

**English Language Learners in General Education: Unlocking Academic Potential**

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### **Abstract**

English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools have long faced academic challenges when compared to their non-ELL peers. This problem stems from a lack of inclusivity in general education classrooms. To address this concern, the capstone project and corresponding professional development (PD) aim to answer the overarching question of how to make the general education classroom inclusive for ELLs. Test scores consistently show that ELLs underperform, scoring lower in both math and reading than their non-ELL peers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation worsened, causing additional delays in ELLs' academic performance, English language proficiency (ELP) progress, and increased dropout rates. Furthermore, teachers express feeling unprepared to meet the needs of ELLs. As such, the primary aim of the PD is to equip general education teachers, administrators, and English as a New Language (ENL) teachers with effective approaches and practices for teaching ELLs. Upon completing the PD, educators should be able to apply this knowledge to create a more inclusive classroom for ELLs. As a result, ELLs will have enhanced educational experiences, increased confidence, motivation, engagement, and improved academic and linguistic achievement.

*Keywords:* English language learners (ELLs), general education, inclusive, academic performance, effective practices, culturally responsive

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Problem Statement**

When I was seven years old and moved to the United States, I was registered as an English Language Learner (ELL) in school and received English as a Second Language (ESL) services in New York City. I was already fluent in two languages before arriving in the United States, so English became my third language to learn. Looking back on my early education, it feels like watching a silent movie. I vividly remember how I felt and what I thought. During my general education classes, I always had the desire to raise my hand and answer the teachers' questions. However, by the time I processed the words in English, translated them in my mind, formulated responses in my home languages, and translated them back into English, another student had already provided an answer, and the discussion had moved on. Consequently, much of my time in the mainstream setting was spent in silence, struggling to demonstrate my efforts, feeling overwhelmed as I hurried to complete tasks, and feeling confused by what I could not understand. When I was pulled out of the general education classes for ESL services, I distinctly recall a sense of relief. Finally, I was able to comprehend more than I ever could in the general education classroom. I often wondered when I would truly feel like I belonged in that setting.

Presently, I spend much of my time in general education classrooms. I have worked in the New York City public school system for approximately six years now and have explored many schools across several districts. I have observed a diverse range of demographics, programs, and instructional practices in these schools. In spite of all of their differences, I witnessed a common factor in each school and even more specifically, in each classroom: students who were either English language learners (ELLs) or students who spoke another language at home besides English. In my observations, I frequently came across ELLs like myself, struggling in

mainstream classes to keep up with content area instruction. Despite trying to engage with the content, they often were not able to do so effectively due to linguistic challenges.

In exploring this issue further, I discovered that general education teachers who had not been provided with the proper training to meet the needs of their ELL student population often only had the knowledge and skills to employ differentiation strategies designed for the general student population, which could not adequately address the unique linguistic challenges that ELLs face (Olds et al., 2021). In this way, the only rich instruction that many ELLs received was during pull-out services, and some did not even receive that sort of instruction. This resulted in ELLs being assigned other language-building activities while their peers were doing language-intensive subjects.

Therefore, it is not surprising that many ELLs, particularly those at the elementary level, still lag behind their native English-speaking peers in terms of their academic performance. According to Olds et al. (2021) English language learners' academic performance is 30-40 points lower than that of their native English-speaking peers.

Through my personal experiences and firsthand observations, I have come to realize that despite the progress we have made in striving for equitable education for all students over the years- through initiatives like renaming programs from ESL to English as a New Language (ENL), conducting specialized research for ELLs, implementing relevant policies, hiring certified English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Bilingual educators, and providing access to training for educators to enhance their ability to meet the needs of these learners- it is evident that we still have a significant journey ahead of us to achieve this goal.

In 2020, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCED, 2023), reported that approximately 9% of New York public school students were ELLs. According to the NYC Public

Schools Division of Multilingual Learners (2022), the number of ELLs has increased to 16% by 2022. Within the past two years, the number of ELLs in public schools in New York has increased by seven percent and is expected to continue to grow. The National Education Association (2020) predicted that one out of four students in the United States will be English language learners by 2025. Since this growing population of learners spend the majority of their instructional time in general education classrooms, general education teachers must be prepared to assist them in achieving academic success (Olds et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, expecting general education teachers to possess extensive knowledge about various aspects of their ELL students' identities, such as their English Language Proficiency Levels (ELPs), can be a challenging task. Additionally, they must also take into account the diverse needs of their other students and address each student's needs accordingly.

Therefore, for the purpose of my Master's Capstone Project, I considered the question of "How to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELLs" with the aim of discovering potential solutions to address the challenge faced by ELLs, who encounter difficulties in actively engaging in academic instruction on par with their non-ELL counterparts in general education classrooms.

Within this capstone thesis, the terms English Language Learner (ELL) and multilingual learner will be used to refer to students who speak more than one language and receive language services in schools. The term English Language Proficiency Level (ELP) refers to ELLs linguistic abilities based on five categories: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding. Further, the terms General Education and Mainstream will be used interchangeably to refer to classroom settings in which the majority of learners do not qualify for services and are taught by a certified general education teacher with a general curriculum.

**Significance of the Problem**

The impact of being left out of general education instruction is significant for ELLs. These students often lag behind their native English-speaking peers in grade level content areas because they simultaneously must acquire a new language while learning academic subjects. In subjects like English Language Arts (ELA) and math, ELLs can struggle to comprehend new terminology and concepts because they not only face the obstacle of being unfamiliar with the English language but they also encounter content that is entirely new to them, which they may not even be familiar with in their home languages. This problem holds significant importance at multiple levels. At the classroom level, it is imperative to recognize the significance of this issue because the lack of appropriate support for ELLs within general education classrooms perpetuates the view that ELLs do not exist within this setting and do not matter, which contributes to their present and future academic struggles. Consequently, this continues to maintain the educational disparity that exists between ELLs and their non-ELL counterparts.

**Purpose**

This capstone project aims to enhance equitable participation among ELLs in academic instruction. The purpose of this project and the related Professional Development (PD) training is to equip general education teachers with knowledge, effective strategies, and tools designed to support ELLs during content area instruction, to enable them to facilitate meaningful engagement and learning experiences, which will ultimately foster their ELL students' academic success. The PD will be designed to be implemented within three days. The first day will focus on providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the PD's rationale, objectives and of the knowledge they must possess regarding ELLs and their identities. The following two days will be dedicated to hands-on practice and application of effective approaches, strategies,

and techniques in collaborative settings. By implementing the strategies from the PD, educators can improve their ELL students' academic performance within the general education classroom.

### **Summary**

The challenge faced by ELLs in general education classrooms is that they are frequently excluded from content area instruction due to a lack of knowledge and understanding among general education teachers regarding how to meet the specific needs of these learners. Consequently, ELLs face persistent challenges in keeping up with the demands of instruction and fall behind academically. To address this issue, the aim of this capstone project and PD is to equip teachers with valuable resources, information, strategies, and tools necessary to actively engage ELLs in both content learning and language acquisition. The PD seeks to empower general education teachers in creating inclusive classrooms that foster the academic development of ELLs.

The subsequent sections of the capstone project will be organized into four chapters. Chapter two will provide a comprehensive overview of the literature review that supports the identified issue faced by ELLs in general education classrooms. As part of the literature review, previous studies and research will also be reviewed that propose effective strategies to mitigate the problem. Chapter three will describe in detail the professional development training related to the capstone project. This chapter will provide an outline of how the PD will be implemented, what information, resources, materials, instructional strategies, and techniques will be presented that will help general education teachers engage ELLs and promote their active participation in content area learning. The final chapter will serve as a conclusion for the capstone project, emphasizing the significance of the problem and the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment for ELLs. Moreover, this chapter will provide further recommendations for future



research and areas for improvement in supporting ELLs' academic achievement. Lastly, the Appendices will include handouts and materials required for the PD.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review to establish a clear understanding of the purpose of the capstone project. This literature review presents an overview and synthesis of relevant and influential research in the field of education related to the instruction of English language learners (ELLs). In order to set the foundation for both the capstone project and the professional development (PD) that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, the review will begin by exploring the academic achievement issues pertaining to ELLs, ELLs' identities, which are fundamental to understanding how ELLs learn, and the challenges that mainstream teachers face as they teach ELLs. Following this, the literature review will present research-based evidence regarding pedagogies, theories, approaches, and instructional strategies, that will assist educators in mitigating the academic achievement challenges faced by ELLs. It is the combination of all the research, from the issues to the measures that educators can take, that forms the basis for addressing the overarching research question of this capstone project: How to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELLs.

### **Exploring the Academic Achievement Problem**

Since the early 1900s, there have been continuous efforts on the part of the United States government to promote equitable educational opportunities for multilingual learners through legislation, litigation, and initiatives. From the National Defense Act of 1958 to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the amended ESEA Title VII, Bilingual Education Act, and all subsequent reauthorizations of these acts, the United States government

has continuously sought to achieve this goal (Baker & Wright, 2021). As such, it was evident very early on in the history of the United States that multilingual learners were a permanent and growing part of the population who, one day, would constitute the next generation of American citizens. In understanding this, it was imperative to make efforts, despite potential setbacks from certain propositions, to provide a high-quality education to this population in order to ensure that the next generation of monolingual and multilingual learners would be educated and intelligent citizens who could one day lead the country and contribute effectively to the improvement of the nation (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017). In the present day, it is common to find students, both monolinguals and multilinguals, studying side by side in public school general education classrooms. However, despite receiving the same type of education, there still remains an alarming number of disparities between these demographic groups.

According to Brooks and Adams (2015), one-third of ELLs scored well on the mathematics and reading components of their standardized state tests, whereas two-thirds of their monolingual peers scored well on the tests. Owens and Wells (2021) report that at the fourth grade level of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) or the Nation's Report Card, ELLs continue to score far below their English-only peers in reading and math. In the 2010-2011 school year, 72% of eighth grade ELLs scored below basic on the NAEP math tests while 41% scored lower than their non-ELL peers on the reading tests (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017; Master et al., 2016).

