and continue to move them forward to progress and meet with success.

Recommendations

The suggestions listed below can assist the study participants, and others interested in the topic, to support the success of English language learners.

Recommendations Related to Special Education Services

1. District leaders need to be well versed in Federal and State policy surrounding the instruction of English language learners, including Chapter 4, Chapter 14, and the

Basic Education Circular (BEC). Districts leaders need to have full knowledge of the policies, both ELL and special education, in order to make informed decisions regarding the appropriateness of instruction for student learning. Too often leaders assume they are making appropriate decisions for student learning based on their limited understanding of regulations and policies.

2. District leaders should explore Standards based instruction for possible implementation to "level the playing field" for all learners, including English language learners. All students need to have access to PA Core. Districts need to ensure that students are matched to the appropriate accommodations and modifications so they can have the opportunity to engage in the curriculum and activate their learning.

Recommendations to All Learners

3. Central office administrators, from the superintendent to other district level administrators, need to provide the required professional development to building level leaders so that the building level leaders can ensure staff is armed with the necessary tools to see all students are educated.

4. District leaders should seek input and feedback from all stakeholders, including parents, as curriculum cycles are implemented to ensure materials and resources address the needs of English language learners. Parents are often untapped to provide pertinent information about their student's learning styles and abilities. Many times district level curriculum specialists make decisions without input from all stakeholders. Educators working directly with students have expertise in providing necessary feedback regarding pilot program implementation.

5. District leaders should facilitate professional development aligned to research based and evidence based curricular strategies to address the individual needs of the students entrusted to them, including English language learners. There needs to be better collaboration between departments. District leaders need to terminate working in isolation and build both inter and intra departmental relationships to better align how they are programming for students.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study can be replicated in other suburban and urban districts and geographical areas to determine what role, if any, educator perception has on the influence of referrals for English language learners to special education programs.

The idea one often conjures up when asked to think about an English Language Learner is typically a student whose family recently arrived to America and who demonstrates little to no mastery of the English language. A suggested topic for future research related to this study would be for the English language learner of Eastern European descent who has been adopted by an American family. This study did not explicitly differentiate between an English language learner who immigrated with their family and an English language learner adopted by an American family. This perspective of an English language learner should be studied and have the outcomes documented to add to the current body of literature supporting English language learners. Another consideration for future study involves gender implications. In this study, sample participants were predominantly female. A future study many include a comparative study with a different gender balance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Provisions of IDEA 2004 With Respect to Minority Disproportionality in Special Education

- States must have policies and procedures in place to prevent the inappropriate overidentification or disproportionate representation by race or ethnicity of students with disabilities, including children with a particular impairment.
  [34 CFR 300.173] [20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(24)]

- Each State that receives Part B funds must collect and examine special education data to determine if significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity is occurring at the State or local level with respect to disability, placement in particular settings or disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions.
  [34 CFR 300.646(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1418(d)(1)]

- If significant disproportionality is found, States must provide for a review and, if appropriate, revision of policies, practices, and procedures used in identification and placement. Local education agencies identified with significant disproportionality must devote the maximum amount of funds (15% of Part B) to comprehensive early intervening services directed particularly but not exclusively towards children with from groups found to be disproportionately represented. Changes to policies, practices, and procedures must be publicly reported by the LEA.
  [34 CFR 300.646(b)] [20 U.S.C. 14189d0920]

- States must disaggregate data on suspension and expulsion rates by race and ethnicity, comparing those rates either among local education agencies in the state, or to the rates of non-disabled children within those agencies.
  [34 CFR 300.646(b)] [20 U.S.C. 1418(d)(2)]

- States must monitor local education agencies using quantifiable indicators of disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services, to the extent the representation is the result of inappropriate identification.
  [34 CFR 300.600(d)(3)]
  [20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(C)]

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter to Interview Participants

November 1, 2010

Dr. Curtis R. Dietrich, Superintendent of Schools
North Penn School District
401 East Hancock Street
Lansdale, PA 19446

Dear Dr. Dietrich,

My name is Leonard Greaney and I am currently the Director of Pupil Services in the Quakertown Community School District located in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. I have worked in the field of education for the last 19 years and have served as a special education administrator for eight of those years.

