Effective Advocacy for English Language Learners

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract

The present capstone project explores the role of English as a New Language (ENL) teachers as advocates for English Language Learners (ELLs) within the context of K-12 schools. As the population of ELLs grows within the United States, ENL teachers are especially positioned as experts and changemakers to notice issues encountered by ELLs and to find solutions to those problems, improving their educational and life outcomes. However, ENL teachers face barriers to this work, including lack of support from colleagues or administrators, xenophobic or discriminatory attitudes from various stakeholders, and misunderstandings about effective advocacy work, among others. A professional development product and accompanying tools were developed to increase ENL teachers' confidence regarding advocacy and provide practical strategies for advocating within their schools. Such strategies include implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, finding a network of collaborative support, being informed on state and national legislation regarding ELLs, and using the Harvard Implicit Bias Test with colleagues to confront negative and deficit-oriented perspectives about these learners. Finally, an advocacy checklist is presented to assist ENL teachers to create informed, effective, and reflective plans each time they engage in advocacy work.

Keywords: English Language Learners, advocacy, culturally responsive teaching, barriers, professional development

Chapter 1: Introduction

English Language Learners (ELLs), such as those recently arriving from other countries or who have experienced interrupted formal education, might arrive to a new school with minimal proficiency and exposure to English. Thus, these students rely heavily on the support of the educators in the building, especially those who have knowledge of the same language as them or who have the title of English as a New Language (ENL) teacher. This does not imply that these teachers are equipped with the knowledge or experience to effectively advocate for these students. ENL teachers across the nation often take on the role of advocate for the learners they work with (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Linville, 2020; Maddamsetti, 2021). However, without clearly defined expectations and roles for their work as advocates, ENL teachers may act as ineffective advocates or face resistance towards their efforts.

The role of advocate is included in the Standards for Initial TESOL Pre-K-12 Teacher Preparation Programs (TESOL International Association, 2019). This advocacy takes various forms, including academic, social, and emotional support and advocacy for learners within the classroom and beyond (Duran, 2019; Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). Whether teachers are collaborating with content teachers and other colleagues, connecting ELLs and their families to resources, or engaging in political advocacy work at local, state, or federal levels, the goal of these efforts is to increase the learning and overall success of students (Linville, 2020; Maddamsetti, 2021; Shapiro & Ehtesham-Cating, 2019). Regrettably, ELLs may experience discrimination within the building from various sources due to the increasingly hostile political climate of the current day (Duran, 2019; Jaffe-Walter, 2018). ENL teachers are especially positioned to protect the right to a safe and quality education of this population considering their knowledge of students' needs and relationships formed with these learners. If it is to be expected

that ENL teachers take on such a role, it would be beneficial to the wellbeing of teachers, students, families, and schools to effectively prepare them for such roles.

As the ELL population increases across the nation and the needs of students become more intense, ENL teachers advocate for ELLs to increase their academic, social, and emotional success (Duran, 2019; Harrison & McIlwain, 2020) and need help in discerning what support ELLs need (Linville, 2020). While this certainly develops with experience in the field, advocacy efforts on the part of the teacher may begin on day one of their career. Furthermore, teachers working in this capacity face resistance to their advocacy from unsupportive administrators and leaders, unknowledgeable colleagues and community members, deficit perspectives of ELLs, and anti-immigrant and monolingual perspectives (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Jaffe-Walter, 2018; Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021). These barriers make it difficult for ENL teachers to achieve their goals, especially when considering the benefits from collaborative, multi-faceted approaches to supporting their success within and beyond the school context (e.g., Palmer, 2018; Shapiro & Ehtesham-Cating, 2019). Additionally, ENL educators have benefited from gaining an understanding of their identities, those of their students, and the power dynamics at play within educational contexts to best make change (Maddamsetti, 2020; Palmer, 2018). Without guidance regarding specific strategies and paths for successful advocacy work such as these ENL teachers risk making uninformed and/or harmful decisions.

Thus, the purpose of this capstone project is to create a guide for ENL teachers to come to understand their role as advocates for the populations they serve and to empower these teachers to successfully assume this role despite hinderances they may encounter. Considering the varied and complex role of ENL teachers as advocates for their learners, an explanative guide and practical P.D. session will support educators' efforts to create effective learning

environments within the context of schools. In Chapter 2, I will examine and review the existing

literature on teachers' role as advocates and the barriers these teachers have faced. This review

will provide context and examples of successful avenues for effective advocacy that other

educators have implemented across diverse settings. In Chapter 3, I will present the P.D. to be

offered to ENL teachers to focus their advocacy efforts and empower them to make decisions

that positively impact the learning and achievement of their students. Chapter 4 will conclude

with implications for teaching and learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter reviews the most recent literature on the role of ENL teachers as advocates for their students. In this Chapter, I will discuss the practical implications of advocacy, impediments to effective advocacy, and ways in which teachers have been able to overcome these obstacles. Effective advocacy from ENL teachers entails identifying a problem or issue and acting to find and implement a solution, with an aim of obtaining positive educational outcomes and quality of life for ELLs both inside and outside of the physical school building (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Linville, 2020). Almost all ENL teachers engage in advocacy activities for their ELLs, although the degree to which they do it and how they do it varies (Linville, 2020).