The argument is often made that standardized assessments do not accurately assess the full range of ELLs' abilities (Master et al., 2016). There is no doubt that they do not reflect the true abilities of ELLs, and multiple assessment measures can provide a more comprehensive understanding of their abilities. Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine additional evidence

that highlights the inadequate support these students receive in schools. Torff and Murphy (2020) indicated that ELLs are not only underrepresented in Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented Programs, but also take lower-level secondary courses.

Additionally, their lack of support at the elementary level is reflected in their identification as Long Term English Learners (LTELs) throughout middle and high school and in their high rate of academic failure (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Furthermore, the average graduation rate of ELL students is 65%, which is comparable to the rate of students with disabilities (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017). As such, it is evident that there are significant disparities between students who are ELLs and their monolingual peers, which suggests the need to pay attention to who these students are, and possibly recognize the reasons for these disparities.

### ***The Impact of Covid-19 on ELLs' Academic Achievement***

It is also important to consider the role of the Covid-19 Pandemic in worsening the already significant academic performance delays among ELLs. There were particular difficulties in achieving academic success for ELLs who engaged in remote learning as they were unable to access technological devices and reliable internet connections mainly due to socioeconomic factors and inadequate knowledge of how to utilize technology effectively. Due to this, they often missed instruction, failed to complete assignments, and experienced an increase in absences (Villegas & Garcia, 2022). While there is still insufficient data on the extent of the pandemic's effects on this group of learners, recent research indicates a negative outcome. Villegas and Garcia (2022) report declines in mathematics and ELA performance, as well as declines in ELLs' English Language Proficiency (ELP) levels, particularly in speaking. ELLs also experienced significant delays in interacting with peers and educators upon returning to school. Further, the authors highlight a survey conducted in 2020 among 650 teachers and

administrators which revealed that only 55% of ELLs received English language instruction during remote learning, while only 39% of ELLs experienced weekly interactions with their English language teachers. It is therefore not surprising that ELLs suffered substantial learning losses, which further enhanced their academic hardships.

The silver lining, in the midst of all the hardships, caused by the pandemic resulted in educators' determination to push their students forward. The pandemic forced teachers to explore alternative instructional methods and adopt various innovative practices to engage students and make instruction more accessible and relevant to the students of today. Technology and technological tools became the holy grail of instruction and opened up a new era in classroom learning. As a result, teachers, whether they were in favor of technology or against it, were more likely than ever before to use it in the classroom and therefore, teaching and learning became more engaging, interactive, and students and teachers had more access to resources. These innovative practices not only enabled educators to counteract the negative impacts of the pandemic, but they also continue to present educators with new avenues to assist ELLs in recovering the academic progress they may have lost even prior to the pandemic (Villegas & Garcia, 2022).

### **Exploring the Identities of ELLs**

Roy-Campbell (2013), argues that ELLs are a diverse and dynamic group of students who are grouped into one category, instructed in a similar manner, and expected to learn in a similar manner to their peers who have completely different backgrounds, knowledge, and learning styles. A majority of ELLs are born in the United States; more than 80%, while others have immigrated from other countries and have been attending schools in the U.S. since kindergarten. Many move to seek better opportunities or refuge, and they belong to different social classes and

educational, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. While some have experience with literacy in their home language as well as in English, others do not. It is estimated that 78% of students who study the English language in school programs are Hispanic, followed by Asian, then 5.5% White, and 2.5% Black (Hernandez, 2022). The number of languages spoken by ELLs in the United States is approximately 450, and students who speak languages that have a common linguistic origin with the English language, find it easier to learn English words whereas, in contrast, students that speak languages such as Chinese and Arabic, which have completely different language and writing systems, find it more difficult to learn English (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Attempting to reach these multitude of students with a one-size-fits-all approach is impossible because of the eclectic nature of the group (de Jong et al., 2018).

### ***English Language Learners and their English Language Proficiency Levels***

Additionally, the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) categorizes ELLs into five groups based on their ELPs, ranging from level 1 Entering, to level 2 Emerging, to level 3 Transitioning, to level 4 Expanding, and level 5 Commanding. At lower proficiency levels, ELLs will usually be able to recognize short words, sentences, or phrases, whereas at higher proficiency levels, they will be able to comprehend more social and academic discourse at varying degrees of complexity. Lower proficiency levels of ELLs, such as level 1, may experience a silent period during which they absorb comprehensible input before speaking. A lower-level ELL may use simple nonverbal gestures, phrases, or sentences that they have observed or heard to communicate, while ELLs at higher levels are capable of generating sentences with errors that do not negatively impact meaning, as well as using appropriate grammar and vocabulary for different discourse settings. In order to develop their reading skills in English, lower-level ELLs depend on stimulating visual support or

their literacy skills in their home language, if they have acquired them (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2019).

They may also be able to recognize sight or high frequency words. In contrast, ELLs with a higher ELP are capable of comprehending texts in a variety of genres, subjects, and levels of linguistic complexity. The writing of ELLs with lower ELPs may be difficult to follow as they use drawings, simple letters, words, phrases, or sentences to convey meaning, whereas ELLs with higher ELPs can produce complex writing in different genres with academic and social vocabulary while still making errors that do not impair meaning. Considering this wide range of ELLs and their proficiency levels, educators of this population must gain a deeper understanding, which is that even though they may be classified within one level, they may display proficiency levels in different literacy domains. As an example, an ELL that is classified as level 3, Transitioning proficiency, may listen and read at level 3, but may speak at level 4 and write at level 1 (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2019). If a general education teacher does not know this information, they may not be able to determine where the student is struggling and therefore may not be able to provide appropriate support.

### ***English Language Learners and their Diverse Cultures***

In addition to their diverse language proficiency, ELLs also have a variety of cultural differences that affect the way they approach learning (Auslander, 2018). If general education teachers do not have this knowledge of ELLs, they may view them from a deficit lens influenced by the dominant culture and develop misconceptions about their abilities. Regarding Hofstede's continuum (Hofstede, 2010) from individualism to collectivism, there are differences between cultures in terms of where they fall on the continuum. It is a belief and a practice in some cultures to place the interests of the individual over those of the group, while in others, the

opposite is true. In the classroom, individualist beliefs manifest in the behaviors of self-efficiency, independence, self-reliance, and autonomy, whereas collectivist beliefs manifest in the behaviors of group work, interpersonal interdependence, and collaboration. On the continuum, the United States is considered to be one of the most individualistic countries, whereas many Latinx countries, such as Ecuador and Venezuela, and Asian countries, such as Pakistan and China, are considered to be more collectivist (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2019).

As educators develop intercultural competence, they are able to understand rather than condemn the behavior of ELLs in the general education setting (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2019). In the case of students who struggle with independent work, or who constantly speak during instruction, speak over one another, or speak loudly, these behaviors may initially be viewed as disruptive behaviors of ELLs, however with a shift toward intercultural competency, educators can recognize these behaviors as cultural norms (Lee & Buxton, 2013b). The behaviors of students who have difficulty working well with others, who are quiet in class, or who do not raise their hands often to participate or debate can initially be interpreted as students who are off task, distracted, opposing, or uncooperative. However, when educators are aware of the individualist-collectivist dimensions, they can recognize this as behavior that is common and respectful within a culture. Furthermore, with this knowledge, teachers can develop a sense of empathy towards the diversity that exists between their learners, reflect upon their own expectations of learners and inherent biases towards one dimension over another, reduce negative consequences for student behavior, and design instruction in accordance with the individualistic or collectivist characteristics of each student.

*Cognitive Processes of English Language Learners in Learning New Languages*

Aside from the influences of their cultures on their learning, ELLs have different cognitive processes for learning an additional language and content through that language compared to their non-ELL peers, and educators should be aware of these differences in order to provide these learners with a more effective learning environment. According to Wright (2019), in the 1980s, Krashen developed cognitive models for language acquisition to better understand the conditions that facilitate or hinder language acquisition. Wright goes on to say that Krashen argues that ELLs acquire language subconsciously as they learn language consciously and in a predictable sequence. In addition, they monitor their thoughts, their input, as well as correct errors, which contribute to the accuracy and fluency of their use of the new language. What's more, ELLs acquire languages when they receive sufficient and multimodal comprehensible input; in other words, when they receive quality information or instruction through listening and reading, and when their affective filters (e.g., anxiety, fear, low self-esteem) are down (Wright, 2019).

However, Wright also points out that, Swain, who is a linguist and educator, proposed a comprehensible output hypothesis which asserts that when ELLs produce language, they are also able to notice their abilities and limitations. In addition, by communicating with others, they can seek clarifications or be asked to clarify, negotiate meanings, test their hypothesis, and modify their output, all of which can facilitate the development of accuracy and fluency in the new language.

Teachers must recognize the diverse identities of their learners in order to make informed decisions about what instructional practices to employ in their classrooms. It has been established throughout this section that the identities of ELLs may be understood through an examination of their language development stages, cognitive processes of acquiring new



languages, as well as their cultural characteristics and behaviors. Using this information, general education teachers can gain valuable insight into the internal processes of ELLs and provide a learning environment that fosters both the development of language skills as well as content knowledge for ELLs.

### **A Unique Challenge for Content Area Teachers**

Olds et al. (2021) assert that today's teachers of general education are also teachers of ELLs. It is no longer solely the responsibility of Bilingual and ESOL teachers to educate these students, but many still think this is the case (Lee & Buxton, 2013a). Brooks and Adams (2015) contend that ELLs are in need of teachers who have the capacity to accept the responsibility of learning about them, teaching them effectively, and advocating for their rights. De Jong et al. (2018) surveyed and interviewed 24 faculty members from 15 public and private universities and colleges to determine how well prepared they felt general education teachers were to incorporate content related to ELLs into their courses. The authors found that 74% of respondents believed that general education faculty were not well prepared to implement ELL-related knowledge and skills into their teaching.

