General Education Teachers and ELL Students: Examining One District's ELL Instruction Through the Lens of the Classroom Teachers

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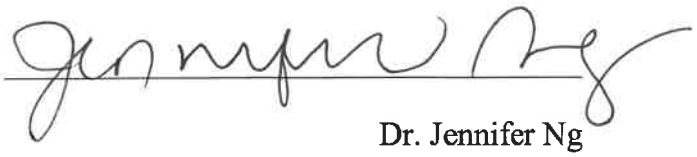

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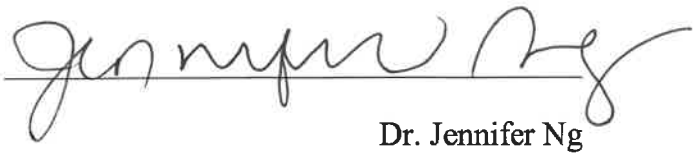

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are nearly 5 million students in our schools for whom English is not their native language. While Spanish is the native language spoken for about 3.8 million English Language Learners (ELL), other languages such as Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic are found throughout the United States and in the public-school system. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was our nation's education policy focused on closing student achievement gaps by providing all students a fair and equal opportunity to get a high-quality education. This policy standardized the way students were taught regardless of their unique educational background by holding schools accountable for all students' progress in reading and math (Public Broadcasting Company, 2002). An emphasis on increased funding for poorer school districts also was part of NCLB.

In December 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which gave states the power to create their own long-term and short-term goals addressing proficiency on assessments, English-language proficiency criteria and graduation rates (Klein, 2016). Accountability for ELL students moved from NCLB Title III to Title I, with the premise that accountability for this subgroup would be a priority for all school districts. ESSA requires that within three years of attending public schools, the ELL student's assessment scores are treated the same as any other student whose native language is English.

The growth of ELL students in schools is unmatched by the general population. The number of ELL students grew 124 percent between 1979 and 2003, while the number of school-age children overall only grew by 19 percent (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Some estimate the number of ELL students across the United States, both elementary and secondary, will make up 40 percent of our schools' population by 2030. In Kansas public schools, there was a 127.6 percent increase in ELL identified students between the 1997-1998 school year with 15,215 ELL students, and the

2007-2008 school year with 34,630 ELL students (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). In the 2012-2013 school year, more than 49,000 English Language Learners enrolled in public schools in Kansas, an almost 141 percent increase from the 2007-2008 school year five years earlier. Teachers interact with children all day, delivering lessons, explaining concepts, sharing stories and guiding learning, without thinking that the words they are using to communicate may be hindering learning (Diaz, et al., 1994). As the faces in our classrooms continue to change and educators welcome more non-English speaking children into their learning environments, school districts must ensure the general education teacher is prepared to meet the students' diverse educational needs through specific knowledge and skills (Zinth, 2013).

Instructional approaches for language acquisition vary. There are districts that prefer segregation where ELL students spend the majority of their days separated from general-education peers and focus on English language and content knowledge (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Moll, 2010). Other districts do not have certified teachers trained to provide English language instruction and second-language students integrate with the general-education classrooms the entire day, receiving little or no additional support with language. Another delivery method has ELL students spending part of the day working directly with a teacher certified to teach English to speakers of other languages and the rest of the school day in the general education classrooms (Roy-Campbell, 2013). This is the most popular method, and has ELL students spending their days in mainstream classrooms with instruction in English and surrounded by peers who speak English (Harper & de Jong, 2004).

The National Reading Panel identified phonemic awareness phonics fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension as having clear benefits for all students, especially language-minority students (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000).

However, NICHD noted that adjustments are needed to the general-education reading programs in order for them to have maximum benefits with ELL students. This means their academic success is dependent on the general education teacher, who often has received inadequate preparation for teaching ELL students, as not all states require ELL teachers to have additional certification or additional training in teaching students who speak another language. ELLs are attempting to learn the content area while also learning a new language, which is different than peers who are focused on learning grade-level standard curriculum.

Harper and de Jong note that exposure to English is not enough and ELL students need opportunities to practice English to negotiate meaning, and teachers need to help them understand the structure of English in academic contexts (2004). Twenty states require ELL teachers to have specialist certification and 14 states reference certification in state policies, yet are unclear in the policy if it is a requirement (Education Commission of the States, 2014). While general education teachers may have knowledge of the ELL state standards, they often lack understanding of the importance of attending to oral language development, supporting academic language in all subjects and being sensitive to the cultural differences (Samson & Collins, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to examine the general elementary-level education teachers' academic, social, and interactional experiences when working with ELL students in one Midwestern school district. One can find research studying how teachers feel about mainstreaming students with special needs (Fish, 2017) and examining teachers' behavior toward racial minorities compared to white students (Batts, 2012). There are studies looking at how a child's socio-economic status affects the amount of attention given by a teacher (Whelan & Teddlie, 1989) and studies that compare teachers' treatment of students by gender (Steffens, Jelenec, & Noack, 2010). Others have examined the impact diminishing funding has on

education (Ramirez, II, & Breckenridge, 2014) and how the lack of teacher professional development is hindering student achievement (McGraner & Saenz, 2009). Yet, there is a lack of research on ELL students in elementary classrooms from the perspective of the general education teacher. Knowing that the ELL population is rising and that students are spending the majority of their school days within the general education classrooms (McGraner & Saenz, 2009), this dissertation will examine the general education teachers' academic, social, and interactional experiences when working with ELL students. Districts can use the findings of this study to examine their own ELL program, investigating whether there are needed changes or adaptations to prepare and support teachers as they educate students who are learning English as a second language.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The landscape of our public education classrooms has changed over the past three to four decades in many ways, and maybe most dramatically by way of student demographics. No longer are classrooms occupied by children who speak English both at home and at school. Instead, general education teachers are teaching students who do not speak English, may never have heard English, and go home to parents who do not speak English. In 15 years, the number of ELL students in the nation rose from 3.8 million, 8.1 percent, in 2000 to 4.8 million, 9.5 percent, in 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In fact, students who speak a language other than English in their homes and are learning English as a second language at school are the fastest-growing population in the United States (Kreck, 2014; Kreck, 2014). There is no denying that the number of ELL students will continue to rise, so districts must ensure teachers are prepared to educate them.

ELL Students in the United States

An English Language Learner (ELL) is a student who lives in a home where a language other than English is spoken, and who additionally has a level of English proficiency that is insufficient to fully participate in classroom instruction without additional language-related support (Zehler, Yin, & Donovan, 2012). Federal guidelines state that students who indicate another language on their enrollment forms must be tested within 30 days to determine English language proficiency (Department of Education, 2016). Language proficiency is tested in the areas of speaking, writing, listening and reading, and determines the students overall level of proficiency.

Characteristics of ELL Students

Characteristics of English Language Learners are reflected throughout literature reviews and research studies with The Great Schools Partnership's (2013) definition articulating that ELL students are those who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, come from non-English speaking homes, and require additional support in language and academic courses. These highly diverse students represent different cultures and ethnic backgrounds, which brings a level of richness and difficulty to our classrooms. Despite their grouping into one category as ELL, their needs vary dramatically based on individual linguistic, social and academic backgrounds, as well as the age at which they enter our public-school system (Gandara & Rumberger, 2008).

Number of ELL Families

The United States' population shows a rising number of families speaking languages other than English and there is no indication of the numbers slowing or declining. In the 1980 Census, 23.1 million people reported that they spoke a language other than English at home. Three decades later that number rose 158 percent with 59.5 million people reporting on the 2010 Census that they spoke another language. During this same time, the total population grew by only 38 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Demographers show no indication of this trend changing (Gandara & Rumberger, 2008).

Number of ELL Students

In the 2010-2011 school year, 16 percent of kindergarteners across the United States came from households where English was not the primary language spoken (National Center on Education Statistics, 2013). By 2020, some estimate that preschool-age children in our country who are exposed to or speak a language other than English at home will outnumber their

English-speaking peers (Maxwell L. A., 2013). The majority of ELL students are Hispanic yet people of Mexican descent are frequently viewed by others as foreigners, partly due to language issues, even though 57 percent of current ELL students were born in the United States (Madrid, 2008).

The number of students in U.S. public schools who are learning English as a second language was estimated to be 4.6 million in the 2014-2015 school year, an estimated 300,000 more students than a decade earlier (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). During that 2014-2015 school year, U.S. school districts had an average ELL enrollment of 9.4 percent of total students, while some states, such as California and Colorado, reported more than 22 percent of students were learning English as a second language. Today, nearly one of every 10 public-school students in kindergarten through 12th grade speaks a language other than English at home and is learning English as a second language while at school.

ELL Students in Kansas Schools

Educators in Kansas also have seen more ELL students in their classrooms each year. In the 1997-1998 school year, 468,744 students were enrolled in public schools in Kansas, and 15,215 of them were identified as ELL students. A decade later, in the 2007-2008 school year, total enrollment was down 0.1 percent to 468,295 students, and there were 34,630 identified ELL students enrolled, which was a 127.6 percent increase (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). Kansas ranked among the top states with the largest percentage growth of ELL students between school years 2002-2003 and 2010-2011 (Zinth, 2013). Two years later, during the 2012-2013 school year, there were more than 49,000 English Language Learners enrolled in the Kansas public school system, which was a 175 percent increase from the 2002-2003 school year a decade earlier. School districts across the state of Kansas vary in the number of ELL students and the

percentage of total student population with the largest having almost 10,000 ELL students. This study's district reported more than 5,000 students spoke a language other than English during the 2018-2019 school year.

Languages Spoken

In addition to the increase in the number of ELL students, there is significant increase in the number of languages spoken by this population. Across the United States, ELL students speak more than 450 different languages (Payan & Nettles, 2008). In the 2014-2015 school year, 11 states and the District of Columbia reported that 80 percent or more of their ELL students spoke Spanish (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017). Across the nation, there were more than 3.6 million Spanish speakers, followed by more than 97,000 Chinese speakers, and around 25,000 Haitian speakers. In only seven states, Spanish was not the top language. For example, Ojibwa was spoken by 34 percent of ELL students in North Dakota, and American Indian was spoken by 64 percent of ELL students in Montana. The number of languages spoken by ELLs in each state varies, with 5 languages reported in Mississippi and more than 225 languages reported in Pennsylvania (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2017).

Languages in Kansas

In Kansas, for the 2012-2013 school year, 80.9 percent of ELL students spoke Spanish, with the other top languages being Vietnamese, German, Chinese and Arabic (Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). The district used for this study reported 87 different languages spoken by ELL students for the 2018-2019 school year, with the top being Spanish, followed by Amharic, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Chinese. These children try to learn English during the day and then go home to non-English speaking families.

Identification and Assessment

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was the national education policy that influenced states' actions regarding all students, including those who are ELLs. Under Title III of NCLB, public schools serving ELL students were mandated to prepare them to "meet the same challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). On December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced NCLB and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). "With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal – that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their live what they will," he said upon signing ESSA (Department of Education, 2017).

Initial Identification

While federal policy requires states and school districts to identify students who need English language services (Wixom, 2015), it does not mandate the process for identification. Once a student has been identified as potential ELL, Federal mandates require the district to assess the student in English for reading, writing, listening and speaking within 30 days of enrollment. Again, there is a lack of consistency across the nation as the U.S. Department of Education does not mandate particular instruments, screeners or assessments, only stating that they must be "valid and reliable." To illustrate the discrepancies, consider that California, which has one of the largest ELL populations, assesses students using its own California English Language Development Test (CELDT). California state law requires all districts to the use the CELDT to determine the level of English language proficiency within 30 days of enrollment and annually to monitor the progress of ELL students (California Department of Education, 2018).

Texas school districts assess potential ELL students in grades prekindergarten to 1st grade using an oral language assessment only, and students in grades 2-12 are given additional department-approved English reading and English language arts section norm-referenced assessments. There are five different assessments on the approved list, which is reviewed annually by the Texas commissioner of education (Education Commission of the States, 2014). Currently, The Texas Education Agency is seeking proposals for organizations to be the single statewide language assessment provider for ELLs (Texas Education Agency, 2019). New York requires districts to give all students who enroll for the first time a home language questionnaire. If a student indicates a language other than English, the school must administer the Language Assessment Battery, and if a student is not English proficient, ESL instruction must be provided by a certified teacher (OCMBOCES, 2019). Oregon leaves it up to each school district to develop a plan for identifying ELL students, which the Oregon Department of Education reviews and provides feedback on an annual basis (Oregon Departmet of Education, 2016).

Assessment in Kansas

In Kansas, if a student indicates a language other than English on enrollment papers, the school district is required to assess English proficiency using one of five state-approved assessments (Kansas Department of Education). One approved assessment for students in all grades is the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT), published by Ballard & Tighe, which uses three levels of designations: non-English, limited English, and fluent English. Another approved assessment, the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) by CTB/McGraw Hill, scores students' proficiency from a Level 1, non-English speaker, to a Level 5, fluent English speaker. If any approved assessment determines the student is limited in any of the four domains of writing, speaking, listening and reading, the student must receive language services by a qualified

teacher. A qualified teacher in Kansas must have an English Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) endorsement, have a plan of ESOL Endorsement Plan of Study on file at the district office, or have passed the ESOL Praxis test. All ELL students must take the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment each spring, which then determines if the student is proficient and can exit the ELL program (Kansas Department of Education, 2018).