Before discussing the themes of practical implications of advocacy, impediments to effective advocacy, and ways to overcome these impediments, I will first present the theoretical underpinnings of affective filter (Krashen, 1982) and the culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). Krashen (1982) speaks to the importance of lowering students' affective filters, or the anxiety and lack of interest and motivation when learning a language, to enhance second language acquisition. Much of the literature to date also uses the lens of social justice to analyze the advocacy efforts undertaken by ENL teachers. Culturally responsive education, a framework that when implemented correctly is a form of social justice, seeks to benefit from and sustain the various identities of learners within the classroom and school communities (Gay, 2013). Hence, the culturally responsive education framework, along with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, can help us to better understand ENL teachers' advocacy work and its impact on cultivating positive educational and life outcomes for ELLs.

Affective Filter and Language Learning

Krashen (1982) purports that to acquire a new language, various conditions must be met, including a low affective filter. The affective filter is defined as the feelings and emotions, such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence, that contribute to acquiring a second language (Krashen, 1982). When a learner's attitudes and emotions impede their ability to acquire a new language, their affective filter is said to be high (Krashen, 1982). If one's affective filter is high, they are less able to manage or absorb the input received in the language. Without this input there is less language being acquired on the part of the learner. Krashen (1982) asserts that those who are motivated to learn, have self-confidence and a positive self-image, and low anxiety in regards to language input and output are better able to acquire a new language (Krashen, 1982). More recently, Mehmood (2018) found adult English learners in Saudi Arabia that their affective filters were raised due to the formality and intimidation of the classroom environment, effectively blocking some input of the new language. However, when changes are made by instructors, such as making the classroom environment more comfortable for students, their affective filters can be lowered through an increase in their interest and decreases in their anxiety (Mehmood, 2018). Widely accepted in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) there are various ways that learners themselves and those interacting with them can help to lower this affective filter.

Specifically in the case of ELLs, while their immediate need to acquire the language for success in the academic environment may be a motivating factor, their real or perceived lack of proficiency, discomfort with the new culture, and experiences with discrimination or xenophobia may produce anxiety that raises the affective filter significantly. For example, students' experiences of discrimination and higher anxiety contribute to their decreased academic success (Brown, 2015; Guerra et al., 2019). Regrettably, ENL teachers cannot prevent every instance of

discrimination that a student may face during the course of their lives. Nonetheless, the ENL

teacher's role as advocate can be leveraged to lower the affective filter through implementing

culturally responsive teaching, thus benefiting the language acquisition of ELLs.

Culturally Responsive Education as a Pathway for Lowering Affective Filters

Culturally responsive education, as described by Gay (2013), is a framework for

instructing learners that uses students' cultural backgrounds, lived experiences, and background

knowledge to make learning more relevant and engaging for the diverse learners of our

classrooms. This framework does not seek to minimize or ignore the differences among our

learners, but instead capitalize on this diversity to assist students in learning and accomplishing

(Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Rather than centering dominant cultures, languages, and

ideologies, culturally responsive education invites teachers and students to explore, examine, and

sustain racially, culturally, linguistically, and ethnically, among other areas, nondominant

perspectives, ideas, and practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Moreover, Ladson-Billings (2014)

informs that identities are global, multi-faceted, and ever-changing, thus making the work of

culturally sustaining and relevant pedagogy more complex. Contrary to ignoring who are

students are, a culturally responsive framework invites our students to bring their cultural,

linguistic, racial, and other identities to the forefront to improve learning, engagement, and

students' sense of selves (Gay, 2013). As such, it helps to increase students' motivation and

sense of belonging within classroom and school communities. Especially beneficial to ELLs, this

framework challenges deficit-oriented points of view and instead positions students from diverse

backgrounds as rich in experience and knowledge (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

As Gay (2013) defends, the framework of culturally relevant education cannot be

implemented overnight. Nor is this framework one that is entirely present or absent from a

classroom or school community. Rather, developing a culturally relevant framework within schools is a process that develops over time and spaces. While a school or district might believe in the ideals of this framework, on an individual level it requires self-reflection and active implementation by all school community members. For example, attitudes from teachers and students can be representative of deficit-oriented thinking and beliefs towards ELLs within the school and local communities (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). If community members view ELLs and immigrants as a whole as negative parts of their community makeup, culturally responsive education can be one avenue for teachers to focus their advocacy efforts. By flipping this narrative and positioning nondominant cultures as the positive and beneficial contributions that they are teachers' advocacy efforts may find even more success. Furthermore, if teachers advocate in culturally responsive ways, such as by working with ELLs and their families to identify strengths and needs they may have, the overall effectiveness will be of most benefit to ELLs and their families.

