

Supporting the Social and Emotional Well-Being of ELLs

by

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Abstract

English language learners' (ELLs) social and emotional well-being plays a major role in their academic success. Teacher, administrator, and support staff support is necessary to promote ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. This project examines the need for teacher, administrator, and support staff support for ELLs and the struggles they face. Research shows the language struggles, interpersonal and social struggles, and cultural issues that impact ELLs' social and emotional well-being. This project discusses the importance of incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices and social and emotional learning into instruction. Implementation of these practices will promote positive outcomes for ELLs within academic and life success. A professional development plan is developed to provide teachers, administrators, and support staff with information on social and emotional learning and how ELLs' experiences must be supported with this type of learning. Participants will learn effective instructional strategies and practices to incorporate social and emotional learning throughout their curriculum to continue to meet the social and emotional needs of ELLs while meeting curriculum goals.

Keywords: English language learners, social emotional well-being, academic success, professional development

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the fastest growing student populations in the United States are English language learners (ELLs). Over 10% (or 5.0 million) of ELLs were served in U.S. public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Many ELLs struggle as they are acclimating into a new culture while learning a new language, maintaining their first language, building relationships, dealing with their personal experiences and having teachers that are not prepared to support their needs. According to Guler (2018) and Stairs-Davenport (2021), many teachers lack knowledge of ELL education and have received little to no preparation for teaching ELLs. In addition, some ELLs live in situations with high-risk factors such as poverty, poor and violent living situations and inadequate health care (Lambert et al., 2017; Niehaus et al., 2017).

These experiences result in stressful mental conditions such as anxiety and cultural adjustment stress, which negatively affect students' academic success (Lambert et al., 2017; Newcomer, 2020; Niehaus and Adelson, 2014). While I was student teaching at the junior-senior high school, I recognized the impact that these stressful mental conditions have on ELLs. These students have little to no motivation in participating in class or showing up to class. I discussed my observations with my school-based teacher educator (SBTE), and she said that several of her ELLs show up to school at most once a month or not at all. We also discussed how some of the ELLs do not show up to school because they have to work to support themselves and their families. Due to these experiences, ELLs have lower levels of academic achievement compared to non-ELLs (Niehaus and Adelson, 2014).

As an ELL teacher, it is important that these ELLs' experiences are taken into consideration so they can receive the social and emotional support needed for their well-being. While I was student teaching, I built a great relationship with a group of twelfth grade ELLs.

These students were very interested in my process of becoming a teacher. I was able to share my experience obtaining my bachelor's degree and working on my master's degree. We discussed career options together and I was able to inform them of the nursing program that a local college has. It was very rewarding to be able to inform and communicate with these students career options they can consider for their future. When working with ELLs, teachers must remember that some of these students do not have the guidance and resources out of school to support their social and emotional well-being.

As a new ELL teacher, I seek to explore the relationship between ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. In turn, I aim to help others including teachers, administrators, and support staff learn different ways to support the social and emotional well-being of ELLs in a professional development program described in Chapter 3. In this professional development opportunity, teachers, administrators, and support staff will learn to position themselves as learners, learning about their students' lives and experiences to become aware of how to support these students. To support ELLs' social and emotional needs, educators must honor students' identities, build community, and communicate with other staff members and family members to lead ELLs to academic achievement (Newcomer et al., 2020; Stairs-Davenport, 2021).

Next, Chapter 2 delves into academic literature that addresses the issue of social and emotional struggles that ELLs experience related to their academic success. I also seek to understand what type of teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities there are for teachers, administrators, and support staff that support ELLs' social and emotional well-being.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As described in Chapter 1, many teachers, administrators, and support staff lack knowledge of the social and emotional needs of ELLs. When considering the social and emotional struggles that ELLs face, it is imperative to understand that culturally and linguistically diverse students face more social and emotional challenges than their mainstream peers (Castro Olivo et al., 2021)). That is, teachers, administrators and support staff have a role to support ELLs' social and emotional wellbeing. The better the social and emotional well-being, the higher the academic success (Niehaus, 2017). In this Chapter, I review literature about the issue of social and emotional struggles that ELLs experience. This Chapter is guided by Geneva Gay's (2002) Culturally Responsive Teaching and Abraham Maslow's (1900) Humanism Teaching Theory, which provide an insight into understanding how to promote the social and emotional well-being of ELLs.

Next, I will discuss the language struggles that ELLs face learning a new language and maintaining their native language, interpersonal and social struggles that involve building relationships and dealing with personal experiences and cultural issues of a new culture and unprepared teachers. The major themes emerging from the literature are teacher, administrator, and support staff preparedness for working with ELLs. Lack of teacher, administrator and support staff preparation provides a disservice to ELLs. I will explain several factors such as language struggles, interpersonal and social struggles, and cultural issues that impact ELLs' social and emotional well-being. Then, I will discuss the strategies and techniques that research provides for teachers, administrators, and support staff to use to support ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success.

Conceptual Framework

Both Geneva Gay's (2002) Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Abraham Maslow's (1900) Humanism Teaching Theory (HTT) can contribute to promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of ELLs. Drawing on Gay's (2002) CRT, teachers must recognize and incorporate students' cultures, experiences, and perspectives into the learning process. CRT highlights the importance of supporting diverse students' social and emotional needs and wellbeing through their own cultural experiences in order for them to become successful academically. Many teacher preparation programs do not include strategies and instructional techniques to use when working with diverse students (Idrus & Sohid, 2023). CRT requires teachers to have explicit knowledge about cultural diversity, including cultural values, traditions, communication, and learning styles (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) suggests that CRT practices should be woven into teacher preparation programs, so teachers are aware of the ethical, emotional and academic strategies to use when working with diverse students.

Likewise, Maslow's (1900) Humanism Teaching Theory (HTT) promotes the needs and preferences of learners. HTT highlights the importance of promoting individuals' positive self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making, and self-management (Castro Olivo et al., 2020). In the context of ELLs, ELL teachers will personalize and individualize materials and resources to meet the language and personal needs of ELLs (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020). Teachers, administrators, and support staff will benefit from using HTT's practices to ensure their students' success. HTT practices allow students to achieve academic, personal and life experiences which will increase their social and emotional wellbeing and academic success (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020). Overall, HTT approaches promote both language learning and personal development. Both CRT and HTT adopt various cultures to

enable students' learning and behaviors. These theories are interconnected and if teachers, administrators, and support staff incorporate practices from these theories into their instruction, students will have an increase in their social and emotional well-being and they will become socially competent individuals.

Language Struggles

ELLs face unique challenges as they are gaining English language proficiency. Learning a new language can be especially difficult for students when they are learning academic content at the same time. For example, through a study in an urban school district with various upper elementary school classrooms, Banse et al. (2019) found that ELLs that enter school at older ages, such as upper elementary, middle, and high school, are expected to speak, read, and write in English while learning academic content and may experience academic difficulties. The study examined several 40-60 minute videotaped ELA lessons and ELLs' experience learning with varying levels of English language proficiency. ELLs that do not have a base knowledge of the English language or are not proficient experience difficulties learning content and understanding academic language (Banse et al., 2019). In a similar study with eleven elementary and secondary teachers of ELLs from different school districts by Guler (2018), teachers involved in the study emphasized that students lack background knowledge on the basic and academic language learned in the classroom which poses struggles on their learning. One of the teachers expressed these struggles through discussion boards, interviews, and lesson plans stated, "people do not realize these students are doing twice the work our regular students are" (Guler, 2018, p. 89).

