

Preparing Mainstream Middle School Teachers to Support English Language Learners

by

Emily Markakis

August, 2024

Supervised by

Dr. Rosa Mazurett-Boyle

A master's thesis capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of SUNY Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education in TESOL

Abstract

The population of English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools is increasing across the U.S. However, mainstream teachers are facing issues in being able to adequately support ELLs in the general education classroom. The literature emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation, and providing mainstream teachers with the knowledge, strategies, and tools to effectively teach ELLs. To address these challenges, a professional development (PD) program was created for mainstream middle school teachers to expand their knowledge and skills in educating the ELL population. It is essential that teachers become educated in pedagogical frameworks, lesson planning for ELLs, and culturally responsive teaching. ELLs academic outcomes and social emotional well being will be positively impacted due to improved instructional strategies and a culturally responsive learning environment. Recommendations include school districts collecting data from teachers and students to discover the most relevant PD programs for teachers to attend. Another recommendation is for school districts to require new teacher candidates to participate in ELL centered training sessions that will prepare them specifically for the demographics of the school they will be teaching in. Extensive research beyond this capstone can be done in the area of teacher advocacy for ELLs to further support mainstream teachers in their work with ELLs.

Keywords: English language learner (ELL), teacher preparation, pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, professional development (PD)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	4
1.1 Problem Statement.....	4
1.2 Significance of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Purpose.....	6
1.4 Conclusion.....	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
2.1 Pedagogical Frameworks.....	8
2.2 The Importance of Teacher Preparation.....	11
2.3 Mainstream Teacher Expectations.....	15
2.4 Mainstream Teachers Attitudes Towards ELLs.....	16
2.5 Teachers As Advocates for ELLs.....	17
2.6 Building a Culturally Responsive Classroom.....	19
2.7 The Importance of Professional Development.....	21
2.8 Conclusion.....	22
Chapter 3: Description of the Professional Development Program.....	23
3.1 The Professional Development Agenda.....	24
3.2 Objectives and Activities.....	25
3.3 Day 1 Breakdown.....	26
3.4 Day 2 Breakdown.....	27
3.5 Day 3 Breakdown.....	29
3.6 Summary.....	32
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	33
4.1 Summary of Findings... ..	33
4.2 Implications for Mainstream Teachers.....	36
4.3 Implications for ELLs Learning Experiences and Outcomes.....	37
4.4 Recommendations for Growth in PD and Future Research.....	38
References.....	39
Appendices.....	43

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

With the growing rate of English language Learners (ELLs) in our classroom's across America, educators must be prepared to meet the needs of each diverse learning need we are presented with. As a dedicated educator, I am focused on preparing not only myself, but other teachers to effectively educate ELLs in the general education classroom. Effective instruction for ELLs is vital to the student's academic and personal success. My interest in the lack of teacher preparation became personal to me this past school year when my coworkers and I grew frustrated with the feeling that we didn't have the tools or strategies to provide our ELL students with a quality education. Many of the ELLs that sit in our classrooms face challenges in new language learning, curriculum comprehension, and cultural and social norms. These challenges inspire me to examine the overarching research question: How can mainstream middle school teachers support ELL students in the general education classroom? When educators are well prepared to teach ELL students, the learning environment will be more inclusive, and progressive towards successful learning outcomes.

In this capstone project I will be using a variety of terms. ELLs refers to English Language Learners which is a term for a group of students who have different language backgrounds and proficiency levels. I will also be discussing the term teacher preparation program. This refers to a program that is curated to prepare teacher candidates with all necessary knowledge and skills needed to be a successful and effective educator (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013). Throughout my literature review I will be discussing Pre-service and In-Service teachers. Pre-service teachers are teacher candidates, or a teacher in training that is not yet certified. They are most likely enrolled in a program to obtain their certification, such as a college or university.

An in-service teacher refers to an individual who is a certified teacher and is currently active in the workforce. The last key term that will be discussed in detail in my capstone project is Professional Development. Professional development can be given in many types of forms such as seminars, workshops, or lectures. These learning experiences provide educators with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills in the field of education.

Significance of the Problem

The problem in education/statistical data that relates to lack of teacher preparation to educate ELLs in America reveals that there is a correlation between lack of trained teachers and depreciated learning outcomes for ELLs. Data also shows that many states across America lack a uniformity in professional development hours on the topic of supporting English Language Learners (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Brouillette et al., 2015; Li & Peters, 2020).

This problem affects the learning outcomes of ELL students because general education teachers are not equipped to teach them. This could also affect the social-emotional self esteem of the ELL students (Ballantyne et al., 2008). This is a problem at the classroom level because ELL students are not being given the adequate tools to access learning in the subject curriculums (Brouillette et al., 2015). When teachers are not prepared to educate their ELLs, they could also feel a lack of rapport with their teachers (Ballantyne et al., 2008). A lack of student-teacher relationship could negatively affect communication between the teacher and student, and it could make them feel isolated in an environment that should be inclusive and safe for all students. The topic addressed at this level is teacher preparation and instructional practices, as well as touching on social emotional and sociocultural contexts.

Purpose

In order for mainstream middle school teachers to be adequately prepared to support ELL students in the general education classroom, they must be provided with the tools and strategies to support ELL students at differing levels. In my Professional Development (PD) plan, the main goal will be for teachers to leave feeling more confident in supporting their ELL students across the content areas. During the PD, teachers will be provided with information on what opportunities can be offered to them to expand their knowledge in ENL education. In order for them to be successful in this professional development, teachers must know their ELL population in their classrooms and what the instructional needs of their students are at the differing English Language Proficiency Development (ELPD) levels. Teachers will be provided with knowledge, tools, strategies, and styles of pedagogy to be prepared to design performance tasks that meet the needs of their ELL students such as their linguistic needs, and cultural needs.

A professional development program will be given to all subject areas in a middle school setting. The ages of the students in this PD are from grades 6-8. This PD will take place in November. Planning 1-2 months into the school year is intentionally planned to give teachers 6-8 weeks to gather data and demographics, and form questions of concern for their current ELL students in class. This is also going to take place on a day called “Superintendent's Conference Day”. This is a ‘teachers only day’ of work when the day is dedicated to professional development. Teachers are more likely to be active participants in a professional development program when it is during the workday, and they are not exhausted from a full day of work.

In this PD, the teachers will participate in activities such as take surveys, sit through an interactive lecture/take notes, participate in group planning with subject area/co teachers implementing new strategies based on what they will learn. This PD will be split into 3 sessions,

with the option for a 4th follow up for teachers to choose to sign up for an expert visit. During the expert visit, the expert can visit classrooms to model/observe implemented strategies learned from PD for the teacher who has signed up. This will be followed by a brief meeting after to discuss the observation and recommendations for the future. The main goal of the PD is for teachers to leave feeling more confident in supporting their ELL students across the content areas. During the PD, teachers will be provided with information on what opportunities can be offered to them to expand their knowledge in ENL education.

Conclusion

Many modern day educators, both pre-service and inservice are not trained, prepared, or hold certifications to effectively teach English Language Learners. In chapter 2, I will be reviewing literature and in chapter 3, creating a professional development plan to address the problem of how mainstream middle school teachers can support ELL students in the general education classroom.

In the following chapters of my capstone you will find that in chapter 2 I will write a cohesive literature review of what has been previously studied related to my problem, paired with potential solutions. During the literature review, I will synthesize, analyze, and critique existing research based on teacher preparation. In chapter 3, I will present a detailed Professional Development (PD) plan. In this PD plan, I will provide a strong rationale for my plan, explain the choices I made when creating it, what it entails for participation, and how it connects to literature. Chapter 4 will highlight the implications and importance of my research and professional development plan on teaching and learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter includes a review of literature that pertains to the lack of preparation for mainstream middle school teachers to support ELL students in the general education classroom. Analyzing peer reviewed studies and reports is necessary to examine why teachers may not be prepared to teach ELLs, and how lack of preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers can impact student's success. The literature reviewed in this chapter discusses; the lack of teacher preparation to work with ELLs, the impact of preparation programs on student's learning outcomes, mainstream teacher expectations, mainstream teachers attitudes towards ELLs, teacher advocacy for ELLs, building a culturally responsive classroom, and the importance of professional development. Before analyzing research on these themes, I will begin by discussing the pedagogical frameworks that are essential to understand in order to effectively educate ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

Pedagogical Frameworks

As discussed in chapter 1, mainstream teachers need to be more equipped to teach and support their ELL students. In order for mainstream teachers to effectively teach their ELL students, they need to build a background on pedagogical frameworks that can support educational strategies to use in the classroom. These pedagogical frameworks support the strategies discussed in Chapter 3.

Sociocultural Theory

According to Lantoff (2000), Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory helps us explain how second language learning is largely impacted by learning through social interactions. Vygotsky claims that the learning process should be more collaborative than it is independent. This means that ELLs should be given the opportunity to interact with their peers as much as possible in the

classroom setting. Peer interaction, especially between ELL students, and students who have English as their L1 can provide many benefits to ELL students (Tavares, 2019). Some of these benefits include an increase in ELL confidence, a reputable model for expressive language, and a low stress setting for learning (Tavares, 2019). This framework supports the work to provide ELL students with more meaningful interactions in the classroom to support their content and language learning.

Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

According to Ortega (2013), Dr. Krashen created a language acquisition theory known as comprehensible input. Comprehensible input can be defined as the information that someone acquires when learning a second language. Ortega states that Krashen argues that second language learning is less about conscious formal instruction, and more about authentic and meaningful interactions. Comprehensible input should be a focus in the ELL classroom. This can be done by activating student's prior knowledge about topics in order for them to make future connections during their authentic interactions. When ELLs have a background built, they are more likely to comprehend what is being taught to them even if they cannot understand every word in the spoken English language. Ortega claims that as an educator responsible for creating comprehensible input for their students, you are tasked in not only scaffolding content knowledge but also scaffolding targeted language objectives through listening, writing, reading, and speaking. Moreover, when ELLs experience comprehensible input opportunities in the classroom, they are more heavily engaged in the content and are working towards building a deeper understanding of topics presented. The author notes that activities centered in listening, readings, and interactions such as read-alouds can promote the use of Krashen's input hypothesis for language learning. The ideas of comprehensible input support the ideology of how students

should be receiving and processing information in the classroom in order to support their academic growth.

Comprehensible Output Hypothesis

According to Ortega (2013), researcher Swain developed a theory of comprehensible output in the language acquisition process. As explained by Krashen's comprehensible input theory, scaffolded instruction is necessary for content and language proficiency, but according to Swain's theory there should be just as many opportunities for students to respond to language as output. Comprehensible output can be defined as language being produced by ELLs, which also displays the degree that they are able to comprehend content. Ortega reminds us that output centered instruction helps ELLs in their language learning process through writing and speaking. This process also includes the use of negative feedback to help the learner improve. For example, if an English speaking educator is conversing with their Spanish speaking student, and at first the student does not understand, the educator would change their language until they do understand. After students repeatedly receive the correct feedback during linguistic interactions, they can then produce their own output in their L2 that can be understood. Ortega claims that activities centered in speaking/dialogue, and writing can promote the use of Swain's output hypothesis for language learning. Comprehensible Output theory is another framework that supports the successful learning process of ELL students in the classroom.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

McVee et al. (2017) indicates that in 1983 Pearson and Gallagher developed a pedagogical framework called the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) model. The GRR framework is a way to describe the gradual shift of responsibility and mental load from the educator to the students during instruction. The release can also be more commonly described as

‘I do, we do, you do’ by the educators that use this model. ‘I do, we do, you do’ is a simple breakdown of how the teacher explicitly models instruction, moves towards guided instruction, gives students collaboration opportunities, then releases responsibility to the student for independent learning. McVee et. al report that Pearson and Gallagher created this framework to show how educators can scaffold instruction through a curated step-by-step process.

According to Lin and Cheng (2010), the GRR model has many beneficial impacts on language learning. A main influence of the model is its impact on student engagement, and influencing ELL students to become more active participants in class. Opposite of direct instruction, this model gives ELL students the opportunity to actively engage in their own learning and take ownership over it. Lin and Cheng maintain that, when students have a grasp of ownership in their education, this can increase their self-esteem and motivation to learn. The flexibility of the GRR model is another advantage to utilizing it with ELL students. Through scaffolded instruction, the educator is able to give more individualized support to students at varying content and language levels. Lastly, this model is set up to promote lifelong learning for ELLs. The authors contend that by guiding students to become independent in their learning, this model can inspire them to build intrinsic motivation to learn. The GRR model supports my claim as a successful framework that mainstream teachers should follow in order to effectively educate their ELL students. Consequently, all the above pedagogical frameworks provide grounded information on how to educate ELLs. Nonetheless, there is a series of issues that affect ELLs success in mainstream classrooms.

The Importance of Teacher Preparation

As of the Fall of 2021, it was recorded that there were 5.3 million ELL students in the United States, compared to the 4.6 million recorded in 2011 (NCES, 2024).

Lack of Teacher Preparation to work with ELLs

With the growth of ELL students in our classrooms, Brouillette et al. (2015) argue that educators need to be prepared to support these students and their development of the English Language. ELL students must be taught through meaningful scaffolded strategies, differentiation, and to their zone of proximal development (Casper & Theilheimer, 2010). Brouillette et al. noted that though these strategies prove to be helpful, many educators in the United States are not well equipped or trained to carry them out effectively. Only 40% of the states across America require a uniform training requirement to educate ELL students. Dawning statistics from Ballantyne (2008) uncover the widespread lack of uniformity of standards of preparation teachers have to work with ELL students. Ballantyne reveals that 29.5% of teachers are trained to have ELLs in their classrooms, 16.67 % of colleges offer pre-service training, 26% of in-service teachers have regular ELL centered staff development, and 57% of in-service teachers express the need for increased training and professional development to support ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Qualified and effective educators are built by creating a high standard of preparation. Brouillette et al. argues that when the United States moves towards a more uniformed system of ELL centered preparation, teacher quality will improve which in turn, determines successful ELL learning outcomes.

Researchers Giles and Yazan (2020) reveal that in the current state of education, the lack of training for mainstream classroom teachers to support ELL students continues to be a problem. Giles and Yazan planned an investigation to uncover the background of ELL centered training from a middle school ELA teacher and middle school ENL teacher. According to the study, the middle school ELA teacher explained that she did not have any prior experience in working with ELL students. The mainstream middle school teacher also revealed that she did not

receive any training prior to becoming an in-service teacher in regards to instructional strategies or lesson planning for ELL students. Because of the lack of pre-service training, the mainstream teacher was not adequately scaffolding instruction, or using unique styles of pedagogy to best support her ELL students, which was leaving them at a disadvantage. This disadvantage was observed by the ENL teacher involved in the study, stating that the mainstream teacher's ELA lessons were un-inclusive and not accessible for the ELL students in the class. Giles and Yazan reveal important issues in the lack of uniformity in teacher Preparation to work with ELLs. These challenges can be met by incorporating more training for pre-service teachers, and mandating ongoing professional development for in-service teachers. Even though a mainstream teacher may not be a certified TESOL educator, they still have the responsibility for providing the most equitable education for the ELL students in their classrooms.

Rubinstein-Avila and Lee (2014) conducted a study to investigate the deficits of teacher preparation to support ELL students in the mainstream classroom. During the study, researchers surveyed 28 high schools. Results of the study showed that 87% of the teachers surveyed among those schools expressed concern in the lack of professional development they received to support their work with ELL students. The lack of professional development opportunities for these in-service teachers causes a deficit in their pedagogical skills as well. The teachers in the study explained that they were not trained in being able to identify, address, and plan for the academic and linguistic needs of their ELL students in their classes. Rubinstein-Avila and Lee state that teachers in this study also expressed that they were often frustrated and overwhelmed with the workload of having ELL students in their mainstream classes with limited support and materials. This study sheds light on how school districts must provide continuous professional development

opportunities for new teachers and veteran teachers to be properly equipped with the strategies and tools to best meet the needs of their ELL students.

Impacts of Preparation Programs on Student Learning Outcomes

Li and Peters (2020) examine the correlation between teacher preparation programs and positive student learning outcomes for K-12 teachers. Li and Peters conducted a study to test the efficacy of a teacher preparation professional development program on student's learning outcomes. The results of the study showed that the students taught by teachers that participated in the PD program had elevated scores on assessments. In the study, the assessment tested language, listening, reading, and writing skills. There was a "29.6% increase in language skills, 37.2% increase in listening skills, 28.3% increase in reading skills, and a 23.5% in their writing skills" (p. 1504). The results of the assessment after the teachers were enrolled in the professional development program show that once teachers were prepared with quality strategies and tools to support ELL students, their learning success rates increased. Studies such as the one conducted by Li and Peter explain the positive correlation between increased preparation and successful student outcomes.

A lack of teacher preparation can be examined in the expectations that teachers hold their ELL students to in the mastery of skills such as reading fluency and reading comprehension. De Jong and Harper (2005) state that reading assessments such as running records as a student reads aloud can be skewed because of the lack of background knowledge and skills teachers may have in working with ELL students. Results of these assessments could be skewed because of miscues of word pronunciation. De Jong and Harper explain that because ELL students often over-analyze their pronunciation when reading out loud, this could show that they struggle with fluency and reading comprehension. Another way this can impact an ELL student's learning

outcomes is if the ELL student has strong decoding and fluency skills in their L1, their deficits in reading comprehension in their L2, English, can be often overlooked. De Jong and Harper reveal that the lack of teacher preparation to work with ELLs can negatively impact the student's learning outcomes. In the case of reading assessments, educators need to have background knowledge of ELLs oral and literacy instruction in order to give a fair and equitable assessment. In summary, there is substantial research on the need to train teachers to work with ELLs in order to improve academic outcomes. Nonetheless, there is a series of social emotional issues that also affect ELLs success in the mainstream classroom.

Mainstream Teacher Expectations

The lack of mainstream teacher preparation for educating ELL students can leave impactful implications on the academic success of these ELL students. When ELL students are acclimated into the general education setting, most of the time they are being taught by a mainstream educator, not ENL certified. These newcomers are expected to simultaneously grow their language acquisition skills alongside their content area knowledge (Villegas, 2018). With these high expectations for ELL students, a well-equipped and knowledgeable teacher is necessary to ensure that the curriculum is being made comprehensible, and that the student's language needs and development are being supported (Villegas, 2018).

Feiman-Nemser (2018) explains that many mainstream classroom teachers are currently, and will continue to teach ELL without the proper training. Feiman-Nemser also states that when pre-service and in-service teachers lack the pedagogical skills to meet the language demands of ELLs, the ELLs are put at a disadvantage. Reaffirming that the lack of preparation could also impact the confidence of the mainstream teacher, leaving them to feel inadequate to meet their student's needs. The authors state that many mainstream educators who do not have

co-teachers feel that serving the ELL population should be the responsibility of a TESOL certified teacher because of their expertise in the craft. In addition, when these mainstream teachers lack accountability, they will generally struggle with creating the necessary scaffolded instruction needed to support ELLs in their content and language objectives.

Mainstream Teachers Attitudes Towards ELLs

Villegas (2018) emphasizes that a systemic problem that is caused by the lack of preparation for mainstream teachers to work with ELLs is that many mainstream teachers hold an unconscious or implicit bias towards their ELL students. Hence, both pre-service and in-service teachers should be given opportunities during preparation programs to examine their unconscious bias they may hold towards linguistically diverse communities. Since, some of the bias that mainstream teachers could hold towards their ELL students can be explained as a deficit view.

Research from Sharkey and Layzer (2000) explains that the deficit view is exemplified by educators when they focus on what the student's cannot do rather than what they can achieve. Oftentimes, the deficit view is an unconscious lens that is never unpacked prior to teaching ELL students. If an educator has a deficit view, they are more likely to hold their ELL students to lower academic and language expectations, which could negatively impact their learning growth. The authors insist that given the nature of common conscious and unconscious attitudes that mainstream teachers hold towards ELL students, there is an urgent need for professional development and preparation programs to work in unpacking these biases.

Youngs and Youngs (1999) conducted a study to investigate mainstream teachers' perceptions of teaching ESL students in their classrooms. During the 1999 study, researchers collected data using a series of interviews. These interviews were all given to mainstream

teachers, two of them taught at the secondary level, and one of them taught at the primary level. The qualitative data in this study revealed that the attitudes towards their ELL students were majority negative. Across all three educators, there was a common theme of not knowing much about their ELL student's home lives, or language backgrounds. As earlier explained by Sharkey and Layzer, these educators also held a deficit view towards their ELL students and held them at low expectations. Youngs and Youngs state that all three educators expressed in their own way that one of the most frustrating parts about working with ELLs is that they felt they felt constrained with time, had little access to a translated curriculum, there was lack of ELL student engagement, and they did not feel adequately prepared to modify instruction. There has been significant data to show that the numbers of ELL students are rising in our classrooms by the million over a period of 20 years (NCES, 2024). Though this study was conducted in 1999, it reveals that there has been a consistent lack of preparation for teachers throughout the United States.

Teachers As Advocates for ELLs

The issue of advocacy and lack of preparation to work with ELLs go hand-in-hand. ELL students are unique and require differentiated support to help meet their needs. The needs of an ELL student extend beyond academic and language support. Fenner (2014) states that educators have a responsibility in being an advocate for their ELL students, which means acting as a tool and a voice for ELL students and their families who can not yet advocate for themselves in the system of education. Advocacy does not just mean providing a voice for students, it also means that educators uphold the responsibility of learning about the backgrounds of their ELL students in order to apply the appropriate action on their behalf.

Jaffe-Walter (2018) states that educators and school leaders hold a shared responsibility of advocacy for their immigrant and ELL students in their schools. Researcher Jaffe-Walter conducted a case study to investigate how educators and school leaders can create school environments where they are dedicated to supporting and advocating for newcomers and ELL students in order to prepare them for higher education. In order for teachers to feel that they are supported in their work of being educators and advocates for their ELL students, they need to be adequately prepared with opportunities to expand their knowledge through professional development. Jaffe-Walter explains that when school leaders support their teachers in creating an inclusive and supportive school environment for ELLs, it helps shape teacher's advocacy work for their students.

Harrison and McIlwain (2020) conducted a study with in-service educators to investigate their efforts in action for advocacy. In the study, researchers conducted interviews to gather qualitative data from a survey size of 144 ENL teachers, 10 of the interviews being more in-depth. Results from the in-depth interviews revealed that the teachers were very strong advocates for their ELL students, even beyond the school building. At the smallest level in their home buildings, the educators were acting as advocates by collaborating with and educating mainstream teachers on strategies for ELL success, opening the line of communication between the school and the home of the ELL student, and being a strong voice to ensure that there were adequate materials and differentiated strategies being used to educate the ELL students across the mainstream classrooms. This is a level of advocacy that is achievable by almost every educator, but they must first be given the prior preparation to understand and assume these responsibilities. Consequently, the 10 teachers in this study went above and beyond by participating in statewide

TESOL committees to stay updated and informed on any legislation changes that may impact their students.

Building a Culturally Responsive Classroom

In order to be an effective educator of an ELL student, a teacher must receive the preparation and ongoing professional development to learn how to build a culturally responsive classroom. German (2021) states that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is not a curriculum, but an attitude that is built into a pedagogy that works to recognize the cultural and linguistic needs of students. German argues that CRT extends beyond diverse representation in the classroom and providing translated materials, the core of CRT involves creating a safe and inclusive environment for culturally and linguistically diverse students to learn and grow in.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Idrus and Sohid (2023) remind us that, in order to be an effective educator we must build a background in cultural differences among our students. Idrus and Sohid (2023) conducted a study to investigate the experience of two teachers, and how they accommodate their ELL students in the classroom in regard to culture, ethnicity, and identity. Qualitative data was collected through a series of interviews with secondary ENL teachers. Results from the interviews showed that the teachers interviewed expressed that they struggled in teaching English to the ELL students in their classrooms because of barriers such as language proficiency, a non-translated curriculum, and socioeconomic background impacts. The study also revealed that following the implementation of CRT in the classroom, the teachers found that the ELL students were more active participants during the lessons, assuming they felt more comfortable in their learning environment. Idrus and Sohid state that implementing styles and attitudes of CRT into the classroom influences teachers to positively adjust their teaching styles, differentiate

instruction that would be more comprehensible to the ELL students, and create stronger bonds between the ELL students and their teachers.

Unpacking Implicit Bias

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2018), implicit bias can be described as an unconscious negative attitude that one holds against a specific group of people. Implicit bias can form through life experiences and perceptions of different cultures, races, ethnic groups, etc. (American Psychological Association, 2018). It is crucial to provide both pre-service and in-service with implicit bias training when they are going to be working with ELL students. Unconscious negative beliefs that educators can hold towards their ELL students can not only negatively impact relationships, but also a student's academic outcomes (German, 2021).

Staats (2016) argues that because implicit bias is out of our consciousness, it may be hard to identify that you have it without deeply looking inwards. Staats states that to address this issue, researchers have identified a way for educators to approach the unpacking of their implicit bias, through the Implicit Association Associations. During professional developments, teachers can participate in taking the Implicit Association Test. By taking this test, educators can be made consciously more aware of some of the beliefs that they may hold towards a culturally or linguistically diverse group. Staats explains that taking a test to even identify what beliefs you may hold is the most essential first step in counteracting the problems they may be causing. Having this awareness is very important for all educators, but especially those with ELL students. Unpacking and investigating internal bias is crucial in ensuring that educators are able to educate their students without implicit bias barriers.

The challenge that we face with implicit bias is that it is almost impossible to identify unless there are opportunities created to, which could be during teacher preparation programs or

professional development sessions. As educators, addressing implicit biases is a journey that is uncomfortable, takes time, and requires an open mind (Staas, 2016). This task in unpacking bias must be created to uncover possible negative assumptions or beliefs that educators could possibly hold towards their students.

The Importance of Professional Development

As defined in chapter 1, professional development (PD) can be defined as learning experiences that provide educators with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills in the field of education. PD be given in many types of forms such as seminars, workshops, or lectures. Rizzuto (2017) reminds us that the most effective type of professional development should be an opportunity for in-service teachers to expand their foundational knowledge, and skills, while also actively participating as a learner. Rizzuto maintains that teachers often have predisposed opinions about PD, believing that most of them are irrelevant to their daily teaching needs, or are planned at times that are inconveniently out of their working hours. Adding that, most professional developments that are given to teachers are also done in one simple session, which is an inadequate amount of time to effectively learn or expand on a set of skills or knowledge set. Rizzuto states that in order for PD to be useful for mainstream teachers, they must be interested in the topic that is being presented and the topic has to be relevant to the work they are doing daily with their students in the classroom setting.

Rizzuto claims that increased PD opportunities for in-service have a significant effect on educator's knowledge development and learning growth, which in turn positively impacts student achievement outcomes. Influential PDs can help develop a teacher's classroom instruction, help teachers better connect with their students, and keep teachers updated on the changing trends in education over the years. Rizzuto also draws on research noting that teachers

who partake in more PD opportunities are more likely to score highly effective for teacher observations, grow their higher-order thinking skills, and better meet the unique needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. PD is a powerful tool that can prepare mainstream teachers to effectively teach and work with ELLs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed literature from a variety of sources that coincide with the lack of preparation for mainstream middle school teachers to support ELL students in the general education classroom. Before reviewing literature, I introduced pedagogical frameworks such as Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and the gradual release of responsibility (Lin & Cheng, 2010; McVee et al., 2017; Ortega, 2013; Tavares, 2019). Reviewing these frameworks lay the foundation of what background knowledge educators must have in order to effectively support ELLs in the classroom. The research regarding the need for teacher preparation to work with ELLs revealed data that showed that many states throughout the United States show a deficit for both pre-service and in-service teachers preparation to work with ELL students (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Brouillette et al., 2015; Casper & Theilheimer, 2010; Giles & Yazan, 2020; Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014). I also reviewed literature that reveals the impacts of preparation programs on student's learning outcomes. Many showed that students who learn from teachers who received preparation were more successful, and for teachers who did not receive professional development or a preparation program showed deficits that negatively impacted student outcomes (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Li & Peters, 2020). Examining the expectations of mainstream teachers is also a necessary component in reviewing the social emotional preparedness of mainstream teachers to work with ELLs because most of the time ELLs are being taught by a mainstream educator

(Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Villegas, 2018). Pairing with mainstream teacher expectations, in the same context it is important to examine how the attitudes of mainstream teachers towards ELLs affect their work in the classroom (NCES, 2024; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000; Villegas, 2018; Youngs & Youngs, 1999). In this chapter I also examined how teachers must be prepared to build culturally responsive classrooms. This effort can be achieved through using CRT strategies, and actively unpacking implicit bias (American Psychological Association, 2018; German, 2021; Idrus & Sohid, 2023; Staats, 2016). To conclude my review, I covered the research describing the importance of professional development for in-service teachers. Professional development allows teachers to expand their skill set and become more prepared to work with their ELL students (Rizzuto, 2017).

The research from this chapter will be used to develop a professional development (PD) described in chapter 3, which is titled ‘How to support ELL students in the mainstream classroom’. The PD will target the themes and challenges that were reviewed in the literature of this chapter. Chapter 3 will include a written description of the professional development session I will be providing to mainstream middle school teachers who lack background in ELL knowledge and strategies for success.

Chapter 3: Description of the Professional Development Program

In this chapter I outline a description of a Professional Development (PD) program targeted towards mainstream middle school teachers who lack background in ELL knowledge and strategies for success. The purpose of this PD is to provide middle school with the knowledge and tools to effectively support their ELL students in the mainstream classroom. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is extensive research to support the claims that mainstream teachers feel ill-prepared to work with their ELL students (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Brouillette et al., 2015;

Casper & Theilheimer, 2010; Giles & Yazan, 2020; Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014). Due to lack of preparation and continued professional development, student outcomes are negatively impacted (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Li & Peters, 2020).

The reviewed literature in chapter 2 directly influences the strategies and style of pedagogy that will be taught to teachers during the PD. These theories include, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and the gradual release of responsibility (Lantoff, 2000; Lin & Cheng, 2010; McVee et al., 2017; Ortega, 2013; Tavares, 2019). This PD will also give mainstream teachers the opportunity to self-reflect on their work with ELLs, and unpack implicit bias they may hold towards their ELL students. Furthermore, the PD provides teachers with recommendations and tools in building a culturally responsive classroom environment. The audience of this PD is mainstream middle school teachers who work directly with ELL students. I will begin by reviewing the agenda of the PD sessions before the participants and I dive into the discussion of relevant data and interactive activities.

The Professional Development Agenda

The Professional Development titled "How to Support English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom" will be given to middle school teachers in Long Island, NY. The teachers participating, teach in mainstream classrooms across the subject areas grades 6-8. This PD will take place during school hours, 8:00-2:00 pm from Monday November 4th to Wednesday November 6th, 2024. Monday through Wednesday have been designated as Superintendent's Conference Days by reason of Election Day.

Beyond the three PD days, teachers are also given the option to sign up for a follow up expert visit. As explained in Chapter 1, this visit entails an ELL expert visiting classrooms of

participating teachers to model/observe implemented strategies learned from the PD. Each expert visit is also followed up with a brief meeting between the expert and teacher to discuss feedback from the observation and possible recommendations for future instruction. This PD was planned in November specifically to give teachers 6-8 weeks to gain experience working with ELLs in their classes for the current school year. Teacher's September experience allows individuals to gather data, notice patterns, and find possible areas of concern in planning and instruction for their ELL students. It is important for me to present this during paid teacher-work days to place adequate attention and importance to the material involved. Presented content and materials will be available for all participants to refer back to at a later date.

Objectives and Activities

The majority of the PD will take place in the auditorium. This space was chosen to accommodate the large number of participants, to have access to a large presentation projector, and have flexibility for participants to move around in the space comfortably. During Day 2, teachers will be assigned a classroom based on subject area for ELL Lesson Plan Template Brainstorming activity. In order to effectively participate in the PD, teachers need to have a charged chromebook, and a writing utensil. As the presenter, I will provide all other materials needed for interactive participation such as a google classroom code, powerpoint presentation, google forms links, nearpod links, activity sheets, anchor chart paper, and markers. For easy access to digital materials, teachers will join a google classroom via code given to them by their principal prior to meeting for the PD (See Appendix A) . Having teachers join the google classroom prior to meeting as a group is a time-management strategy to make meeting-time more meaningful.

Day 1 Breakdown

There are three main objectives for the first day of the PD. The first objective will be lack of teacher preparation for mainstream teachers (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Brouillette et al., 2015). The second objective will be how insufficient preparation can impact student outcomes (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Giles & Yazan, 2020; Li & Peters, 2020; Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014). Lastly, self-reflection of work with ELLs. To address each objective, research from Chapter 2 will be presented in a powerpoint presentation in the form of a whole group discussion. Following the lecture, participants will have the opportunity to interact through a Turn and Talk Activity (see Appendix B). Then teachers will complete a survey to reflect on their experiences (see Appendix C). The survey asks teachers to reflect on their pre-service ELL preparation, in-service ELL PD, and personal struggles/questions concerning their work with ELLs. The reflection survey is strategically used to ignite thoughts, opinions, and passion for the topics being covered.

Next, the engaged teachers will choose their own groups of up to 6 people to participate in a group discussion activity, a small group reflection discussion paired with anchor chart creation (See Appendix D). To complete this activity, participants are first asked to share with the group their thoughts and opinions from the survey that they all had just completed. Small group discussion of shared experiences will help teachers feel validated and less alone in their experiences and struggles with teaching the ELL population. Teachers participating in this PD will have a variety of educational backgrounds and preparation experiences. Given anchor chart paper and markers, group members will be asked to split the page into four equal boxes.

Teachers will label the top two boxes, 'Pre-Service Prep', and 'In-Service Prep'. In these boxes, participants will write bullet points on their positive or negative experiences for both

preparation types. The bottom two boxes will be labeled ‘Struggles/Questions’, and ‘Teacher Tips’. The ‘Teacher Tips’ box is a space for participants to write solutions to the questions asked in the neighboring box, or helpful strategies they use in their work with ELLs. Once the anchor charts are complete, all groups will tape their work around the perimeter of the auditorium walls. Groups are asked to participate in a gallery walk to each anchor chart. After time is given for the gallery walk, participants are asked to share what they found interesting or surprising from other group’s charts. This discussion directly transitions into my closure of Day 1.

Day 2 Breakdown

The three main objectives for the second day of PD are: (a) Pedagogical frameworks and ELL specific instructional strategies, (b) The ELL lesson plan template, and (c) Content vs language objectives. Objective (a) is addressed through a lecture-style discussion of researched based pedagogical frameworks and instructional strategies that apply in planning and instructing ELL students. The frameworks presented on the powerpoint include, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, Swain’s Output Hypothesis, and the gradual release of responsibility (Lin & Cheng, 2010; McVee et al., 2017; Ortega, 2013; Tavares, 2019). These frameworks are a guide to introduce the participants to best practices for content and language learning for their ELL students. As frameworks are presented, participants will be asked to remain actively engaged by completing several activities. First they will do a Turn and Talk activity with a vignette of sixth grade students (see Appendix E). PD participants will also receive a lecture guided activity sheet (see in Appendix F). The activity sheet includes matching questions, and open ended questions for teachers to connect content presented to their classroom practices. After activity sheets are completed, participants are encouraged to share their open ended answers, as a way to wrap up this portion of the PD.

Objective (b), the ELL lesson plan template, will then be introduced to teachers. Before starting this discussion, teachers are asked to log into a Nearpod Collaborative Board using a code provided on the powerpoint presentation (see Appendix G). The Nearpod Collaborative Board is a digital discussion board where submitted responses will be anonymously shared live on the projector as responses are recorded. Teachers are asked to submit answers to the question, what are the components of an effective lesson plan?. After all responses are submitted, we will have a group discussion about what they wrote. The answers provide a segue to show participants that most mainstream lesson planning is done without taking ELL centered instruction into consideration. Next, teachers are presented with a comparison of an ELL lesson plan template (see Appendix H) and a standard lesson plan template (see Appendix I). A distinct difference in the templates is the inclusion of language objectives. The structure of a language objective is similar to a content objective, but they require the inclusion of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Other than the use of the four language skills, they could also include language functions such as hypothesizing. Implementing language objectives create success criteria of how ELL students should linguistically engage with lesson content to both achieve the content objectives and grow in their language learning.

For the next activity, teachers will be tasked with applying what they have just learned about frameworks, strategies, and language objectives by brainstorming lesson ideas in an empty ELL lesson plan template (see Appendix H). For this activity, teachers are assigned groups by subject area or by grade level and are sent to separate locations. For example, Science teachers grades 6-8 will be assigned to gather in Room 120. Following this, the Science teachers break off into smaller groups by grade level to collaborate in choosing a topic, grade level, and the relevant NYS standards for a model lesson. Teachers will work together to plan a lesson using the ELL

lesson plan template that specifically addresses the needs of their ELL students. For the duration of the time that the teachers are in their break-out rooms, I will be circulating to each classroom observing and assisting all participants. After lesson plans are completed, grade 6-8 teachers will swap their lesson plans with each other for peer evaluation. Once peer-evaluation notes are made and group discussions are finished, we will all come back together in the auditorium so that I can close out Day 2. Once the closure is complete, teachers are asked to complete an exit ticket in a google form to assess what they have learned, and reflect on their Day 2 experience (see Appendix J).

Day 3 Breakdown

The three main objectives for the third and final day of PD are: (a) Unpacking implicit bias, (b) Building a culturally responsive classroom, and (c) Post-PD reflection and explanation of expert visits. Day 3 is expected to be the most emotionally taxing day for the participants. It is common for individuals to become uncomfortable with confronting their own unconscious bias, and often feel as if they are being attacked. It is important for me to communicate to the participants that educators should place significant value in treating our students with equity and respect, and strive to create an inclusive learning environment. In order for safe environments to be created, educators must address any unconscious bias they may have. As a warm-up activity, participants will begin with a quick Turn and Talk activity (see Appendix K).

Referring back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, Staats (2016) argues that because implicit bias is out of our consciousness, it may be hard to identify that you have it without deeply looking inwards. Staats states that educators can approach the unpacking of their implicit bias, through the completion of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (see Appendix L). Staats

explains that taking this test is the most essential first step in counteracting the problems unconscious bias may be causing.

To build rapport, I will share my experience with the participants by explaining how I was initially hesitant to take the IAT, in fear of seeing negative results. I was nervous that I would possibly reveal ignorant attitudes I held that I was not aware of. It is never comfortable to unpack the biases we have, but without doing so, we will never grow as teachers or individuals. When we allow ourselves to sit in discomfort, we are starting our journey to becoming more aware and culturally responsive educators. According to German (2021), we must all ‘do the work’, which means extending these growth efforts beyond one PD session. Prefacing day 3 with this introduction is important in ensuring participants can engage in this portion of the PD with an open mind. If I showed up, forced teachers to take the IAT, and had them view their potential uncomfortable results with no prior-context, they would most likely feel attacked and disengage from the objective of the PD.

For the next activity, teachers will be asked to access and take parts of IAT, accessed through google classroom. Before taking the tests, I will discuss the creation of the test and how results can impact their teaching (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000; Villegas, 2018). Teachers must complete a series of 6 tests, the Skin-Tone IAT, the Arab-Muslim IAT, the Hispanic IAT, the Race IAT, the Asian IAT, and the Asian-Foreign IAT (Project Implicit, 2024) (see Appendix L). During this time, I ask teachers to move to a private location such as their own classroom to take these tests. Not only do I want teachers to take this test free of distraction, I want them to answer questions honestly without fear of being judged by colleagues. When teachers are finished, they will meet back together in the auditorium. I will ask participants to share about their experiences taking the tests, without disclosing sensitive information about their results. Following this,

teachers will break up into small groups of their choice to discuss topics more intimately. I allow group choice instead of assigning groups at random in hopes that the teachers would be more vulnerable and open to discussion individuals that they trust and have close relationships with. After the allotted time for discussion is complete, I aim to answer the ‘Now what?’ feeling they could be puzzled with. This aids in my transition to the portion of the PD where participants learn about the importance, and strategies to build a culturally responsive classroom.

As explained in Chapter 2, and presented in the powerpoint, German (2021) states that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is not a curriculum, but an attitude that is built into a pedagogy that works to recognize the cultural and linguistic needs of students. To introduce this topic, participants will participate in a Nearpod Collaborative Board (see Appendix M). Participants will submit responses to the question ‘What does being culturally responsive mean to you?’. After responses are discussed I will present information about building a culturally responsive classroom, by defining culturally responsive teaching and explaining why culture is relevant to student learning (German, 2021; Will & Najarro, 2023). Next, I will discuss steps in building a culturally responsive classroom and how it can benefit the ELL learning experience (Jaffe-Walter, 2018; Idrus & Sohid, 2023). Following this, participants will engage in a collaborative activity with their small group that they chose earlier. During this activity, the teachers will work together to create a concept map (see Appendix N). The concept map will bridge off the main concept box labeled ‘Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices’. With this map, teachers can create subtopics and supporting ideas to make the classroom a more culturally responsive environment. Groups will be given anchor chart paper and markers to create their concept maps. Mirroring the Day 1 activity, groups will stick their anchor chart papers on the

perimeter walls of the auditorium and participate in a gallery walk which will be followed by a discussion of the interesting and surprising findings from their peer's maps.

Following the gallery walk discussion, I will gather the attention of participants and begin to close out the final day of our PD program. During my closure, I will explain how the participants must complete a post-PD google form (see Appendix O). On the google form, they are given the option to sign up for something called an Expert Visit. As discussed in the Professional Development Agenda, this is a completely optional visit that entails an ELL expert, myself, visiting their classrooms to observe, or potentially model strategies that were taught in this PD. Each expert visit is also followed up with a brief meeting where we would discuss the feedback I had from observing their lesson/classroom environment and my possible recommendations for future instruction. This expert visit experience is a valuable opportunity for teachers who would like more personalized professional development in supporting ELLs in their mainstream classroom.

Summary

Using reviewed literature and research based data, I curated a 3-day, 15 hour PD that aims to give mainstream middle school teachers the tools in supporting ELLs in the general education classroom. Over the course of 3 days, teachers participated in lectures, whole and small group discussions, independent and group activities, while using a variety of educational technology. During this PD, the participants are provided with knowledge, tools, strategies, and styles of pedagogy that better prepare them to meet the academic, linguistic, and cultural needs of their ELL students. The teachers were also given opportunities to self-reflect, and peer-evaluate, which are two very beneficial practices in any learning process. Though a 3 day PD cannot equate to obtaining a TESOL certification, I hope that the concepts taught will

influence and empower the mainstream middle school teachers to make instructional changes to better support their ELLs in the general education classroom. In the next chapter of this capstone I will present my conclusions.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone presents my examination of the overarching research question: How can mainstream middle school teachers support ELL students in the general education classroom? In order to identify the problem, I analyzed peer reviewed studies to discuss why teachers may not be prepared to teach ELLs, and how lack of preparation for pre-service and in-service teachers can impact student's success. I also worked to emphasize how PD can be a powerful tool that can prepare mainstream teachers to effectively teach and work with ELL (Rizzuto, 2017).

Furthermore, I argued that in order for educators to be adequately prepared to support ELLs, they must be provided with effective tools and strategies through various forms of PD. In this Chapter, I draw conclusions from my literature review, discuss implications for both students and teachers, and provide my recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

During this capstone's literature review, I identified and discussed a variety of pedagogical frameworks that are essential to understand in order to effectively educate ELLs in the mainstream classroom. The frameworks include, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Swain's Output Hypothesis, and the gradual release of responsibility (Lin & Cheng, 2010; McVee et al., 2017; Ortega, 2013; Tavares, 2019). The four main themes I found include: (1) Increasing ELLs social interactions in the classroom (Tavares, 2019), (2) Simultaneously challenging ELLs while teaching within their language proficiency levels (Ortega, 2013), (3) Creating opportunities for ELLs to learn from identified gaps within their

knowledge (Ortega, 2013), and (4) Helping ELLs gradually learn by providing scaffolded support towards independent practice (Lin & Cheng, 2010; McVee et al., 2017). The information and recommendations from these frameworks can be directly applied to teacher's planning and instruction for ELLs.

The research regarding the lack of teacher preparation to work with ELLs revealed data that showed that many states throughout the United States show a deficit for both pre-service and in-service teachers preparation to work with ELL students (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Brouillette et al., 2015; Casper & Theilheimer, 2010; Giles & Yazan, 2020; Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014).

From research, I conclude that without receiving the proper amount of pre-service teacher preparation, or continued opportunities for in-service PD, teachers are left unprepared while also being held to unrealistic expectations to effectively educate ELLs in an inclusive learning environment. Lack of preparation causes negative impacts on the teaching experience.

Rubinstein-Avila and Lee (2014) found that many mainstream teachers have expressed feelings of frustration and uneasiness with teaching ELL students in the gen-ed setting. Giles and Yazan (2020) found that ill-prepared teachers were not adequately scaffolding instruction, or using unique styles of pedagogy to best support ELLs. The biggest takeaway from these studies is that lack of preparation does not only cause teachers to deliver non inclusive and inaccessible lessons, but causes them to experience feelings of inadequacy.

I also reviewed literature that reveals the impacts of preparation programs on student's learning outcomes. Many showed that students who learn from teachers who received preparation were more successful, and for teachers who did not receive professional development or a preparation program showed deficits that negatively impacted student outcomes (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Li & Peters, 2020). More specifically, I learned from Li and

Peters (2020) that once teachers are prepared with quality strategies and tools to support ELL students, their student's learning success rates increase. De Jong and Harper (2005) revealed to me that educators need to have background knowledge of ELLs oral and literacy instruction in order to give a fair and equitable assessment. Lack of preparation in this area can cause skewed scores and biased assessment. The biggest takeaway from these studies is that lack of preparation negatively impacted student outcomes, and increased professional development positively impacted student outcomes.

During chapter 2, I discussed the expectations of a mainstream teacher, and how their attitudes towards ELLs affect their work in the classroom. Findings from Villegas (2018) revealed that a well-equipped and knowledgeable teacher is necessary to ensure that the curriculum is being made comprehensible, and that the student's language needs and development are being supported. I have also learned that lack of ELL preparation for mainstream teachers to work with ELLs can impact possible implicit bias towards their ELL students. Research revealed that the 'deficit view' is one of the most apparent attitudes that stem from implicit bias. This unconscious lens must be unpacked prior to teaching ELLs. Sharkey and Layzer (2000) claim that educators with a deficit view are more likely to hold their ELLs to lower academic and language expectations, which negatively impact their learning growth. To overcome these issues, Staats (2016) suggests that educators can begin unpacking their implicit bias through the completion of the Implicit Association Test. By taking this test, educators can be made consciously more aware of some of the beliefs that they may hold towards a culturally or linguistically diverse group.

Building a culturally responsive classroom is one of the major themes found in my literature view that positively impacts the learning experience for ELLs. German (2021) states

that culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is not a curriculum, but an attitude that is built into a pedagogy that works to recognize the cultural and linguistic needs of students. I have learned that efforts to be a culturally responsive teacher look like building relationships, and using students' culture and experiences as tools for instruction. Research from Idrus and Sohid (2023) revealed that CRT influenced ELLs to become more active participants during the lessons, showing they felt more comfortable in their learning environment. My biggest takeaway from this research is that CRT can give ELLs more social connection to their teacher and peers, increase their confidence to learn, and provide them with a safe and inclusive learning environment.

To conclude my literature review, I researched the importance of PD for in-service teachers, and how it can impact their work with ELL students. According to Rizzuto (2017), professional development allows teachers to expand their skill set and become more prepared to work with their ELL students. Rizzuto claims that increased PD opportunities for in-service have a significant effect on educator's knowledge development and learning growth, which in turn positively impacts student achievement outcomes. My biggest takeaway from this research is that in-service teachers must be continually enrolled in PDs in order for them to develop their teaching skills, learn how to better connect with their students, and stay up to date on new education trends and data.

Implications for Mainstream Teachers

Mainstream middle school teachers can all benefit and feel more supported in their work with ELLs from the information, ideas, research and PD that I present in this capstone. With new data, changing demographics, and advancements in instructional strategies, it is essential for all educators to be lifelong learners. As a result of my research, mainstream teachers are being

validated in their struggles with ELL education, and are provided with strategies they can apply to their work with ELLs in the classroom. My professional development program, described in chapter 3, is a researched-backed, valuable experience that could benefit all teachers, including those who are ENL and bilingual certified. During the PD, participants will learn about the widespread issue of lack of teacher preparation, and how it impacts both teachers and students. Teachers will also learn about pedagogical frameworks and ELL specific instructional strategies that can help develop their teaching styles and practices. A valuable tool in the PD is the ELL lesson plan template. The template offers a guideline to create a differentiated lesson plan that caters to the needs of an ELL student. The ELL template includes the use of language objectives, which aim to create success criteria of how ELL students should linguistically engage with lesson content to both achieve the content objectives and grow in their language learning. Lastly, my PD offers a unique yet impactful experience in unpacking implicit bias and includes steps to build a culturally responsive classroom.

Implications for ELLs Learning Experiences and Outcomes

Any student, but more specifically ELL and Bilingual students can benefit from the concepts and ideas from my research, and the professional development program that their teachers will be offered. As their teachers implement the ideas, and practices that were taught to them, the ELL learning experience will improve. My research showed that Once teachers were prepared with quality strategies and tools to support ELL students, their learning success rates increased (Li & Peters, 2020). Aside from learning success rates, the social emotional well being of ELLs during school will also improve due to learning environments becoming more culturally responsive. Culturally responsive classrooms will make culturally diverse students feel more safe, included, supported, and celebrated (Idrus & Sohid, 2023).

Recommendations for Growth in PD and Future Research

Through the completion of this capstone, I have discovered my recommendations for a school district to increase support for their teachers in working with ELL students. I recommend that administrators continue to collect data from their teachers through anonymous surveys, and track ELL student's trends in outcomes and progress in order to discover the best PDs for their school population. Another recommendation I have is for school districts to require new teacher candidates to participate in a 'new teacher preparation program' to provide them with the correct knowledge and tools to be successful educators. In this program, new teachers can participate in ELL centered training sessions that will prepare them specifically for the demographics of the school they will be teaching in.

The recommendation I have for future research is in the area of teacher advocacy for ELLs. The needs of ELLs extend beyond academic and language support in the classroom. ELLs need to have advocates in the education system. This means, advocacy shouldn't end at providing a voice for an ELL student's needs or rights in a school. I recommend there be future research on how mainstream, ENL, and Bilingual teachers can access statewide TESOL committees, family-outreach programs, and any other advocacy work that extends beyond the classroom.

References

- American Psychological Association. (2018). *Implicit bias*. American Psychological Association.
<https://www.apa.org/topics/implicit-bias>
- Ballantyne, K. G., Sanderman, A.R., & Levy, J. (2008). *Educating English language learners: Building teacher capacity*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521360.pdf>
- Brouillette, L., Grove, D., & Hinga, B. (2015). How arts integration has helped k-2 teachers to boost the language development of english-language learners. *Journal of School Leadership, 25*(2), 286–312. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/55k5t67c>
- Casper, V., & Theilheimer, R. (2010). *Early childhood education: Learning together*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Cummins, L., & Asempapa, B. (2013). Fostering teacher candidate dispositions in teacher education programs. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 13*(3), 99–119. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1017120>
- De Jong, E. J., & Harper, C. A. (2005). Preparing Mainstream Teachers for English-Language Learners: Is Being a Good Teacher Good Enough? *Teacher Education Quarterly, 32*(2), 101–124. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23478724>
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2018). What does research tell us about educating mainstream teachers to work with ELLs? *The Educational Forum: Preparation and Development of Mainstream Teachers for Today's Linguistically Diverse Classrooms, 82*(2), 227–234.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2018.1420872>
- Gast, Chisholm, J. S., & Sivira-Gonzalez, Y. (2022). Racialization of “ESL students” in a diverse school and multilingual Latina/o peer mentors. *Race, Ethnicity and Education,*

- ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2022.2069737>
- Germán, L. E. (2021). *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*. Heinemann.
- Giles, A., & Yazan, B. (2020). “You’re not an island”: A middle grades language arts teacher’s changed perceptions in ESL and content teachers’ collaboration. *RMLE Online*, 43(3), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2020.1724045>
- Hansen-Thomas, H. & Cavagnetto, A. (2010). What do mainstream middle school teachers think about their English language learners? A tri-state case study. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 33(2), 249–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2010.502803>
- Harrison, J., & McIlwain, M.J. (2020). ESOL teachers’ experiences in their role as advocate: Making the case for transitive advocacy. *TESOL Journal*, 11(1), 1-18. <https://doiorg.brockport.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/tesj.464>
- Idrus, F., & Sohid, M. (2023). Teachers' Expectations and Challenges in Using Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Strategies in the ESL Classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 14(3), 629+. <https://link-gale-com.brockport.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/A749533844/AONE?u=brockport&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=66d857d7>
- Jaffe-Walter, R. (2018). Leading in the context of immigration: Cultivating collective responsibility for recently arrived immigrant students. *Theory Into Practice*, 57(2), 147-153. <https://doi-org.brockport.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/00405841.2018.1426934>
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing sociocultural theory. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*, 1, 1-26. Oxford University Press.

- Lin, N. C., & Cheng, H. (2010). Effects of gradual release of responsibility model on Language learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 1866–1870.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.1000>
- Li, N., & Peters, A. W. (2020). Preparing k-12 teachers for ell: improving teachers' 12 knowledge and strategies through innovative professional development. *Urban Education*, 55(10), 1489–1506. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1266012.pdf>
- McVee, M. B., Shanahan, L. E., Hayden, H. E., Boyd, F. B., Pearson, P. D., & Reichenberg, J. (2017). The Genesis of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. *Video Pedagogy in Action*, 1–22. DOI: 10.4324/9781315175638-1
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) home page, part of the U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (2024). <https://nces.ed.gov/>
- Ortega, L. (2013). *Understanding second language acquisition*. (2nd ed.) Routledge.
- Project Implicit. (1998). *Implicit Association Test*. Harvard University.
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- Rizzuto, K.C.(2017). Teachers' perceptions of ell students: Do their attitudes shape their instruction? *The Teacher Educator*, 52(3), 182–202.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2017.1296912>
- Rubinstein-Avila, E., & Lee, E. H. (2014). Secondary Teachers and English Language Learners (ELLs): Attitudes, Preparation and Implications. *The Clearing House*, 87(5), 187–191.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4399940>
- Sharkey, J., & Layzer, C. (2000). Whose Definition of Success? Identifying Factors That Affect English Language Learners' Access to Academic Success and Resources. *TESOL*

- Quarterly*, 34(2), 352–368. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587961>
- Staats, C. (2016). Understanding implicit bias: What educators should know. *American Educator*, 39(4), 29.
- Tavares, V. (2019). A review of peer interaction and second language learning for ELL students in academic contexts. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education/Revue canadienne des jeunes chercheuses et chercheurs en éducation*, 10(2).
- Villegas, A. M. (2018). Introduction to “Preparation and Development of Mainstream Teachers for Today’s Linguistically Diverse Classrooms.” *The Educational Forum*, 82(2), 131–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2018.1420848>
- Will, M., & Najarro, I. (2023). *What is culturally responsive teaching?*. Education Week. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/culturally-responsive-teaching-culturally-responsive-pedagogy/2022/04>
- Youngs, G., & Youngs, C. (1999). Mainstream teachers’ perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching ESL students. *MinneTESOL/WITESOL Journal*, 16(1), 15-29.

Appendix A

For easy access to digital materials, teachers will join a google classroom via code given to them by their principal prior to meeting for the PD.

The screenshot displays a Google Classroom interface for a course titled "How to Support English Language Learners in the M..." by Hicksville Middle School. The class code is "eue3tie". The course is organized into three days of assignments:

- DAY 1:**
 - Self-Reflection Survey (Edited Jul 31)
- DAY 2:**
 - Exit Ticket (Posted Jul 31)
 - Nearpod Discussion Board (Posted Jul 31)
- DAY 3:**
 - Post-PD Survey (Posted 9:39 PM)
 - Nearpod Discussion Board (Posted Yesterday)
 - Implicit Association Test (Posted Yesterday)

Appendix B**Turn and Talk Activity #1**

TURN AND TALK!



AFTER BEING PRESENTED WITH
A LOT OF NEW
INFORMATION.. YOU MUST
HAVE THOUGHTS!

TURN TO A PARTNER, AND DISCUSS...

- 1. ONE THING THAT SURPRISED YOU**
- 2. YES OR NO : CAN YOU RELATE TO THE TEACHERS FROM THE STUDIES?**

Be prepared to share with the group when you finish discussing the two leading questions!

Appendix C

Survey to gain knowledge of the participant's experience with pre-service ELL preparation, in-service ELL PD, and their personal struggles/questions concerning their work with ELLs



Self-Reflection Survey

1. Grade Level

- 6
- 7
- 8

2. Subject Taught

- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- English
- Other _____

3. Level of Education

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorate

4. Please list your levels of education, institution attended, graduating year, and teaching certification obtained. PLEASE include any other teaching certifications you have obtained outside of a bachelors/masters/doctorate program.

Ex:

1. *Bachelors: SUNY Cortland 2021: Inclusive Childhood Ed (1-6)*
2. *Masters: SUNY Brockport 2024: TESOL (K-12)*
3. *Certification in Early Childhood Ed (B-2)*
4. *Certification in Literacy (K-12)*

5. Did your pre-service teacher preparation program TEACH you about ELL education?

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but it was only touched on slightly

6. Did your pre-service teacher preparation program offer an opportunity to directly teach ELLs in a classroom setting?

- Yes
- No

7. If you answered YES to the question above, do you feel your cooperating teacher or supervising professor supported you to give ELLs effective instruction? Please explain your experience below. If you answered NO, type 'N/A'

8. Did you complete your pre-service teacher preparation program feeling confident and prepared to teach ELLs in your own classroom?

- Yes
- No

9. If you answered YES to question 8, please explain how your program helped you feel confident and prepared.

10. If you answered NO to question 8, please explain what your program lacked, or could have done better to prepare you.

11. (QUANTITY) Do you feel the Hicksville UFSD has offered enough ELL centered PD?

- Yes
- No

12. (QUALITY) Please list anything you remember from these prior ELL PDs. Do you feel these PDs were helpful, informative, and relevant to your day to day teaching? Explain.

—

13. How many ELLs are typically in one of your class sections?

- 0-2
- 2-6
- 6-10
- 10+

14. Do you have an ENL certified Co-teacher?

- Yes

No

15. Please describe what support you DO receive to teach your ELL students.

16. Please describe what support you DO NOT, but WISH TO receive to teach your ELL students.

17. From the options below, which do you feel you struggle with, or concern you the most about teaching ELLs in the general education classroom? Please choose all that apply.

- Planning
- Understanding or Access to Student's ELP levels
- Building Relationships
- Access to Translated Materials
- Instructional Strategies
- Assessment
- Other _____

18. What do you wish to get out of this PD?

Please be AS HONEST as possible, reading your feedback on Day 1 can help adjust or add information to Days 2 and 3 to meet the needs of you, the HMS staff. (This is an anonymous survey)

Appendix D

Group discussion activity paired with anchor chart creation

GROUP UP : Group of 6 people Max

DISCUSS : Share with the group your thoughts and opinions from the survey that you all just completed. **WHAT FEELINGS OR THOUGHTS DID THE SURVEY PROVOKE?**

ANCHOR CHART :

Pre-Service Prep	In-Service Prep
Struggles/Questions	Teacher Tips

1. With your group, complete the anchor chart in the format displayed.
2. When you are finished, tape the anchor chart paper to a wall around the auditorium.
3. Once all charts are taped, participate in a GALLERY WALK. Be prepared to share your observations

Appendix E

Turn and Talk activity with a vignette of sixth grade students

TURN AND TALK!



Picture this scenario:

- You are a 6th grade teacher, and have class of 20 students. During class, you ask your students to write a 4 paragraph essay explaining why we need algae in the ocean ecosystem.
- During independent work time you observe...
 - * 9 students are staring at a blank page
 - * 5 students are writing bullet points about algae in the ocean ecosystem
 - * 3 of the students are writing the essay in the correct format, but incorrect facts
 - * 2 students wrote successful body paragraphs, but no intro or conclusion
 - * 1 student is completing the essay in the correct format AND included accurate information

Only 1 student successfully completed the task. Why were the other 19 struggling? What did they all need before completing this task?

Appendix F

A lecture guided activity sheet for participants to complete as they learn about pedagogical frameworks.

HOW TO SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

DAY 2 LECTURE ACTIVITY SHEET

These frameworks are a guide to plan future instruction to influence content and language learning for your ELL students.

Part 1 Directions: Please match numbers 1-4 to their correct descriptions as you listen to the lecture.

1. Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory 2. Krashen’s Input Hypothesis

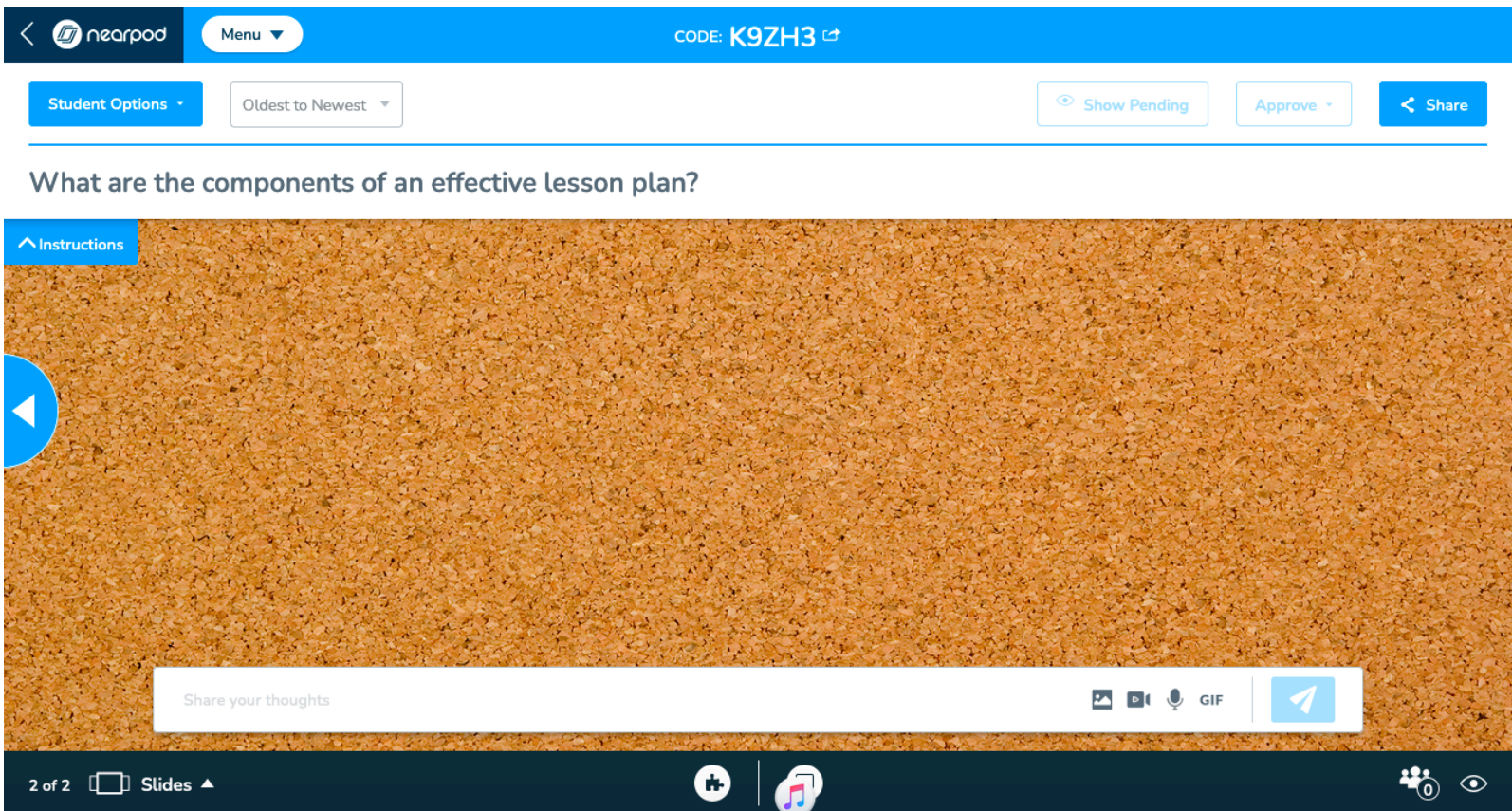
3. Swain’s Output Hypothesis 4. The Gradual Release of Responsibility

- _____ - ELLs need to be exposed to linguistic input that is just slightly above their current language level so that they can understand the new input. What students hear, see, and perceive as you teach.
- _____ - People learn language by noticing that one uses it incorrectly. The learner then corrects herself and uses language that correctly follows the grammatical rules. ELLs can communicate at the level of their language proficiency
- _____ - Gradual shift of responsibility and mental load from the educator to the students during instruction. Model instruction → Guided instruction → Student collaboration → Independent learning
- _____ - Second language learning is largely impacted by learning through social interactions. All humans learn more effectively when they interact with “more skilled” individuals such as peers, teachers and parents.

Part 2 Directions: Pick 1 out of the 4 frameworks to write about in the space below. Explain how you see yourself using this in the classroom to support ELLs with specific examples to the content you teach.

Appendix G

The Nearpod Collaborative Board is a digital discussion board where submitted responses will be anonymously shared live on the projector as responses are recorded. Completed on Day 2.



Appendix H

The ELL Lesson Plan Template

Teacher:				
Content Objective(s): -	Class:		Date:	
	Topic:			
	Skills: <input type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Listening <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Writing			
	Language Objective(s): -	NYS Standard:		
		Vocabulary: Simple - Difficult -		
Success Criteria				
Prior Knowledge				
Teaching Materials				
Teaching Instructions	Purpose	Learning Activities	Time	
1. Warm Up				
2. Presentation				
3. Practice				
4. Check for Understanding				
Formative Assessment:				

Appendix I:

The Standard Lesson Plan Template

Teacher

School

--	--

Class/Course

Date

--	--

Name of Lesson

--

Standards

--

Learning Target and Success Criteria

--

Materials and Technology Integration

--

Procedures

--

Assessment

--

Appendix J

Teachers are asked to complete an exit ticket in a google form to assess what they have learned, and reflect on their Day 2 experience



Exit Ticket

1. Which framework(s) can you realistically see yourself implementing into your daily teaching practices? Check all that apply.

- Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory
- Krashen's Input Hypothesis
- Swain's Output Hypothesis
- The Gradual Release of Responsibility

2. Verbs : Discuss, Verbally describe, Write, Read, Tell, Listen, Summarize, and Use ...(transition words, adjectives, question words, etc..) are used in writing what kind of objective?

- Content Objectives
- Language Objectives

3. What is your biggest takeaway from learning about and practicing within the ELL Lesson Plan Template?

4. With tomorrow being the final day of professional development, please rate your experience thus far on a scale of 1-10, and explain why.

Appendix K**Turn and Talk Activity****RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENTS BELOW AS I READ THEM ALOUD.**

- As a teacher, I place significant value in treating my students with equity and respect.
- As a teacher, I strive to create an inclusive learning environment.

TURN AND TALK!

1. What does equity mean to you? What is the difference between equity and equality in education?
2. What do you think the characteristics of an inclusive learning environment look like?
3. What does implicit bias mean?

Appendix L

Teachers will be asked to access and take parts of [IAT by Project Implicit](#). They must complete a series of 6 tests, the Skin-Tone IAT, the Arab-Muslim IAT, the Hispanic IAT, the Race IAT, the Asian IAT, and the Asian-Foreign IAT.



Project Implicit

[Log In](#)

[Take a Test](#)

[About Us](#)

[Learn More](#)

[Technical Issues](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Donate](#)

Race IAT

Race ('Black - White' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Black faces as well as positive and negative words.

Asian IAT

Asian American ('Asian - European American' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Asian-American faces as well as positive and negative words.

Skin-tone IAT

Skin-tone ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize light-skinned faces and dark-skinned faces as well as positive and negative words.

Arab-Muslim IAT

Arab-Muslim ('Arab Muslim - Other People' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize names that likely belong to Arab-Muslims and names that likely belong to other nationalities or religions as well as positive and negative words.

Hispanic IAT

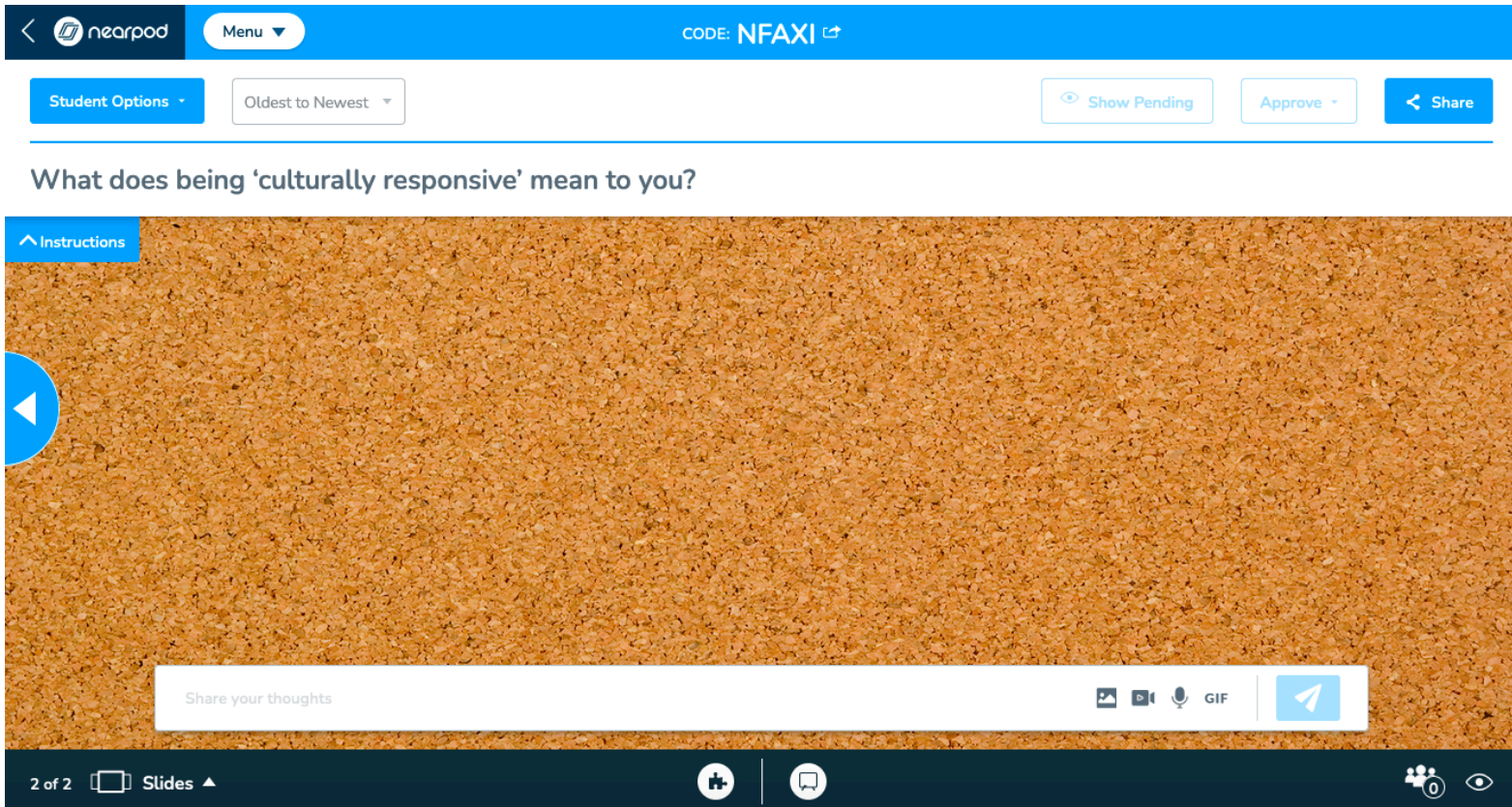
Hispanic American ('Hispanic American – European American' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize typical Hispanic names and typical European American names as well as positive and negative words.

Asian-Foreign IAT

Asian American ('Asian - European American' IAT). In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Asian-American faces as well as images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

Appendix M

The Nearpod Collaborative Board is a digital discussion board where submitted responses will be anonymously shared live on the projector as responses are recorded. Completed on Day 3.



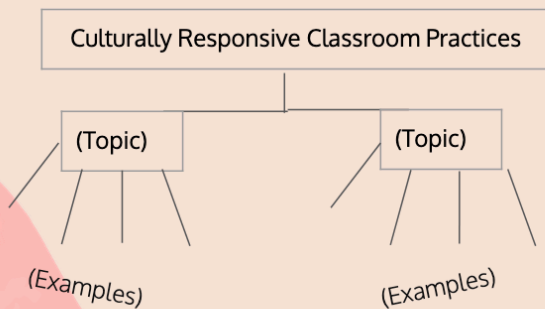
Appendix N

Group discussion activity paired with concept map creation

GROUP UP : Group of 6 people Max

DISCUSS : Share with the group your thoughts and ideas on how you can personally implement culturally responsive classroom practices.

CONCEPT MAP :



1. With your group, complete the Concept Map in the format displayed.
2. When you are finished, tape the large paper to a wall around the auditorium.
3. Once all maps are taped, participate in a GALLERY WALK. Be prepared to share your observations

Appendix O:**Post-PD Reflection Survey Including Sign-Up for Expert Visit****Post PD Reflection**

1. On a scale of 1-5, please record your satisfaction with this 3-Day PD program.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

2. Please write about your biggest takeaway(s) from this PD that you feel will help you in your everyday teaching practices.

3. Please give any relevant feedback to how I can improve this PD for future presentations.

Expert Sign Up

Please list your name, and school email if you wish to participate in the expert visit experience. Further information will be provided to you in the following days via email.