Thus, teachers' work as advocates can align with and actively promote the goals of culturally responsive education, namely to call into the school community the students' identities and home lives as resources for teaching and learning. Furthermore, if ENL teachers are utilizing ELLs and their families as funds of knowledge and experts in their own needs, they can ensure that the advocacy work they are completing is useful and important, rather than perfunctory and unessential. This work will also allow learners to decrease their affective filter by feeling affirmed in their identities and gaining self-confidence, while also creating a safe environment for them to learn. The subsequent sections discuss how teachers have used their role as advocates to improve the outcomes of ELLs and implement practices that align with a culturally responsive framework.

Advocacy: Beliefs into Action

Teachers' beliefs about advocacy impact the types and amounts of advocacy in which they engage. Without explicit instruction regarding the expectations for advocacy of ENL teachers the actions they take and the perceptions they have of this work are largely informed by their own views of being a teacher and advocate. Maddamsetti (2020) interviewed and observed two teachers working in a Massachusetts elementary school and found that while these teachers may have a conviction to advocate for ELLs' success across a variety of settings, other factors may influence the reality of their advocacy. Such factors include their understanding of their own identities, possessing a critical view of advocacy, and support or lack thereof on the part of colleagues and administration (Maddamsetti, 2020; Palmer, 2018; Parkhouse et al., 2020). Likewise, the content-area teacher interviewed, observed, and studied in a Massachusetts elementary school advocated for her students in a way that was highly contained to the context of the classroom and instruction, while another teacher's "more critical view" (Maddamsetti, 2020, p. 13) of advocacy encouraged her to challenge dominant ideologies that led to inequitable practices. As such, the teacher with a more critical view of her role utilized critically responsive principles to advocate for her students within the context of the classroom. However, teachers' beliefs are not the sole determining factor for advocacy actions. Jaffe-Walter (2018) suggests that school leaders, such as those at two schools within the Internationals Network for Public Schools, can create a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration that places the needs of immigrant and ELL students at the forefront. In this case study, Jaffe-Walter (2018) found that when teachers feel supported in their work as advocates and teachers of ELLs, they are more successful in doing so. Furthermore, when schools create climates where this work is expected, it

can help shape teachers' beliefs to align with critical advocacy work, echoing the findings of other researchers (Harrison & McIlwain, 202; Jaffe-Walter, 2018; Palmer, 2018).

ENL teachers engage in advocacy actions that are varied and occur in diverse spaces. Linville (2020) quantifies the frequency of instructional and political advocacy work of ENL teachers. Through surveys conducted of 511 teachers designated as teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), she concluded that ENL teachers more frequently perceive and engage with advocacy work at the school-level than at the political one. An overwhelming majority expressed that they work with their colleagues to improve instruction delivered to ELLs, combat deficit-oriented perspectives of ELLs within the school community, and discuss the rights of ELLs with administrators, among other actions (Linville, 2020). While these teachers reported engaging in activities that were political in nature, such as encouraging ELLs to speak up for their rights, collaborating with families to advocate for their children, and increase community understanding of issues facing ELLs, only 25% of these teachers worked to combat negative policies that impacted ELLs and their families at governmental levels (Linville, 2020). Similarly, Harrison and McIlwain (2020) surveyed 144 ENL teachers and conducted in-depth interviews of 10 of them about their advocacy actions. They found that teachers not only work within the context of the school building, but also perform actions that enact change within the school district, local community, and state level. At the building level, this included working with and educating colleagues, creating connections between school and home, and ensuring proper materials and instructional techniques for students (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). Beyond the school context, these teachers request materials and inform of students' needs at the district level, participate on statewide board and committees related to TESOL and connect students and their families with resources, among others (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). These actions

transcend beyond students' school lives and into their home lives and beyond. Likewise, Jones et al. (2017) interviewed five teachers and analyzed various social media postings as part of a teacher advocacy group, ultimately concluding that these teachers engaged in advocacy efforts by writing to legislators, making changes within their own classroom practice, and creating a tool kit for teachers to help diminish the perceived negative effects of national legislation. Overall, these teachers banded together, educated themselves, and shared this with others to advocate for students across the nation.