I am currently a fourth year doctoral student at Temple University in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program. I am beginning my dissertation research in the fall of 2010. The topic of my dissertation is ***"A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services."*** The main objective of my research is to gain a deeper understanding of educators' perceptions of English Language Learners as related to special education services. This is a topic of great interest to me as I have observed first hand the on-going needs of our English Language Learners in the K-12 public school setting.

I am seeking your approval for your district to participate in this qualitative case study about English Language Learners. The study will require audio-taped interviews of district educators that will last approximately 45 minutes in length. Confidentiality of all participants will be upheld through the use of a coded number system in order to protect each individual's identity. I will also need access to district documents such as the district's strategic plan, ELL policy and procedure, and school goals if applicable. I will also conduct informal observations in the field to obtain a general feel for the English Language Learner programs in your districts.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in this study. I believe the context of this study has the potential to illuminate instructional practices for English Language Learners at the federal, state, and local levels. If you wish to contact me with any questions or feedback, I can be reached at leonard.greaney@temple.edu or by cell phone at (267) 377-6029. Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Leonard V. Greaney
Doctoral Candidate (Educational Leadership and Policy Studies)
Temple University

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter to Interview Participants

September 25, 2010

Dear Educator:

My name is Leonard Greaney and I am currently the Director of Pupil Services in the Quakertown Community School District located in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. I have worked in the field of education for the last 19 years and have served as a special education administrator for eight of those years.

I am currently a fourth year doctoral student at Temple University in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program. I am beginning my dissertation research in the spring of 2011. The topic of my dissertation is ***"A Case Study on Educators' Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services."*** The main objective of my research is to gain a deeper understanding of educators' perceptions of English Language Learners as related to special education services. This is a topic of great interest to me as I have observed first hand the on-going needs of our English Language Learners in the K-12 public school setting.

I am seeking your approval to participate in this qualitative case study about English Language Learners. The study will require an audio-taped interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. This interview is the only requirement if you choose to participate in the study. Your confidentiality will be upheld through the use of a coded number system in order to protect your identity.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in this study. I believe the context of this study has the potential to illuminate instructional practices for English Language Learners at the federal, state, and local levels. If you wish to contact me with any questions or feedback, I can be reached at leonard.greaney@temple.edu or by cell phone at (267) 377-6029. Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Leonard V. Greaney
Doctoral Candidate (Educational Leadership and Policy Studies)
Temple University

APPENDIX D

Consent Form to Participate in Research

Title: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services

Investigators:

Principal Investigator: Steven Gross, Ed.D. Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Temple University (215) 204-8064.

Student Investigator: Leonard V. Greaney, Doctoral Student at Temple University in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program (267) 377-6029.

Purpose of Research

The two investigators are currently engaged in a study that is examining the perceptions and opinions of suburban district educators as it pertains to the referral of English Language Learners for Special Education Services. To be eligible for the study, the participants have to hold a valid teaching certificate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and be currently employed in a public school district as a Director of Pupil Services, Director of Special Education, Principal, Regular Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, English as a Second Language Teacher, or Speech and Language Pathologist. To obtain further insight into this research we would like to ask you to participate in this study by taking part in a 45 minute interview. This interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. The interview should not impact your work day or take you away from your responsibilities.

General Research Design

The research design that is proposed will be done in an interview format and will be audio taped and transcribed at another time. The researcher will ask approximately XX questions that focus on decision making processes as it relates to the referral of English Language Learners for Special Education Services. The researcher will conduct the interview at the district at a time that is convenient to the participant.

Benefits of the Study

The results of the data collected and the recommendations from the investigators will provide rich descriptive reports that can be utilized by parents, educators, policymakers, and the general public to gain a deeper and richer understanding of English Language Learner programming in one state.

Title: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services

Confidentiality

The data that you provide will be recorded anonymously. Your participation and anything you say during the session will be held in the strictest confidence. A numbered coding system will be utilized with each participant to ensure confidentiality. The number correlating to each research subject will only be known to the researcher and no one else. We welcome questions about this study at any time. Your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis. You may refuse to participate at any time without consequence or prejudice.

Research Rights

Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to **Mr. Richard Throm**, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19140, (215) 707-8757.

Signing your name below indicates that you have read and understand the contents of this Consent Form and that you agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature_____ Date_____

Investigator's Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX E

Permission to Audiotape

Title: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services.

Principal Investigator, Steven Jay Gross, Ed.D. College of Education
Professor of Educational Leadership and
Policy Studies at Temple University (215) 204-8064.

Student Investigator, Leonard V. Greaney, College of Education
Doctoral Student at Temple University in
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (267) 718-1471.

*Subject:*_____ *Date:*_____

*Log#:*_____

I give Leonard V. Greaney permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used for the following purpose:

RESEARCH

This audiotape will be used as a part of a research project at Temple University. I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audiotaped during the time period: Anita 2011 through July 2011.

Title: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services.

HOW LONG WILL THE TAPES BE USED?

I give permission for these tapes to be used from: Anita 2011 through July 2011.

This audiotape will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the private office of the investigator's residence for a period of three (3) years after completion of the study.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdrawal my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with Leonard V. Greaney or Temple University in any way**.**

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audiotaped or for the use of the audiotape(s).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Leonard V. Greaney

Department: College of Education, Ed. Leadership and Policy Studies

Institution: Temple University

Street Address: 266 Ritter Hall
1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Telephone: (267) 377-6029 or (215) 257-2676

Title: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services.

This form will be placed in my records and a copy will be kept by the person(s) named above. A copy will be given to me.

PLEASE PRINT

Subject's Name: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Subject's Signature: _____
(Or signature of parent or legally responsible person if subject is a minor or is incompetent to sign.)

Relationship to subject:

Subject cannot sign because:_____

_____

but consents orally to be audiotaped under the conditions described above.

Witness signature:_____ Date_____

Witness signature:_____Date_____

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Investigator's Name: Leonard V. Greaney

Title of Study: A Case Study on Teacher's Perceptions of English Language Learners as it Relates to Special Education Services

Interview Protocol: Questions for the Participant

1. My goal is to understand your point of view about English Language Learners and their relation to special education services. As we talk for the next 45 minutes or so, I will refer occasionally to my list so we don't miss anything important. Let's begin by you telling me about your educational background, your life, and/or your future career aspirations.
2. Please define your current role and responsibilities in the school district along with how many years you have been serving in this capacity.
3. Think about your current position. How do you feel about working with ELLs? Related to education, what beliefs and thoughts do you hold about English Language Learners? Are you challenged, fulfilled, frustrated? Why?
4. Discuss the characteristics of your ELLs and/or special education students, including an academic profile.
5. Tell me about a time you worked with or supported an ELL. What did you find valuable? What did you find challenging?
6. Discuss the impact teachers have on working with "at risk students," including ELLs and/or special education students.
7. How do ELL programs align to the District's strategic plan, Board policy, and Board adopted curriculum for content areas?
8. Who are the stakeholders involved in making a decision in regards to English Language Learner programs and referral for special education services?
9. Discuss your perspective on the effectiveness schools have on serving the diverse needs of the "at risk students" and meeting their needs.
10. How have English Language Learner programs changed over the last 5 years?
11. Discuss what teachers in the district do to integrate knowledge of the student's home culture into their teaching.
12. What process do educators go through as they refer ELLs for special education services? What informs these processes?
13. Discuss the available resources to meet the needs of ELLs and/or special education students.

14. What specific interventions you may be aware of, that have been found to either be successful or not successful when working with an ELL student and/or special education student.
15. From your perspective, discuss the single most important thing a school can do to ensure ELLs and special education students are successful.
16. How do the high stakes assessments impact English Language Learner programming and the potential referral for special education services?
17. Discuss the most common misconception or wrong assumption that is made when working with ELLs and/or special education students.
18. In reflecting on your professional training and experience to date, discuss what is really important for me to understand about your work with ELLs and/or special education students.
19. Is there anything else you think I need to know about working with ELLs and/or special education students that you want to share, that I did not ask?