Brooks and Adams (2015) suggest that general education teachers struggle to understand the importance of culturally and linguistically responsive instruction primarily due to deficit-oriented views about multiculturalism and diversity amongst learners. This deficit orientation not only impedes general education teachers' ability to view ELLs based on what they can do rather than what they cannot do, but this also sets them up to believe that general education teachers do not have, and do not need to have the ability to meet these students' needs (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Lee & Buxton, 2013a). It is within this context that certain narratives emerge that are aligned with that point of view. For instance, some may believe that if ELLs

possess advanced Basic Communication Skills (BICS), it implies they must also have advanced Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPs). Additionally, an assumption arises that ELLs should achieve proficiency in the new language within two years. If they fail to do so, it is assumed that the issue lies with the learner rather than the teaching, when in fact, it takes up to 8 years for ELLs to achieve proficiency in CALPs. This orientation perpetuates the assumption that when ELLs fail to speak or engage in classroom activities, even when teachers employ effective strategies like visual aids, ELLs lack of participation is attributed to a disability, without considering the possibility that an alternative approach may be necessary (Olds et al., 2021; Roy-Campbell, 2013). In this way, general education teachers become less likely to set high expectations for ELLs simply because of the belief that ELLs cannot meet those expectations in the same manner as native English speakers (Torff & Murphy, 2020).

In summary, it is evident that ELLs face significant challenges in the pursuit of education. Not only do ELLs encounter difficulties in achieving academic success comparable to their non-ELL peers, but they also face the additional hurdle of being taught by educators who may lack comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their unique identities and instructional needs, which only exacerbates the difficulties they face in attaining academic success. The following sections of the literature review examines, in detail, potential solutions that can be used to mitigate these issues and create a more supportive and inclusive learning experience for ELLs. Among these potential measures that can help mitigate these challenges include shifting from a deficit mindset to an asset-based mindset, creating a welcoming classroom environment, drawing on insights from theorists, providing evidence-based literacy instruction, and employing diverse instructional strategies in different content areas. By exploring these possible solutions, educators can take steps toward providing ELLs with a rich and effective academic experience.

## **The Steps Towards Equitable Education for ELLs**

### ***An Asset- Based Orientation***

Throughout the years, extensive research has provided valuable insights and strategies for addressing the challenges faced by educators of ELLs in creating an academic learning environment in which ELLs can access content area instruction while simultaneously acquiring English alongside their non-ELL peers. According to Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2019), ELL educators must adopt an asset orientation, which differs from a deficit orientation in that educators view ELLs' identities, home languages, experiences, and abilities as resources and strengths to be built upon, rather than as deficits and weaknesses to overcome. It involves recognizing that students arrive in general education classrooms with existing life experiences that shape their competence and knowledge, and integrating ELL students' funds of knowledge into instruction. The paradox is that when educators adopt this perspective and utilize it for all learners, even monolingual students, who possess their own funds of knowledge, benefit from it as well. When educators attempt to incorporate general education strategies, approaches, and instructional practices for all learners, some are left out, but when they integrate strategies beneficial for ELLs, everyone benefits (Olds et al., 2021).

### ***Classrooms that Reflect Culture***

Additionally, the effort to provide inclusive educational experiences for ELLs can begin with visual representations of the students in the mainstream classroom. Baker and Wright (2021) recommend that teachers develop a classroom library that includes multicultural and bilingual books that portray the identities of students in the classroom. It is possible to access these books through the internet, the families of students, and local language communities. Auslander (2018) suggests that a welcoming environment also includes teachers collaborating

with students' families and other faculty and staff including ELL specialists and counselors to increase attendance, develop strategies and social and emotional supports, to assist learners and their families in understanding criteria for college and career readiness, as well as to familiarize them with the American educational system. Furthermore, effective teachers of ELLs display students' work, languages, cultures, and writings in their home languages across the walls of the classroom such as with poster boards and anchor charts that include both English and the students' home languages (Wright, 2019). Therefore, ELLs can feel welcome in their learning environment and thus, remove any affective filters they may possess that restrict their ability to learn.

### **An Evidence-Based Approach to ELL Instruction**

#### ***Culturally Responsive Pedagogy***

Once the learning environment has been established, educators can adapt instructional approaches in accordance with theories that support the academic development of all students, especially those who are ELLs. Owens and Wells (2021) propose that educators of ELLs can benefit from incorporating Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) into their repertoire, which will assist learners in developing their academic skills. As a result of integrating their cultures and languages into the curriculum, students can become proficient learners, as their cultures affect their thinking and learning. This in turn leads to a curriculum that is more meaningful, impactful, relatable, and engaging for them. An additional benefit of this approach is that students perceive their identities to be valued and respected, which motivates them to strive for greater success in the classroom.

Furthermore, whenever possible, teachers should share their experiences with their students as well as invite them to share their own in order to connect with them and activate and

build new learning on their existing knowledge base. Thus, learning becomes more meaningful and engaging, thereby promoting content retention.

Furthermore, by doing so, teachers and students can also both learn about each other's cultures and assist each other in developing cultural competence and acceptance. Moreover, by building genuine relationships and trust in the classroom, teachers will be able to give students a greater range of choices (Fairbairn & Jones- Vo, 2019; Owens & Wells, 2021; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015). Nevertheless, general education teachers must continue to actively research their students' cultures, identities, and languages, and integrate some of that knowledge into their teaching.

### ***Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory***

In working with ELLs, educators should also consider Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory, which suggests that learning takes place through meaningful and genuine interactions with others, especially adults or peers who have higher skills (Wright, 2019). By providing ample opportunities for students to interact with one another, educators can make intentional choices about what discussions take place in the classroom and how authentic those discussions and collaborations will be.

### ***The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model***

The final consideration for content area teachers who are teaching ELLs is to adopt the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model and obtain training in this approach since it has been shown to enhance the oral, writing, and test scores of ELLs as well as their vocabulary, science, and social studies skills (Short et al., 2012; Short & Himmel, 2013). According to Wright (2019), "The SIOP model identifies eight key components of effective sheltered instruction: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies,

interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment” (p. 97). As part of the SIOP model, general education teachers must clearly define the lesson's content and language objectives, which allows ELLs to understand the language they need to develop throughout the lesson in order to master the content. The unique aspect of this model is that it can be used for all content areas and can benefit all learners in a mainstream environment once it has been implemented.

### **Evidence-Based Strategies for ELL Literacy Instruction**

As well as adopting instructional approaches that effectively address the needs of ELLs, general education teachers can assist the ELLs in their classrooms in acquiring content area knowledge through the integration of literacy strategies that are applicable to various content areas. Uccelli and Galloway (2017) note that academic language can be difficult for ELLs to comprehend, which makes school texts difficult to read. According to the authors, students' academic learning can be greatly enhanced once they develop an understanding of cross-disciplinary language and core academic language skills (CALs). Cross-disciplinary language and CALs refer to linguistic features that are common across all content areas, such as Tier 2 words, that are not commonly used in informal conversations. Once students have developed sufficient academic language proficiency, they are able to independently access classroom content as well as public information, such as news about health and politics.

### ***Disciplinary Literacy***

Ardasheva et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of fostering Disciplinary Literacy in students as early as possible. The concept of disciplinary literacy refers to the use of content-specific language and tools by experts in the field such as mathematicians, scientists, and historians, to share their knowledge within that disciplinary community. As students reach the

upper grades, they are required to acquire and utilize a more specific academic language in their classes. If students do not possess this knowledge, they may assume all academic language is cross-disciplinary and be unaware that the language they use does not correspond to that context. Thus, they may continue to struggle to achieve academic success.

Therefore, the development of disciplinary communicative competence, especially in elementary school, allows ELLs to gain access to disciplinary communities in which they can learn from the experts. As a result, they are able to move through communities and gain an understanding of the way the professionals read, write, think, do, and reason (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2018). General education teachers can implement disciplinary literacy in their classrooms by explicitly teaching registers, inferencing, perspective, purpose, and vocabulary within the context of discipline-specific expository texts. Additionally, Wilkinson (2018) argues ELLs must engage in a considerable amount of metacognitive thinking and reflection in order to identify and apply language patterns in general or specific registers. To help students understand how this should work, teachers must also explicitly teach and model this process through think-alouds.

### ***Balanced Literacy***

To advance the academic learning of their ELL students, general education teachers can also implement a literacy strategy called Balanced Literacy. A Balanced Literacy Framework emphasizes a student-centered classroom where learners take part in a variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities at least twice a week, throughout the day. It is consistent with the Workshop Model in that it promotes the collective and individual participation of students in literacy activities. General education teachers can incorporate various components of Balanced Literacy into instruction for both reading, such as read-alouds, shared

reading, guided reading, and independent reading, as well as writing, including shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing. Using read-alouds, shared and guided reading and writing, teachers can teach whole groups or small groups of students certain skills such as vocabulary, phonics, fluency, grammar, and registers across content areas and assist them in making sense of the text and academic language (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Willson & Falcon, 2018; Wright, 2019).

### **The Role of Technology in Teaching ELLs**

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, technology advanced at an accelerated pace in the world, and it became an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Villegas and Garcia (2022) indicated that educators began to use tools such as Zoom, Nearpod, and Google Classroom to share videos and lessons, assign worksheets, and facilitate interactions virtually. In 2023, the unstoppable rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has taken the world by storm, and educators stand to gain tremendous benefits from utilizing these groundbreaking tools and incorporating them into their instructional practices. Despite the conflict and resistance among teachers regarding the use of technology since its inception, it is evident that technology is not going away, rather it is evolving. A key characteristic of effective educators is their ability to remain flexible and change with the times, therefore it is imperative that teachers become knowledgeable about this topic, its benefits and limitations, and how they can use it for the benefit of students (Fisk, 2023).

AI research is currently on the rise and researchers are examining how it can be applied to classrooms and how it may transform education. According to Crowe et al. (2017), AI can be defined as an autonomous machine capable of replicating intelligent human behavior in order to support humans. Fisk (2023) maintains that the AI that is currently emerging will be the least



sophisticated computer application our students will encounter during their lifetimes. While many educators raise concerns about how AI can be utilized for plagiarism, others point out that AI is comparable to calculators, search engines, and translation tools. Furthermore, they suggest that educators may have to reconsider the mission and objectives of classrooms if the material that they devote so much time and effort to teaching can now be made available electronically (Fisk, 2023).

Others argue that this addition to instruction may increase the speed at which students acquire knowledge in the classroom setting, allowing educators to devote more time to assisting students in developing skills such as creativity, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and communication (Fisk, 2023). Moreover, general education teachers can utilize technological and AI tools to develop instructional materials tailored to meet the needs of ELLs, such as Hi Translate to translate conversations, directions, and instructions, Google Translate Documents to translate content specific worksheets into students' home languages so that they can participate in instruction, as well as Dubverse.ai to convert the audio of a YouTube video they may use for instruction, into students' home languages. In cases where the linguistic demands are too high for ELLs at lower ELPs, teachers can also allow them to use translation tools during content learning. Additionally, general education teachers can utilize tools such as ClassDojo to reward their students' achievements and communicate with their families.

Katsarou et al. (2023) examined the benefits and challenges of using Intelligent Virtual Agents (IVAs) such as Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa, and Siri as assistants in the classroom for the purposes of promoting language acquisition among ELLs. In addition to providing realistic human-to-machine communication, these tools adapt and respond to the student's responses and teach them the proper use of the English language through the interaction. The

study found that ELLs' listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills improved through the use of IVAs. In addition, it provided a fun and engaging opportunity for students to learn English in a less stressful learning environment. In spite of the fact that teachers cannot heavily rely on this tool for providing explicit instruction or feedback, they may be able to set up centers in the classroom where students may practice independently using these tools.

### **Effective Instructional Techniques and Strategies for ELLs**

#### ***Multimodal Learning***

In the mainstream classroom, general education teachers can adopt techniques that are aligned with effective instructional practices for ELLs, to make academic content more comprehensible for their students. As an example, in accordance with the SIOP model, teachers can begin lessons by explicitly stating and writing the language and content objectives. Further, they can monitor their language pace and slow it down or make it more concise and direct, as well as wait up to eight seconds after calling on ELLs to respond. Likewise, they can make their speech more comprehensible by incorporating hand and facial gestures and accentuating their tone, diction, and pitch (Owens & Wells, 2021; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015).

ELLs can benefit greatly from additional multimodal strategies in the classroom, such as using pictures, flashcards, manipulatives, videos, and music in conjunction with oral and written language (Owens & Wells, 2021; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015). Wright (2019) advocates the use of realia, such as maps, artifacts from the students' cultures, magazines, etc., to enhance students' understanding of abstract concepts within content. Pereira and de Oliveira (2015) established that linguistically demanding instruction can be text engineered by teachers by altering the way it is presented rather than simplifying it. General education teachers can provide visual and audio support for dense texts, eliminate filler words, create headings and translations, and make use of

colors to draw the reader's attention to detail (Patterson, 2022). Furthermore, ELLs can benefit greatly from the Total Physical Response (TRP) method, which involves responding to commands and the whole body to learn (Wright, 2019).

### ***Home Language Support***

Following CRP, general education teachers can incorporate translanguaging and code switching in their classes so that students can utilize their entire linguistic repertoire when learning. Students can participate in translanguaging activities such as listening and reading in their home languages and writing and reading in English or vice versa (Wright, 2019). Teachers can also encourage their students with lower ELP levels to express their understanding through alternative methods such as drawing or writing in graphic organizers (Fairbairn & Jones- Vo, 2019). During discussions, they can also engage in code switching where they use words, phrases, or sentences in both languages to convey meaning. In addition, general education teachers can provide bilingual dictionaries and worksheets in students' home languages to help facilitate literacy transfer. When teachers encourage students to utilize their home language while learning English, they foster a classroom environment that promotes additive bilingualism. This not only allows students to maintain their home languages, but also enables them to access academic instruction on par with their native English speaking peers (Wright, 2019).

### ***Cooperative Learning***

Additionally, teachers can implement strategies that are aligned with Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory, such as collaborative learning. According to Owens and Wells (2021), learning cooperatively improves the grammatical competence and oral fluency of ELLs. Therefore, engaging in paired and group activities (e.g., in centers), is essential for them and should be intentionally planned. Ardasheva et al. (2019) state that educators can assign

heterogeneous groups so ELLs can work with more advanced peers and have them serve as models and tutors, and homogenous groups so they themselves can provide modeling, assistance, and guided practice and thus meet the needs of learners. During this time, teachers can observe individual students and provide differentiated support and scaffolding as necessary. The body of research strongly advocates for the utilization of various evidence-based approaches and strategies to foster an inclusive classroom environment where ELLs can effectively acquire content knowledge alongside their peers. By employing these approaches, educators can ensure that the needs of ELLs are met without neglecting the needs of other learners.

### **Instructional Techniques for Improving Content Area Instruction**

It is imperative that general education teachers recognize that language and language learning is not separate from content area instruction (Wilkinson, 2019). In many cases, the languages of the disciplines are a new language that both ELLs and their non-ELL peers must learn together. Instead of setting low-expectations for students that may have additional language barriers that make teaching the content a little more challenging, educators must maintain an understanding of the features of language that exist within each discipline, as well as the practices they can implement during their instruction to promote students' acquisition of these features.

### ***Effective Techniques and Strategies for Mathematics Instruction***

Math is more than just arithmetic. Moschkovich (2015) explains that ELLs can participate in mathematics instruction and content area learning when teachers make conceptual understanding more accessible than procedural understanding to them. Consequently, teachers can demonstrate mathematical thinking and ways of expressing ideas through connections to students' cultures and languages, as well as demonstrate concepts through the use of visual and

audio aids, objects, drawings, data, and gestures. Additionally, teachers can find moments during instruction to encourage students to explain, represent, justify, and discuss their reasoning through using tools and manipulatives, drawing graphs, using the home language, and conversational language so that they can develop the discourse of the discipline and conceptual understanding of mathematics practices (Moschkovich, 2015; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015; Sorto et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2019).

Wilkinson (2019) observes that students cannot produce mathematics discourse without understanding the precise academic language they hear and read within the content. This suggests that students must be explicitly taught both discipline specific and general academic vocabulary, where these words originated, what these words mean, how these words relate to conventional vocabulary, and how these words relate to previous learning experiences or personal connections.

Standardized tests and word problems can be especially challenging for ELLs because of their complex syntax. Therefore, students are better able to conceptualize and solve word problems when they make sense of the context. Due to this, teachers should spend time preparing students for word problems by teaching the features they need to know, such as background knowledge, unclear subjects, nested constructions, and subordinate clauses. Additionally, before they may participate in this discipline, ELLs must be able to understand dense nouns and phrases, embedded clauses, and passive voice constructions that commonly appear in this subject area. Teachers may also instruct ELLs on aspects of math language such as homophones and cognates, which may present challenges to their understanding. These features of the register of the discipline can and should be explicitly taught to students, modeled for students by demonstrating their use, and students should have ample opportunity to practice

these aspects in peer collaboration (Moschkovich, 2015; Sorto et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2019).

### ***Effective Techniques and Strategies for Science and Social Studies Instruction***

The teaching of science and social studies in many schools in the United States is not always subjected to the same level of accountability as literacy and math. As a result, teachers may not be equipped to use effective strategies to assist ELLs, resulting in the neglect of these specific topics in the classroom. Lee and Buxton (2013a) contend that effective general education teachers support their students' language development in science by providing language support, cultural connections, and content area literacy strategies. As an example, they might research and employ terms in the ELLs' home languages and allow them to use code switching during instruction. During science class, it would be beneficial for students to work in heterogeneous groups where they can learn from their more advanced peers what they may not have been able to learn through the teacher's instruction (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Lee & Buxton, 2013b).

Additionally, teachers can encourage students to read case studies, trade books, and literature with scientific themes as well as to write narratives and expository texts such as lab reports, and to use graphic organizers, Venn diagrams, and concept maps to assist them with their writing. Furthermore, to reinforce understanding, realia and hands-on activities may also be incorporated into the instruction. Moreover, ELLs may also be encouraged to communicate their ideas and demonstrate their understanding through nonverbal means, such as graphs, charts, tables, or drawings (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Lee & Buxton, 2013b).

Huang et al. (2022) investigated the impacts of concept mapping and image recognition (IR) tools on ELLs' scientific learning. In the study, students took pictures of plants they encountered in their community and uploaded them to an online database in order to learn more

about them, and then used concept mapping to put their findings together. It was found that both concept mapping and the implementation of the IR resulted in students developing their scientific inquiry skills, intrinsic motivation to learn, and improving their academic performance. As a result, this illustrates how teachers can help students improve their academic learning of science content through the use of multimodal supports such as technology and graphic organizers.

Copeland Solas and Wilson (2017) conducted an experiment to determine the effectiveness of annotated concept sketches in demonstrating ELLs' understanding of science concepts. The study revealed that students were more engaged in brainstorming and sharing ideas with their peers, motivated and focused on science content area learning, and as a result, scored higher on their exams. Teachers can use concept sketches in this manner to determine if ELLs understand the main idea or the organization of the readings. Using alternative responses, such as concept sketches, allows students with limited English proficiency to demonstrate their learning without having to articulate their knowledge verbally or in complex writing. Furthermore, it provides students with the opportunity to utilize their creativity, which can help them to turn off their affective filters. Moreover, teachers can use these concept sketches as formative assessments in order to identify students' knowledge gaps and misconceptions, and provide feedback and additional scaffolding accordingly.

General education teachers should explicitly teach academic functions within scientific contexts to ELLs, such as how to describe, identify, classify, sequence, explain, and predict as scientists do. In addition, they should model how ELLs can apply inquiry skills such as observing, measuring, inferring, and predicting, just as scientists do. Additionally, they can provide students with ample opportunities to form and test hypotheses, construct experiments,

collect and interpret data, draw conclusions from that data, and communicate their results in scientific terms. Educators should also introduce key science vocabulary in context at the beginning of each lesson and provide students with opportunities to practice using them during and after the lesson. For ELLs, explicit instruction in positional words and phrases, comparative terms, and affixes can be even more beneficial and can help them develop the skills necessary to read complex scientific texts independently (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Lee & Buxton, 2013b).

Ardasheva et al. (2019) maintain that in order for students to be able to participate in social studies content area instruction, they must recognize and contextualize historical information as well as develop a historical perspective and empathy. They should also be capable of identifying and making claims about historical perspectives, questioning texts, examining data for patterns and anomalies, and considering how social and historical contexts are intertwined. In the classroom setting, teachers can offer ELLs the opportunity to conduct social studies research reports using scaffolds relevant to their individual ELPs.

### ***Effective Techniques and Strategies for English Language Arts (ELA) Instruction***

Ardasheva et al. (2019) suggests that, in English Language Arts (ELA), ELLs should practice developing their inferencing skills, pattern recognition and the ability to synthesize across texts, in addition to developing claims and considering literary devices. Further, teachers should provide students with an understanding of English language conventions such as making predictions and identifying key details. The author highlights how teachers can use strategies such as choral repetition of words or finger gestures to demonstrate punctuating syllables. As another way to enforce skills necessary for ELA such as predicting, teachers and students can preview books together prior to reading.



Zhang (2021) emphasizes the need for teachers to utilize multimodal strategies to accommodate each student's learning style, such as pictures and videos for visual and auditory learners, games for kinesthetic learners, and manipulatives for tactile learners. The author conducted a study to determine whether multimodal vocabulary instruction could benefit ELLs in the acquisition of vocabulary. It was determined in the study that ELLs were able to acquire vocabulary at the same level or at a higher rate than their non-ELL peers when teachers explicitly incorporated child-friendly definitions, questions, prompts, examples, visual aids, and act-out opportunities to foster vocabulary acquisition. As such, the author maintains that in the ELA content area, students must learn academic vocabulary that they rarely employ in their everyday lives through multiple modalities, in order to use to read texts across disciplines.

As a final consideration to support ELLs' literacy development, teachers can place them in homogeneous groups and provide them with guided reading and writing practice. This can be implemented during center times and for small group instruction when other students are working on reinforcing skills or learning new ones independently or in groups (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the above literature review highlights the academic challenges faced by ELLs in mainstream settings, as well as the many effective approaches available to promote inclusive content area instruction for these learners. By implementing the aforementioned research-based strategies, general education teachers can enhance the academic performance of their ELL students. ELLs have the fundamental right to develop language proficiency in the four content areas. For ELLs to achieve academic achievement on par with their English-speaking

peers, general education teachers must recognize the importance of providing the appropriate instruction and developing these skills.

Additionally, it is crucial for educators to embrace a continuous learning mindset and explore multiple variations in their teaching practices to find the right combination that works for both them and their students. While it is true that this endeavor requires considerable effort from general education teachers, it is not a responsibility that must be undertaken alone. By equipping themselves with appropriate guidance and evidence-based resources, they can transform the general education classroom into an inclusive environment for ELLs.

In Chapter Three of the Capstone project, a detailed description of the PD that will be presented based on the research described in Chapter Two is provided. In addition, this chapter discusses the rationale for the PD, the intended outcomes, participants, and how it will be used to mitigate the problem I am addressing in this capstone: How to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELLs.

### **Chapter 3: Description of the Professional Development (PD)**

Throughout Chapter Two, the literature review, it was revealed that a major problem that English language learners (ELLs) face is alarming academic struggles in the mainstream classroom. It is true that ELLs have a different method of learning and specific set of needs that general education teachers may not have the knowledge or expertise to address. Nevertheless, mainstream educators must obtain the necessary knowledge in order to serve as educators of ELLs. Therefore, the aim of this professional development (PD) is to assist educators to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELLs and all students. Chapter Three presents a detailed overview of the PD for the capstone project, which provides educational professionals the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills related to ELL instruction.

**Rationale for the PD**

The PD provides general education teachers with valuable knowledge and strategies to implement in their classrooms, which can positively impact the academic learning of ELLs. By participating in the PD sessions, teachers gain the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support the educational needs of ELLs. By implementing the strategies from the PD, which are designed to enhance the learning experiences for ELLs across content areas, educators can promote their students' academic success within the general education classroom. As part of the PD, handouts and materials will be provided, and they can be found in the Appendices labeled from A to J.

**Participants**

The target audience for the PD includes general education teachers, administrators, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) specialists. The PD can be particularly valuable for general education teachers who encounter difficulties in adequately supporting ELLs in their classrooms, especially if they have not received the same level of specialized training as ESOL teachers. By participating in this PD, general education teachers can gain necessary skills and knowledge to better meet the needs of ELLs in their classrooms. Additionally, administrators can find value in the PD as it will inform them about the specific support that may be required for ELLs, which they may need to authorize for implementation in the classroom. By attending this PD, administrators can better understand the needs of ELLs and can therefore be in a better position to advocate for and facilitate appropriate support for ELLs in their schools. ESOL teachers themselves can also benefit from the PD by gaining knowledge about more current essential tools and approaches to share with general education teachers within their schools. In

this way, general educators will be able to effectively accommodate the academic needs of ELLs in various content areas.

### **Setting**

The PD can be scheduled flexibly such as after school, during school hours, or during department meetings, depending on the specific needs and availability of those attending.

However, the optimal time to present the PD is during the summer before the start of the new school year or at the end of the existing school year. These times can allow educators to adequately prepare for the upcoming year, to reflect on the most recent year's experiences, and to determine how to incorporate the PD strategies into their future classrooms. Additionally, the virtual nature of this PD can allow educators to conveniently participate at home and together in the school setting.

### **Timeline**

The PD is designed to be implemented within three days. Throughout the PD, participants will be expected to actively engage in the sessions by gathering information, taking notes, sharing their experiences and concerns, and collaborating in breakout groups and activities to practice applying the strategies, tools, and supports presented in the PD. The first day will focus on providing participants a comprehensive understanding of the PD's objectives, rationale, and the overarching problem that the PD is intended to mitigate. Additionally, a significant part of the first day will also be dedicated to providing educators with a concise overview of the knowledge they must possess regarding ELLs and their identities. It is important to introduce participants to this aspect of ELLs on the first day of the PD because educators must first understand who the ELLs are, how they think, how they process new information and language,

what challenges they face, and why they face them in order to provide an inclusive general education classroom that meets their needs.

The following two days will be dedicated to the development of knowledge as well as hands-on practice and application of the strategies, techniques, and approaches that support ELLs' academic achievement. It is essential that educators learn about the most effective methods of instructing ELLs, as they will then be able to implement a variety of those methods in their classrooms to create an inclusive learning environment where ELLs can participate equally in content and language learning with their non-ELL peers. By the end of the PD, participants will be equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to mitigate the problem in their own classrooms.

### **PD Day One**

The first day of the PD will begin with a brief greeting to the audience, followed by an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and discuss what they hope to gain from participating in the PD. Next, an overview of the PD will be presented, establishing its rationale, timeline, and objectives, as well as the intended outcomes. Participants will be informed that the objective of this three- part PD series is to assist general education teachers, as well as other professionals who work with ELLs such as administrators and ESOL teachers, in developing knowledge and experience in effective and research-based strategies, approaches, and instructional methods for meeting the academic needs of ELLs in their classrooms and schools. Additionally, they will be informed that a significant issue that is prevalent in general education classrooms is the lack of equitable learning opportunities for ELLs in regard to content area instruction. Unlike their non-ELL peers, ELLs face the added challenge of acquiring a new language while learning new content, and when they do not receive instruction tailored to their

specific language, cultural, and academic needs as ELLs, they do not have equal access to instruction as their peers and fall significantly behind. As such, by the end of the PD sessions, educators of ELLs will gain the information they need to ensure that they can create a general education classroom and deliver content area instruction that is inclusive for ELLs. The participants will also be informed that the PD will last three days, one hour per day, during which they will be provided with valuable information regarding ELLs as well as how to teach them effectively and apply their new knowledge both inside and outside of the PD sessions.

Following the general introduction to the content of the three- day PD sessions, teachers will receive an agenda for the day which will be presented and will include learning goals, expectations for the day, a list of activities and materials, and the times for each activity. The learning goal for Day One is for teachers to receive information on the following topics: statistics related to ELLs' academic performance, Covid-19's impact on ELLs' academic achievement, ELLs' identities and cultures, Second Language Acquisition, and an introduction to Language Theorists. The aim is to help teachers to recognize the significance of the achievement problem for ELLs and the importance of utilizing ELLs' identities and cultures as instructional tools as a potential means of mitigating that problem. Teachers will also participate in a series of activities on day one including an emoji opener activity, a pre-test activity (see Appendix A), an anonymous survey (see Appendix B), and a post-test activity (see Appendix A).

First, participants will engage in an ice breaker opener designed to facilitate socialization and deactivate any affective filters that may interfere with their ability to take in the comprehensible content. A variety of emojis will be presented to them and they will be required to choose the one that best represents them. After this, the participants will complete a pre-test activity (see Appendix A) designed to assess their knowledge of ELLs. This will not only enable

them to reflect on what they already know, but also shed light on what they do not know and as a result, what they should learn during the PD.

After the pre-test activity, the PD will commence with a presentation covering crucial information about ELLs. This will be accompanied by relevant statistics concerning ELLs' academic achievement as well as the impact of Covid-19 on achievement such as it contributed to reducing the mathematics and ELA performance of ELLs' (Villegas & Garcia, 2022). This is followed by information regarding general educators' perspectives, which contribute to the problem faced by ELLs and supported by appropriate citations. After this information is presented, participants will take part in an anonymous survey (see Appendix B) where they will reflect on their beliefs, confidence in teaching ELLs, the strategies they have employed in the past and whether they found them effective or not for ELLs, as well as identify areas they would like to improve on or gain knowledge in. By looking at the results of the survey, participants can see commonalities between beliefs, practices, and knowledge gaps amongst educators.

The rationale for the survey activity is based on the argument of Lee and Buxton (2013a) who argue that despite the fact that the responsibility of educating ELLs is no longer limited to Bilingual and ESOL teachers, and extends to general education teachers as well, many educators still do not fully recognize this shift of responsibility. This insight highlights the necessity for educators to pause and reflect on their own beliefs and perceptions in a survey activity. Due to the anonymous nature of the activity, educators can feel comfortable sharing their true thoughts about who should be responsible for educating ELLs and gauging their confidence levels in terms of being prepared to meet the needs of ELLs. Additionally, they may even discover that others have similar or differing perspectives. Furthermore, this activity may serve as the springboard for teachers to reflect on and reevaluate their own views, which they may then go on

to examine further and work on in the future. These steps are essential for effective educators to take when they are preparing to work with ELLs.

Following the completion of the survey and discussion, the PD will proceed to provide information about ELL identities and cultures, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), theorists such as Krashen, Swain, and Cummins, and their conceptual frameworks.

Afterwards, the participants will complete a post-test activity in which they will review their pre-test (see Appendix A) and self-assess whether their answers were accurate or not, and if not, provide the correct answers. The rationale behind both the pre-test and post-test activities stem from valuable research conducted by De Jong et al. (2018) that revealed that 74% of 24 faculty members from 15 public and private universities and colleges believed that general education faculty members were not adequately prepared to incorporate ELL- related knowledge and skills into their teaching. Given the evidence from this study, it is imperative for educators to assess their own knowledge base and understanding of ELLs and their abilities in a pre and post-test activity. Not only will participating teachers be able to see the progression of their knowledge as they complete these activities, but also develop a sense of readiness to work with ELLs. Furthermore, once they have gained a deeper understanding of ELL students, how they learn best, and feel confident in that understanding, they can move forward to the next PD sessions to learn about effective strategies and approaches for teaching ELLs.

Following the post-test activity, participants will review their notes, discuss the information they have learned and how it will affect the way they approach teaching ELLs in their classroom, or how it will help them make better instructional decisions. The first day's PD will conclude with a brief slide with information on what will be addressed on the second day of the PD, including instructional approaches for ELLs and their implementation.



**PD Day Two**

On the second day of the PD, the audience will be greeted with a short welcome message expressing appreciation for their participation in the first day's session as well as their attendance at the second session. As was done in the first session, the second session will begin by introducing the rationale for the PD, the objectives, and what the PD aims to mitigate. Specifically, participants will be informed that the objectives of the PD are to assist educators of ELLs in developing their knowledge of the ELL demographic as well as effective instructional approaches and strategies to implement so that ELLs can receive quality content area instruction in general education classrooms. Furthermore, the participants will be informed that the PD is designed to mitigate the problem of ELLs not being appropriately included in general education classrooms and content area instruction.

This will be followed by the presentation of the agenda for the day, including the learning goal for today, chronological order of the PD for that day, and the times, activities, and materials that will be utilized during the session. The learning goals for Day Two of the PD include Asset-Based Orientation, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory, and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The activities for day two include an opener activity, scenario activity (see Appendix C), a homework assignment (see Appendix D), and a checklist activity (see Appendix E).

First, participants will engage in a brief opener that aims to kick start conversation and remove affective filters. Participants will be asked to select which animal they believe would make the best pet and explain why.

Following the opener, participants will engage in a short activity in which they will work in small groups to discuss a scenario about ELLs (see Appendix C) that may provide insight into

their expectations of the ELLs in the classroom and their beliefs about the academic and linguistic capabilities of ELLs. During this activity participants will be tasked with analyzing their responses to the scenario and reflecting upon their beliefs regarding ELLs to determine if they are deficit-based or asset-based perspectives.

For the scenario activity, educators will be asked to provide responses to the following scenario: “Marco, a fifth-grade ELL, finds himself in a general education class that is gearing up for language-rich and demanding activities such as debating, giving presentations, and poetry writing. Can Marco actively participate in the language-rich activities that his class is preparing for? Should Marco be required to participate in these activities? Why or why not? What specific types of language skills are necessary for engaging in debates, presentations, and poetry writing? Considering Marcos ELL status, what kinds of language skills should his teachers expect him to demonstrate in these activities? Additionally, what strategies can Marco’s teacher employ to facilitate his inclusion and active participation in these language-rich activities as an ELL?”

As educators discuss their responses in groups, they are given the opportunity to contemplate their beliefs, the underlying reasons behind those beliefs, and consider whether they lean towards an asset- based or deficit- based orientation. Through this process, educators may be inspired to revise their beliefs if needed. Even though this is not a challenge that can be resolved in one PD, and is likely to require considerable effort and time on the part of the individual educator, it is a starting point from which the teacher may be able to begin.

The scenario activity is grounded in the ideas put forth by Brooks and Adams (2015), Lee and Buxton (2013a), and Torff and Murphy (2020). According to Brooks and Adams (2015), sustaining culturally and linguistically responsive instruction can be challenging for general education teachers who hold deficit- oriented views about multiculturalism and diversity.

Additionally, when educators have a deficit-oriented perspective, they will tend to focus on what ELLs cannot do rather than recognizing their capabilities and strengths. Moreover, they may believe that general education teachers do not have nor do they need to have the necessary skills to meet the needs of ELLs (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Lee & Buxton, 2013a).

Torff and Murphy (2020) recommend assigning both new and experienced teachers the task of responding to targeted questions about ELLs. This prompts teachers to reflect on their beliefs, articulate the reasons behind their beliefs, and potentially reconsider them. It is imperative for teachers to engage in this type of reflective work during PD sessions because it can assist them in developing the required mindset and readiness to effectively teach ELLs.

Upon completion of the scenario activity, participants will be presented with research-based approaches that can be implemented into their classrooms with the goal of mitigating the academic disadvantages experienced by ELLs due to their lack of inclusion in general education classrooms and content area instruction. These approaches include obtaining an asset-based orientation towards learners, creating a welcoming classroom culture, integrating culturally relevant pedagogy, making instructional decisions based on Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory, and adopting the SIOP model.

Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2019) maintain that educators must adopt an asset- based orientation and view ELLs' identities, home languages, experiences, and abilities as resources and strengths rather than as deficits and weaknesses. Owens and Wells (2021) propose that educators of ELLs can benefit greatly from incorporating Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) into their repertoire as it contributes to the development of students' academic abilities, provides more meaningful, relatable, and engaging instruction, and honors the identities of students, which motivates them to succeed. Additionally, Wright (2019) argues that when

educators understand and value Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory, they create meaningful and genuine classroom interactions for ELLs. Moreover, many professionals working in the field of education advocate for educators to become knowledgeable about the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model as the model has a potential to enhance the oral, written, vocabulary, science, social studies, and test scores of ELLs, as well as non-ELLs in the mainstream environment (Short et al., 2012; Short & Himmel; 2013). As such, the PD will provide educators with an opportunity to learn about and understand these approaches and potentially incorporate them into their practices, which will allow them to make more effective instructional decisions for ELLs in order to improve their academic performance.

For participants actively working during the time period when the PD sessions are being held, it will be necessary for them to complete a homework assignment (see Appendix D). This assignment involves integrating two or more of the approaches discussed in this day's PD into their instruction. Participants will be expected to bring evidence of the instructional approaches they used and a reflection on the outcomes of implementing these approaches to the third day of the PD. The day's PD will be concluded with an explanation of what the participants will be doing and learning on the final day of the PD, which will involve learning about specific strategies that can be used during content instruction to better meet the needs of ELLs. To prepare them for the next session, the participants will fill out a checklist (see Appendix E) with strategies that will be discussed in the following session and check off which ones they have heard of or used in the past.

### **PD Day Three**

The introduction on the third day of the PD will begin with a final greeting to the participants and a sincere appreciation message for their attendance and participation. The

rationale, objectives, and purpose of the PD will once again be explicitly stated. In the same manner as in previous PD sessions, participants will be informed that the objective and aim of the PD sessions are to assist educators of ELLs in developing their expertise and knowledge about ELLs; their identities, cultures, languages, language proficiency levels, as well as how to utilize ELLs' identities and effective strategies and approaches to enhance the academic achievement of ELLs in general education classrooms.

The learning goals for Day Three include examining three effective approaches to literacy instruction as well as learning about multimodal learning, using technology in instruction, home language support, and cooperative learning. The activities for day three include an opener activity, sharing outcomes of the homework activity (see Appendix D), a reflection activity to a film clip (see Appendix F), a reflection activity to a video clip (see Appendix G), an implementation discussion activity (see Appendix I), and a final reflection (see Appendix J).

After the agenda for the day has been presented, participants will engage in a light-hearted opener in which they will be presented with images of sports and asked to select the sport they find most engaging to watch and explain why. Then, they will have the opportunity to share their reflections on the homework assignment (see Appendix D) they completed for the second day of the PD.

Following the opener, the participants will watch an excerpt from the short film "Immersion" and pair up, or provide responses in a discussion board (see Appendix F) for the PD if they are participating virtually. Their task after watching the clip, will be to reflect upon what challenges the student in the film, Moises, experienced during content area instruction and suggest ways in which the teacher could have prevented them.

This activity will provide a link to information that will be presented in the PD session on the third day, which will begin with a discussion of the types of literacy instruction that can prove effective for ELLs including Cross-disciplinary, Disciplinary, and Balance Literacy. During the presentation on Disciplinary Literacy instruction, participants will be provided with examples of effective strategies for ELLs that they can implement during math, science, social studies, and ELA instruction.

Participants of the PD will be provided with information on Cross-Disciplinary Literacy, Disciplinary Literacy, and Balanced Literacy based on the following rationale. Uccelli and Galloway (2017) suggest that ELLs must develop an understanding of cross-disciplinary language and core academic language skills (CALs) in order to be able to comprehend complex texts that contain academic language and improve their academic performance. Ardasheva et al. (2019) suggest that ELLs should be taught the content-specific language of the disciplines as early as possible so that they do not develop the misconception that all academic language is cross-disciplinary and does not necessarily need to be used in an appropriate context. Further, through the Balanced Literacy Framework, students learn skills such as vocabulary, phonics, fluency, grammar, and registers across content areas through collective and individual engagement (Ardasheva et al., 2019; Willson & Falcon, 2018; Wright, 2019). These literacy instruction methods provide ELLs with individual and peer scaffolding that enhances their literacy skills, so it is imperative that educators learn about them and incorporate them into their general education classrooms.

After the presentation on Balanced Literacy instruction, participants will engage in an activity that involves watching an instructional video on Balanced Literacy and sharing observations (see Appendix G). Following the video, they will have a discussion where they can

share their observations and explore the various ways in which Balanced Literacy can be utilized to help ELLs develop different literacy skills.

Both the Balanced Literacy model video reflection activity and the “Immersion” film clip reflection activity are designed with the intention of providing teachers with opportunities to analyze and reflect on instructional practices. These activities were inspired by the suggestions put forth by Torff and Murphy (2020), who emphasize the importance of allowing teachers to engage with and critically examine examples of instruction. The “Immersion” film clip reflection activity illustrates the importance of Disciplinary Literacy, while the Balanced Literacy model reflection activity highlights the value of the Balanced Literacy approach in literacy instruction. For the “Immersion” film clip reflection activity, participants will view a film clip of an ELL student, Moises, grappling with the comprehension of content-specific language in the mathematics discipline. They will also witness Moises’ struggle to actively participate alongside his peers. By observing and analyzing the specific challenges faced by this student, participants can delve into a reflective process where they consider alternative approaches that the general education teacher could have employed to make the student’s learning experience more effective. On the other hand, the Balanced Literacy model video reflection activity prompts participants to examine the effective practices demonstrated by a skilled educator and how they facilitated student success in literacy. By participating in both activities, educators can draw insights from real-world examples and enhance their instructional practices.

The second portion of PD Day Three is dedicated to approaches, tools, and strategies (see Appendix H). First teachers will participate in a demonstration of how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology can be used to support the learning of ELLs. According to Fisk (2023), effective educators have the ability to change with the times, and with the increasing presence of AI and

new technology both within and outside of the school setting, teachers must become knowledgeable about this topic and learn how they can use it for the benefit of students.

A continuation, other examples of strategies will be presented, including multimodal learning, home language support, and cooperative learning. Wright (2019) suggests that multimodal instruction deepens students' understanding. Additionally, the author points out that ELLs should be provided with home language support so that English instruction and content area instruction can be made as comprehensible as possible. Moreover, Owens and Wells (2021) argue that learning cooperatively improves the grammatical competence and oral fluency of ELLs. Therefore, it is important for participants to gain knowledge about these instructional strategies and how to effectively implement them in their classrooms to support ELLs' academic and linguistic development. As the new information is presented, the participants must once again listen actively and take notes. At the end of this activity teachers will have the approaches and tools to which they can take back to their classes, try to implement, and in the future, provide reflections on how implementing those tools impacted the academic performance of ELLs in a discussion board specifically designed for the participants (see Appendix I).

To conclude the PD sessions, the participants will complete a reflection activity (see Appendix J). As part of this activity, participants will review their takeaways, discuss what they learned, what they plan to implement in their own classrooms, what they found difficult to understand, what they feel they are confident with, and what knowledge they feel they need to further develop.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of the lack of inclusion of ELLs in general education classrooms holds significant importance at multiple levels. At the classroom level, it is imperative to recognize the



significance of this issue because the lack of appropriate support for ELLs within general education classrooms contributes to their present and future academic struggles. Consequently, this continues to perpetuate the educational disparity that exists between ELLs and their non-ELL counterparts. ELLs are in need of well-informed mainstream teachers who not only possess knowledge about the types of tools and approaches that will be most effective for them, but who also have hands-on experience using them and feel confident in their ability to deliver instruction to this demographic of learners. By participating in this PD, educators develop this knowledge base and experience and will be able to know how to ensure all learners, both English speakers and multilinguals, have an equal opportunity to acquire content area knowledge and academic success within the mainstream educational setting.

Chapter Four will serve as the concluding chapter of the capstone project. As part of this chapter, key takeaways will be presented that have been derived from the answers to the research question: How to make the general education classroom inclusive for ELLs, that emerged both from the literature review and from the overall capstone project. Additionally, it will discuss the intended results of the capstone project and the corresponding PD at mitigating the problem. This chapter will also highlight the implications for teaching and student learning, offer recommendations for future research, and provide concluding thoughts to bring closure to the capstone project.

## **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

As I reflect on my personal journey as an English language learner (ELL) within mainstream education settings, and recall the challenges of navigating learning English as a third language during my elementary school years, I can attest firsthand to the barriers ELLs often

encounter throughout their educational experience. In many cases, no matter how capable ELLs are, they struggle academically when there are not enough appropriate instructional strategies implemented in the classroom to meet their needs. For me, it was not until I reached adulthood and shed the burden of perpetually feeling inadequate in comparison to my non-ELL peers that I fully began to recognize the extent of my cognitive, linguistic, and overall academic capabilities.

In spite of the fact that some individuals are able to overcome the odds and break through the barriers, many are not as fortunate. Jiménez-Castellanos and García (2017) contend that the dropout rate of ELL students is much higher than that of their non-ELL peers, and that they graduate at similar rates to students with disabilities. In light of my own experiences, I decided to examine mainstream classrooms and observe the instruction provided to ELLs across the New York City School Districts, in order to determine if the challenges I encountered were still prevalent today. These observations ultimately led to the research question that informed my capstone project: How to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELLs. Additionally, my observations fueled my determination to explore and advocate for potential effective and inclusive solutions that would support ELLs' academic progress.

## **Conclusions**

Chapter One presented the challenges that ELLs encounter in achieving academic success within general education classrooms and the significance of the problem. Each year, the national ELL population grows substantially and is expected to reach one in four by 2025 (National Education Association, 2020). Unfortunately, despite the growing number of ELLs, their academic performance is adversely affected by the fact that their unique needs are excluded from general education instruction. Moreover, their academic performance fares significantly worse than their non-ELL peers by over 30-40 points (Olds et al., 2021). Additionally, if ELLs' general

education teachers do not possess the knowledge and understanding of how to effectively and simultaneously support their content and language development, they will continue to face academic challenges in the present and in the future. To that end, in chapter one, the personal experiences, as well as the research question that guided the capstone project and its corresponding professional development (PD) was introduced: How to make the general education classroom more inclusive for ELL. Further, the chapter identified that the purpose of the capstone project and PD is to equip educators of ELLs with research-based resources, strategies, and approaches to meet the needs of ELL students in their classrooms and assist with their language and content acquisition.

In Chapter Two, the literature on the academic challenges ELLs face in general education environments was presented, as well as the effects of Covid-19 and teacher perspectives on ELLs' achievement, aspects of ELLs' identities and research-based strategies educators can use to promote inclusive instruction for ELLs. Specifically, this chapter revealed that 72% of ELLs in the eighth- grade score below basic on math tests, and that non-ELLs consistently outperform ELLs in both reading and math (Jiménez-Castellanos & García, 2017; Master et al., 2016). Further, as a result of Covid-19, ELLs also experienced increased delays in math, English Language Arts (ELA), and English language acquisition. In addition, the chapter highlighted aspects of ELLs identities and cultures, including that there are over 450 languages spoken by ELL, and that ELLs come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and races which differ in their individualist-collectivist dimensions, as well as vary in their levels of proficiency in English (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2019; Roy-Campbell, 2013). This research suggests that utilizing a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction for English language learners is ineffective and will not produce results.

Furthermore, this chapter provided potential ways for educators to create inclusive general education classrooms for ELLs by adopting asset-based orientations, creating a welcoming and culturally responsive classroom environment, and aligning instructional decision making with ELL-specific models and language theories, such as Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. Additionally, Chapter Two highlighted effective approaches to literacy instruction for ELLs, including Cross-Disciplinary, Disciplinary, and Balanced Literacy. Moreover, effective instructional techniques for supporting ELLs' content and language learning in the general education classroom were presented, including the use of technology, multimodal learning, and home language support. By providing educators with a variety of approaches and instructional practices that are shown to support ELLs academic achievement, they may be able to implement them in the classroom and enhance the learning experiences of their students.

Last but not least, Chapter Three provided detailed information on the three-day professional development sessions designed to provide educators of ELLs with the valuable knowledge and strategies that were outlined in Chapter Two, which will assist them in improving the academic learning of ELLs in their classrooms. Specifically, this chapter discussed the target audience, the setting, and the timeline, as well as the objectives, rationale, and contents of each day's sessions. As a result of this chapter, educators are alerted to the importance of attending professional development workshops in order to obtain the skills and experience they will need in order to support diverse learners.

### **Implications for Student Learning**

There are several implications of my capstone project and PD on student learning. By integrating the concepts and ideas derived from the research into the learning process, ELLs will

have greater access to instruction, which will enhance their educational experience, confidence, motivation, engagement, and their overall academic and linguistic development. For instance, they will be able to speak, listen, read, and write more proficiently, and their vocabulary and content knowledge will expand, which will enable them to comprehend and participate effectively in various academic disciplines. Additionally, mastering content and language learning will become more attainable for ELLs, which may result in a reduction of the achievement gap. The issue of educational disparities has been a persistent challenge for ELLs in general education classrooms, and the insights from the research can provide educators with guidance on how to raise up underperforming ELLs and ensure that they are not left behind. Further, ELLs' sense of belonging to the classroom community will be enhanced. By integrating students' identities, cultures, languages, interests, abilities, and strengths into instruction, students will witness themselves represented and celebrated in their learning environment. Consequently, this will foster a positive and inclusive atmosphere where students feel respected and valued for who they are and what they bring to the classroom. Additionally, ELLs' cooperative learning experiences will be enhanced, as well as their ability to communicate effectively, socialize, and collaborate with others. This will not only benefit their academic performance in the classroom, but also prepare them for success in their future careers and endeavors beyond the classroom.

### **Implications for Teaching**

Teachers can also benefit greatly from the ideas and concepts presented in the capstone project and the PD sessions. For instance, the capstone project and the PD offer educators of ELLs evidence-based approaches, practices, and techniques that they can utilize in their instruction to create an inclusive environment for ELLs. Additionally, they gain insight into what

works best for ELLs and why it works. As a result of having access to these approaches and methods, teachers are able to experiment and incorporate variations of them into their lessons to meet the needs of their ELL students. Additionally, by understanding the underlying rationale behind these approaches, teachers can develop an appreciation for these concepts, thereby increasing their likelihood of implementing them. Further, as teachers gain valuable knowledge about ELLs, such as the achievement problem among ELLs, the identities of ELLs, their cultural nuances, and diverse learning styles, as well as their language acquisition, teachers' confidence in teaching ELLs will improve. As a result of utilizing this knowledge in the classroom, they can foster an environment that is culturally responsive and built on mutual respect and trust. The insights gained from the capstone project and PD can ultimately empower teachers of ELLs to be more effective educators who promote the overall academic success of their students.

### **Recommendations**

While I have presented research on the academic achievement problem for ELLs and provided research-based approaches that educators can utilize to potentially improve academic achievement, there is still a pressing need for further research in several areas to ensure ELLs academic success. First and foremost, there is a critical need to address the accountability measures in the current education system. Currently, accountability measures such as high-stakes standardized assessments have more adverse effects on ELLs and their educators than they have benefits. Additionally, accountability measures for science and social studies content learning have been found to be insufficient compared to English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics accountability measures (Lee & Buxton, 2013a).

Therefore, to effect meaningful change, further research must focus on identifying how accountability measures and policy reform efforts are being implemented, and how they can be

improved, as well as how they directly impact ELLs and their instructors. Further, research studies must examine alternative robust frameworks for accurately assessing the progress and growth of ELLs as well as potentially offering ELLs their own set of academic and language learning standards- independent of those of non-ELLs- so that ELLs are not always striving to meet standards comparable to non-ELLs, and so that their learning experiences are accurately reflected. Lastly, further research is needed to identify effective strategies that teachers can implement for ELLs within specific content areas such as science and social studies. It cannot be assumed that all of the strategies that have proven to be effective in one content area can be applied across all content areas. Detailed studies should be conducted to determine what strategies work the best for each content area, as well as how to address the language barriers that can hinder academic learning within specific content areas. A concentrated effort to address these limited areas in research can contribute to the equitable education for ELLs and support their long- term success.

### **Final Thoughts**

As a result of conducting my research and completing my capstone project, I have gained valuable insight into meeting the needs of ELLs, and I believe that these understandings could be beneficial to other educators as well. Firstly, when working with ELLs, it is important for educators to understand that a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction is insufficient for effectively supporting the diverse needs of ELLs. Instead, adopting a holistic perspective and utilizing multiple instructional strategies, while constantly adapting and combining them, is essential to discover what works best for each individual learner.

Secondly, recognizing and valuing the unique experiences and funds of knowledge that ELLs bring to the classroom is vital. In leveraging these aspects of ELLs' identities, educators

can create a more inclusive and enriching educational experience for ELLs. Further, maintaining a positive view of learners, even when faced with challenges, helps foster a supportive and encouraging learning environment.

Thirdly, staying up to date on the latest research and being intentional in our instruction is essential. Not only must we use explicit, clear, and concise language, but we must modify content to ensure accessibility for ELLs, employ appropriate grouping strategies, and continue to develop intercultural competence through active research and personal efforts.

Lastly, I have come to understand that collaboration and teamwork are paramount in this journey. Just as students learn and grow through social interaction, educators can also enhance their skills and knowledge by learning and working with one another, following the principles laid out in Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory. In this regard, comprehensive dialogue among stakeholders, policymakers, administrators, educators, and families is imperative to determine the optimal academic learning objectives for ELLs. While teachers play a pivotal role in the classroom, there are inherent limitations to what they can accomplish. As a result, a top-down approach is crucial in ensuring effective implementation of practices for ELLs.

Undoubtedly, the importance of general education teachers in shaping the future generation of leaders and change-makers cannot be overstated. Even one dedicated and well-trained general education teacher can profoundly impact the life and learning of an ELL student, who can one day contribute to society in a positive way. Regrettably, the current efforts are falling short of meeting the diverse needs of ELLs. If disparities in ELLs' learning experiences persist, they will continue to endure stigmatization, encounter difficulties in attaining academic success, and feel inadequate in their abilities. To break this cycle, immediate action is required. Today, we, as educators at the forefront of ELL education, must drive forward the



transformation needed for the enhancement of the educational experience of our ELL students. We must take on this responsibility with dedication and unwavering commitment. The time for action is now. By shedding light on the experiences of ELLs and advocating for equitable educational practices, we can help to build more inclusive and supportive general education classrooms that empower all students, no matter their backgrounds, to unlock their full academic potential.

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**Appendix A***Pre and Post- Test Activity*

1. Circle True or False. The majority of students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) are born in the United States.

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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2. Circle True or False. The graduation rate of ELLs is similar to that of students with disabilities.

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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3. How do native English speaking students perform on assessments on average compared to ELLs?

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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4. What is the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) intended for?

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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5. In order of proficiency, what are the five English Language Proficiency (ELP) Levels for ELLs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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6. Circle True or False. When ELLs are identified as one proficiency level, they are at that same level in all four areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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7. On average, how long will it take an ELL to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)?

A. 2 Years B. 5 Years C. 8 Years D. 3 Years

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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8. On average, how long will it take an ELL to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS)?

A. 2-4 Years B. 5-8 Years C. 1-3 Years D. 6-7 Years

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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9. In order to allow ELLs adequate time to respond, what is the recommended waiting time?

A. 2 seconds B. 4 seconds C. 8 seconds D. 10 seconds

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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10. What are the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures?
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Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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11. Circle True or False. ELLs with literacy skills in Chinese, Arabic, or Russian would find it easier to learn English than those with literacy skills in Spanish, German, or French.

Post test:

Was your response correct? Yes or No. If not, provide the correct answer below.

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**Appendix B***Anonymous Survey Activity*

Virtual Link:

<https://6ojgyddnrlx.typeform.com/to/gK7Vc2gr>

1. I feel prepared to work with English language learners (ELLs).  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. I am confident in my ability to support ELLs in my classroom.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. I know enough about the identities, cultures, languages, and experiences of my ELL students.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. In making instructional decisions and designing lessons, I draw on the funds of knowledge of my ELL students.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. I share relevant information about myself as a way of building trust and rapport with my students.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
6. I foster open communication with the families of my ELL students.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. I work closely with colleagues; we co-plan and co-grade, to ensure ELLs needs are supported during instruction.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. I know when an ELL in a class is having difficulty understanding the content and when they have mastered it.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. Language support for ELLs should be provided by the ENL teacher.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

10. ELLs should refrain from using their home language in class.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

11. During my teaching career, I have used at least three instructional strategies designed to support ELLs.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

12. Whenever the instructional strategies I use do not work for an ELL, I experiment with others until I find the ones that do.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

13. It is unclear to me what strategies are effective for students who are ELLs and what strategies are not effective.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

14. I do not know how to incorporate language objectives into my content area instruction.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

15. I want to improve my knowledge and skills regarding working with ELLs.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

## Appendix C

### *Scenario Activity*

Virtual Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/scenario-activity>

Directions: Read the scenario and provide answers to the following questions.

Marco, a fifth-grade ELL, finds himself in a general education class that is gearing up for language-rich and demanding activities such as debating, giving presentations, and poetry writing.

1. Can Marco actively participate in the language-rich activities that his class is preparing for?
2. Should Marco be required to participate in these activities? Why or Why not?
3. What specific types of language skills are necessary for engaging in debates, presentations, and poetry writing?
4. Considering Marco's ELL status, what kinds of language skills should his teachers expect him to demonstrate in these activities?
5. Additionally, what strategies can Marco's teacher employ to facilitate his inclusion and active participation in these language-rich activities as an ELL?

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\* Please share your thoughts in your groups once you have completed your responses. Consider your perception of students such as Marco, as well as how you view his capabilities in participating in language-rich and challenging activities.



## Appendix E

### *Checklist of PD Day Three Strategies and Tools*

## Checklist of PD Day Three Strategies and Tools

Please indicate whether you have heard of or used these strategies and tools in instruction, then provide a brief example of how you used them.

	YES	NO
1. Cross-Disciplinary Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
2. Disciplinary Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
3. Balanced Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
4. Technological Tools/ Artificial Intelligence (AI)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
5. Multimodal Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
6. Home language Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		
7. Cooperative learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, Please Explain</b>		







**Appendix H***List of Approaches, Strategies, and Techniques for Three Part PD***List of Approaches, Strategies, and Techniques for Three Part PD**

1. Discovering ELL's Funds of Knowledge
2. Asset- Based Orientation
3. Welcoming Classroom Environment
4. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
5. Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory
6. Sheltered Instruction Observation  
Protocol (SIOP) model
7. Cross-Disciplinary Literacy
8. Disciplinary Literacy
9. Balanced Literacy
10. Technological Tools/ Artificial  
Intelligence (AI)
11. Multimodal Learning
12. Home language Support
13. Cooperative learning



Appendix J

*Final PD Reflection Activity*

Virtual Link:

<https://forms.gle/va1NyEBSg7YU3AUo8>

Directions: Write a reflection on your participation in the PD sessions. Review your takeaways, discuss what you have learned, and what you intend on implementing in your own classroom. Consider what you found challenging or difficult to understand. Identify the areas in which you feel confident as a result of the PD sessions. Additionally, identify areas where you feel you need to improve your knowledge.

Lined writing area consisting of multiple horizontal lines for reflection.