Some ENL teachers act as advocates by working to promote students' positive self-images and understandings of their identities. Maddamsetti's (2021) analyses of interviews, artefacts, and observations of three elementary ENL teachers during an academic school year revealed that these teachers critically reflected on the role of advocate in different ways, thus causing different levels of implementation of this advocacy. One of these teachers described and showed ways in which she advocates for learners' academic success through the inclusion of home language material and by inviting students to bring their home life into the classroom through a gallery walk activity. Despite resistance from families, administrators, and English-only policies at the state level, this teacher understood the importance of inviting students' lived experiences and cultural and linguistic identities into the classroom in promoting students' educational success, aligning with principles of culturally responsive education (Maddamsetti, 2021). The teacher says, "…I began to ask my students to create their identity boxes. The boxes really bring their cultural and linguistic identities and struggles to the surface" (Maddamsetti, 2021, pp. 13-14). Such an activity, where students can highlight the aspects of their identity that are most important to then, opens the door for students to feel proud of who they are and where they come from, affirming their identities within the context of an academic setting. Similarly,

teachers also call upon their own identities and experiences to inform their advocacy and overall work as educators. Two teachers enrolled in a master's program aimed at improving the practice of ENL teachers provided data to researchers through interviews as well as the coursework they submitted during the course of the program (Palmer, 2018). Through reflections on who they are these teachers ultimately decided that they share a responsibility to promote the importance of bilingualism considering their own identities as bilinguals and their lived experiences being bilingual students (Palmer, 2018). By identifying a deficit-oriented point of view, namely that espoused by subtractive language policies at the state and school levels, these teachers also identified a way to counteract such views by speaking out against these policies at the local level. Ultimately, these advocacy actions can affirm ENL students in their linguistic and cultural identities in a way that reverses the erasure and harm done by policies that support English-only pedagogies.

ENL teachers do not work alone as advocates. Rather, they work in a collaborative nature to achieve their goals. As mentioned earlier, educators at two schools in the Internationals Network for Public Schools work in team-structured supports to reflect on curriculum, target support for students who need help, and to share the work needed to meet the needs of immigrants and ELLs (Jaffe-Walter, 2018). While these schools utilize teams of educators from different backgrounds, including ESOL teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, and administrators (Jaffe-Walter, 2018), there are also opportunities for collaboration among classroom teachers. In their study of 34 ENL teachers in a U.S. Midwestern city to ascertain what practices they used in their teaching, Haneda and Sherman (2018) found that while these teachers all viewed their advocacy in their own ways many engaged in collaborative advocacy efforts through co-teaching models and acting as experts within the field to support all teachers

in serving the needs of ELLs. These educators even worked with families by conducing home visits, coordinating parent meetings within the community, and serving as a link between families and social services and other resources they needed. As such, these educators did not work independently, but rather worked alongside their colleagues and other stakeholders for the benefit of their ELLs. Additionally, Shapiro and Ehtesham-Cating (2019) recommend the inclusion of ELLs and their families in the goal-making process to ensure that the actions of staff are aligned with the choices of the students themselves.

Barriers to Advocacy

The lack of support from administrators, colleagues, and community stakeholders can hinder the ability of ENL teachers to effectively advocate. While some administrators certainly do support the work of ENL teachers, there exist others who actively work against the work done by these teachers. Harrison and McIlwain's (2020) survey and interview data reflect that almost three-fourths of 70 ENL teachers faced resistance to their advocacy efforts from colleagues and administrators. This resistance has materialized as colleagues undermining the work done by the ENL teacher, deficit-oriented views of ELLs within the school and local community, and the desire to segregate ELLs by using push-out models instead of integrative co-teaching (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). Maddamsetti (2021) describes the intimidation and fear that some educators experienced due to the lack of support faced within the school community. While one of the teachers felt undervalued as an educator in that her school community did not hold space for her advocacy for students outside of language pedagogy and assessment preparation, the other also did not feel comfortable engaging in advocacy outside of the classroom because of her colleagues' perceptions of this advocacy as breaking the rules or overstepping (Maddamsetti, 2021). While the teachers still did engage in advocacy work, some of these efforts were also

focused on educating other teachers and changing the relationships between these educators and ELLs. Future research might focus on ways to increase understanding of advocacy for ELLs for content-area teachers and those not deemed as ENL experts so as to create co-ownership of advocacy responsibilities among school community members. This can result in less time spent educating colleagues and more time implementing the effective strategies and engaging in other forms of advocacy.