Zimmerman's (2014) study of fourth, eighth and twelfth grade ELLs from multiple school districts through class observations also emphasized the expectation to quickly comprehend content and language when ELLs enter United States schools. The inability of ELLs

to speak little to no English puts them at a disadvantage to learn and effectively maintain relationships. Not having English language proficiency makes daily classroom tasks a struggle for most ELLs. In the several school districts I have worked in, ELLs that enter school past third grade are not receiving the foundational English language instruction such as learning the alphabet and phonics. This is especially difficult for ELLs if their teachers and support staff do not speak their native languages (Banse et al., 2020 & Meng, 2020).

Thus, teachers must provide ELLs with social and emotional support during this challenging process of learning to read and write in a new language. Newcomer et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of using home languages to access content. However, if teachers do not share the same native language as their students, it will be difficult for ELLs to access content. The teachers in Newcomer et al.'s (2020) study of 5 fourth and fifth grade teachers of ELLs found that if ELLs were not paired with students who share the same native language together, they would not be able to successfully complete lessons. Many times, ELLs are placed into classrooms with other ELLs that come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. For example, in Meng's (2020) study of 2,900 preschool students, come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Though this has many positive affects for students, it does not allow ELLs to collaborate and support one another when learning English.

ELLs' knowledge and development of their native language also plays a big role in their English language development. If ELLs are not developed in their native language, they will struggle to learn the English language. Second language development is linked to students' native language development and abilities. Moreover, it is important for students to maintain and renew their native languages. A native languages is more than speech; it holds cultural values, so it will be a struggle for native languages to be lost (Reyhner & Tennant, 1995). However, in

Reyhner and Tennant's (1995), elementary and secondary schools provide instruction to ELLs through a dual language program. Dual language programs are especially beneficial for ELLs because they get to maintain their native language and build on their English language proficiency. This is not the case in most schools, so it is very important for teachers, administrators, and support staff to find ways to incorporate ELLs' native language.

Interpersonal and Social Struggles

Teacher-student and student-student relationships play an important role in ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. Most ELLs that enter United States public schools come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Each culture is unique and can affect relationship building with teachers and students. ELLs and non-ELLs may have challenges building relationships with one another which can negatively impact their social and emotional well-being (Meng, 2020; Newcomer et al., 2020).

Oftentimes some ELLs experience feeling unwanted and burdensome, especially if they have low levels of English proficiency. For example, through a study with various fourth and fifth grade classrooms, Banse et al. (2019) found that ELLs experience isolation, stigma, and anxiety in their classrooms that challenges their social and emotional well-being and relationships. Expanding on this, Niehaus et al. (2017) underscored the positive peer relationships to mediate these struggles. However, relationship building amongst the school and parents and guardians is especially a struggle with ELLs and their families.

ELLs' parents and guardians could be strong allies to their child's education, and it is important to examine the support ELLs are receiving at home. In Niehaus and Adelson's (2014) study of relationships among school, parents, and guardians on ELLs' social, emotional, and academic outcomes revealed that ELLs' families contribute greatly to ELLs' social, emotional

and academic outcomes. The more parent and guardian involvement, the higher success for the students. Overall, many teachers feel overwhelmed including parents that speak languages other than English in the education process, but it is crucial for the success of the student.

Dealing with Personal Experiences

ELLs often experience multiple traumatic experiences and stressors at a young age and without support they are at risk for negative social, emotional, and academic outcomes. One of the struggles that ELLs experience are poor living conditions. Poor living conditions include poverty, violence, and inadequate healthcare (Lambert et al., 2017; Niehaus et al., 2017). Many of these poor living conditions are unchangeable by teachers, administrators, and support staff, but this emphasizes the importance of supporting the stressful mental conditions inherited from these situations, that affect students' social and emotional well-being and academic success (Lambert et al., 2017; Newcomer, 2020; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014).

Some ELLs come to the United States with poor living conditions from their home countries such as war. Some of these students lost everything and had to leave their belongings, family members, friends and pets behind. Among these students are Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). SLIFE students may live in poverty and have limited or interrupted formal education due to war, migration, and other factors. These students have never had the opportunity to participate in schooling before entering the United States or had limited education. Zehr (2018) discussed the trauma resulting from the process of immigration. Some of these students have little to no motivation in participating in classroom discussions and activities. Other students have difficulties showing up to class because they have to go to work to support themselves and their families. On top of learning a new language and academic content, ELLs are also dealing with personal responsibilities. These experiences lower ELLs' social and

emotional well-being which will affect their academic success. Teachers must work especially hard to support these students to become successful.

SLIFE students' experiences impact the way they learn and their interactions. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2022), they discuss the dire need for social and emotional support of SLIFE students. SLIFE students experience many traumas which impacts the way they are engaged in academic activities. Studies discussed in the article reveal that these students most likely do not have grade-level academic knowledge and skills expected of the United States Education System due to their absence of schooling and personal experiences (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022).

The social and emotional wellbeing of ELLs play a role in their academic achievement. In Niehaus' (2017) study of 21,000 elementary and middle school students revealed that increased social and emotional problems resulted in low academic achievement. In a similar study conducted by Zehr (2018), ELLs who experienced trauma from immigration affected their success.

In Newcomer et al.'s (2020) study of fourth and fifth grade classes with ELLs from differing English proficiency levels, showed students who have difficult personal lives and experiences may have post-traumatic stress or lack of trust (Newcomer et al., 2020). These factors will impact their social and emotional well-being and academic success. Although these personal experiences are seen as negative, they have also allowed these students to develop unique strengths such as survival skills, resilience and problem solving (Newcomer et al., 2020). These strengths will assist them in their academic success, but teachers must use effective strategies to support them further.

Cultural Issues

When ELLs enter schools, they must adjust and adapt to new cultural perspectives and practices. It is important for teachers to be flexible with ELLs as they are navigating a new culture. Teachers, administrators, and support staff must also understand the cultural differences that ELLs may have. Newcomer et al.'s (2017) study identifies the cultural differences that families have and what to do to accommodate those differences. Some of these differences include scheduling and greetings. It is important to note that cultural differences could seem out of the ordinary or rude, but they are not. In some cultures, there are traditional gender roles and norms that ELLs practice, so teachers, administrators, and support staff must be aware of the differences and help ELLs adjust to the new culture (Newcomer et al., 2017).

Biased Perceptions of ELLs

Due to many teachers being unprepared to work with ELLs, they may have negative perspectives of working with ELLs. Teachers of ELLs often expect students to quickly assimilate into school behaviors and if they do not, teachers may form negative biases (Cho et al., 2019). In Cho's et al. (2019) study of kindergarten and first grade ELL teachers, they interviewed 6 teachers to determine teachers' perspectives and approaches to supporting ELLs' social and emotional well-being. One teacher involved in the study expressed ELLs to be bossy and sassy, but it is just the students' tone of voice. This bias will affect teachers' perceptions of students. In another study by Guler (2018), mainstream teachers had negative perceptions of ELLs which wrongly affected the teaching accommodations they were providing students. For example, one teacher said, "I was completely taken aback this by the unique needs of one of my African students, which forced me to realize how overpopulated my class is" (Guler, 2018). From this

interview, the teacher formed a negative perception of the ELL due to the unique language needs the student had.

Often, this deficit view of thinking when working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds causes teachers to view what students are lacking rather than focusing on what students already know. Teachers, administrators, and support staff may think that students cannot complete certain tasks because they speak little to no English. Newcomer et al. (2020) discusses the importance of teachers, administrators, and support staff focusing on possible delays due to personal experiences that students' have been through throughout their life. When teachers, administrators, and support staff shift their thinking, they will be able to look at their students as resourceful, brave and resilient.

Teachers, administrators, and support staff must consider that other countries have different school policies and practices. If students come from other countries, they may not understand United States' school policies and practices. When ELLs do not understand the school policies and practices they may do or say things that are not acceptable and teachers may form negative bias about those students. If teachers, administrators, and support staff do not take the time to recognize these potential differences, and model appropriate behavior, and explicitly teach school policies and practices, ELLs will not be able to correctly learn and adapt.

Lack of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Beginning in the 1990s, ELLs were starting to be placed in mainstream classrooms due to the increase in ELL population, changes in policies, and English immersion support (Stairs-Davenport, 2021). Mainstream teachers had the responsibility of meeting the needs of a population they were not qualified for. Most mainstream teachers have ELLs in their classrooms and receive little to no preparation for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students

(Guler, 2018; Stairs-Davenport, 2021). With over 5.0 million of ELLs in U.S. public schools (NCES, 2023), it is crucial for mainstream teachers to receive ELL education preparation.

Teachers may think that ELLs cannot complete certain tasks because they do not speak English yet and do not consider the traumatic experiences that ELLs' have been and are going through (Newcomer et al., 2020).

According to Guler (2018), Newcomer et al. (2020), and Stairs-Davenport (2021), mainstream teachers do not have a positive perception of ELLs which causes a deficit view of these students. These deficit views can impact ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. Guler's (2018) study identified mainstream teacher's negative perceptions of ELLs due to their lack of educational preparation, lack of materials, lack of second language acquisition knowledge, and their mindset that it is not their responsibility to teach ELLs. These factors that impact teachers' negative perceptions must be addressed prior to teachers working with ELLs.

Coming to a new school and perhaps a new country, ELLs may have feelings of not belonging, so if teachers do not create a welcoming and safe space, their students' social and emotional well-being will be affected. Teachers, administrators, and support staff lack a cultural diversity knowledge base. For example, Gay (2002) discusses how teachers cannot teach what they do not know. Teachers, administrators, and support staff must have knowledge of both their student population and curriculum. This involves cultural values, communication styles, learning styles, ethnic groups' living situations, ways of interactions, and gender role socialization (Gay, 2002). Without teachers having knowledge of these aspects, they will not be able to effectively teach their diverse students.

Strategies to Support the Overall Success and Wellbeing of ELLs

There are many effective strategies that teachers can use to positively increase students' social and emotional well being. Cho et al. (2019) discussed modifying classroom social environment and promoting individual students' skills. Teachers can modify their classroom's social environment by integrating social and emotional practices into their curriculum and teaching.

One way I do this is by starting my day with a student check-in. My student check-in is on a small piece of paper with several emojis on it. Students circle which emoji best describes their mood. This student check-in allows me to know how my students are feeling and will inform my instruction of any additional support they may need. Another effective strategy is incorporating a calm down corner into the classroom. In one corner of my classroom, I have a small carpet with bean bag seats, blankets, books, fidget toys, and bilingual social and emotional posters. This calm down corner allows students to be quiet, comfortable, and "calm down". Students are given opportunities to go into the calm down corner when necessary. These strategies create a positive learning environment for students where they can develop socially, emotionally, and academically (Cho et al., 2019).

In order for students to increase their social and emotional well-being, teachers must explicitly teach social and emotional skills to students (Cho et al., 2019; Fisher & Frey, 2020). Social and emotional learning is being taught in more and more schools across the United States. As explained above, research shows that social and emotional learning increases students social and emotional well-being, and academic success if taught explicitly (Doolittle & Jones, 2017). Students must explicitly be taught how to manage their thinking, emotions, and behaviors (Cho et al., 2019; Doolittle & Jones, 2017; Fisher & Frey, 2020).

Teachers can teach students how to manage their thinking, emotions and behaviors through academic lessons. Teachers can instruct a vocabulary lesson using a vocabulary schema for emotion words in English, students' native language, and with visuals (Fisher & Frey, 2020). In my classroom, I have a word wall that has words that describe feelings. I have the words in English and students' native languages, along with a picture of the feeling. This helps students identify their feelings and support them in their writing. It is also important for teachers to model social and emotional instruction. This can be done through correcting behaviors, repeating, role play, and modifying instruction (Cho et al., 2019).

Self-reflection is another important strategy for teachers to use. Teachers can self-reflect on their practice by monitoring which strategies are effective and not effective in their classroom. Fisher and Frey (2020) suggest asking questions involving to which extent are CRT reaching all learners, how are these strategies impacting student learning or to which extent are social and emotional learning integrated into the curriculum. These questions should be asked frequently throughout the school year to make sure teachers, administrators, and support staff are meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of students. If students' needs are not being met, teachers, administrators, and support staff can continue to learn how to better support their students.

There are also several social and emotional competencies that teachers can incorporate into their instruction. Doolittle and Jones (2017) discuss the five social and emotional learning competencies; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These five social and emotional learning competences are important for teachers to consider teaching when working with ELLs. Self-awareness will allow students to learn how to identify their emotions and thoughts and how they impact their behavior.

Self-management allows students to manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviors. Social awareness allows students to understand social norms.

It is important that teachers, administrators, and support staff remember that ELLs are acculturating into a new culture, so social norms may be difficult for them to understand. Teachers, administrators, and support staff must also remember to respect ELLs' social norms from their native culture. Relationship skills allow students to listen, work with others, and ask for help. This skill is especially important for ELLs to acquire because of the cultural differences they face. Lastly, responsible decision making allows ELLs to make appropriate choices. Each of these social and emotional learning competencies will support ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success.

Newcomer's et al. (2020) study revealed that it is important to address the language needs of ELLs from various English language proficiency levels. Scaffolding instruction, modeling, schema building, and contextualizing are common ways for teachers to address the various needs of ELLs from differing language proficiency levels (Newcomer et al., 2020). Teachers must understand that ELLs may have little to no background knowledge on certain subjects or content included in the curriculum. Teachers must build ELLs' background knowledge through direct experiences, pre-teaching language, and hands-on activities (Newcomer et al., 2020). I find that when students have opportunities for hands-on activities, they are able to manipulate and connect new concepts in a more meaningful way. Results from the teachers involved in Newcomer's et al. (2020) study reveal that students were engaged in similar activities that supported their language and academic content.

ELLs have different needs than non-ELL students, and teachers. Thus, the preparation of teacher, administrator, and support staff preparation is a significant factor in addressing the

social and emotional well-being and academic achievement of ELLs. Culturally adapted and culturally teaching strategies and practices are a positive approach to support ELLs' social and emotional well-being. Culturally responsive strategies and practices increase ELLs' sense of belonging (Castro Olivo et al., 2021). It is important for teachers to create a safe space for their students where they feel welcomed and safe.

One of the most important aspects of CRT is getting to know your students. Teachers, administrators, and support staff must learn about their students in order to build a classroom and school community in order for learning to become meaningful and reach academic achievement (Newcomer et al., 2020). CRT and HTT both examine and recognize students' experiences, identities, and cultural values. Teaching practices influence students' identity construction, so it is important to include practices that reflect students' identities into teaching (Newcomer et al., 2020). To start, it is important for students to have opportunities to share personal stories. Sharing stories allows students to be engaged, make academic gains, feel a sense of community, increase English language and increase their social and emotional well-being (Newcomer et al., 2020; Zehr, 2018).

Lastly, another strategy to support ELLs' when one does not share the same native language as their students, is to use translating and interpreter services. These strategies are beneficial for ELLs because they will be able to access the content being taught in the classroom. Google Translate is very helpful for translating documents, photos, and PDFs. This will help teachers, administrators, and support staff translate activities for students. It is important that teachers are giving their ELL students the same tasks and activities as their non-ELL students, they just have to be sure to make accommodations. Interpreting services are also beneficial for communicating important information that Google Translate may not be able to get across. Both

of these strategies will help ELLs access the same content and curriculum as their non-ELL peers to create success for all.

Summary

As you can see, ELLs experience many struggles that affect their social and emotional well-being and academic success. Language struggles such as maintaining one's native language and being expected to learn a new language and academic content in English poses difficulties on ELLs. Interpersonal and social struggles such as dealing with personal experiences and building relationships lowers ELLs' social and emotional well-being. All of these components and lack of culturally responsive teaching strategies will greatly affect ELLs' success. It is important for teachers, administrators, and support staff to address these struggles and needs.

Attending professional developments will allow teachers to continue to learn how to better support their students. Stairs-Davenport (2021) emphasizes the importance that teachers "need to continue building their repertoire for teaching ELLs" (p. 167). Professional developments will provide teachers with instructional strategies and techniques for teaching ELLs. In Chapter 3, I describe a professional development session that I will be presenting to assist teachers, administrators, and support staff in fostering the social and emotional well-being and academic success of ELLs. During the session, I will provide strategies and tools to promote social emotional well-being and academic success.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

In this Chapter, I will present a professional development to help teachers, administrators, and support staff support ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. Social emotional learning promotes success for students' academics and social and emotional well-being (Castro Olivo et al., 2022; Doolittle & Jones, 2017; Newcomer et al., 2020). Often, when ELLs come to the United States, they are unfamiliar with the social skills necessary to navigate school and relationships. Social emotional learning will help students learn about managing their emotions and relationships to benefit themselves (Doolittle & Jones, 2017).

As research in Chapter 2 shows, there is lack of teacher, administrator, and support staff preparation programs and education in order to successfully meet ELLs' social and emotional needs. Therefore, in this Chapter I describe a professional development program that advocates for ELLs. The professional development program provides teachers, administrators, and support staff with information that positions themselves as ELLs to better understand the experiences that ELLs go through. Secondly, teachers, administrators, and support staff will learn about effective instructional strategies to incorporate social and emotional learning throughout academic curriculum. Doolittle and Jones (2017) describe social and emotional skills to be just as important as academic and cognitive skills, so it is important for students to learn them while also learning academics.

Description of the Professional Development

The participants of this professional development are teachers, administrators and support staff in a district with a growing population of ELLs. The ELL demographics of the school district are 77% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 18% White, and 1% Multicultural (New York State Education Department, 2022). The school

district's priorities are student social and emotional well-being. Programs such as *Beautiful Me and Leader in Me* are implemented in the district. This professional development is a great addition to the school district because it focuses solely on ELLs. ELLs undergo many different experiences compared to their non-ELL peers, so it is important that those experiences are highlighted.

The professional development program will be available for all teachers, administrators and support staff that work with ELLs. The professional development program will be beneficial for all individuals that work with ELLs because the population of ELLs in the district continues to increase throughout the school year. Most of the ELLs that come to the high school are SLIFE students, so it is important that teachers are prepared with the the correct strategies and instructional techniques to make their students transition smooth. Several of the high school students in this district come to school once or twice a month or not at all. It is important that teachers, administrators, and support staff are creating a space where students feel welcomed and engaged so that they come to class.

Agenda of Events

The professional development will be conducted in a 30 minute session at the beginning of the school year. The professional development will happen the second month of school, so teachers have time to settle into the school year and start to get to know their students. This timing also allows teachers to adjust to their school day schedules and start instruction. The professional development training session will be located in the library, so teachers, administrators, and support staff have the opportunity to sit together and collaborate in small groups at the round tables.

Activities

In the 30 minute session, I will introduce what social emotional learning is and what social emotional learning looks like for ELLs. I will also discuss some of the struggles that ELLs may experience that affect their social and emotional well-being. This will allow teachers, administrators and support staff to position themselves as learners and better understand the experiences their students are going through. It is important for teachers, administrators, and support staff to recognize and value students' experiences so they can build on their funds of knowledge (Newcomer et al., 2020). Next, I will provide teachers, administrators, and support staff with strategies that will promote ELLs' social and emotional well-being.

Then, I will play a short film from YouTube called *Immersion*. *Immersion* is a short film about a ten-year-old boy who has just arrived to the United States from Mexico. The film will position teachers, administrators, and support staff as an ELL who has little to no English language proficiency. After the short film, teachers, administrators, and support staff will work in small groups to answer reflective questions. The reflective questions will allow them to collaborate and come up with different strategies to use that will benefit their students like the boy in the film.

This professional development aims to help solve the problem of unprepared teachers, administrators and support staff working with ELLs. I chose this professional development because it is important that teachers understand the difficult experiences that ELLs experience that will affect their performance in school. Teachers will leave the professional development with a handout of strategies that they can use in their classroom to promote ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. The professional development will end with a discussion and Q&A.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This project has discussed the experiences that ELLs face such as language struggles, interpersonal and social struggles, and cultural issues that impact their social and emotional well-being. Teachers, administrators, and support staff must support ELLs' social and emotional needs to create success for this group of students. In this Chapter, I will first summarize the major findings reviewed in Chapter 2 and the intended outcomes of the professional development plan I proposed in Chapter 3. Next, I will present implications for teaching and learning and conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary

Through research, major findings such as learning a new language, maintaining a native language, building relationships, dealing with personal experiences, acclimating into a new culture, and unprepared teachers, serve as struggles that impact ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. Learning a new language has a great effect on ELLs because as they are learning to speak, read, and write in English while learning academic content (Banse et al., 2019; Guler, 2018). This can pose difficulties for ELLs that have little to no English language proficiency because they are expected to learn both a new language and new academic content simultaneously (Banse et al., 2019; Guler, 2018). Along with learning a new language, ELLs are maintaining their native language.

Maintaining a native language can be difficult for ELLs when they are placed into classrooms where teachers do not speak the same native language as them. This also creates difficulties for ELLs when they are trying to build relationships with their teachers and peers (Banse et al., 2019; Meng, 2020). ELLs may begin to feel isolated and anxious which affects their social and emotional well-being. Personal experiences also create this same feeling for

ELLs. Many ELLs experience traumatic events and poor living conditions that could impact their day to day. These experiences create difficulties as they are acclimating into a new culture (Guler, 2018; Stairs-Davenport, 2020). Teachers, administrators, and support staff are unaware of these struggles that impact ELLs' social and emotional well-being. When teachers lack culturally responsive teaching strategies that support ELLs and these struggles, students will not be able to successfully increase their social and emotional well-being and academic success (Castro Olivo et al., 2021; Newcomer et al., 2020).

The most significant influence on ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success is teacher, administrator, and support staff support through culturally responsive teaching practices. Therefore, the intended outcome of the professional development plan I outlined is to adequately prepare teachers, administrators, and support staff to apply culturally responsive and social emotional learning practices to their teaching. If teachers, administrators, and support staff position themselves as learners and understand the experiences that ELLs face, and implement these practice and strategies, they will be able to promote success for their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research can improve the quality of instruction within ELLs' social and emotional well-being by exploring which practices will increase both ELLs' social and emotional well-being and academic success. Social and emotional learning practices need to further be explored because there is currently a limited number of specialized instructional practices and strategies for ELLs in the realm of social and emotional learning. Further research can improve the quality of social and emotional instruction for ELLs because there can be more practices and strategies that specifically meet the needs of ELLs.

Final Thoughts

Meeting the social and emotional well-being of ELLs is a very important aspect in ELLs' lives and academic success. Teacher, administrator, and support staff practices must be culturally specialized for the diverse linguistic students involved. Modifying the classroom's social environment, modeling social emotional learning and behaviors, and teacher education will provide support for ELLs. Increasing teacher, administrator, and support staff awareness of the challenges that ELLs face will allow them to incorporate social and emotional learning within the curriculum. Starting social and emotional learning at young ages will benefit students' lives in the classroom and out of the classroom, making communities and worlds a better place one student at a time.

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Appendix A

Professional Development Presentation

<https://voicethread.com/myvoice/thread/23282752>

Appendix B

Professional Development Worksheet

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10CogCq7g0NDaUy5XVmBWwMaPjHVmcSKm8G4>

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