Language Proficiency Assessments

A flaw with language assessments is that if the goal is to determine if an ELL student can participate in the oral language of the general education classroom, then the test should simulate the classroom, and to determine reading level, test at the same reading levels as the ELL student's peers (Hargett, 1998). A study of assessments used by states across the nation suggests that "academic English constructs are described by listing tasks that occur in academic settings without specifying specific academic language features" (Wolf, et al., 2008). The study's review of assessments found that they do not agree on their emphasis of academic language features as one assessment focuses on academic language functions such as inference and critical analysis in its reading component while another focuses on linguistic features through evaluation of vocabulary development and sentence-level reading ability.

When three English oral language proficiency tests were examined using BICS and CALP distinction, it was found that the tests measured similar and dissimilar aspects of proficiency (Schrank, Fletcher, & Alvarado, 1996). The study assessed students in kindergarten and second grade using three assessments and then compared results. Researchers found that the subtests within the assessments measured similar ability in picture vocabulary and listening comprehension, yet measured different aspects in oral vocabulary and following directions for kindergarten students. For second grade students, the assessments showed the highest

correlations in listening comprehension and vocabulary, while the lowest correlations were in verbal analogies and pronunciation. It also found that the tests measured different components of language in terms of BICS and CALP. For example, LAS pronunciation test measured a student's ability to discriminate between pairs of spoken words, phrases and short sentences, which is a component of BICS. Whereas another assessment used verbal analogies to determine how well a student could comprehend and complete a logical word relationship, which is a component of CALP.

When educators use an assessment that measures BICS, it may lead to the assumption that the student possesses CALP and lead to an incorrect placement in ELL services or denial of services (Schrank, Fletcher, & Alvarado, 1996). A 2008 study found 12 states use only English language proficiency tests to determine exit, while seven states use six different measures to deem if a student has reached language proficiency, with 26 states ranging from two criteria to five criteria (Wolf, et al., 2008). This lack of alignment among states on what defines an ELL student raises the issue of comparability of ELL performance for each student. The 2008 research noted:

> "During our review, one noticeable finding was the varied definitions of academic English proficiency in the states' ELP standards and assessments…The variation of state standards in defining academic English reflects the lack of consensus from the research community on its definition…The lack of common framework to describe academic English poses a challenge to practitioners attempting to operationalize the construct into their standards and assessments (Wolf, et al., 2008, p. 17)."

Language Services

All districts throughout the nation must provide identified ELL students with services focused on building academic literacy and cultivating English language development. For general educators who must modify their content for ELL students in their classrooms, the task

can be daunting. As part of the instructional program, districts must provide adequate and appropriate resources, including trained and certified educators, and instructional materials at the student's level. The federal government states:

> EL students are entitled to appropriate language assistance services to become proficient in English and to participate equally in the standard instructional program within a reasonable period of time. School districts can choose among programs designed for instructing EL students provided the program is educationally sound in theory and effective in practice. (U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

Grade Placement

A student's English language proficiency does not factor into grade placement, as placement is determined based on birth date and age. This can result in a student who cannot speak nor understand English being placed in an intermediate grade where the content may be at his cognitive level, yet the language of delivery makes it difficult to keep up with peers. Across the country, there are kindergarten and first-grade students who, even though they have been born in the United States, are unable to speak English as their families do not speak the language. The academic achievement gap between ELL students and their English-speaking peers is one of the largest gaps in the United States (Conger, 2013). In addition, ELL students are held to the same graduation requirements as their English-speaking peers no matter at what age they entered the school system or their level of English language proficiency (American Institutes for Research, 2019). Many ELL students lack support at home as their family members do not speak English, and this has been linked to a lack of reading skills and academic failure for the students (Burgess, 2011). There is not enough research on the effects of grade placement and academic achievement for ELL students to provide a recommendation or a research-based solution, so districts continue to use social placement in grades.

Academic Assessments

Under ESSA, states must fully incorporate ELL students in school-level accountability under Title I, which includes state assessment testing to measure academic progress in math and English language arts, just as their general-education peers (Department of Education, 2016). A student who has recently arrived in the United States may be excluded from state assessments for the first year of schooling. Yet, by the third year of schooling in the United States, the ELL student must be assessed alongside his peers, even though it takes an average of three to five years for a student to reach intermediate fluency in a second language and to have excellent comprehension and make only minor grammatical errors (Hill & Bjork, 2008). Many ELL students in their third year of learning English are able to produce simple sentences yet make grammatical errors that often influence assessment results. While the government outlines four programs, it does not mandate which one a district must implement and even reports that there are districts that use more than one method of instructional deliver.

Models of ELL Instruction

There are different models of language instruction for ELL students used throughout the nation with no federal mandate. Language instruction integrated in the general education classroom is not the same model as when ELL students are segregated from their peers. The programs range from one where students receive no instruction in their primary language to programs where all instruction is in the primary language. As districts and states do not have to report the program model they are using, it is difficult to determine what percentage of each is used.

Table 1
Common ELL Programs that are Educationally Sound in Theory
(U.S. Department of Education, 2017)

Program	Language Taught In	Goal
English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD)	English	Curriculum is designed to teach ELLs about the English language and to develop language proficiency. Students spend the majority of the day in the general education classroom and receive ELL instruction from an ELL teacher.
Structured English Immersion (SEI) or Sheltered English Instruction (SEI)	English	Program is designed to impart English language skills so that ELL students can transition successful into the general education classroom.
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Early-Exit Bilingual Education	English and ELL student's primary language	Program maintains and develops skills in the ELL student's primary language, while introducing and maintaining skills in English.
Dual language or Two-Way Immersion	English and ELL student's primary language	Goal is for ELL students to develop language proficiency in two languages in a classroom with half primary-English speaking students and half primary speakers of another language.

English Language Instruction

This type of instruction removes ELLs from the general-education classroom for part of the day for targeted English language instruction (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). The goal is to develop English grammar, vocabulary and communication skills from an ELL-certified teacher. One problem with this model is that students miss grade-level content while with the ELL teacher. In a case study of two general-education classroom teachers in schools with pullout models, it was found that their approaches to teaching ELLs "were characterized by an absence of planned instructional modification targeting English language and literacy development (Coady, Harper, & DeJong, 2016)." Smaller districts have an ELL teacher who travels to several

schools to work with small groups of ELL students, while larger districts employ full-time ELL teachers for individual schools (Minaya-Rowe).

Sheltered Instruction Model

California uses a sheltered instruction model, whose primary goal is learning and acquiring English, and the secondary goal is content-related (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2008). This model is similar to SEI, yet instruction is sheltered to help ELL students learn skills and concepts in a safe environment while they also learn the language.

Arizona ELD (English Language Development) uses the SEI model, where ELL students are segregated and do not get to interact or socialize with other students at the school for between four and eight hours each day (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Moll, 2010). This can harm students in terms of learning social norms and becoming a part of the school community, and some teachers relayed that ELL students are shunned by their peers. In the 2008-2009 school year, Arizona school districts implemented a legally-mandated 4-hour English Language Development (ELD) block for ELL students with great variation on the delivery method and content covered (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Moll, 2010). The principle was that students would be taught the language quickly, so they could then succeed academically. The state of Arizona provided additional funding for ELL students for two years; those who did not become proficient within that timeframe were no longer eligible for additional government monies. The 2010 study found that while proponents praised the focus on students' English language development, many raised concerns about the lack of attention paid to credits needed for graduation, missed core academic content, and increased isolation of ELL students from other students (Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canche, & Moll, 2010). In some Arizona districts, students in the same grade with the same English proficiency level spent the entire day in class

together, separated from the rest of the grade-level classes. Other districts tried to embed academic content into the English lessons whenever possible, usually missing science and social sciences. The program operated under the assumption English language learning could be accomplished in one year by using the 4-hour block method, which focused on language-specific instruction including phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary and semantics, in the absence of all other academic content subjects. A higher percentage of students were considered English Proficient, able to leave the ELL program and enter the general education classroom after the program. However, survey respondents reported that anywhere from 5 to 25 percent of those students, depending on the district, returned to the program because they could not succeed in general education classrooms. Data from the 2009-2010 school year showed that none of the ELL students in 3rd grade through high school met the state's passing objective goals. The graduation rate for ELL students did not support the program's success as it dropped from 44 percent in the 2005-2006 school year to 25 percent in the 2010-2011 school year. Segregating students in a language immersion program is harmful cognitively and emotionally as students are "stunted in their overall growth academically, but students are stunted emotionally within this segregated environment as well. This type of overall instructional policy for ELLs exposes these students to a higher risk of school failure and drop out (Jimenez-Castellanos, Combs, Martinez, & Gomez, 2013)."

Transitional Bilingual Program

This is defined as the most common form of bilingual education for ELLs, which provides academic literacy and content instruction in the student's native language as they also learn to speak and comprehend English (Villarreal, 1999).

Washington is one state that uses the transitional bilingual program where students learn language concepts and knowledge in their primary language while also receiving instruction in English, and take all tests in English (State of Washington, 2018). The program's goal is to develop language proficiency that enables meaningful access to grade-level curricula and instruction. Over time, the student's primary language is used less in instruction while the use of English is increased. Once students are determined to be proficient in English, then they are transferred to a regular classroom. An evaluation of a transitional bilingual program for ELL students in grades 2-5 showed that it was more effective than other ELL programs, and students had higher levels of both Spanish literacy and English literacy (Saunders W. M., 1999). Saunders did note that the transition period typically involved declines in academic growth and student participation, and there was no standard determination or timeline for when a student could transition to the general education classroom.

Bilingual Program

Cummins (1999) argued for the use of English and the student's native language in education, as the languages enrich each other when taught appropriately. Only eight states – Alaska, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin – require districts to provide bilingual education in schools that enroll a specified number, ranging from 8 to 20, of ELL students speaking the same language (New America). Cummins states that "a strong bilingual program should provide a Focus on Message, a Focus on Language, and a Focus on Use in both languages…We know our program is effective, and developing CALP, if we can say with confidence that our students are generating new knowledge, creating literature and art, and acting on social realities that affect their lives. There are the kinds of instructional activities that the BISC/CALP distinction is intended for foster."

General Education Teachers

ELL students require additional services beyond the general education student, and while a school may have high-quality educators teaching math, science, social studies and reading, the problem lies in whether they are trained to meet the unique needs of this subset of students (Advocates for Children of New York, Inc, 2001). Classroom teachers shoulder the responsibility of educating students, with elementary teachers bearing responsibility for all subjects and secondary teachers focusing on one or two subjects. Educators are trained in the facets of education and meeting the needs of the average student, yet most general education teachers are largely untrained to work with ELL students and many assume that educating these students is the sole responsibility of the ELL teacher (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). Consider a study where researchers observed four preservice general-education teachers who had isolated ELL students in their classrooms. One high-school Language Arts teacher had a student who spoke Serbian, did not receive pullout ELL services, and was observed off task throughout a lesson, which his teacher believed was cultural (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). Another teacher in the same study gave an ELL student from Japan grades of As and Bs because she did not know what else to do. The students in general-education classes often fall behind, become discipline problems and even become invisible as the content increases in difficulty.

Model in This Study

The district for this study had used the English Language Instruction model, placing ELL students in mainstream, general-education classes with pullout direct English-language services from a certified teacher for 60 minutes per day, for more than a decade. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, one elementary, one middle and one high school were chosen to participate in a state-wide program to redesign the delivery of education for all students. The

participating elementary school chose to integrate ELL students into the general education classrooms and no longer provide direct pullout instruction, except for non-English speakers. District leaders embraced this change as the goal of the program was to investigate different educational models. ELL teachers and general-education teachers worked together to plan and deliver content, creating a collaborative, co-teaching environment. Students who were consider newcomers and spoke no English still received pullout instruction in the English language.

By the 2018-2019 school year, elementary schools throughout the district were operating under different models, with some staying with the 60-minute pullout model, while others reduced the amount of time ELL students were pulled from classes. Some schools chose to only pull non-English speaking students for direct instruction and to provide push-in services for other students. There were no programs within the district where ELL students were taught in their primary language and no students were segregated from peers for the entire school day. It appeared that the different models of ELL instruction were partly a result of changes in district leadership, including a new superintendent. The variations in instructional delivery did not appear to be sanctioned by the district, yet were not forbidden. Instead, individual school leaders chose to modify ELL instruction based on what they believed was best for their students, and did not seek permission from district officials. The district is working with three schools and has formed a team of ELL teachers, general-education teachers and principals to review current practices and determine if one model meets the needs of the district. There is not a detailed timeline, instead it is a fluid process at the time of this research.

Language Acquisition

ELL students face significant academic challenges compared to their non-ELL peers; evident by the ELL graduation rate of 62.6 percent in school year 2013-2014 compared to 82.3

percent for all students nationally (Department of Education, 2016). Data for the 2010-2011 school year showed that half of the states reported a graduation rate of at least 80 percent for all students, while Kansas reported slightly higher at 83 percent. Almost half of the states reported a graduation rate for ELL students of 60 percent or lower, while Kansas again reported higher at 70 percent for ELL students (Scott, 2012). The percentage of ELL students graduating is rising, as nationally, the class of 2016 reported a 66.9 percent graduation rate for ELL students while Kansas reported a 77.4 percent graduation rate for ELL students (Mitchell, 2017). This trend would appear to be positive, yet there are states whose graduation rates for ELL students remains low. Arizona, which has the 11th highest ELL enrollment has roughly a 32 percent graduation rate for ELL students in 2016 (Mitchell, 2017). Oregon reported a 53 percent graduation rate; California reported a 72 percent graduation rate; Texas was at 73.7 percent; and New York was at 37.8 percent.

Stages of Acquisition

Without federal oversight into programs, it is difficult to assess the quality of instruction in each state. In elementary schools, ELL students commonly receive 30 minutes of direct English language instruction and spend the remainder of the day in the general education classroom with teachers who are often unprepared to teach them (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011). One must remember that English Language Learners, especially those who enroll during the high school years, often take longer to learn English and earn a diploma, as no two students navigate through the stages of language acquisition at the same stride. Some students will pick up English at a rapid pace while others will struggle, and the reasons are unclear. Factors that affect the acquisition of a second language have been divided into three categories: learner

characteristics or personal traits; situational or environmental factors; and prior language development and competence (Robinson, Keogh, & Kusuma-Powell, 2004).

Table 2
Stages of Second Language Acquisition (Hill & Bjork, 2008)

Stage	Characteristics of the student	Approximate Time
Preproduction	Minimal comprehension Does not verbalize Nods yes or no Draws and points	0-6 months
Early production	Limited comprehension One- or two-word responses Uses key words and familiar phrases Uses present-tense verbs	6 months – 1 year
Speech Emergence	Good comprehension Simple sentences Grammar and pronunciation errors Misunderstands jokes	1 – 3 years
Intermediate Fluency	Excellent comprehension Few grammatical errors	3 – 5 years
Advanced Fluency	Near native level of speech	5 – 7 years

We use language to communicate our thoughts, ideas and information, and students who do not speak English in a classroom where English is the mode of communication are at a disadvantage. ELL students enter the classroom in different stages of development; some are unable to speak a word of English while others can speak fluently. Consider the student who is unable to speak a word of English, referred to as the 'pure type' ELL, and is in the 'silent period' or preproduction stage of language development (Robinson, Keogh, & Kusuma-Powell, 2004). The student is concerned about decoding verbal communication, as well as non-verbal communication, which is just as important (Galloway, 1972). Classroom misunderstandings between teachers and students, as well as students and students, are a direct result of nonverbal communication taking place (Grove, 1976). At this same time, the teacher is concerned about the student's academic success, which can be daunting when verbal communication is minimal. The dominant theoretical perspective among educators is that of communicative language teaching

where the goal is to develop the ELL student's communicative competence and that communication is both a goal and means for developing language (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2008).

BICS and CALP

There are timelines and challenges associated with second language acquisition and a distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979; 1981). The ability to converse (BICS) in English is different from a students' ability to understand and express themselves, both in oral and written forms, (CALP). The misunderstanding of the difference between conversation and academic language can result in ELL students being exited from ELL services on the basis that they have acquired English because of conversation skills, yet they experience academic difficulties because they have no additional language supports in mainstream classes (Cummins, 1979; 1981). Immigrant children often are able to converse with peers using peer-appropriate conversational English within two years, yet usually take five to ten years to catch up to their peers academically in English (Cummins, 1999).

When educators do not take into account the nature of language proficiency and instead fall into the misconceptions, bilingual students are prematurely exited from support programs. Often ELL students are not allowed certain intellectual experiences nor able to participate fully in classroom activities until they have reached CALP, which is achieved after BISC. There are students who may achieve CALP before BISC, which can result in an ELL student being held back academically. Cummins noted that many educators believe conversational fluency in English is a reliable indicator of language proficiency, which has led to bilingual children being identified as learning disabled, when they are continuing to learn the language (Cummins, 1999).

ELL students are expected to develop English language proficiency at the same time they are attaining grade-level academic skills. When an ELL student falls behind academically, yet is able to maintain conversations with peers, educators look to intellectual ability instead of understanding the complexities of language acquisition. (William J Tikunoff, 1983) Educators need to compare an ELL student's conversational language, BICS, and more formal academic language, CALP, as most will have lower CALP than BICS (Anderson, 1994).

Academic Language and Proficiency

As students move through academic grades, the academic language becomes more advanced and difficult. ELL students are at a disadvantage in this regards as they do not have the background knowledge often accompanied by more difficult subject matter and thus conversational language begins to show a deficit (Anderson, 1994). Research has indicated ELL students typically have taken five to seven years to become proficient in academic language to perform on academic tests in English (Batt, 2008).

There are many factors in determining a student's language proficiency, yet as with assessments and identification, there is a lack of federal guidance and mandates. The U.S. Department of Education does require states receiving federal funds for ELL students to establish a common definition of English Learner (Linquanti & Cook, 2013). They made it clear that the English learner status was temporary and that students were expected to leave the ELL category due to receiving quality instruction.

The difficulty is determining when an ELL student is proficient in English and needs in learning English have been met as the means to demonstrate English proficiency vary from state to state, and even from district to district (Zinth, 2013). In a survey of New York City teachers, 58 percent agreed that assessing ELL students' language proficiency and determining

appropriate language services was a problem, with some students having to wait up to five months for proper placement (Advocates for Children of New York, Inc, 2001). Students were placed in general-education classrooms without applicable, sometimes mandated, support or services because of a lack of assessment and identification as ELL, and thus did not progress academically.

Teacher Interactions

A teacher's positive perceptions can increase the positive interactions with the student, while negative perceptions can result in amplified conflict (Davis, 2003) Scholars have found that the student-teacher relationship is more influential during the elementary schooling, as this is when most of the day is spent interacting with one teacher (Irizarry, 2015). For ELL students, the student-teacher relationship is crucial and reliant upon teachers looking beyond the language deficiency.

Forty-five percent of teachers said in a 2001 survey that ELL students should adapt to American culture and school life, with one teacher saying, "ESL students should assimilate to American school culture" (Walker, Shafer, & Michelle, 2004). Researchers Horencyzk and Tatar are quoted as stating that "teacher's approaches and behaviors toward culturally diverse populations do not exist in a social vacuum; rather they tend to reflect and be affected by – the norms and values both of the larger society and of the educational settings in which the interactions take place" (Walker, Shafer, & Michelle, 2004).

Public Opinion

Consider that voters in California, Arizona and Massachusetts approved referendums banning bilingual education and negated ELL instruction to a single year of structured immersion. Societal communications in these states broadcasted negative ideas about students with cultural and ethnic differences; and teachers internalized these messages. Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley millionaire and former gubernatorial candidate, started a campaign in 1998 to abolish bilingual education in California, and the ballot measure passed. In 2002, 72 percent of voters in an industrial city in Massachusetts supported a referendum to ban bilingual education, even though the city's population included high numbers of Latino and Southeast Asian immigrants (Toness, 2017).

One father recounted that when he took his son to enroll in kindergarten, he was given an English test, but the child would not talk during the school's interview. He was labeled bilingual because his native language was Khmer even though the father told the school his son was fluent in English (Porter, 1998). In another example, a New York grandparent was told his seventh-grade grandson should remain in bilingual classes because he had a Spanish last name. It took 15 years before the Massachusetts' Legislature passed a bill lifting the ban on English-only instruction and paving the way for flexibility within the classroom (Glatter, 2017). There is no data to show whether teachers' attitudes toward ELL students changed with the new legislation.

There are studies that have documented the negative feelings associated with changes and resulting challenges as a result of the influx of immigrants and refugees, such as the belief that these low-status diverse students cannot achieve no matter how hard the teacher tries and that they bring too many deficits to the classroom (Walker, Shafer, & Michelle, 2004). A community, River City, in a Great Plains state experienced two influxes of refugees, the first of which

increased its ELL student population almost two-fold. Six years later, a second wave of refugees arrived, and many of these children had less education than those who had arrived before them. Researchers found that 70 percent of mainstream teachers were not interested in having ELL students in their classrooms and 14 percent objected to the students being placed in their classrooms (Walker, Shafer, & Michelle, 2004). Educators responded to the survey that they welcomed diversity and believed the school and community embraced diversity yet said they did not have time to adapt their curriculum to meet the needs of ELL students. One teacher in the study reported feeling lost when faced with educating an ELL student and another said she was not qualified to teach the ELL students. These teachers commented that students should not be placed in their classrooms until they are ready to learn at the same level as their peers and able to do the work. The authors noted:

> "The process of confronting and adjusting to change is a painful one. In the face of rapid population shift, the entire character of both the community and the schools change…Some teachers feel angry. They feel cheated at not having the 'good' students they once had…Principals, however, do not have easy solutions. Sometimes they, too, wish that the new children would simply go away," written by G. Valdes, *Learning and not Learning English: Latino students in American schools"* (Walker, Shafer, & Michelle, 2004, p. 133).

Teachers, as all humans, form opinions about students based on gender, race, physical handicap, disability, intelligence and even the clothes they wear. The difference is that these ideas influence teachers' actions within the classrooms, which then affect the students. A teacher's opinion of a student begins the moment the youth walks into the room, with much of it based on hearsay and misinformation (Clair, 1993). Research suggests that a teacher interacts with each student in a different way depending on his expectations of that student, going as far as to seat students who he has low expectations for in a cluster away from the front of the room or his workspace (Gill & Reynolds, 1999). Numerous studies have confirmed the conclusion that

"the concept of social background is deeply embedded in the psyche of many teachers as an all too ready excuse for the academic failure of children who are poor" (Berube, 1984). When teachers believe a student's SES is the only vital factor for predicting achievement, they perceive they cannot make a difference in the student's achievement and thus take no responsibility for the student's academic achievement (Whelan & Teddlie, 1989).

Conclusion

Districts across the United States use different models, different language proficiency assessments and different requirements for teachers. As schools continue to see a rise in English learners, all educators are going to need requisite knowledge and skills to educate linguistic minority students (Batt, 2008). Mainstream teachers who did not take ownership for ELL student performance also did not engage ELL students during classroom instruction, and soon general-education peers no longer sought them out for classroom participation (Bogum, 2008). The general education teacher may recognize the ELL student's needs yet have difficulty providing the instruction to support those identified needs (Tobins & McInnes, 2008). Research on teacher readiness, which includes training and professional development, curriculum alignment, and appropriate classroom materials and supplies, mostly focuses on English-speaking students in regular education classrooms and overlooks ELL students. There is a need to examine how teacher preparedness and efficacy influence educators' interactions with ELL students in the classroom. Evaluating educators' interactions and experiences with ELL students will help schools and districts recognize, evaluate and address successes and areas for improvement in terms of education ELL students.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The purpose of my study is to explore general education teachers' experiences working with students whose native language is not English. The number of students who are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) is the fastest growing population within our schools and one that presents academic, social and interactional challenges to educators. The chapter will explain the study, the reasons for a qualitative study, the value of the topic, how it was implemented and the interview protocol.

Study Context

Located in a suburban area about 20 miles outside of a large metropolitan city, the school district chosen for this study serves students from one county, yet its boundaries reach into four different cities. It is the second largest in the state and employs almost 5,000 staff members to help educate the more than 30,000 students ranging in age from preschool to young adults. The district has 11 support facilities, covering close to 6 million square feet. The housing market has rebounded, and the cities served by this district are seeing increased new construction in both single-family and multi-family housing. Estimates are that there will be 500 new single-family homes a year for the next five years, bringing many new children to the district.

At the time of this study, it educated students at 35 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, five high schools, two early childhood centers, and several specialized campuses. The 36th elementary school and 10th middle school will open for the 2018-2019 school year, and there is district-owned land for two additional elementary schools, another middle school and one more high school, yet there are no definitive plans to begin construction. Every school has achieved the Standard of Excellence in either reading or math, or both, on state assessments. As of the 2016-2017 school year, 47 percent of the district's students were in elementary grades, and

it served an estimated population of 171,000 people. Twenty-eight percent of students participated in the National School Lunch Program, and 11 schools qualified for Title 1 funding based on a high percentage of students participating. Most students, 67 percent, were Caucasian, with almost 17 percent Hispanic, 7 percent African American, 4 percent Asian, 4 percent multi-racial, less than 1 percent Native American, and less than 1 percent Pacific Island. Within these subsets, the largest increase had been the Hispanic population, which was at less than 1 percent about 15 years ago.

The number of students in the district's ELL program had grown the fastest during the past 15 years, by 57 percent and to more than 3,350 students, with no signs of slowing down. The percentage of minority students increased within this same timeframe, with the largest increase in Hispanic students, accounting for 15.7 percent of the total student population. As the majority of the district's ELL students speak Spanish as a first language, it makes sense that both the number of students designated ELL and the number of Hispanic students would increase. For more than a decade, the district had used a pullout model for ELL instruction, where ELL students received services by a certified ELL instructor outside of the general-education classroom. However, during the past few years, the district has implemented different models throughout the district, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

I chose this district for the study as it has a large population of ELL students and one that is continuing to grow. The district is in an affluent county with schools designated as ELL sites considered to be in low socio-economic areas.

Research Areas

This study examined general educators' experiences when working with ELL students in three areas:

- Academic, including professional development, available curriculum materials, assessments, knowledgeable colleagues, and mentors
- Social, encompassing ELL students' interactions with all students, ELL students, the classroom, and school communities
- Interactional, such as teacher-student relationships, social and cultural norms, family communication, and community involvement

To carry out this study, I chose a qualitative approach study because such an approach is valuable when the goal is to examine depth rather than breadth of a phenomenon (Neuman, 2014). "The qualitative paradigm has penetrated virtually all educational venues and has become established as a powerful and effective way to conduct educational research" (70). The purpose of this research study is to examine the different issues teachers face when educating students who are learning English as a second language, including teacher perceptions of English Language Learners (ELL), the instructional and social challenges that accompany educating this population, and the impact of social and cultural norms on relationships with and between ELL students, families and teachers. This study expands our knowledge by exploring the perspectives of general education teachers that are local and context-specific. As this research study examined teachers' personal beliefs and perceptions in regard to students whose first language is not English, a qualitative approach was warranted as it is best at capturing the voices of the participants (Rabionet, 2011). My intent was to gain an understanding of general education teachers' beliefs and experiences in their natural setting, the classroom, which Guba and Lincoln (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) coined "naturalistic inquiry," and a study format that relies heavily on qualitative methods.

In addition, researchers doing qualitative research should have a familiarity with the setting and phenomenon, and a strong interest in the subject matter (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Researchers of qualitative studies gather information by examining documents, observing behavior and interviewing participants (Creswell, 1994). It is important for a qualitative researcher to understand the content (Maxwell J. , 2012). My personal experience working with ELL students and multiple years of experience as a general-education elementary classroom teacher informed this research. My commonality with participants in terms of educational background and experience resulted in a level of comfort that afforded unguarded conversations as I was considered an indigenous-insider (Banks, 1998). This also means I bring bias to the study that must be acknowledged. I paid attention to participants' words and to not influencing participants with my personal thoughts and experiences.

Building and Participant Selection

I applied for and received permission to conduct this study from the University of Kansas Human Research Protection Program. I submitted a research application with the selected large suburban school district in the Midwest, and subsequently received approval to proceed with the study.

The school district provided its overall student enrollment information and enrollment information for each individual school. As part of the participant selection process, I analyzed these data from 2005 through 2017, focusing specifically on the change in number and percentage of ELL students at the elementary level. In 2005, the number of ELL students enrolled in each of the district's elementary schools ranged from 0 students to 130 students, reflecting percentages from 0 percent to 43.2 percent, respectively. I followed the data each school year, noting the variance in ELL student population and the correlating percentage of total enrollment, and determined which schools experienced growth or decline in the number of ELL students.

Narrowing the scope and focusing on years 2010 through 2017, elementary schools experienced varying rates of ELL enrollment with one school seeing a 3.7 percent decline in ELL students over the seven years while another school saw a 1,071 percent increase in the number of ELL students in its classrooms**.** One elementary school had a total enrollment of 675 students in 2005 with nine students identified as ELL. To further evaluate the data and examine the increase in ELL students, looked at 2014 data and found this school's ELL population was at 76 students, 14.7 percent, with a total enrollment of 455 students. In 2017, that school had a total enrollment of 432 students, which was a decline of 243 students, and yet increased to 102 ELL students. The data shows a steady decline in total enrollment yet an increase in ELL student enrollment. The educators at this elementary educational setting would be qualified participants for this research project as they have experience with ELL students in the general-education classroom and have experienced an increase in the number of ELL students.

Table 3
Enrollment Data of Selected Schools

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 1	2010	336	7	2.08%
	2011	335	13	3.88%
	2012	336	16	4.76%
	2013	315	13	4.13%
	2014	367	60	16.35%
	2015	382	66	17.28%
	2016	382	76	19.90%
	2017	395	82	20.76%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 2	2010	400	128	32.00%
	2011	400	132	33.00%
	2012	416	151	36.30%
	2013	439	162	36.90%
	2014	455	186	40.88%
	2015	483	188	38.92%

	2016	454	185	40.75%
	2017	507	212	41.81%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 3	2010	438	191	43.61%
	2011	443	201	45.37%
	2012	490	230	46.94%
	2013	407	195	47.91%
	2014	416	226	54.33%
	2015	434	239	55.07%
	2016	451	262	58.09%
	2017	452	256	56.64%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 4	2010	216	89	41.20%
	2011	241	105	43.57%
	2012	247	111	44.94%
	2013	256	128	50.00%
	2014	258	136	52.71%
	2015	262	133	50.76%
	2016	256	126	49.22%
	2017	233	122	52.36%

As the research questions focus on teachers' interactions with ELL students, the schools were selected based on ELL student enrollment numbers and percentage, and subsequent growth, as evaluated using the data for years 2005 through 2017. Through reviewing enrollment data, I was able to determine which elementary schools had educators in their buildings who would have seen a rise in students needing language support and would have faced educational hurdles directly related to that need. These educators met the criteria for participation in this research study.

School 1 had 336 students in 2010 and 7 ELL students, which represented about 2 percent of the total population. Four years later, the ELL population had grown to more than 16

percent of the total school population, with 60 students. For the 2017-2018 school year, the school had 82 ELL students; a 1,071 percent increase since 2010.

School 2 had an increase in both overall enrollment and ELL student population. In 2010, there were 400 students enrolled and 128 were ELL identified, representing 32 percent of the population. For the 2017-2018 school year, there were 507 students and 212 of them were ELL identified, accounting for almost 42 percent of the population.

School 3 had a total enrollment of 438 in 2010, with 43.61% of its population identified as ELL. In the 2017-2018 school year, there were 256 ELL students, accounting for 56.64 percent of the total population.

School 4 had 89 ELL students in 2010, and 122 ELL students in the 2017-2018 school year, accounting for a 37 percent increase (See Table 3).

The Participants

After purposeful selection of the elementary schools, I invited 20 educators from to participate in the research study, and 11 agreed. Each educator was a certified elementary teacher, had at least three years of experience teaching at the specific elementary school, and had at least three years of experience teaching ELL students in the general-education classrooms. I chose a minimum of three years of experience as I wanted to avoid novice teachers who were in the probationary period of their license. Purposefully sampling is a qualitative research technique used to identify and select participants who are knowledgeable about and experienced with the research area (Palinkas, et al., 2013). As there are between 23 and 35 general education teachers in each of the three elementary schools, it is important to purposefully select participants that have experiences teaching ELL students for at least three years. With each new school year, the classroom teacher garners new experiences and thus can relay these during the interviews,

deepening the data collected. In addition, participants identified as general education teachers, not ELL specific teachers, as this study focused on the demands placed on the classroom teachers. While ELL teachers, those who specifically work with ELL students in small groups or individually, are important members of the school community, they are not the focus of this research study. As the number of ELL students continues to rise, teaching students who are learning English as a second language is no longer the sole responsibility of the ELL teachers but falls to the mainstream teacher (Kreck, 2014).

I did not select participants based on other criterion, such as gender, ethnicity, and race. In evaluating the data to guide participant selection, I did have data on the race of students, as the school district breaks the student population down into these categories. It is important to note that a student's race did not automatically translate to a classification as ELL, therefore the number of students in a certain population did not automatically coincide with the same number of ELL students in the same population. In addition, I did not factor in the school's free and reduced lunch numbers or percentages when selecting schools or participants for this study. There could be a relationship between the rise in ELL students and a subsequent rise in free and reduced lunch percentages as participants brought this up during interviews. This would be a potential area for future studies.

I invited each selected teacher to participate in the study via a personal email requesting an interview time. In the email, I explained the purpose of the study, the goal of the research, confidentiality of responses, the option to answer or skip questions, and the ability to withdraw at any time. In addition, I explained how my findings may be used to help shape future professional development within the district, to help prepare current and future teachers to educate ELL students, and to better understand the needs of educators in terms of ELL students. There also

was the offer to review comments included the study prior to submission and to share the results of this study with participants at the conclusion of the research.

Participants were teaching ELL students in their classrooms at the time of the interviews. One of the participants' information and interview was not used for this study because she did not have significant interaction with ELL students in her general education classroom. Three of the participants chose teaching after having another career, six spent time raising their own children and not working outside of the home, and four previously taught in other states. One teacher had less than five years of experience and the other 10 educators' years of experience ranged from 10 to 34 years. Ten of the teachers were female and one was male. To protect the individual identities of the 10 participants used for this study, participants were given pseudonyms and, as gender is not relevant in the findings of this study, female pronouns were used in all references.

Data Collection

My study addressed the general-education teachers' experiences working with ELL students in their classrooms primarily through the use of semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews was conducive because it allowed me to address specific comments and ask for clarifications with each participant at the time of the interview (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with selected educators from the chosen elementary schools within the district.

As part of the process and documentation of their rights, I provided each participant with a written consent form at the beginning of the interview. I allowed each participant time to read the consent form, ask questions and sign it. I indicated to each participant that I would record the conversation, that the recordings would be kept safe, that the conversations were confidential,

and that they will be destroyed once my dissertation is defended. I reminded them that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw participation at any time by informing me.

Each interview began with collecting background information about the teachers, including the teacher's education, grades taught, and certification. The remainder of the semi-structured interview was open-ended questions that allowed the teachers to share personal experiences (Rabionet, 2011).

The interview questions for this study were divided into three categories: 1) Academic, 2) Social, and 3) Interactional issues teachers face when working with ELL students (Appendix A). The purpose of the first category was to garner an understanding of how teachers plan for instruction when the classroom includes students whose first language is not English. The purpose of the second category was to delve into the social-emotional aspects of ELL students as they pertain to the elementary classroom, such as emotional needs as students adjust to new environments (Niehaus, Adelson, Sejuit, & Zheng, 2017). The third category looked at how general education teachers interact with the students and the families, and how cultural and social norms influence these interactions.

Through the literature review and my understanding of the research topic, the questions provided data about this district in terms of general education teachers' preparedness to work with ELL students, their observations regarding ELL students' social adaptations; and insight into the relationships between teachers, students and families. The goal of the research questions was to gain understanding of the context within which educators act and what influences their actions, and to provide discussion for the future of the district as it meets the growing needs of this population. Using the semi-structured format, I guided the conversations through my initial

question, with the goal of producing detailed and rich dialogue, which could then be synthesized and analyzed to create meaning (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

During the interview session, I focused on listening and allowing interviewees time to complete their answers without interruptions (Kvale, 1996). By listening attentively and by being conscious to not draw immediate conclusions, I was able to attend to the many nuances and layers of meanings within their answers, allowing me to ask clarifying follow-up questions to enrich the research. Consider, for example, that during the literature review, it was noted that general education teachers are often frustrated with the lack of communication with parents of ELL students, which may be mentioned during the interviews. This allowed me to ask a participant to share a personal story and then ask questions about how it was or was not resolved. I maintained a flexible style in the interview to allow ideas and themes to emerge as it progressed. Rubin and Rubin (1995) note that using iterative design means that the phenomenon becomes clearer each time data is gathered and processed; meaning I learned from each interview and used use continuous design, where I revised questioning to include new information and, consequently, gather richer data. While I adhered to the questions created at the onset of the research, I was open to amending them to explore new information.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a complex process with no single prescription or set of steps to follow because each study is different (Creswell, 1994). After meeting with each participant, I transcribed the interview and simultaneously analyzed the data through the collection process, as suggested by Merriam (1998) and Creswell (1994). Transcription is an important step in the research process as it provides a complete record of the interviews and ensures relevant comments that may have been overlooked during the actual interview are

captured and noted in the research (Neuman, 2014). Through this process, I was better able to understand the data and be flexible enough to respond and accommodate new information as it was revealed.

The next step was organizing the data from the interviews, which Neuman (2014) describes as dividing into manageable chunks. As I read each transcript, I used the descriptive validity as the framework for other aspects to consider such as the participant's tone, stress and pitch, not just the words spoken ((Maxwell J. , 2012). I looked for similarity in the answers to questions and noted general themes within the conversations using the grounded theory of constant comparative method, taking note of those I noticed throughout the interviews (Gibbs, 2008; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Qualitative analysis using constant-comparative method looks for patterns within words, such as phrases or words participants use often (Maykut & Morehouse, 2005). I pulled together comments that fit into categories for further evaluation and allowed the categories to change as I gathered more data.

A second read of the transcripts involved tagging the major topics with codes to separate into smaller sets for analysis, creating a coding document, or map, to document the responses. Part of the data analysis was listening for participants who responded vastly different from other participants to isolate those thoughts and contributing factors. This chunking method allowed me to analyze data within each interview and across all interviews to identify overarching concepts to answer the research question of what general education teachers' experiences with ELL students.

As I evaluated the data, I looked for commonalities within each school individually and then across the district, determining if the findings were district-wide or isolated to a particular school. With the district piloting and trying different approaches to ELL instruction, I assessed

each school to analyze educators' experiences and concerns about educating ELL students. By looking at teachers within each school, I isolated comments that relayed to only one school or then those that applied across the district. This approach allowed a look at what a particular school did to serve ELL students and the experiences of the educators within that school, as well as to evaluate district-wide points that could be applied to every school and every educator within this study.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The District

Across the district, schools have seen an increasing numbers of students in their classrooms who speak a language other than English at home. Over the past decade, the four schools in this study have changed from middle-class income populations with mostly Caucasian students to lower socio-economic populations with more diverse classrooms. This aligns with the district's overall trend for the same timeframe, as the number of Caucasian students has declined, and the number of minority students has increased throughout the district. Schools that once served a Caucasian, English-speaking population have transformed to schools that are English Language Learning sites, often transporting ELL students from other schools that did not offer language services. The district's trend of increasing ELL students follows the nation's trend, which shows an increase of 158 percent in three decades of the number of people speaking a language other than English, as reported on the United States Census Bureau (2013).

ELL students in this district and across the nation do share the characteristics of students with higher rates of poverty and higher mobility rates compared with their non-ELL peers (Jimenez-Castellanos & Garcia, 2017). It is difficult to find statistical data on how many ELL students are from low-income families as this information is not required to be separated when reported to government agencies. However it is true that ELL children are more likely to be from low-income families (Vera & Wallace). It is noted that these two subsets of population, ELL and low-income, are overlapping and that students and families from these different subgroups face similar challenges (Terry, 2017).

Another characteristic of this population is transiency. According to district data, the first semester of the 2018-2019 school year, 4.4 percent of ELL-identified students changed schools,

with 47 percent of those being intra-district transfers. For the entire 2017-2018 school year, approximately 8 percent of ELL students changed schools, with 34 percent of them being in-district transfers. There is no public state-wide data on student transfers and most states are not required to report the number of students changing schools, which makes it difficult to determine how this number compares to other states and if this district's numbers are high or low. Some information is available through news sources and district sites. A school district across the state line from this one, which has a high number of low-income families and almost 30 percent of its students are ELL, reported that almost 40 percent of its students changed schools within the year and about 15 percent are at one school less than 30 days (Moxley, 2018). The data from this other district can be used to illustrate the issue of student mobility among low-income students, which encompasses a large number of ELL students within the district used in this study.

In response to the increasing number of students needing language services, the district's support of ELL students has evolved with ELL-designated schools that have dedicated ESOL-endorsed teachers and aides. For the 2001-2002 school year, this district had 10 educators assigned to 10 ELL-designated sites. Five years later, for the 2006-2007 school year, the district had 30 full-time equivalent educators at 14 ELL-designated sites. The trend continued, reaching more than 55 educators at 23 sites or the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 4
District data on educators, designated schools and designated elementary schools

School Year	FTE Number of Educators	Number of ELL-designated schools	Number of ELL-designated elementary schools
2001-2002	10	10	7
2006-2007	30	14	9
2011-2012	34	15	10
2016-2017	42.5	17	11
2018-2019	56	23	15

The district has ESOL certified teachers in each of its ELL-designated schools. The general-education teachers in this study are not ESOL certified. Three participants had additional training directed toward educating ELL students and a few had worked with a diverse ELL population in other districts. Two teachers had thought about getting the ESOL endorsement as a classroom teacher yet opted not to do it because it meant they would no longer have teacher aides or paraprofessionals in their rooms to help those students. The district follows federal and state guidelines, which state that if a classroom teacher has certification to teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), an ELL aide cannot spend time in her classroom. This means an ESOL-endorsed teacher may have a newcomer who knows only a few words of English in the classroom along with 20 or more other students, and no additional support. State and federal guidelines meant to create a better learning environment for ELL students by providing classroom teachers trained in providing instruction for ELL students has resulted in these teachers viewing the ELL endorsement as a negative.

While all schools have experienced changing demographics and increased numbers of ELL students, the model of ELL instruction is not uniform across the district. This is an issue throughout the United States as there is not a Federal approved or recommended model for ELL instruction. Public schools are organized by grade level, content is delivered according to state standards, and teachers have an understanding of the expected outcomes for students, yet the ELL program has multiple models and no defined curriculum.

The Schools

Study School No. 1

School 1 has the smallest ELL population in terms of numbers, yet the largest overall growth. There were 7 ELL students in 2010 and 82 ELL students in 2017, which is a growth of

1,071 percent. The overall population at School 1 increased only slightly during this time period with 336 students in 2010, and 395 students in 2017, which is a growth of 17.55 percent. When looking at ELL population as a percentage of the overall student population, the growth was 898 percent, as the percentage grew from 2.08 percent in 2010 to 20.76 percent in 2017. The district designated this school as an ELL site beginning and added a full-time ELL teacher with the 2014-2015 school year.

Climate and Culture

These teachers focused on welcoming ELL students, which appears to be due to the more recent shift to designation as an ELL site. Quinn relayed that when the school first began its ELL program, staff dedicated meeting time to discuss the needs of this group of students and how to make them feel part of the community. Posters with greetings in different languages were displayed throughout the school as one way to welcome families and students. The school's ELL teacher educated staff on ways to build relationships with those who spoke another language, and several classroom teachers spent time discussing family backgrounds and advocating that diversity brings strength to the school. There is no formal data to validate Quinn's belief that ELL students and families felt welcome; she equated it to conversations had during parent-teacher conferences, as well as the success ELL students showed in various settings, including extracurricular activities at the school. Quinn explained:

> I actually think the [demographic and socio-economic] changes have been amazing for our school and our community. These families all care about each other. Our community has done an amazing job of welcoming ELL students, and I feel like we had a huge push among our community about how that would look and feel. The kids did a great job accepting that.

When asked if they would prefer teaching in a school with a mostly middle-class Caucasian population, these participants said no. Jamie responded,

> I left that class. I hated that class when I was growing up, as I came from a pretty affluent area. I like the idea that everybody in this school is exposed to diversity…I would never want the all-white community.

ELL Instruction Delivery

School 1 follows strict district guidelines requiring ELL students receive 60 minutes of small-group instruction by a certified ELL teacher outside of the general education classroom. The pullout schedule was set at the beginning of the year, and the ELL teacher did not plan with the grade-level teachers in terms of providing ELL instruction. This school's ELL teacher informed one participant in this study that she could not deviate from her designated ELL curriculum, and was required to see ELL students for 60 minutes per day regardless of what was going on in the classroom. Participants shared experiences that highlighted the lack of collaboration. One shared that students were learning about fire safety and the city's fire department was visiting the class. The ELL students in the grade level could not participate because the visit was during the designated pull-out time. The teacher expressed her desire to have the students stay with the class for these lessons, potentially with the ELL teacher there to provide support. Another class had instruction about a project-based learning activity that ELL students missed due to ELL pullout. The classroom teacher had to modify the activity for ELL students and take time during other subjects to explain the project. Another educator said:

> I want time to collaborate with my ELL teacher. I haven't had a meeting with her all year. My kids come back with wonderful writing samples and they are doing wonderful things, but I don't feel like I really know what she is doing, and she doesn't know what I am doing.

Another participant shared:

> My ELL kids were pulled [for ELL services] during small group reading time, so I never got to know them as readers. That is a huge disadvantage for me as a

> classroom teacher. The rigid aspect of the ELL program makes it so we can't share curriculum, so when we are trying to do projects it gets frustrating.

Within the current model, these classroom teachers want flexibility as to when ELL students are pulled.

> I want my kids in my classroom because I know where I started with them and where I ended with them. I try to let it be because I don't have a choice. But ELL students are getting part of the instruction but not the background information. They are a much lower group academically, and they miss out when they are gone.

Another participant echoed the sentiment and said:

> We need all of our instructional time and we have different pullouts all afternoon. We have to pick and choose components we are not going to teach. The hardest part is the scheduling piece.

If given an opportunity to modify or change the ELL instructional model, these teachers want the students to remain in the class, to co-teach with the ELL teacher or have more aides to assist students. Jamie provided a unique perspective because a few years ago when the school had a large number of students needing special-education resources, she worked with the principal to concentrate the highest-need students in her classroom. Then, she collaborated with the resource teacher to plan and co-teach. This led to her wanting an ELL-endorsed teacher in every class, and qualified paraprofessionals to push into every classroom with ELL students.

> I would be happy to have 30 students in a classroom but two teachers as we can be doing team planning and working in the curriculum together. The kids could be in small groups and they could constantly be changing. If you had two great teachers but one with ELL endorsement, it would be a game changer. We had a team-teach class and had a great plan. I love the idea of team teaching and that planning component and meeting the kids' needs in our classrooms. When I first came to this school, we had more para support in the classroom and the paras we had were phenomenal.

Language as a Barrier to Communication

Participants specifically mentioned having students who spoke Urdu, Portuguese, Hungarian, and Sundanese, rendering the on-site translator ineffective for many families. Jamie had five different home languages spoken in her class, including Spanish, and there was not a Spanish translator in the school until the 2018-2019 school year. Jamie shared:

> I have research and projects that take so much language and interaction with other people. I try to make the experience as positive as possible for my ELL students. I use Google translate, which certainly has its limitations. I look at these kids when we have cooperative learning and try to find someone who can help. I provide pictures or word banks for them to use and I recognize the language acquisition during that time is just massive.

When a new ELL student arrives who cannot speak English, classroom teachers try to find another student to translate. Bailey relayed a story highlighting how one student did not want to help a fellow ELL student who spoke the same language. Other teachers echoed this statement, yet could not determine why students do not want to speak their native language among their peers.

> I had a student from Brazil who did not speak English, so I asked another student that I had a few years ago who was also from Brazil to talk to him. He would only talk to him in English. He would not speak Portuguese.

Teachers at this school believed that PE and art classes allow students to express themselves and participate without having to rely on language. Quinn said,

> PE breaks down the walls and often times kids who are academically delayed or have a language barrier find that sports are easier for them to jump right in. I find that our ELL kids are right alongside their peers with being able to do things in PE and I find that other kids are more willing to help them if it is a fun game or activity.

Overall, these teachers believe ELL students can be high achievers, even with language barriers. Quinn commented, "Kids are amazing and able to adapt so well when you give them the opportunity and keep expectations high."

Beyond the School Day

Prior to the first day of school, the ELL teacher met with the general education teachers and provided information about ELL students within each grade level. She told them about the parents and family members, and gave teachers ideas about ways to connect with them. Knowing what was going on within the family was "priceless," one participant said.

For these teachers, there is a disconnect between home and school in that schoolwork is not a priority for most ELL families. Quinn commented that the parents at her school are focused on working to pay the bills and buying the essentials needed for basic survival. She stated:

> The number of parents in our building, whether ELL or not, has declined. Parents spend a lot of time working and putting food on the table. They care so much for their kids, but they just don't have the ability to meet all the needs and provide the kids what they need to survive.

Quinn commented that many of the parents do not have high school educations, which hinders their abilities to help with homework. This is in line with research that shows about one-third of immigrant parents do not have high school degrees (Cohen & Clewell, 2007). Other teachers found homework was coming back to school incomplete or incorrect. With this knowledge, these teachers do not assign much homework.

Study School No. 2

School 2 had 128 ELL students in 2010 and 188 ELL students in 2017, which is a growth of 46 percent. The overall population at School 2 increased slightly during this time from 400 students in 2010 to 483 students in 2017, which is a growth of 20.75 percent. When looking at

the ELL population as a percentage of the overall student population, there was an 898 percent growth, as it grew from 32.00 percent in 2010 to 38.92 percent in 2017.

Climate and Culture

The teachers view the students and staff as part of a school family. One participant commented:

> I know that everyone in the building has the same struggles. Nobody is deflated. We come together as a staff, and everybody is trying to do their best for students, which brings us closer together.

The teachers shared a love for their jobs and the lower SES students, including those speaking another language. One teacher commented that she believes she is doing mission work when she helps students learn the English language. Another participant, Lee, said she "fits better" in a lower socioeconomic environment. "I want to be here. This is the best way I can help kids," she said. Another participant, Erin, said, "I love teaching where I teach because these families love that their kids are getting an education."

ELL Instruction Delivery

This school utilized the pull-out model for ELL instruction. The school has put limits on the total amount of time a student can be outside the general education classroom receiving services such as ELL or Title Reading. This has resulted in most ELL students only being pulled by the ELL teacher for 30 minutes a day, with a few students spending 60 minutes with ELL teachers. ELL teachers rarely co-taught or met with ELL students within the classrooms. Newcomers were pulled up to 240 minutes a day, depending on the level of need. ELL teachers did spend minimal time collaborating with classroom teachers and adapting some ELL content to support what was happening in the classroom. The collaboration was not scheduled, and

happened at random times throughout the year. There was no common plan time, yet the principal recognized the importance of collaboration and allowed ELL teachers to adjust their schedules to meet with grade-level teams on an as-needed basis.

Two of the participants expressed the opinion that the pullout model with ELL students leaving the classroom for instruction was best. It was evident that their comfort level with the pullout model influenced their thinking. One participant, who believed being pulled from class was beneficial for the student, said, "They can relax there and don't have to show off or meet the standard of everyone around them." She preferred the ELL pullout model because she thought the classroom environment was too distracting. Avery noted that ELL students often lagged behind their peers, which is why she believed they needed the English language support outside of the general-education classroom.

> They need to be given an opportunity not to be distracted by what is going on in the classroom. It is good for them and they build a sense of community with that group.

However, even with those sentiments she admitted that she was not sure the best approach for her ELL students. The other two teachers at this school did not have a strong opinion of which model of ELL instruction was the best, yet commented that they preferred students to be in the classroom as much as possible.

One teacher at School 2 wanted more aides in the classroom. She said:

> When you have one aide work with you all day, there is consistency and they know what to do with the kids. It provides a greater toolbox of ideas and they are automatically thinking about the language piece.

Another said, "I want more hands on deck to work with the kids in small groups. I want more aides and more translators in the buildings at all times."

For another participant from School 2, collaboration is not appealing due to the lack of time in her day. “We don’t have time to plan for co-teaching. We don’t have time to plan as a grade level and that’s my priority.” As every grade level has planning at different times during the day, the district would have to research options to allow for collaboration, which is a hurdle. The two teachers who prefer the pullout model did not believe they had time to devote to teaching language skills to ELL students, and that having these students out of the classroom for periods of time took that responsibility off of their plates.

While the ELL instruction is not exactly what these teachers want, one teacher reflected on her first ELL student and noted how much better ELL instruction is today. “I bought an ABC book in Spanish and English,” she recalled. “Nobody knew what to do. Someone might pull the student out and talk to them for a half hour, but there was very little understanding of how to support ELL students.”

As with other schools in this study, the teachers use methods that have been successful with general-education students as they do not have resources specifically for ELL students. Each teacher had developed different ways to instruct classrooms with students who are learning English, without the guidance of the district. One teacher talked about planning for the “average” student and then finding ways to differentiate through texts leveled by reading ability or hands-on activities. “I started adapting things to get them (ELL students) engaged a little bit more.” When asked to elaborate, Erin explained:

> Over time we began working with students who had a lower understanding and they didn’t have the ability to put forth the extra effort, often because of the lack of language. They don’t understand that what they put into it is going to pay off.

Tracy focused on vocabulary when teaching a classroom with ELL students.

> I start with vocabulary, especially during shared reading lessons. I'll find three words they don't know and have students turn to that page. I will read the word in the sentence and I'll ask them what they think it means. Then, two days later we will do more with the vocabulary and add a definition and illustration, which is big for ELL students. I think I plan for higher, on grade level and lower; and I think about those who don't have the experiences and background knowledge.

Avery said, "These kids are so intuitive. They follow others and watch their classmates. They learn by immersion and it is amazing what they learn. I see their faces at the beginning of the year and they are so scared."

Lee said:

> These students look forward to coming to school and they see the value in education. Most of our kids realize that education is important. They may struggle to learn, but they want to learn. They want you to teach them. I may not always understand the best way to help a kid, but you just have to dive right in and find out what works best.

Language as a Barrier to Communication

The prominent second language at School 2 is Spanish, with others being Urdu, Amharic. Vietnamese, and Laotian. Communicating with students who do not understand English was at the forefront of these educators' mind. Avery noted, "Sometimes a student will take my hand and point to something. I am more aware of how I communicate and am more intentional. There is more pointing and more gesturing."

All of these teachers pair new ELL students up with a buddy, hopefully one who speaks the same language. This is easier when the student speaks Spanish, yet more difficult with other languages as there are fewer students. Tracy said, "You still try to find another student who would be a good buddy with him. I pick a kid who gets along with everyone and is helpful and wants to help."

In Lee's class, an ELL student entered her classroom only being able to speak two words, and she asked another student to translate for the new student. This common approach led to behavior issues.

> I asked another student to tell my newcomer what we were doing and explain what we had just talked about. It created a whole other dynamic with one student always telling him what to do. It created a rift between him and that particular student because he didn't understand that the student was telling him what I said.

The two students started arguing and fighting as a result, yet when she reached out to parents, she found them supportive and helpful. The behavior was directly related to the student's ELL status in that if he had understood and spoken English, the teacher would not have needed a peer to translate her instructions.

Erin also finds a new ELL student a buddy. "You are just praying you have someone that speaks their language and is a good role model and helpful. With my Hispanic students, the other Hispanic kids are right there to help."

There was a sense of frustration among these teachers around translation services and the expectation that everything sent home should be translated. Tracy said:

> I get frustrated having to translate everything. I sometimes want to tell my students to read this to your parents. I want to say, 'Look, this is going home in English and there should be someone who can translate this,' but if they have to find someone to translate this, they probably won't do that.

Another teacher talked about having to create her newsletter on Monday to give to the on-site Spanish translator so it would be ready to send home with students on Friday. The biggest issue was when something happened during the week that she needed to put in the newsletter and there was no time to have it translated. In addition, translation services for families who do not speak English were cumbersome, and thus items were translated only into Spanish.

Beyond the School Day

These participants spoke of students having family responsibilities and showed respect for those. Most were aware that extended family members often take care of children in Hispanic families, and extended family members often occupy the same houses (Bermudez, 1994). One participant commented:

> If a kid is absent, I understand the reason they had to stay home may not be because they were sick. It may be because if they had to take care of a sibling because if their parent didn't go to work, they would lose their job. I can't punish my student because of something they had no control over. I have to be empathetic to their situation.

She or an aide worked with absent students when they returned to school to complete missing assignments and ensure understanding of content. This process is similar to what she did for all students, yet often takes additional time due to language barriers.

When teachers assign homework in English, it creates a language barrier at home and parents are not able to assist their children. Tracy noted that the lack of parental involvement at home led to her no longer assigning homework to her students, and rarely do the other participants assign homework. Tracy said:

> The parents don't have the tools at home to help their kids; that's why I don't assign homework anymore. It's not transferring at home. They [the students] have to take care of siblings, that's their culture. They take care of their family and it is not always priority for them to do their homework.

Connecting with Families

This school had a high attendance at parent-teacher conferences and served dinner for families in its cafeteria once a month to promote a sense of family. There is a lack of parents volunteering in the classroom. Avery talked about a mom with two children who apologized because she could not speak English, and thus did not volunteer in the classroom. Avery wanted

parents to be comfortable volunteering even if they did not speak English yet did not have a solution to help facilitate that. Another participant shared her belief that there is a lot parents do not know due to the lack of English proficiency and translation.

> Parents were clueless and felt like nobody cared about them. Our previous translator worked to teach families about school and helped educate them. We need to provide support beyond their children.

Another participant noted the connection the school's translator had with the ELL families, and how that helped when having to call home for an educational or behavior issue because there was a positive relationship between the parents and the school.

Study School No. 3

School 3 had 191 ELL students in 2010 and 256 ELL students in 2017, which is a growth of 34 percent. The overall population at School 3 showed a minimal increase during this time with 438 students in 2010 and 452 students in 2017, which is a growth of 3.19 percent. When looking at the ELL population as a percentage of the overall student population, there was a growth of 29.87 percent, as the percentage grew from 43.61 percent in 2010 to 56.64 percent in 2017.

ELL-Instruction Delivery

ELL students at School 3 are pulled from class for 60 minutes a day to receive direct language instruction. There is collaboration between classroom teachers and the ELL teacher, although infrequently and unscheduled. Taylor shared lesson plans for those ELL students are missing during pull-out time and hoped the ELL teacher would align her lessons with the classroom lessons. When that did not happen, Taylor tried to find time to fill in the gaps for ELL students. Taylor noted that ELLs being pulled out of the general-education class for instruction from the ELL teacher has not been a positive experience for the students.

> I love my ELL teachers, but they don't fully connect with my kids. My kids tell me they don't want to go to ELL and don't want to leave my classroom. She pulls them during science and we are doing hands-on experiments. My kids have to go knowing what they are missing. Then, they bring my students back two at a time because they weren't being respectful or listening.

The lack of connection to the students, she believed, is because the ELL teacher only sees them for an hour a day and has not taken time to get to know them as individuals. This opinion is based on her observations and conversations with students, and not direct conversations with or observations of the ELL teachers. Taylor was the only participant from this school, so other teachers may believe differently.

She stressed the importance of connecting with ELL students and the impact that connection has on academic success. Taylor commented:

> I can teach academics and I believe those will come with age. But if a student is behind because they are behaviorally behind, they won't learn. They have to learn social skills and how to interact. They have to care about how they present themselves. When a student is immediately defensive and believes every teacher is against him, I have to take the time to teach him how to manage his behavior. It took me years to see that the kids really just want someone on their side.

Taylor explained that she had an ELL student who struggled socially and got angry every time a teacher corrected him, believing they didn't like him. She spent the year teaching the student how to manage his anger and how to communicate with teachers. When he became angry or upset, she would take him aside and try to talk through the reason for his emotions. She modeled appropriate behavior and language, trying to help him navigate situations better. She admitted that it was more difficult due to his lack of understanding English.

Language as a Barrier to Communication

School 3 has a Spanish translator on site, and the teachers translate documents to send home. For Taylor, that is not always enough. “I send stuff home in English and Spanish. I had a student from Ethiopia give something back to me and said he needed it translated. They [the district] don’t do that. We want the child to feel like we care enough to make it their way, but we don’t,” said Taylor.

In an effort to include all students, Taylor tried to design activities to access learning that do not require language skills, such as wordless cartoons. “Kids love it and it doesn’t matter if you speak English or not. You just have to draw,” she said.

Beyond the School Day

During one interview, Taylor commented that as she was listening to a student, she found herself thinking “you have seen things you shouldn’t have seen and done things you shouldn’t have done when you are only in elementary school.”

Taylor believes understanding the students’ cultures and their lives outside of schools is important. She mentioned that it is common for several families of the ELL students to live together in one house or apartment, sleeping on couches or the floor, wherever there is space, the participants said. Taylor illustrated it when she said:

> They treat each other like brothers and sisters, beating up on each other and loving on each other. It’s because their parents came over here together, so the families are connected. They are living together; it’s part of their culture. One student told me about how he had to take a cold shower that morning because he was last in line. All of this plays a role in their lives and their education.

Connecting with Families

Taylor taught previously in a non-Title school where families had high socio-economic status. She said she is more comfortable in the lower socio-economic classroom, partly due to the parents welcoming her and being more appreciative of how hard she works. In addition, she has

studied cultures and languages as part of her continuing education, which has helped her better understand the students and their families. She said:

> Parents are so appreciative that I can give their child an education. Many of them have never experienced education themselves. They are so busy laboring, that they feel blessed in some way for having a teacher pay attention to and love their child while they are working.

Study School No. 4

School 4 had 89 ELL students in 2010 and 122 ELL students in 2017, which is a growth of 37 percent. The overall population at School 4 showed a minimal increase during this time with 216 students in 2010 and 233 students in 2017, which is a growth of 7.87 percent. When looking at ELL population as a percentage of the overall student population, there was a growth of 27.09 percent, as the percentage grew from 41.20 percent in 2010 to 52.36 percent in 2017.

Climate and Culture

Ryan, who spent several years away from the classroom, had a total of 13 years of teaching experience. She noted that her first class in the fall of 1993, which was middle-class and Caucasian, had very involved parents and families, and that the students were enthusiastic and eager to learn. Yet, when describing her most recent class, from the fall of 2017, which has a lower economic status and high ELL population, she said there was an "array of levels academically and behaviorally."

> Social norms are not being taught and we have a number of kindergarten students coming to school not prepared to socialize. They are not prepared to work in groups and have a lot of needs. Unfortunately, that trend is going to continue, and when you add students who don't speak English and come to kindergarten only speaking Spanish, that is a giant challenge for a teacher.

For Ryan, the change in demographics has not been dramatic. As she was the only participant for this school, others may feel differently. She used numbers to highlight the

differences in students from her first year of teaching in 1993 and those from the 2017-2018 school year. The first class she taught, which was in a neighboring district with similar demographics, did not have any students leave or join the class throughout the year. That was unlike her classes the past few years where students left and new students enrolled throughout the year. She commented that today's families are more transient, perhaps because they have lower incomes.

Table 5
Ryan's Classroom Demographics

1993-1994 Class	**2017-2018 class**
19 students	16 students
0 moved; 0 new students	2 students moved; 2 new students
Caucasian students: 18	Caucasian students: 1
Hispanic students: 1	Hispanic students: 13
African American: 0	African American: 2
Academic IEP: 2	Academic IEP: 1
Speech services: 5	Speech services: 1
Gifted IEP: 1	Gifted IEP: 0
ELL: 0	ELL: 11
Foster child: 0	Foster child: 1

ELL-Instruction Delivery

School 4 is part of a pilot to redesign the district's schools, and has integrated all instruction, including ELL, into the classrooms, creating a full immersion model. Students are grouped by ability levels instead of only by grade-level placement, meaning you may have students from different grade levels in the same classroom. ELL teachers co-teach and collaborate with general-education teachers. In addition, the school is part of the Kansas Can School Redesign Initiative; one of 14 schools across the state. It is charged with redesigning

education for the future with the support of the school board and following guidelines outlined by the state. She believes less pullouts are better for students.

> We have good relationships with our ELL teachers, and with our redesign, we are adding co-teaching and fewer pullouts into our days. Before, many of our ELL students were hardly in the room, maybe for only an hour or two of the day, due to all of their pullouts. This is being addressed with our redesign.

Teachers at Building 4 collaborated with the ELL teachers to adapt curriculum. Ryan talked about working directly with the ELL teacher to strategically provide different opportunities for student groupings and interactions regardless of language or academic needs. This was isolated to this building, which is a product of the co-teaching model and intentional times for ELL teachers and grade-level teachers to plan together. She said:

> Co-teaching with an ELL teacher provides a different lens and perspective, and she has been an excellent advocate for helping us think about what an ELL student may need at different times throughout the day.

Newcomer ELL students continue to be pulled for direct ELL instruction throughout the day. She does believe her school may be different from other ELL schools within the district and it is focused on ELL students because "the number of ELL students in a classroom is sometimes the majority, not the minority."

Language as a Barrier to Communication

As with other schools, teachers try to assign another student to help a new ELL student. The goal is to select a buddy who speaks the same language, which is easier since most students at this school speak Spanish.

> We teach empathy, respect, and kindness, and we treat every student as humans, not labels. Teaching humanity in the classroom really helps the connections. Kids buddy up, they help each other regardless of any or all needs, and they work

> together…Then, with the buddy, we encourage interaction with others while helping keep the ELL student's needs in mind.

Connecting with Families

She relayed that as the demographics have changed, the involvement with the school community has increased. As part of that, the school has partnerships with local agencies to help provide necessary resources to students and staff.

To connect with families, staff members have started making home visits. In addition, Ryan tries to be involved with school events and community events that involve families from her school. "I volunteered for a Fun Friday event this summer at one of the apartments a lot of our students live in," she relayed.

She continued, "I have a heart for ELL students, so I really try to develop my relationship with not only the students but their families."

Cross-Case Analysis

The experiences of these educators provide insight into the successes and challenges of educating ELL students within this district. While there are differences among the schools in how ELL instruction is delivered, the educators in this study shared more commonalities than differences.

ELL-Instruction Delivery

For many years, the district had a mandate that ELL students must receive 60 minutes of direct language instruction outside of the classroom. Conversations with participants revealed that not all ELL teachers had been following the previous district mandate, and instead were modifying ELL language instruction within their own schools. For the 2018-2019 school year, approaches to ELL instruction included the redesign initiative where ELL students are integrated into the classroom based on academic level with few pullouts, the limit on the amount of time

student can be pulled out of class, minimal collaboration with classroom teachers to align ELL content, and adherence to 60 minutes of direct ELL instruction. These different methods of delivering ELL instruction were not shared among schools or teachers, as these educators believed the model within their school was the district mandate. I did not probe why this was the case as that would involve talking with ELL teachers, principals and district personnel, and that was beyond the scope of this research. These teachers want direction from district leaders around ELL instruction and are seeking more collaboration with ELL teachers and flexibility in terms of pullout times and length.

A common sentiment was that students currently sitting in their classrooms require more attention than the students of a decade or two ago, and a large percentage of students needing additional assistance are English Language Learners. This is in line with the findings of Gandara & Rumberger (2008) who note that while students learning English as a second language are grouped into the ELL category, their educational needs vary based on individual linguistic, social and academic backgrounds and the age at which they enter our public-school system.

Several participants mentioned that students are entering kindergarten unable to write their names and without knowing the alphabet or their colors, even when they speak English. As they progress through the grades, they see the achievement gap widen. It was interesting that these teachers did not single out ELL students when making these comments, and instead talked about the students as a whole. The teachers did, however, make comments that some students are below grade level and they speak English. This would indicate that teachers understand language is a barrier and see it as a reason why an ELL student may be below grade level.

While participants did not specifically mention lowering expectations for a student because of a lack of language proficiency, there were comments about modifying content or

assignments to allow ELL students to demonstrate understanding of the curriculum. When creating lesson plans, participants created expectations and desired outcomes for the class and then modified them based on individual student ability. They understood that ELL students struggling with language comprehension may not be able to read grade-level text. They also pointed out others in the class may not be able to read the same text. The prevalent thinking was that students from low-income families are often below grade level and need additional support and modifications. And, as academic English is vital to success, these educators are aware that ELL students who attend high poverty schools tend to acquire English at a slower rate than students at other schools (Edvantia, 2007). Their goal was to create an environment where each student was successful, to which participants discussed altering spelling lists, reducing the number of problems a student must complete on a math assignment, and having students skip assignments that may prove too challenging. While you could say this is lowering expectations, one could argue that this model is good teaching, as participants work to ensure each student grasps the content.

> The function of teaching can be defined as a guide or catalyst in the process of learning, which reinforces effective learning and promotes learning achievement. On the other hand, the effect of learning reflects whether teaching approaches and methods are appropriate, providing feedback leading to adjustment or improvement of teaching methodology. Therefore, language teaching and learning interact closely with each other. (Ma, 2008)

It is evident that these teachers have the skillset to develop and modify lessons that meet students' needs. The stressor for these participants is that they are the ones charged with teaching the standards and bringing students up to grade-level, yet they do not have the resources to facilitate English language learning. They lack the knowledge and confidence to meet the needs of ELL students. When asked what resources they use specifically for teaching ELL students, not

a single participant had one. Research has shown that students need proficient use of and control over academic language to succeed in content learning (Edvantia, 2007). Yet, these educators do not know how to facilitate that and have relied on strategies geared to all students, without knowing if they were effective with ELL students. For example, all teachers assign a buddy to a new ELL student without knowledge of whether there are positive results from this action. One teacher, in fact, had negative results from using a buddy.

The teachers want ELL instruction to align with grade-level standards and activities within the classrooms. While School 4 has a model in place to achieve this, the other schools are lacking collaboration between grade-level teachers and ELL teachers. ELL students are pulled from the class in three of the schools and teachers are rarely or never collaborating, which has left these participants frustrated. While two participants are in the minority and prefer the pullout model, they still want to know what is happening with ELL instruction. These educators feel responsible for their students' learning, and teachers voiced the desire to be involved in all learnings by their students.

Language as a Barrier to Communication

Language is a barrier, whether that is with daily curriculum, completing schoolwork at home or communicating with families. Participants illustrated how they communicated with their hands, created visuals for students to use when they had to use the restroom or get a drink of water, and even drawing a picture to help with communication.

Spanish is the predominant language of the district's ELL students, which is in line with the nation, as 76.5 percent of the country's ELL students speak Spanish (Terry, 2017). The district reported in 2017 that 88 different languages were spoken by its students. Teachers were thus tasked with communicating with multiple families speaking several different languages, and

its schools were not staffed with translators beyond Spanish. The National Council on Disability (2017) noted that language can represent a significant barrier to family engagement.

Evaluation of this district's language services showed that district-wide communications are available in English and Spanish, which is not beneficial to the almost 1,700 students and their families who speak another language. Progress reports, grade cards, and enrollment forms, for example, are available in English and Spanish. Families who do not read English or Spanish cannot read the communications and may be unaware of happenings within the schools or district. The district has been proactive for parent-teacher conferences by asking families through emails, flyers and school newsletters if they need translation services. This service is not readily available on other occasions, such as choir concerts or family fun events, which can add to parental isolation. Language barriers are among the top reason immigrant parents do not attend school events (M. Beatriz Arias & Milagros Morillo-Campbell, 2008). There is a page on the district's Web site about interpretation services, which includes a district contact email link and phone number, as well as phone numbers for schools with on-site Spanish interpreters. The district has interpreters available in the majority of languages spoken within the district if a family requests translation services through the Web site or school. This is an area where all participants voiced frustrated and concern, and the overall thinking was that by not providing translation of all documents in all needed languages, the district is dismissing some students and not valuing them.

Sending documents home in Spanish helps a portion of the population, yet even with on-site translators, most teachers did not provide translated copies of all documents. There is no district-wide process for translation within the elementary schools, so each school developed an informal process. One participant explained that she must give a document to the school's

Spanish translator anywhere from three days to five days before she needs it. Teachers reported spending time in the evenings or during the weekends working on school communications and plans for the next day or week, which did not always equate to the required additional days for translation. It was evident that the teachers who had an on-site translator felt a greater burden to provide communications in other languages. School 4 is an outlier as it has a high number of ELL students, which has forced translation to be part of the routine. The teachers at School 1 are in the infancy stages of an ELL site with a low ELL population, and translation is a newer requirement. Families who speak a language other than English or Spanish did not get information from the school in their native tongues. This results in a lack of communication, which can leave students, parents and families unaware of what is happening at school and experiencing feelings of isolation.

Social and Emotional Needs

These participants believed that students in their schools are facing more difficult issues at home compared to their peers of past classes. Stories shared included a student whose father was killed in front of him, as well as fears about immigration and parents being forced to leave the United States. One participant shared:

> When I first started teaching my class was predominantly white. Our clientele has changed. It is more diverse. We have more kids in need and more kids dealing with trauma at home.

Trauma and the associated emotional needs are not isolated to ELL students, yet there is an additional element of stress for this population as they try to navigate a climate focused on immigration. In every school, these educators are concerned that they are not equipped to deal with the social and emotional aspects of our ELL student population, especially when communication is difficult due to language. Throughout the interviews, the social and emotional

aspects of teaching were of high concern. Seven of the participants specifically mentioned that ELL students just wanted someone to be on their side and someone to listen to them.

Several teachers in this study commented that there has been an increase in behaviors. The continuing struggle for educators in this district is finding the cause of behavior issues and determining how best to address them. Language plays a piece as educators cannot communicate with non-English speaking students without the help of a peer, translator or app, which causes frustration for both parties. Participants felt like they were continually searching for a new way to manage behaviors, and what worked with one group of students did not work with the next year's group of students.

Again, it is difficult to determine if the increase in behaviors is associated to an increase in ELL students, increase in lower-socioeconomic students or a combination, as this data is not tracked by the district. It must be noted that while the participants have ELL students in their classrooms, they do not attribute behavior problems solely to the lack of English language comprehension, yet believe it can be a contributing factor**.** Three participants believed a lack of parental involvement leads to increased behavioral issues.

A kindergarten teacher talked about how it takes longer today than in years' past to teach classroom skills, such as walking quietly in the hallways and waiting to talk instead of blurting out answers. She attributed this to a lack of parental direction. Students who do not understand English struggle with following directions as they do not understand what they are being taught. Students will not remain seated during class, talk to peers during instruction, struggle with walking quietly in the halls and other common expectations during elementary school. Participants equated this to a lack of language ability, not willful disobedience. Probing this, one

participant talked about changing her approach to behavior resulting from a lack of language skills. She used pictures and hand signals to help the student learn expectations.

One participant pointed out that because a student cannot speak English does not automatically equate to a behavior issue. She explained:

> A lot of Hispanic families value education and don't want to draw attention to themselves. Their children often aren't the problem because they value education and want to learn. But behaviors have increased as the number of kids on free and reduced lunch has gone up. The more families we have moving into the attendance area, the more behaviors and special needs.

The conclusion is that financial hardship causes parents to spend more time focused on finances and less time on behavior. There appears to be a strong relationship between ELL status and socio-economic level, as migrant and immigrated families do not have financial stability. This is evident in this district when evaluating enrollment numbers and realizing that Title 1 schools, which are based on the number of families with low socio-economic status, have the highest number of ELL students. The teachers appeared to be resigned to having increased behavior issues and little support or methods to manage them.

Beyond the School Day

Research shows that ELL students spend their school days trying to learn English and then go home to their families, who speak a different language. Participants in this study spoke of the disconnect between school and home, and attributed it to language skills and socio-economic status. Economic status does play a role in that most often, upper-class parents tend to see themselves as integral to their children's education and believe school and home are interconnected (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). While working-class parents view home and school as separate entities, believing their role is to prepare their children for school by

instilling good manners and ensuring they arrive at school on time, and educational decisions are the responsibility of the school staff (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The participants' views on parental involvement stemmed from previous experiences in non-Title schools where income levels were higher, and was not specific to the building. Cultural awareness and understanding were limited among these participants, with only three having specific education. One participant attended a professional development session at a previous school, which educated staff about families from Mexico. She learned that these parents believe that as long as their children were at school, it is enough and they do not need to help outside of school unless it is a behavior problem. Two others have studied cultures for their graduate degrees, and believed this education is beneficial. The National Research Council identified attributes of schools and classrooms that benefit ELL students, among those was valuing of home cultures (August & Hakuta, 1997). Those with this additional education were more vocal about the differences in families. They appeared to have a better understanding that ELL students have different background knowledge and experiences. Without further research and analysis, it is difficult to say if this knowledge relates to increased student success, yet the teachers related a sense of understanding others did not have.

Another commonality among these schools is the lower socio-economic status of families. Participants displayed a level of compassion and understanding for these families and believed that parents were focused on earning money and did not have time to email teachers or volunteer in the classrooms. These educators do not see this as a lack of concern about a child's education, instead it is a matter of basic survival. In addition, they were quick to point out that this is not exclusive to ELL students. Educators shared stories of students who were living with relatives because parents had not found work, students whose parents worked two or three jobs

and left them at home alone, and students who spend nights at work with their parents because there are no childcare options. These situations impede a parent's ability to assist with homework and volunteer during the day after working overnight or late in the evening. This knowledge is partly why participants discontinued assigning homework across the buildings.

Helping Educators

The educators who took part in this study had similar experiences and shared common observations. When asked what would be the most beneficial for them when educating the growing number of ELL students, the answers spanned from professional development to resources. Research suggests that general education teachers have little access to preservice and in-service professional development and training that is focused on how to teach ELL students (McGraner & Saenz, Preparing teachers of English language learners, 2009). As of 2011, there were 83,840 traditional public schools and 65.6 percent reported to have specific ELL instruction (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The same reporting year, there were 82,540 of the 3,269,500 public school teachers who reported having a degree in teaching English as a Second Language. Additionally, 26 percent of teachers in suburban schools participated in professional development on instructing ELL students, with most spending less than eight hours a year focusing on this subset of students.

This district does not require general-education teachers to have training focused on educating ELL students. It does require ELL teachers to be endorsed or be on a path to receive endorsement, which is a state requirement and allows the district to receive federal funding. During district professional development days, the ELL teachers are often separated from general-education teachers, which reduces the opportunities for collaboration. Participants

mentioned the desire to have professional development at the district level so all teachers hear the same message.

Five of the educators specifically said they wanted more education through professional development and additional resources, while all teachers mentioned these at some point during the interviews. One participant said, “I want interventions. Give me some parameters. When a student is non-speaking, what are the first things I start with?” Another relayed the idea of providing five different things a teacher can do for a non-speaker coming into the classroom. Several teachers mentioned wanting resources for each grade level that broke information down for ELL students.

Many educators wanted additional personnel in the classroom, whether a teacher or an aide. For an educator from School 4, her experience led her to believe the best resource is having another teacher in the room. She said, “Co-teaching is the way to go. We not only have time to co-teach, but we are able to co-plan. We are a whole team.”

One educator focused on the ELL students:

> I feel like we need to give the kids a chance and the time and resources to find out what they are good at. Every student has gifts and talents, and I feel like ELL students are at a big disadvantage due to riding the bus or lack of resources. We are still a country of possibilities and opportunities, and sometimes our ELL students don’t get the same opportunities as other students.

It was evident during conversations that these educators want to be the best teachers they can and desire additional resources to help educate ELL students. As one educator said, “Professional development. That’s what’s lacking. When thinking of ELL strategies, none come to mind.”

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the general-education classroom teachers' experiences and needs in regard to teaching students who are learning English as a second language. The analyses of data from interviews noted many similarities among participants in their experiences with ELL students, their desires for additional professional development and resources specific to ELL students. The interviews revealed vast differences in the ELL models and relationships with ELL teachers among the schools in this study.

Limitations of this Study

The results of this study can be used to provide insight into the educators within this district. The results cannot be used to generalize general-education teachers' needs and experiences beyond this district as the survey sample is not representative of the state's or nation's teachers or schools. In addition, School 3 and School 4 had one participant each, which might result in the findings being narrow and not representative of the other teachers within the school.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Implications

Through interviews, these educators displayed their dedication to ELL students and their families. They shared their experiences with ELL students, frustrations when communication is difficult due to a lack of language acquisition, concerns about students being pulled from the general-education classrooms and personal accounts of conversations had with ELL students about life outside of school. The data collected in this qualitative research study provides a foundation for district leaders to use as they consider how to better meet the educational and emotional needs of ELL students within the district.

There is a commonality among the participants in this study in that they want to teach in a Title 1 building with ELL students. Lacking in this study were teachers who wanted to transfer out of a Title 1 building, and it is important to note that their experiences and ideas may be different from those in this study as they do not have active ELL students in their classes nor do they have to navigate the additional pullout services for math and reading. As I did not specifically select participants who have a strong desire to teach in a Title 1 school, there also is the possibility that teachers in Title 1 buildings choose to teach in that setting, although I do not have evidence to support or refute that claim. During the past years, the participants' classrooms in this study have changed from predominantly middle-class, Caucasian students to diverse rooms with students speaking an array of languages. Less than half had a true newcomer in their classes, which is a student who speaks no English, and most had students who could translate for new students.

Participants must grapple with meeting the needs of a diverse classroom of learners, including ELLs. A lack of knowledge and skills in educating ELLs is a problem that needs immediate attention. This study revealed the frustration classroom teachers have with the

lack of resources, yet there is the larger issue that teachers do not understand the needs and nuances of multicultural education. One teacher discontinued homework as an accommodation, which could be considered a means of lowering expectations. If other buildings within the district routinely assign homework, which is successfully completed and returned, then are teachers expecting less of students in lower socioeconomic schools? What are the unintended consequences of creating a school-wide culture of education stopping when the student leaves the building each afternoon? The answer is not evident through this study and deserves further investigation by district leaders.

This is not an isolated issue in that schools throughout the district, state and country are failing our ELL students. One study recommends discussions between education professionals and teacher education programs about coursework in diversity issues and skills for educating ELLs (Batts, 2012). This district works closely with several colleges and universities in the state and could take a leadership role in providing direction to modify and update teacher education programs. A change of this magnitude will take time and commitment, and does not alleviate the immediate need of a standard, district-wide ELL instructional model that features research-backed curriculum strategies and resources, and appropriate training of staff.

The absence of an ELL curriculum and resources call into question the district's commitment to ELL students, as the district does provide math, reading, science and social studies curriculum resources. As of 2011, there were 83,840 traditional public schools and 65.6 percent reported to have specific ELL instruction (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). This district is among the less than 35 percent that do not have designated instruction for students learning English as a second language. As a transient population, the services received at one school are vastly different from another school, creating a lack

continuity and interrupted English language curriculum when students transfer intra-district. Schools are trying different models of ELL instruction with no discussions among schools. Since this research was started there have been changes in district leadership, yet the district's initiatives continue to have a lack of dedicated focus on ELL students.

There was a cry among teachers for ELL-specific training. The lack of professional development is not unique to this district, as research suggests that general education teachers have little access to preservice and in-service professional development and training focused on how to teach ELL students (McGraner & Saenz, 2009). Only 26 percent of teachers in suburban schools participated in professional development on instructing ELL students, with most spending less than eight hours a year focusing on this subset of students. Yet, of the more than 3 million teachers, 55.6% of them report having an ELL student in their classrooms. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages developed standards for those educating ELL students, which include ensuring teachers understand the role of culture in language development and academic achievement and understand how to teach standards directly related to learning a second language (Hall-Whittier, Siebe, & Zitta, 2009). It is recommended that classroom teachers know how and when to modify instruction and build on their students' background knowledge (Apthorp, Wang, Ryan, & Cicchinelli, 2012). This district had 13 professional development days for the 2018-2019 school year, with none focusing on lower socio-economic or ELL students. The only ELL focused professional development has been offered during the summer at an optional conference hosted by the district. As noted in the analysis of the conversations with participants, there have been multiple district initiatives in the past, none of which have centered on the changing demographics of the classrooms in Title 1 schools. For the 2018-2019 school year, the

district provided district-wide training and messaging surrounding its math curriculum at the elementary level. It used different mediums, including video and online learning, to explain the district's important initiatives, which all district staff were required to participate in. Through these past endeavors, the district has demonstrated that it can present the same message to all staff members. Professional development would be a start, but there are limits to it as it focuses on the teacher as an individual and not the educational system as a whole. In order to address the larger issue of ELL students achieving in lower quadrants compared to regular-education peers, the district must evaluate its policies on a broader scale.

Our nation recognizes that the ELL population is on the rise, at the same time ELL students continue to educationally lag behind their English-speaking peers. The nation's average achievement gap between ELL students and their peers remained about 40 percent for both fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math between 2000 and 2013 (Murphey, 2014). Nationally, 63 percent of ELL students graduate from high school, compared to 82 percent of their classmates (Sanchez, 2017). The results are similar in Kansas, where 66.8 percent of ELL students graduate high school compared to 80.7 percent of all students (Noble, 2010). By high school, only 7.1 percent of ELL students are meeting or exceeding math standards, 9.8 percent are meeting or exceeding science standards, and 6.8 percent are meeting or exceeding standards in English language arts (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). The hope of graduating high school for almost 40 percent of students learning the English language while also grade-level content is dismal, and it is time for this district, as well as all districts, change the landscape.

Language is only one facet of educating ELL students; there is culture and socio-economic status to consider, which lead to increased social-emotional issues. Nine to 14 percent of young children have social-emotional problems while almost 30 percent of children

from low-income families have social-emotional problems, which equates to a higher likelihood of academic difficulties (Wilson-Simmons, 2012). The district's focus on social and emotional well-being of students is a positive step and it is essential for administrators to examine closely its data for the subset of ELL students. In addition, as low-income and ELL students share many commonalities, it will be beneficial to examine the results through that lens. Providing information to teachers on the backgrounds of their ELL students, including past trauma, will assist with understanding this subset.

While the majority of ELL families speak Spanish, there are 1,700 students in the district studied whose families do not speak English or Spanish. The district does offer translation services during conferences for most languages, yet does not have a format in place to translate documents into the more than 80 different languages spoken by families within the district. The district states that family and community involvement is important, while participants noted ELL students cannot always attend after-school activities due to lack of transportation. In addition, parents may not know about the events due to language barriers. If a school receives federal funding, it must ensure that parents with limited English proficiency have access to information about their children's education programs at the same level as English-speaking parents, which equates to written translation for documents and interpretation services for in-person. According to this research, the district is not meeting this requirement to its full extent, which is problematic for hundreds of families. The district should begin by creating a formal translation process and collaborating with community resources to provide additional avenues for communicating in all languages spoken. Also, it can focus on increasing engagement among its Hispanic population, as that is the largest ELL subset. Research shows that this set of parents are more likely to engage in the education of their children when they are provided an

opportunity to participate in culturally sensitive programs (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006). Consider the parent-teacher organizations and how many non-English speaking parents are on the boards or actively involved. Most of these meetings have preset agendas, a lack of parental feedback and no childcare or translation services available (Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2012).

The findings are not surprising to this researcher and could be echoed in most districts across the country with similar demographics. Oftentimes, the subset ELL population is intertwined with the low-income population within schools, which can make it difficult to pull apart culture, socioeconomic status and language. It can be said that educators and administrators must look at all students in lower socioeconomic settings as being language learners, as students in poverty show decreases in vocabulary, phonological awareness, and syntax (Parkins, Finegood, & Swain, 2013). The social capital of this group of students and families is unequal to higher socio-economic families, and until these are equal, we cannot lessen the achievement gap, which is the goal of the district. If the district continues in the same manner as the past decade, it can expect the same results and continue having an ELL population that falls behind academically and socially.

Conclusion

This qualitative study was designed to explore the experiences and needs of general-education teachers and ELL students. It highlighted the desire of these teachers to have increased district support through resources, strategies and professional development. It also brought to light the lack of communication avenues for the many families who do not speak Spanish or English, and lack of parental involvement, which both need to be evaluated and addressed by the district. There is a disconnect between statements by the district in its vision and its actions involving ELL students. Further exploration of the needs of these students and their teachers is warranted in order to determine how to close the achievement gap of ELL

students. The district must ask hard questions about how its schools can be the connection between students, teachers and families. It must explore relationships with community agencies and have in-depth conversations that are followed by action. The status of ELL students in this district, as with districts throughout the nation, has remained unchanged for generations. The teachers are grappling with educating these students, and the district needs to find the resources – people, funds, curriculum – to enforce change. Until a commitment to ELL students and lower socio-economic students is made, the district will continue to see the lack of results in achievement.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

I created main questions to ensure I covered the areas of my research, which is paramount for structuring an effective interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). My main questions are:

1. Tell me about your background; what led you to where you are today?
2. Think about your first class. Describe it for me. Who was in your class? What were the students like? How would you describe the class?
3. Now, think about this year's class. Describe them for me. Who are your students? How would you describe them to me?
4. The district has seen an increase in the number of students learning English as a second language during the last decade. Your building has changed over the past decade, even the last five years in terms of enrollment numbers and demographics. How has this change affected the school culture, the personnel and the climate?
5. You have a diverse class in terms of students and their educational needs, which includes ELL students. Thinking about those needs, what resources do you use to ensure your ELL students are progressing and learning?
    a. What is lacking for you to be able to meet the educational needs of ELL students?
6. While the district is dedicated to academic success, administration is focusing resources on the social wellbeing of students. Think about the social aspects of your students and classroom, and all that involves from student to student

relationships, to the groups of students that naturally form to the classroom and school communities.

   a. How are new ELL students integrated into the classroom?
   b. How do you foster relationships between your ELL students and other students in your classroom?
   c. What are your experiences with ELL students in terms of social interactions?
   d. Describe the social atmosphere during the first few days. For example, whom do you see ELL students gravitating toward socially?
   e. Explain your thought process when choosing partners or helpers for your new ELL students.

7. Our society has numerous social norms; your school has social norms and your classroom has social norms. The way you interact with your students is different than how other teachers interact with students in your class. How would others describe your relationships with your students?
   a. And, your relationships with ELL students specifically?
   b. The district is focusing on mental health through Second Step, which is fabulous. How do you relay our social and cultural norms to ELL students?
   c. What are your experiences with how ELL students learn these norms?
   d. Explain how you maintain communication with ELL families, and how you connect with ELL families.

8. Money is no object. You can have anything you want or need, even if it doesn't exist today. What would be the most beneficial to you when educating the growing number of ELL students?

Appendix B: Student Enrollment Data by Year

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 1	2010	336	7	2.08%
	2011	335	13	3.88%
	2012	336	16	4.76%
	2013	315	13	4.13%
	2014	367	60	16.35%
	2015	382	66	17.28%
	2016	382	76	19.90%
	2017	395	82	20.76%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 2	2010	400	128	32.00%
	2011	400	132	33.00%
	2012	416	151	36.30%
	2013	439	162	36.90%
	2014	455	186	40.88%
	2015	483	188	38.92%
	2016	454	185	40.75%
	2017	507	212	41.81%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 3	2010	438	191	43.61%
	2011	443	201	45.37%
	2012	490	230	46.94%
	2013	407	195	47.91%
	2014	416	226	54.33%
	2015	434	239	55.07%
	2016	451	262	58.09%
	2017	452	256	56.64%

	Year	Total	ELL	% of students
School 4	2010	216	89	41.20%
	2011	241	105	43.57%
	2012	247	111	44.94%
	2013	256	128	50.00%
	2014	258	136	52.71%
	2015	262	133	50.76%
	2016	256	126	49.22%
	2017	233	122	52.36%

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