Ideological differences in how best to support ELLs can create tension for ENL teachers as they attempt to teach and advocate for their learners. After reviewing the policies for ELLs of 12 districts within the state of Florida, Raubaugh and Purmensky (2021) found that while schools claim to make ELLs a priority, the lack of consistency and clarity of policy decisions do not align with these stated goals. Raubaugh and Purmensky (2021) also interviewed two teachers who both reported that while these districts stated their intent to incorporate culturally responsive practices into their instruction to the benefit of ELLs, there was little to not support for them in how to do so. Likewise, there seemed to be a lack of understanding about what culturally responsive practices are, considering the lack of professional development opportunities, diverse staff hiring practices, and discussion of fostering respect between and among students according to interview data collected from these two teachers (Raubaugh & Purmensky, 2021). These findings are echoed by Linville (2020) who found that teachers' knowledge of the national TESOL Standards and their perceived support for advocacy were positive indicators of their instructional and political advocacy. That is to say, when teachers understand what advocacy is, what their role as advocates is, and know that administrators, colleagues, and community members will support them they are more likely to engage in advocacy tasks. Therefore, all educators and stakeholders should be informed about the needs of ELLs and effective strategies

to support these needs to prevent misinformation or deficit-oriented points of view that hinder advocacy.

Xenophobia and discrimination work against the goals of advocacy, while also being a focus of advocacy efforts among ENL teachers. Districts and states have enacted policies that are contrary to the research-driven instructional practices that are most beneficial to ELLs, especially those that do not promote additive bilingualism or culturally responsive practices (e.g., Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021). These policies place a large emphasis on the acquisition of academic English at the expense of students' home languages and cultures. Parkhouse et al. (2020) set out to understand the role of teachers in supporting undocumented students within their school considering the negative views of these students and their families that are prevalent in schools and beyond. After interviewing 18 teachers, 16 of which were ENL teachers, they discovered that the ENL teachers were largely the only teachers who sought to understand and provide support to these learners. These teachers described xenophobic comments from colleagues by use of negative language (e.g., "illegal" instead of "undocumented) and exclusionary comments, such as teachers saying, "I don't think [undocumented students] should be here" (Parkhouse et al., 2020, p. 538-539). ENL teachers discussed how they sought to educate these teachers on the rights of these learners and to remind these deficit-oriented educators of their responsibility to these learners. Likewise, these teachers described apathetic and uninformed attitudes from leaders within the school communities as barriers (Parkhouse et al., 2020). As soon as all teachers see themselves as teachers of ELLs the work of advocacy can be shared among all stakeholders.

Overcoming Barriers and Enacting Change

Creating strong convictions for advocacy through teacher preparation programs will lead to increased advocacy and will promote the acquisition of effective strategies for overcoming previously mentioned barriers. Considering the role that knowledge of advocacy as part of the TESOL standards plays in predicting advocating (e.g., Linville, 2020), providing direct instruction and practice during the earliest stages of teacher development is a worthwhile cause to prepare teachers for this role. Linville and Whiting (2020) suggest that teacher education programs might utilize case studies, role-playing scenarios, and reviews of the legal rights of ELLs as possible avenues for advocacy preparation for future ENL teachers. Preparing these pre-service ENL teachers to engage with the communities they serve and empowering them with ways to learn from their students and families is another important aspect to consider because effective collaboration with these groups is essential to effective advocacy (Linville & Whiting, 2020; Shapiro & Ehtesham-Cating, 2019).

Finding collaborative networks of support by creating positive relationships with colleagues helps advocates to accomplish their goals. Linville & Whiting (2020) suggest that preservice teachers explore hands-on experiences in collaborating with colleagues and administrators, as well as community members, to effectively achieve their objectives. Similarly, Palmer (2018) concludes that teacher education programs can prepare preservice teachers to be change makers and leaders within their fields. After completing a master's program in bilingual education and teacher leadership, two of the 53 teachers were interviewed and their assignments, projects, and other contributions were studied. It revealed that these teachers demonstrated a commitment to developing support networks of allies with shared goals, as well as sharing what they learned with others.

Aside from working individually with mentees, these teachers also developed presentations that were delivered at a national conference. Unfortunately, they had yet to present at the district-level, a missed opportunity on the part of the school district to benefit local ELLs (Palmer, 2018). Jaffe-Walter (2018) also defends the position that collaboration within the school community helps immigrant students and ELLs to succeed. When the often burdensome emotional and material load of advocacy is shared, more effective and beneficial work can be achieved. Putting the pressure of meeting students' needs entirely on teachers ignores the various other needs that these students face. Through a culturally responsive framework, the lived experiences of students are brought directly into the school building. Jaffe-Walter (2018) describes weekly meetings that were observed in which individual students' needs are discussed and shared to seek solutions and provide support where possible. These meetings included guidance counselors and social workers who are experts in the field of social and emotional needs. This multifaceted approach to assisting students reinforces the benefit of shared responsibility for ELLs as all teachers and support staff work with and can support these learners.

Understanding the identities and needs of students is essential to advocacy work. Additionally, teachers benefit from understanding their own identities and positionalities in relation to power and equity within the school community. Madamsetti (2020) embarked to understand ways in which teachers understood their own advocacy identities and how they negotiated these identities given the context through which they worked. Although one of the teachers in the study was endorsed to teach Sheltered English Immersion, her main responsibility was as a fourth-grade classroom teacher, while the other was an ENL teacher. Providing a comparison of self-perception as advocate between a classroom teacher and ENL teacher, it was

evident that various psychological, emotional, social, and political influences shaped the views each educator had of their role as advocate (Maddamsetti, 2020). The classroom teacher's advocacy failed to disrupt monolingual perspectives hindered her overall ability to advocate for large-scale change, despite her critique of such perspectives. Conversely, the ENL teacher's self-perceived identity as an advocate regarding the harmful policies she observed motivated her to speak out, even when this was unpopular within the school. Maddamsetti (2020) suggests that this teacher's identity as a queer woman may have encouraged her to advocate in these situations. Palmer (2018) also contends that the two teachers whom she analyzed were impacted by their identities, but especially after given the chance to reflect on these identities and how this relates to their work with emergent bilingual students. Their experiences as bilingual students themselves inspired them to take action to promote bilingual education, supporting Maddamsetti (2020)'s findings that lack of self-reflection and conviction to upset accepted norms can be a hindrance to advocacy efforts.

Culturally responsive pedagogies are one way to advocate for learners within the context of the school and classroom communities. Encouraging students to bring their lived experiences, cultures, and languages, as well as other parts of their identities into the classroom as resources for learning, is one pathway to advocacy. Rejection of deficit-oriented points of view and celebration of the students that are in our classes are pathways to advocate that can extend beyond the classroom and school communities. Furthermore, if ENL teachers can expel these negative perspectives by sharing of the positives with others they can help to create stronger ties between these students, their families, and the school community.

As discussed above, the advocacy efforts performed by ENL teachers, while contested and challenged at times, take varied forms and aim to support the success of ELLs both within

and beyond the context of the school. However, there are gaps that exist within the reviewed literature. The quantitative and qualitative data provided by the studies do not consider the experiences of all ENL teachers nor all ELLs as some of the studies focused on a small sample size (e.g., Maddamsetti, 2020, 2021). As such, these findings may not be accurate across all the contexts within which ENL teachers and their students work. The literature also largely fails to consider the perspectives and opinions of ELLs themselves. While the literature reviewed explores ENL teachers' beliefs about advocacy, we must also consider how students interpret and perceive these efforts. Lastly, while these advocacy efforts are largely accepted as beneficial to the educational and life outcomes, future research might aim to quantify or qualify in what ways these efforts improve these outcomes. Understanding the quality of different advocacy actions will assist ENL teachers as well as others in making more informed and effective decisions.

In Chapter 3, I will consolidate the findings above to create a practical and informative guide for ENL teachers to successfully understand their roles as an advocate. Of utmost importance will be ways for these teachers to navigate the contentious environment that is often detrimental to successful advocacy work. Over the course of the professional development, these teachers will be able to identify and implement research-driven advocacy techniques despite challenges they may face to improve the educational and life outcomes of ELLs across grade-levels, geographic, and time differences.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

In this Chapter, I will provide a rationale for and description of a Professional Development to be delivered at the Joyce Central School District (pseudonym) on Long Island to provide ENL educators with practical knowledge and exposure to effective advocacy strategies. Having worked in the district as an ENL teacher, I have seen the increase in newcomer ELLs throughout the last year and a half, as well as the need of the district to call on ENL teachers to be leaders and advocates for both these students and all ELLs. Additionally, this increase in the ELL population has necessitated the hiring of new ENL teachers who may have worked as teachers in other areas, thus resulting in less experience as an ENL expert. Having reviewed the literature in Chapter 2, I have come to understand that my colleagues in the department lack the awareness of what advocacy is for ELLS and how to effectively do so within the constraints of their resources and abilities. As such, the needs of the students within the district and the teachers acted as guides for the outcomes and content of the professional development product and related tools.

Below, I present a possible solution to the lack of clear advocacy guidelines for teachers within the Joyce Central School District. First, an overview of the professional development is presented, as are relevant information regarding the target audience. Afterward, tools for teachers to use are introduced and explained. Such tools include an identity box activity, template for co-planning lessons as an ENL expert, contact information to state agencies, links to possible resources for sharing and learning, scenarios for implementing advocacy, and a checklist for teachers to reflect on when implementing advocacy work. Finally, the goals and outcomes of the session are revisited within the context of the presented information.

Description of the Professional Development

The professional development will take place on Thursday, September 1, 2022 during the district's Superintendent's Conference Day. All teachers in the district will be present at the Joyce Central High School engaging in professional development experiences on this day throughout three sessions. This professional development will take place during the first of these session blocks, which will last from 8:30am to 10:30am. During this two-hour session, I will present and work with the district's eleven ENL teachers that work with students in grades K-12. Considering the role that all classroom teachers have in instructing ELLs, the professional development will be open to content-area teachers who co-teach with ENL specialists or who have a special interest in working with ELLs.

The professional development will be titled "Effective Advocacy Strategies for the Teacher of ELLs: How to Improve Educational and Life Outcomes for Learners." The title is designed to clearly demonstrate the goals of the program and prepare attendees to call on their funds of knowledge before arriving at the professional development. Specifically, the goals of this professional development are to provide ENL teachers with practical strategies to implement effective advocacy strategies and overcome barriers they may encounter to this work. It will consist of a PowerPoint slideshow presented to the educators, as well as various materials (see Appendices A, B, & C) to aid in their understanding and application of the content. After reflecting on the identities of the teachers present and their students and presenting the problem, various practical strategies for advocating on behalf of ELLs will be discussed and opportunities to apply them will be provided. Such strategies include: creating culturally responsive school and classroom environments, collaborating with content-area teachers, using their voice to make change at the state and national level, and using a supportive network and educational tools to overcome barriers to advocacy.

Each element of the professional development is individually discussed below. After presenting a rationale for its use, supported by the literature presented previously, a description of its presentation and application during the session is provided.

Reflection on Identities

While all students certainly benefit from the culturally responsive pedagogical approach, ELL students stand to especially benefit from such a framework. Considering their diverse and varied racial, cultural, and linguistic identities, among others, are often different than the dominant group, showing respect for and value of who these students are can help to decrease their anxiety and increase their self-confidence (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). As part of creating a culturally responsive school and classroom environment, teachers must be aware of how their own identities and those of their students shapes their experiences and views of the school community (e.g., Palmer, 2018). For example, Maddamsetti (2021) shared the story of a teacher who utilizes identity boxes for her students to feel affirmed in their identities and to have a way to share who they are with their classmates and teacher. Through a gallery walk activity, they were able to share these and learn about who their classmates are, demonstrating that students' identities are not incompatible with the academic context, but rather central aspects to who they are as students and people. Such identity boxes included words, stories, and artifacts related to the cultural and linguistic identities of students and their families (Maddamsetti, 2021). Similarly, another teacher used an activity for students to share their identities, set goals, and share concerns they have related to who they are, using the name "journey boxes" (Maddamsetti, 2021, p. 13) instead.

Therefore, the professional development will begin with an activity where teachers will be called upon to consider what culturally representative artifacts they would share with their

class in discussions about their identity (see Appendix A). Participants will also consider what

artifacts they think their students would bring in and will share these in a group discussion to

begin the professional development. This will serve as an introduction to using a culturally

responsive framework as a lens through which to focus advocacy work. Similarly, it will be

presented as a possible activity for teachers to use with their students beyond the professional

development, thus providing teachers with practical tips from the very start of the session.

Advocacy at the Local Level

Collaboration and cooperation are two cornerstones to advocacy work for ENL teachers

(e.g., Jaffe-Walter, 2018; Linville & Whiting, 2020). While all teachers are teachers of ELLs,

ENL teachers have expertise in the area of designing and implementing instruction for these

students, as well as meeting their needs beyond the classroom. Haneda and Sherman (2018)

reported that of the 34 ENL teachers who participated in a case study, sixteen of them engaged in

advocacy by acting as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages experts and by adapting

their teaching of ELLs through the use of various instructional models. When exploring options

for instructional models, one ENL teacher described her conversation with a colleague. Working

together, they both "decided that maybe we would jump into [inclusion teaching] and try it, and

it worked out very well and partly because we're able to communicate very well, the teacher and

I" (Haneda & Sherman, 2018, p. 411). This assists learners in being able to fully access the

grade-level content, without missing material due to pull-out models. As such, it requires a level

of dedication on the part of the teachers to collaborate effectively throughout the school day to

best provide this instruction to ELLs.

This process of planning, implementing, and reflecting on instruction, as well as

assessing learners, can be supported by tools that teachers can use to foster these collaborative

relationships. During the professional development, teachers will be introduced to a template adapted by the Long Island Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (L.I. RBERN) created to facilitate the planning and reflection needed for delivering instruction with ELLs. This template will help prepare ENL teachers and content teachers to reflect on their goals, assessments, and lessons to advocate for best practices for the individual students that are in their classes. Not only will this guide teachers' conversations to consider students' strengths and weaknesses, but it will also increase meaningful time spent together.

Advocacy at the State and National Level

Much of the advocacy at the state and national level requires ENL teachers to educate themselves on laws and policies that govern their individual states and throughout the country. Throughout educational policy history there have been several changes to the requirements for educating ELLs; therefore, remaining informed about current policies is essential to ensuring that learners are being treated fairly (Linville, 2020; Parkhouse et al., 2020). Jones et al. (2017) report the findings of five teacher-advocates who used their knowledge and understanding of effective practices to educate other teachers and change instructional practices within their classrooms. This took the shape of changing their individual pedagogical approaches, as well as the creation of a tool kit for teachers to use in counteracting the national legislation they perceived as harmful to their students (Jones et al., 2017). Additionally, these teachers wrote and advocated directly to the legislators that largely shaped the educational policy and legislation that they viewed as harmful (Jones et al., 2017). Similarly, Harrison and McIlwain (2020) found that teachers advocated for learners by sharing their experience and knowledge with various committees and boards, as well as with state departments of education. Therefore, ENL teachers need to be

informed of the policies and laws that are in place, as well as possible forums for them to voice their concerns and share their expertise.

During the professional development session, attendees will be presented with information about state and national laws that govern the education of ELLs. While given a cursory look at these policies, links will be provided for teachers to continue their education on their own beyond the time restraints of the session. Moreover, the contact information for the New York State Department of Education, as well as the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages will be provided so that participants can remain informed of developments within the department and how to voice their praise or concerns as experts within the field. In a state as large as New York, ensuring that the local populations and unique circumstances of various geographic areas is essential. Without voicing concerns and sharing their experiences, these teachers risk allowing their students' needs to be ignored and to face harmful decisions without speaking alongside these populations. As such, this portion of the professional development will prepare them to do so.

Overcoming Barriers

Facing resistance to advocacy efforts is a reality of ENL teachers (e.g., Maddamsetti, 2021; Parkhouse et al., 2020). In fact, Harrison and McIlwain (2020) found that an overwhelming majority of the 70 ENL teachers surveyed and interviewed encountered opposition to their advocacy efforts. Such resistance can come from those in positions of power above these teachers, such as administrators, but also from colleagues including other teachers, guidance counselors, and community members (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Maddamsetti, 2021). Understanding the "why" behind this hostility towards teachers' work at improving educational and life outcomes for ELLSs is important to being able to overcome it. Parkhouse et

al. (2020) discovered that some teachers and administrators have xenophobic and discriminatory

beliefs that can prevent ENL teachers from reaching their full potential as advocates. As such,

ENL teachers might face the additional task of educating these teachers about their own beliefs

and working to change these views as a form of advocacy, but also to circumvent this form of

resistance to advocacy.

Strategies for triumphing over barriers include building networks of support, sharing their

knowledge and experience with others in the form of informal conversations and leading formal

professional development opportunities, and being dedicated to advocacy (Jaffe-Walter, 2018;

Linville & Whiting, 2020; Shapiro & Ehtesham-Cating, 2019). At this point in the professional

development, I will share with teachers a video of an ENL teacher who shares her experiences as

an advocate and some ways that have proven successful for her in overcoming some of the

barriers to advocating for her learners. Teachers will also engage in a discussion about utilizing

the implicit bias test developed by researchers at Harvard University as a way for teachers to

reflect on their biases. While we will not have enough time to model the test during this

professional development session, discussion of its purpose, use, and the provision of the link to

this test will prepare teachers well to recommend it to others or use it during their own

professional development work in the future.

Putting it All Together

Considering the goal of practical implementation of advocacy strategies, teachers must be

provided the opportunity to do so. While this will realistically and largely occur after the

confines of the two-hour session when teachers are engaged in work with their ELLs, I also plan

to allow time for the participants to collaborate and engage in simulated application so as to

measure their learning and meeting of the intended outcomes, as well as to offer the chance for

teachers to ask questions and reflect on their learning. Linville and Whiting (2020) recommend the use of role-playing scenarios and case studies as preparation tools for teachers to engage in advocacy efforts. Accordingly, the last activity that attendees will complete is a simulation of various scenarios they may encounter during their practice (see Appendix B). In this activity, small groups of teachers will read a scenario and create a plan to effectively advocate for ELLs given the situation. These teachers will utilize a checklist (see Appendix C) to ensure that they are engaging in effective strategies according to the research presented as part of the professional development. Finally, the last fifteen minutes of the session will be spent with each group sharing out the situation and developed plan with the other attendees as a conclusion to the professional development.

The professional development session to be delivered to the aforementioned participants will prepare them to engage in real-world advocacy efforts during their practice as educators. Presenting the material at the beginning of the academic year will best prepare teachers to implement these strategies from day one, creating a focus area for teachers for the year ahead. Furthermore, the ENL department can utilize monthly department meetings to reflect on their advocacy, share ideas with one another, and create the shared responsibility for advocacy that is indispensable to this work (Jaffe-Walter, 2018). