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The Effects of Balanced Literacy Strategies on English Language Learners

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Abstract

The number of ELLs continues to grow in our country, and teachers need to know how to adequately service them. Due to the differences in educational data such as test scores and enrollment in postsecondary education, there is thought to be an achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers. ELLs need to be given the same opportunities as native English speakers in order to read and write on grade level. If students cannot read on grade level by the end of third grade, it affects their academic potential, self-esteem, socio-economic potential and more. The use of a wide range of balanced literacy strategies can help bring ELLs to grade level. In my professional development, elementary teachers learn a variety of balanced literacy strategies to apply to a lesson format, which I have created. Teachers who attend the professional development walk away with a created individualized lesson, which includes a variety of balanced literacy techniques for one of their own students. The use of a variety of balanced literacy techniques will help bring ELLs to grade level. There is still much research needed on the effects balanced literacy as a philosophical orientation on secondary and post secondary ELLs.

Keywords: balanced literacy, ELLs, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension

Chapter 1

The Problem

Why are we not training all regular and English Language Learner (ELL) teachers in balanced literacy intervention strategies? “The balanced literacy approach contains multiple elements of reading, writing and word study at various levels of scaffolding” (Balanced Literacy Framework, 2018). Balanced literacy does not have a prescribed structure. It supports the belief that writing and reading achievement are accomplished through many different approaches and instructional strategies. I have been able to work with a few balanced literacy intervention teachers in Upstate New York throughout the completion of the Masters of Education in TESOL program at SUNY Brockport. The teachers I observed pulled students out of their classroom for one-on-one instruction on literacy and equipping them with reading strategies to be able to read independently. Students in these programs are learning reading strategies that are phonetic and meaning-based to improve their literacy levels. These reading specialists service early readers (elementary school age) to bring them up to grade level. It is through the observation of these teachers, that I have decided the use of those strategies will benefit literacy gains for ELLs of all ages.

The Importance of the Problem

What is the problem with not being able to read on grade-level? If students are not taught phonetic and meaning strategies to read, they will not be able to learn on their own through literature. Not being able to read grade-level texts hurts a student’s academic

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success in all subject areas. “It will take both wide-ranging and carefully targeted actions and initiatives to help more students read proficiently by the end of third grade so they can take on the learning tasks associated with fourth grade and beyond” (Fiester, 2010, p. 25). Starting in fourth grade all the way through high school, students need to read on grade level to achieve grade-level English Language Arts tasks, but also to achieve grade-level tasks in all other subjects, as the text is written with grade-level literacy. Fiester, for instance, encourages us to look at the numbers:

Let’s do the math: There are 7.9 million low-income children from birth through age 8—one-fifth of all kids in this age group. If current trends hold true, 6.6 million of these children are at increased risk of failing to graduate from high school on time because they won’t be able to meet NAEP’s proficient reading level by the end of third grade. (p. 10)

Fiester is addressing the problem through the lens of native English speakers. The complexity of English language reading also has great impact on the graduation rates of ELLs as they too have to take and pass high stake exams to graduate. Therefore, if ELLs are not adequately serviced, they will face low self-esteem and minimal academic progress, which may contribute to high dropout rates. It has been found that students who do not read on grade level tend to lack a sense of personal worth and competence, and because of this shy away from certain activities (Hisken, 2011). It has also been found that “Without strong literacy skills, students are less likely to experience academic success and more likely to drop out of high school before graduating” (Carlson, 2013, p.

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1). Therefore, ELLs need to be equipped with strong literacy skills so they are able to experience academic success.

ELLs are positioned by many as having deficits because they lack reading skills in English. Recently, the educational results of ELLs have become more of a focus in English education research. Unfortunately, much of the scholarly discourse about the education of ELLs emphasizes their shortcomings, and views educating them as a problem, instead of acknowledging how much they enrich education (Shapiro, 2014). Standardized tests are a poor representation of what ELLs know, yet they are fuel in the positioning of ELLs. Results of standardized tests are viewed as objective indicators of language and literacy skills, yet research has shown that these tests are not a true measure of ELL's capabilities (Shapiro, 2014). This negative and narrow-minded positioning has been reinforced in education and in society. Research has found that ELLs are behind in a number of measures including results of state testing, participation in advanced classes, and enrollment in postsecondary education. Due to these differences between native English speakers and ELLs, conversations of educational professionals and public media have been focused on the differences as an achievement gap (Shapiro, 2014). In order to fight this deficit positioning, ELLs need to be given the same opportunities as native speakers for balanced literacy intervention. If the skills are systematically taught, they could reach or surpass their peers. Having a different L1 does not mean one has a different IQ yet, "Closely tied with narratives of educational deficit are assumptions of intellectual inferiority" (Shapiro, 2014, p. 397).

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If ELLs are not able to be successful in school due to inadequate literacy instruction, it will limit opportunities in the future, as well as generations to come. Sometimes ELLs English proficiency level is assessed, but professionals decide to wait until the ELL has a higher English proficiency level before they can service them with a balanced literacy intervention service. However, ELLs need to start balanced literacy intervention services as early as possible, regardless of their proficiency level (Kelly, Gómez-Bellengé, Chen, & Schulz, 2008).

It is believed that if a student is not on grade-level by grade three, they will forever be behind grade-level. In addition, if literacy levels continue to be below grade level after high school graduation entering a higher education institution will require them to take and pass English placement exams. These courses are required but do not count towards degree completion credits. For instance, if ELLs are not able to pass English access exams, they need to pay for services elsewhere to learn English, before applying to community college. This not only delays their degree, but could be very costly. At a local community college, all students whose primary language is other than English must pass an English exam before they can enroll.

All applicants from countries where English is not the primary language or the language of education must submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing Service (IELTS). Minimum score for consideration is 55 on the Internet-based TOEFL and minimum score band is 5.0 for IELTS. (Monroe Community College, 2019)

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This means that students must have a level of English at grade level or above before leaving high school.

If the student does pass the English access exams, but does not pass with a score high enough to be placed in English Language Arts classes, the student must enroll in English as a Second Language courses. Students are placed in the appropriate level course after a test including a written evaluation and an interview. Once placed, students must receive a grade of C or higher to advance to the next course in the sequence.

Students need to test out of all the ESL courses offered before they can take English Language Arts courses (Monroe Community College, 2019). This too, could be very costly and time consuming for the ELL students. If an ELL student does not have a high level of English leaving high school they will face a very expensive and slow processes to completing an associate or college degree. It is generally agreed that getting a college degree provides people with more employment opportunities, and therefore financial stability.

I am a certified Spanish language teacher and seeking a TESOL masters. A program requirement is to observe multiple TESOL classrooms. I have observed and worked with TESOL professionals and became aware that through the use of balance literacy strategies ELL and non-ELL elementary students made significant gains in decoding and comprehension. Mastering literacy skills clearly demonstrates that reading and comprehension is a pivotal element for school success and beyond. ELLs need to build not only their L1 skills but also their L2 skills to pass high stake exams in school and college. The economic outcomes are also impacted by high school graduation and

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progression to secondary education. “At an individual level, the median annual income of a high school dropout in 2007 was \$23,000, compared with \$48,000 for someone who obtained a bachelor’s or higher degree—a considerable difference for anyone trying to support a family and be economically self-sufficient” (Fiester, 2010, p. 9).

Mainstream classroom and TESOL teachers could benefit from drawing on balanced literacy intervention training to lessen the linguistic, socio-cultural, and assessment challenges ELLs face in our educational system. The reality is that balanced literacy is not a part of the training in TESOL and LOTE teachers receive in pre-service or in-service training. Nonetheless, it is crucial to implement balanced literacy strategies if we want ELLs to gain linguistic skills, avoid the complexities inherent in not passing examinations, and to improve socio-economic status. In Chapter 2, I will present research on balanced literacy interventions and the impact on ELL’s academic and social success. I also discuss when this instruction is most important in order to avoid long-term negative effects on the student. In Chapter 3 I will present a professional development that includes a model lesson plan and materials, intended for students before grade four, based on the literacy interventions discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

The Need for Balanced Literacy

Our racial and ethnic composition of the United States is changing, and we have more ELLs every year. “This diversity is added by the increase of the English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools in recent decades. Recently, the ELL population has become the fastest growing segment of the school population in the United States” (Li, Mitchell, and Howard, 2011, p. 25). Snyder, Witmer, and Schmitt (2017) found that 70% of fourth-grade ELLs, and 71% of eighth grade ELLs cannot read on grade level. These numbers are very different in comparison to the non-ELL population, where only 30% of fourth graders and 23% of eighth graders cannot read on grade level. In addition, Snyder et al. (2017) state that in California, 59% of ELLs are long-term ELLs. These ELLs have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years, yet still are not English proficient.

The stark differences in data show ELLs are not being adequately serviced, and therefore ELL students are consistently not meeting expected reading levels. “In order to provide ELLs with the reading skills necessary for academic success, it is important to provide effective reading instruction that addresses their unique needs” (Snyder et al., 2017, p. 136). With teachers who do not have the skills to effectively teach ELLs, teachers could view ELLs as failures. It doesn’t matter if teachers are putting effort into reaching ELLs if they are not using effective strategies. Teachers need to be using balanced literacy instructional methods to approach literacy instruction through proven effective strategies. In this capstone I will use balance literacy as a theoretical concept that reading and writing can be improved through instructional support and a wise range

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of instructional strategies. If the teachers are not using effective strategies, all of the teacher's effort and the student's effort will be for naught. The constant failure of ELLs, results in a social stigma that they cannot learn. If all teachers can use balanced literacy strategies to teach their students, we will have more successful ELLs.

What is Balanced Literacy?

A balanced literacy intervention specialist's role is to bring the lowest achieving students to grade level in reading and writing standards. The goal of early balanced literacy instruction is to intervene in a low-achieving child's reading instruction early, before their academic potential is permanently limited.

The balanced literacy approach contains multiple elements of reading, writing, and word study at various levels of scaffolding. Teachers use the gradual release of responsibility method, often referred to as I Do, We Do, You Do, to teach explicit skills and strategies, allow time for guided and independent practice, and give feedback to students. (HPISD Early Literacy Learning Team 2017-2018, p. 8)

Sirinides, Gray and May (2018) conducted a four-year study on the trajectories of students experiencing difficulty reading who complete a balanced literacy intervention program. These researchers concluded that balanced literacy intervention is an "effective intervention that can help reverse struggling readers' trajectories of low literacy" (Sirinides et al., 2018, p. 331).

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Meeting Students Where They Are. According to Egan (2014) “The population of school-aged English Language Learners has grown 169% over the past two decades” (p. 15). Egan also states that ELLs are in the 30th percentile for reading achievement. With the number of ELLs increasing, we, as teachers, need to meet them where they are. We cannot expect all ELLs to be achieving grade-level literacy levels. ELLs need to learn in their Zone of Proximal Development, not at their grade level. This is a key feature of balanced literacy instruction. Giving a student too much or too little assistance while reading does not help them make gains as the potential maximum rate, because this means they are not in their Zone of Proximal Development.

The Five Key Areas for Effective Reading Instruction. ELLs should be offered the same intervention services to address their linguistic challenges as native-English speaking students. Egan (2014) presents research indicating that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are the five most important reading practices. During the completion of my capstone project I was able to observe and work with literacy instruction expert, which I will call Angela. Angela uses balanced literacy strategies to improve literacy of elementary students. She works with students to improve reading and writing. Angela also uses the five key areas for balanced literacy instruction. The same strategies were successful with English Language Learners. Egan (2014) reports that ELLs need early, intense, and direct instruction in phonological awareness and phonics. She also states that ELLs must be given opportunities to develop their vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies.

An Exemplary Balanced-Literacy Program

In the upstate New York schools I observed, the balanced literacy intervention specialist worked with first-grade students experiencing difficulty with reading every day for thirty minutes. The scheduled time does not pull students from full-class literacy instruction. This pull-out intervention supports their full-class literacy instruction. It does not replace it.

Throughout this capstone I will incorporate my observations of the reading specialist, which I will call Angela. One of the programs Angela uses is Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery is an early-intervention program of balanced literacy. Sirinides et al. (2018) state, “A key goal of the Reading Recovery intervention is to equip students with literacy strategies that can be applied in the regular classroom, allowing them to continue developing as readers after the intervention has ended” (p. 317). I spoke with Angela to learn first-hand about her intervention strategies.

Angela’s responsibility is to bring readers experiencing difficulty to grade level. This practitioner uses the Reading Recovery program, however there are many other reading programs that apply a balanced literacy approach. In Reading Recovery she exclusively teaches first-graders. Reading Recovery supports Leveled Literacy Intervention (by Fountas and Pinnell) that is conducted in the classroom. Leveled Literacy Intervention is for all elementary readers. In academic intervention she works with groups of second and fourth graders.

Sirinides, et al. (2018) explain that Reading Recovery lessons have a specific structure, yet there is some room that allows the teacher to choose which instructional

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activities are most beneficial for their student at that time. The structure includes reading familiar books, running records, letter or word recognition activities, writing, sentence assembly, and the introduction of a new book.

Addressing the Five Key Areas

Fluency. Angela also taught intonation and fluency by modeling reading a book together with the student, taking turns reading each page. Intonation and fluency need to be modeled by the teacher (Johnson, 2006) so the student can hear more than just himself or herself read. All readers, but especially English Language Learners, need explicit instruction and modeling of correct English intonation (Herrera & Perez, 2015). They need an example for how fluent reading should sound.

We know that fluency is not just speed and accuracy. “A child who is not fluent, who reads by considering each word as a separate entity, is more apt to lose the sense of story or meaning of the sentence” (Johnson, 2006, p. 60). Angela designed her lessons to have readers know the words, and think about the meaning instead of having to focus on each individual word; this is a goal of balanced literacy. They do this by rereading familiar literature. Repeated reading activities benefit English Language Learners by providing them the opportunity to develop automatic recognition of English phonemes, high-frequency words, and word patterns (Herrera & Perez, 2015). “Time for familiar reading each day will provide the child with opportunities to practice reading fluently. Each child needs to know what it feels like to be a fluent reader” (Johnson, 2006, p. 60). The student that read familiar texts with Angela was excited to read them. She laughed as

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she read parts of the books, and commented on what was happening and what was going to happen next. She demonstrated high comprehension, and enjoyed reading.

Vocabulary. Early intervention teachers also pair sight words with context (Johnson, 2006). Herrera and Perez agree with Johnson; they say sight words can and should be taught, especially to English Language Learners. The key though, is that the sight word is immediately connected to text (Herrera & Perez, 2015). Sight words without a connection to text will not be remembered with meaning attached, and therefore will not aid in comprehension in the future. Snyder et al. (2017) reports that vocabulary instruction is highly effective for ELLs, as it is a basic reading component.

Phonics and Phonological Awareness. Dussling (2018) conducted a study focused on the use of balanced literacy strategies' affects on ELL's phonological awareness and phonics. The study reinforces previous research supporting positive effects of explicit early reading interventions for ELLs which focus on phonological awareness and phonics, regardless of their oral proficiency level of English. Snyder et al. (2017) also state that based on their findings, there is a strong positive relationship between early instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness with later reading outcomes for ELLs. "Specifically, they instructed kindergarten students on letter-sound correspondence, segmenting, word reading and spelling, irregular words, phoneme blending, alphabet naming, and oral reading. Large effects sizes were identified in the areas of phonics, fluency, and comprehension" (Snyder et al. 2017, p. 140).

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Comprehension. Egan (2014) reports that it is important to give ELLs opportunities for structured academic talk and independent reading with a purpose. The students should discuss comprehension of the reading through balanced literacy techniques such as talking about author's purpose and main idea. Using a balanced literacy model, the child will consider many aspects of the text such as letters, words, illustrations, language, messages, and stories. At the beginning of the process it will take time and attention, but with practice the reader will understand what they have read, and be a more fluent reader.

Professional Development. Another component of teaching literacy is continuous professional development on current best practices. For instance, Angela indicated that the reading program she uses also incorporates annual professional development opportunities. In these PDs teachers are able to work with other teachers, teacher leaders, and university trainers to keep best practices current. In addition, teachers are observed and assessed every year, and receive feedback from their teacher leader. Similarly, Kindall, Crowe, and Elsass (2018) support the implementation of continual, focused professional development in literacy instruction. In their study, teachers commented that they found the professional development more beneficial when it was focused on their grade area, and when they were given a clear plan for implementation. Similarly, the teachers I observed using balanced literacy programs were also constantly professionally developing. They reported they were better able to service their students because of it. The teachers of Kindall et al. (2018) found they benefit from

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the different methods of professional development that balanced literacy specialists receive.

Furthermore, the surveyed teachers desired the following to support their individual growth: to observe master teachers implementing instructional strategies during literacy instruction; to have someone come into their individual classroom to model best practices in literacy; and to provide ongoing support through observations and constructive feedback multiple times during the school year. (p. 308)

Lastly, balanced literacy teachers are inspired to be more effective when they are continuously professionally developing. “The ability, or desire, to transfer new learning to instructional practices was related to the level of ongoing support they received...” (Kindall et al., 2017, p. 308).

When Balanced Literacy Intervention Needs to Happen

Assessment. Dussling (2018) reports that often times the placement of ELLs into a reading intervention service is delayed in order to give them more time to develop their English proficiency.

Research has shown that, like native English speakers, English language learners (ELLs) may struggle in areas that require skills such as phonemic awareness, fluency, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension (August & Shanahan, 2006) making explicit instruction in these areas imperative. That being said, reading instruction should in no way be delayed to wait for the attainment of English language proficiency. (Dussling, 2018, p. 276)

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Dussling (2018) also argues for earlier assessments and interventions for ELLs in order to increase their chances of succeeding in school, and decrease the chance that they will need special education services later.

Socio-Cultural Challenges of Low-Achievement in Reading. Balanced literacy intervention techniques are beneficial for ELLs, and they should not be denied to students. These services should be early interventions. The long-term cost to the student of not getting these early intervention services is detrimental.

Students must receive these services before fourth grade. Students are given until the end of third grade to learn to read, yet starting in fourth grade they must use their established literacy skills to progress in other subjects. If a student reads below grade level in fourth grade, a lot of the printed curriculum will be incomprehensible. Consequences of being a poor reader in fourth grade follow the student through high school. “Not surprisingly, students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioral and social problems in subsequent grades and higher rates of retention in grade” (Fiester, 2010, p. 9). Trends have shown that students who are poor readers at the end of third grade are unlikely to graduate high school (Fiester, 2010). As we know, many of these students that are behind their peers in literacy level, are ELLs. To avoid such steep consequences, we need to service ELLs using balanced literacy instruction skills before third grade.

Feister (2010) reports long-term consequences of low-achievement. Feister (2010) warns that if we do not intervene and support ELL’s reading level before grade three, this could have an effect on their adult livelihood, and therefore on how well they can support

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future children. “Students who cannot read proficiently are especially unlikely to obtain a post-secondary degree, which is necessary for the kind of jobs that make America globally competitive in the age of information and communications technology” (Fiester, 2010, p. 11).

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, I have observed many ELL teachers throughout the master’s completion. I observed one teacher at the elementary level that gave every second she had to her students. She had one student who received all the ELL instruction she was legally entitled to, but this ELL teacher felt the student needed even more intervention. It became that the teacher was giving up her lunch to instruct this student. The teacher was working very hard, as was the student, but they were not seeing the progress they had hoped to see. Halfway through the year the teacher stopped this additional intervention time. She said that although she was receiving extra services, she was in turn missing her own lunch. This meant she was missing out on much needed social learning and bonding with her peers, which is also very valuable in language development. I agree because I too know social learning is very important, but, looking back on that experience now, if this teacher could have been equipped with balanced literacy instructional tools, I believe she would have been able to see much more progress in the student.

In conclusion, ELL teachers and mainstream teachers instructing ELLs need to use balanced literacy intervention strategies. Although they can be applied to any grade level, it is extremely important that they are used before fourth grade, in order to avoid

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long-term negative effects. In Chapter 3 you will practice identifying a student's strengths and areas of need, discuss how to address them, see an example lesson plan, and create your own lesson plan.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 of my professional development is designed for elementary school teachers working with ELL populations. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is important for students to participate in instruction centered on the philosophical orientation of balanced literacy. This approach supports the use of a wide range of literacy tools that educators use to support students reading and writing. Balanced literacy instruction at a young age can support efforts to improve reading by fourth grade. I have invited both Kindergarten and First Grade teachers to attend the Professional Development. The goal of the PD is for teachers to identify students' literacy strengths and needs. They will also walk away with a balanced literacy lesson they create to best address ELL and general education students' strengths and needs.

I have created this PD because I observed successful and unsuccessful literacy instruction for ELLs. The unsuccessful teachers were trying to teach their ELL students, but simply did not have the tools and strategies to move students from one level to the next. The successful teachers used a wide range of balanced literacy strategies. After my observations, I decided all teachers need access to successful strategies for literacy instruction. I aim to be an ELL teacher that can identify students' strengths and needs and implement balanced literacy strategies, while creating individualized lessons for my students. The lessons will be individualized to address linguistic and literacy needs, in addition to make connections to their lived experiences.

Description of the Professional Development

Teachers will hear me read an audio example of a student's reading (a mock reading). While listening, teachers will answer specific questions about successes, misread words, self-corrections, interventions, and more (see Appendix A, Figure 1.2). Once teachers have answered these questions, they will then be able to identify strengths and needs. We will listen to the recording twice to give participants the opportunity to analyze and debrief. Teachers will have five minutes to discuss this with a table partner. I would like teachers to listen and make their own analysis, with the guidance of my questions, and find the student's strengths and needs without me telling them. This will help them to be confident that they are capable of identifying these on their own.

Next, in the format of group discussion and with the assistance of my guiding questions, teachers will be able to identify and share their analysis. They will find that in the mock reading, the "student" struggles with letter identification and meaning. "She" does not ask herself, "Did the sentence I just read make sense?" This means she does not always comprehend what she is reading.

The next step then, is how to help this student by addressing her specific needs in order to get her to read on grade level. This lesson model can be adapted for all ELL students experiencing difficulty learning to read in English.

It is important to have the student reading at her reading level. The mock student was tested prior to this lesson to ensure that this reading level (Level 5/Level D depending on which leveling system is used) is at a level of comprehensible input for her. Participants in the professional development can use any leveling system they have

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access to. The levels are determined, allowing students to make mistakes, but not too many. The Level 5 (Level D) testing book, for example, contains 100 words. The student is allowed 11 errors while reading this book. If she has more than that, the student will be asked to read the book at Level 4. If the student did not make very many errors, they can try to read the Level 6 book. This is how the reading level is tested, so it is at a level of comprehensible input.

I borrowed many techniques from a wide range of balanced literacy models in this lesson; familiar reads, “pulling down” sounds, writing an elaborate sentence, cutting and reordering the sentence, tag-team reading, and a picture walk (see Appendix A, Figure 1.3, Example Lesson). A picture walk is when the teacher goes through each page to briefly talk about what is happening in each picture in order to give the student an idea as to what they will be reading about. This generally helps students’ accuracy. After the picture walk, students can also use meaning as a technique for decoding words.

Mock Lesson and Construction Process. Teachers will receive a copy of the lesson model (see Appendix A, Figure 1.3, Example Lesson). I will walk teachers through the steps of the lesson and how it was constructed. The basic structure of the lesson is the student first independently reads a familiar book aloud, and the teacher records a running record (see Appendix A, Figure 1.7). Next, the student does hands-on work isolating and addressing specific areas of need. Next the student will reinforce areas of need through a writing activity. The teacher is at liberty to choose an appropriate writing activity based on the level of the student. After this, the teacher and the student tag-team read a book that applies the specific areas of need that were just addressed.

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Finally, the student is able to read a new book, and the teacher is able to intervene and assist. The student is then asked to make a personal connection to the book and complete a sentence through art instead of writing.

As far as the hands-on work my student did, I used many different strategies to address the confusion she has with similar letters and digraphs. I had my student “pull down” sounds of “ch” and “sh” because she was struggling with using the two sounds interchangeably. You can use plastic letters, magnetic letters, or simply written letters on paper index cards to create these manipulatives. This allows students to physically move the letters on the table as they pronounce them. The student also approaches words as each individual sound, instead of approaching “sh” as the digraph it is, she would first approach an “s” sound and then an “h” sound. After speaking the two sounds she will then decide the “sh” should be one sound. By pulling “sh” and “ch” down on the table and saying them as she pulled them down, she was reinforcing that “sh” is only one sound, but also the difference between “sh” and “ch.” I thought this worked very well with her. All of the books we read in this lesson had “sh” and “ch” words included.

The mock student was asked to write a sentence on a sentence strip. I wanted her to first, reinforce and apply the “sh” sound, starting with the word “she.” The student originally wanted to write “She tried to fly.” but I asked her to add to her sentence. I asked her, “Why did she try to fly?” My student then decided she could add “...like the bird.” which made the sentence more complex, and it showed understanding of the reading.

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I then wrote an identical sentence on a sentence strip, had her read mine, and then chopped the sentence up with scissors into each word and punctuation. I thought this was great for my student to work on word order, and manipulating sentences. She had to reconstruct the sentence in a way that looked and sounded correct. It is also an important practice for students to begin a sentence with a capital letter, and end the sentence with punctuation.

The first and second books in the lesson are familiar reads. In order to select these books, teachers can use whatever leveled library they have access to. Familiar reads improve fluency and boost student confidence. With that said, reading three books in one lesson can be taxing on some students. It was because of this anticipation that I decided to make the second book what I call a “tag-team” read. This means that the student reads a page, and then I read a page, and we rotate throughout the whole book. In tag-team reading the teacher is able to model intonation, phrasing, fluency and expression. Tag-team reading models, but it also provides a break for the student, so they can focus just on the story, and not on decoding.

With your particular student, if you feel it would be beneficial to switch the first book (independent read) and the second book (tag-team read) to help your student warm up before they independently read it might be a good switch for your individual student. I found my student liked starting out reading independently because she liked reading for me.

In addition, I think if there were an opportunity to incorporate more of the student's native language, I would do that in the future. If there were a chance to read a

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book in the student's first language, for example, that would be beneficial to do for one of the new books. They could first read it in their native language, and then hear a picture walk in English, and lastly read the book in English. I think reading the book in their native language first would give similar relief that a picture walk does, helping students predict what they will read in English and use what they already know to decode the words. I think their first language could also be used in the writing portion of the lesson. If students could brainstorm what they wanted to say in their native language, this often lifts the restraints of responding very simply. If a student is allowed to think in their native language, they often develop more complex answers. I would especially use their native language for brainstorming at higher levels with more developed sentences.

I planned for the last book to be a fun book for the student to read. The student enjoyed reading this book because she liked the mother and son relationship, but also because she liked relating the book to herself. In the camp at which I am completing my practicum, we are focusing a lot on identifying feelings. We have read books, and related how the characters in the book were feeling, to our personal lives. I think this is great for ELLs, because they can associate vocabulary with meaning. It also makes the lesson student-centered. I want the student to talk about themselves and their personal experiences. I asked her "Can you think of a time you felt brave?" She told me about the first time she spent time with her father, and that she had to be brave because she did not know him. This was a great example, and connection to the text. I got to learn a little bit more about her, and where she comes from, and she was able to associate "brave" with a personal experience. I would have had her draw a picture about meeting her father, but I

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did not want her to feel sad or nervous. I confirmed her example, telling her that was brave of her. I then asked her if she could think of any more examples. I gave her suggestions such as the first time she went swimming without a bubble, or riding a two-wheeler. She talked to me about the first time she rode a two-wheeler. I got to learn about where she lives and what friends she has. I asked her if she would like to draw a picture about her being brave riding a two-wheeler for the first time. I figured this would be a less-sensitive memory to illustrate. I also offered my help in drawing/coloring. The student liked that I was willing to work with her. She did a great job asking me to draw some pieces, and drawing some parts of the picture on her own. I wanted her to draw about this memory instead of write, because she had just been reading and writing. I wanted her to relate to the story in a more relaxing way. She was able to include many more details in her picture than she would in a sentence. This student in particular is fond of art, so I knew this would be a very positive way to end the lesson. I was hoping to take this picture home with me as an artifact to submit, but she asked me when we were done, “Do I get to take this home?” I instead took a photograph of our art, so that I could submit the photo, and she could take home the art she was so proud of. I share this with teachers in the professional development so that they too can create lessons in collaboration with classroom curriculum, which provide opportunity to get to know the student personally, and demonstrate understanding in a form of artistic expression.

Lastly, I chose books I thought she would like, but also books that are race-sensitive. For instance, I would choose Hide and Seek because it has characters that look

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like her, with dark hair and dark eyes. The other two books we read in this lesson utilized animals as the characters; this eliminates race altogether.

My student did very well with this lesson. Since then, she has shown growth in thinking about meaning while reading. She does a great job self-correcting. Sometimes, if she reads something that doesn't quite make sense, she will ask me, "What is that word?" While this is not displaying evidence that she is using the strategy independently, she at least is listening to herself read, and realizing what she read does not make sense. This is a huge step for her. This growth has helped her reading comprehension.

She still struggles with confusing letters and sounds, but when we come upon "sh" and "ch" I can ask her, "Is that 'sh' as in 'she'? Or 'ch' as in 'cheese'?" If she hesitates, write "she" and "cheese" for her to see. Ideally I would show her the same index cards we used in the lesson above, but sometimes they are not easily accessible. After seeing the familiar words, she can identify the "ch" or "sh" she is approaching in the book, and read them correctly.

In addition, she really seemed to enjoy the lesson. I think it was challenging enough, but included breaks for her to express her thoughts and feelings without having to read or write. The closing in which we were drawing together was very enjoyable. It was a great time to ask about her, and aspects of her picture. We both ended the lesson feeling closer to one another. The familiar reads both at the beginning and to take home from the lesson build confidence. I feel like if we can incorporate bonding, learning, and confidence building, this model of a lesson is ideal for ELLs.

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After the breakdown and explanation of the lesson I did with my student, teachers will write a lesson to follow the example lesson I provided (see Appendix A, Figure 1.4). They will bring a recording of one of their own students reading. Teachers will first use the worksheet in Appendix A, Figure 1.2 to identify their student's strengths and needs. Teachers will walk around the room, stopping at each station to choose an activity for each step that best suits their student's needs. In completing the stations teachers will be writing their lesson (see Appendix A, Figures 1.5, and 1.8 - 2.3). Ideally, teachers will have access to a leveled library at their professional development training, and will even be able to choose appropriate books for the lesson, based on what the student will be focusing on in the lesson. Finally, teachers will complete the exit ticket (see Appendix A, Figure 1.5) to tell me a strategy they will implement immediately into their classroom.

Chapter 4

What Did I Do and What Did I Learn?

I created a lesson format, which incorporates a variety of balanced literacy intervention skills. My lesson format gives students a chance to read independently, read with support from their teacher, listen to fluent reading, write and make connections to literature. The lesson is an individualized lesson, so it exercises skills in which the student needs the most improvement. The array of balanced literacy strategies help the student to progress to the next reading level by applying learned strategies on their own.

I learned these balanced literacy intervention skills are beneficial to English Language Learners because English Language Learners need the same focus on literacy that early readers do; vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness. I also learned that ELLs and all students learn quicker when they make connections to literature.

What Are the Implications for ENL Teachers?

ENL teachers need to be using a variety of balanced literacy skills to bring their student to the next literacy level. All students should have familiar reads in their lessons. They should also read at least one new book that is on their reading level. Their word work and book choice should be tailored to the student's needs. ENL teachers need to identify the areas of need in which each individual ELL student needs to improve. In the lesson format I created, teachers have many opportunities to identify the student's needs. In the lesson format teachers are able to analyze a student's reading, but also develop a relationship with the student.

What Are the Implications for Non-ENL Teachers?

Non-ENL teachers can effectively educate ELL students too. Non-ENL teachers should use the same early balanced literacy intervention strategies as the ENL teachers are using. If we can get all teachers, ENL and non-ENL alike, using early balanced literacy intervention skills with their ELL students, teachers will have more direction, and the students will be more successful. This early and specialized intervention will close the racial and ethnic literacy gap by bringing ELL students to grade level. The earliest we can provide services, the better, in order to avoid long-term effects.

What Are the Implications for Student Learning?

ENL students can improve their literacy through a focus on vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, phonics and phonemic awareness. Students will learn skills that they can use on their own while reading. The use of a variety of balanced literacy strategies with the student, equips them to apply those same strategies when they are reading independently. The ENL teacher may only have forty minutes a day to work with the student, but the lesson targets the student's areas of need. The student can take the strategies they learned, and apply them to literacy in the general education classroom and at home.

What Further Research Needs to Be Done?

Although I have made many gains throughout this process, I was only able to work with one English Language Learner in my practicum. I used these early literacy intervention techniques with her and found them to be very successful. I have seen

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successful ENL teachers incorporate such techniques into their teaching. Although we have these examples to prove success, more research needs to be done.

Will my lesson plan formula work for all students of all ages? More research needs to be done with early ELL readers at the secondary level. ELL students at the secondary level have the same literacy needs, but we cannot treat them as if they are elementary students. The same techniques could be used, but the format of implementing them might be different.

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Appendix A

Figure 1: Agenda for Training

Objectives:

I will be able to identify a student's strengths and areas of need while listening to them read.

I will be able to address the student's strengths and needs in literacy by planning a lesson to support them.

I will be able to connect the reader's personal life to the reading.

Agenda:

1. Listen to audio of me reading as a student (twice)
2. Roadmap to Strengths and Needs
3. Lesson Formula
 1. What
 2. Why
4. Example Lesson
5. Create Your Own Lesson
6. Exit Ticket

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Figure 2: Roadmap to Strengths and Needs

Listen to the student read. Answer the questions below to identify the student's strengths and needs.

1. What words did the student read successfully?
2. What words did the student misread?
3. What did the student self-correct?
4. When did the student ask for help?
5. When did the teacher intervene?
6. Why did the teacher intervene?

Therefore...

7. What are the student's strengths?
8. What are the student's areas of need?

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Figure 3: Mock Student Biography

Name: Maria

Age: 7

L1: Spanish

L2: English

English Level: Proficient

Grade: 2

Current Reading Level: 5/D

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Figure 4: Example Lesson

Teacher's Name: Brenna Earle
Grade Level: "1 Go 2" (students going into 2nd grade)
Date:

Guiding Question(s)

Can I use meaning to help me read?

Can a combination of letters make only one sound?

Can I differentiate between the sound "sh" makes and the sound "ch" makes?

What does it mean to be "brave"?

Standard(s)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2.3.D Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2.4.C Use content to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts, and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.1.F Produce, expand and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.5.A Identify real-life connections between words and their use

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.6 Use words or phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g. *When others kids are happy that makes me happy*).

Key term(s): brave, she, cheese, chimp, shouted, names in Hide and Seek book

Supplies

- A small room with a table and two chairs
- Books used during the lesson: A Bird and a Hippo by Scott, Foresman and Company, Hide and Seek by Jenny Giles, Little Chimp Is Brave by Jenny Giles
- Books used as a continuation of the lesson: Bears in the Night by Stan and Jan Berenstain, Shark in a Sack by Joy Cowley, Gabby Is Hungry by Michele Dufresne, Bella and Rosie Play Hide and Seek by Michele Dufresne, Spaceboy

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<p><u>Plays Hide and Seek</u> by Michele Dufresne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Running Record sheet for teacher • Index cards with “she” and “cheese” written on them • 10 small (around 3 inches in diameter) paper circles; 5 with “sh” and 5 with “ch” written on them • 2 sentence strips • 2 black markers • 1 pair scissors • 8 x 11 white paper with “I was brave when...” written at the top in black marker • Crayons 	
<p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student will be able to chunk words that have “sh” and “ch” in them, giving each digraph only one phonetic sound. 2. Student will be able to use meaning to decode words in a sentence. 3. Student will be able to make a personal connection to the story, both orally and by drawing a picture. 	
<p>Assessments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student will draw a picture (with the help of the teacher, if desired) and orally explain a time when they were brave (formative assessment) (informal assessment) 2. A running record will be recorded next class on <u>Little Chimp Is Brave</u> (summative assessment) (formal assessment) 	
<p>Differentiation</p> <p>This is a one-on-one lesson, so it is tailored exactly to the student’s reading level, reading strategy needs, and interests (By Learning Profile/Style). The student is able to choose which familiar books she would like to take home to read, and if she would like help drawing her picture.</p>	

Time	Lesson Progression
15 mins	<p>Opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A familiar read. Also tell her we are going to read two more fun books. We are going to get to write and draw today <p>Core Progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>A Bird and a Hippo</u> by Scott Foresman • No picture walk • Read highlighted text to remind her

<p>8 mins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RUNNING RECORD on this book (Reading) (Independent Practice) (Individual Grouping and Assessment) (formal assessment) • Give her one grow and one glow (focus on meaning) • Find the word “she” • The first two letters of “she”, “s” and “h”, do they make one sound or two sounds? (Linking to Past Learning) • We are reviewing “sh” and “ch” sound • This is “sh” like “she” and this is “ch” like “cheese” • Put just one “sh” and one “ch” and pull them down, saying their sounds (listening). Then, have her pull the two sounds down (speaking). • Put a bunch of “sh” and a bunch of “ch”s and have her pull them down as she says them (speaking) (informal assessment) • Teacher: “Hippo was very silly what did she do in this book? Find your favorite page. What is she doing on this page?” Student describes scene, starting with the word “she”, referring to the hippo. (speaking) • Teacher: “We are going to put that together, starting with ‘she’. Just look at the picture - not the words.” • On writing strip, bounce out (say the sentence she created, pointing to a space on the writing strip where it could be) her sentence, without any written words (speaking). Do it once with her, and have her do it once on her own. Then, she can write her sentence. Be sure she puts two fingers between each word to space. (informal assessment) • Student reads the sentence she has just written on a piece of paper. The teacher writes her exact sentence on a different sentence strip while student is writing • Student reads the sentence she has created • Student reads the sentence from the sentence strip the teacher has created. Teacher cuts off each word as student reads it. Chop off period too • Teacher scrambles pieces and puts them in a vertical line • Student re-constructs the sentence, including punctuation • <u>Hide and Seek</u> by Jenny Giles • Teacher gives picture walk • Share read (student reads every other page, teacher reads every other page (partners)) (modeling phrasing, expression, quotations mean someone is talking, therefore use a talking voice) (reading) (listening) (informal assessment) • Teacher reminds student to ask herself, “Does that make sense?” for self-monitoring • Key words: shouted, where - plant all the kids names • p.14 stop and say “On this page Dad SHHHouted. What would you expect ‘shouted’ to start with? See if you can find it on this page.”
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<p>8 mins</p>	<p>(listening) (reading)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Little Chimp is Brave</u> by Jenny Giles • Key words: brave, chimp • Teacher gives picture walk to tell what happens (do not include feelings) (listening) • p.11 stop and ask how the chimp is feeling, and how she knows that • p.15 stop and ask what “brave” means • Student reads book (teacher help is fine (Guided Practice) - ask her “What would make sense and start like that?” “When I am stuck, I have to make sense.”) (Developing / Reviewing Academic Language) (informal assessment)
<p>14 mins</p>	<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there ever a time that you were feeling brave? Think about a time you learned something new - riding two wheeler, swimming, crossed street, went to new school or class (speaking) (Linking to Student Background and Experience) • Teacher writes, “I was brave when...” at the top of the paper and student draws the picture. Teacher helps her draw the picture, only under the direction of the student. • When the picture is finished, the student orally completes the sentence, “I was brave when...”. Then she describes the details of her picture (speaking) (informal assessment) • Give student choice of familiar read books to take with them and read at home. They can choose 2-3 books to bring home. Today, the choices are: <u>Bears in the Night</u> by Stan and Jan Berenstain, <u>Shark in a Sack</u> by Joy Cowley, <u>Gabby Is Hungry</u> by Michele Dufresne, <u>Bella and Rosie Play Hide and Seek</u> by Michele Dufresne, and <u>Spaceboy Plays Hide and Seek</u> by Michele Dufresne. If there is extra time the student can read one of the books in class.

Following-day assessment:

1. Record a Running Record of Little Chimp is Brave by Jenny Giles
2. Comprehension questions:

Why does Little Chimp climb the tree?

What is Little Chimp’s problem?

How does he solve his problem?

(The questions are answered verbally and I record what she says because if I have her write she would only be able to answer one question, as her writing is well below

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grade level and it would exhaust her to write three sentences. She will write more in tomorrow's lesson, outside of this assessment.)

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Figure 5: Template for Creating Own Lesson

Step 1

Book 1

Type: Familiar

Format: independent

Teacher's job: complete running record OR Roadmap to Strengths and Needs

Book title: _____

Step 2

Word work

What needs are being addressed?

How?

Step 3

Writing Activity

What needs are being addressed?

How?

Step 4

Book 2

Type: Familiar

Format: Tag-team read with teacher

Book title: _____

Step 5

Book 3

Type: New

Format: Student reads, but the teacher can prompt, guide and assist student for success

Book title: _____

Step 6

Relate the book to the student's life

Sentence to complete:

Mode of expression (use mode of expression that the student most enjoys):

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Figure 6: Exit Ticket

It will take some planning and effort to implement all entire lessons in the format you have just written, but what is one balanced literacy strategy/exercise that you will IMMEDIATELY implement in your classroom?

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Figure 8: Step 1 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 1: Familiar Read with Strengths and Needs

Choose a familiar read for your student. Record their strengths and needs as they read aloud via running record (template provided in Figure 1.7 or your own) or the Roadmap to Strengths and Needs (Figure 1.2).

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Figure 9: Step 2 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 2: Hands-On Word Work

Choose one or two of the activities below based on the needs of your student.

Learning Letter Sounds:

- “Pull down” letters on table (technique discussed in example lesson).
- Apply known words to new words (“If you know ‘play,’ you can write ‘day!’”).
- Sign language with short vowels.
- Create a word ring of words the student knows.
- Write sight words with a crayon on paper that is on top of sandpaper.
- Write sight words with chalk on a chalkboard.
- Clap words in syllables.
- Give students the magnetic letters of a word. Scramble the word and have them rebuild.
- Spell word aloud while tapping arm progressing left to right.

Exercising Meaning:

- Give students a sentence with a word missing. Students must fill in the blank based on context.
- Give students a sentence with one of the words only having its first letter. Students must complete the word based on context.

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- Give student pictures and sentences separately. Student must match the sentences to the pictures based on meaning.
- In a sentence, students must identify the word that does not make sense, and replace it with one that does. Ideally, the teacher would provide sentences that the student said while reading that day. If the teacher used a running record to record, she can reference the running record for sentences.

Figure 10: Step 3 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 3: Writing Activity

Choose one of the activities below based on the needs of your student.

- Student writes a sentence. Teacher writes the same sentence on separate strip. Teacher cuts all words and punctuation and scrambles all pieces. Students must reorder the sentence. (Shown in example lesson.)
- Student creates tongue twister.
- Student writes the first page of a book that would be a continuation of the book they just read.
- Student creates a story, adding a little (amount depends on level) each day.
- Student responds to literature to answer: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and/or How using complete sentences.
- Student responds to literature to identify the problem, their favorite part, a connection to another book, or a personal connection.

Figure 11: Step 4 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 4: Tag-Team Read

The student reads one page, and the teacher reads the next. Depending on your student's needs, you can choose a new book or a familiar read at this step.

Figure 12: Step 5 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 5: New Book

The student reads, but the teacher can prompt, guide, and assist the student for success.

Choose a book based on your student's interests and needs addressed in this lesson.

Figure 13: Step 6 Poster Instructions for Lesson Creating Activity

STEP 6: Personal Connection Expressed Through Art

Give students a sentence to orally complete that allows them to relate to the literature.

The sentence I gave my student after reading about a brave chimp was “I was brave when...” Students will complete the sentence represented through art. Some suggested forms are drawing, clay, painting, or drawing in sand. You are welcome to create your own mode of artistic expression for your student to use. The teacher offers her help in creating the art. It is a collaborative activity.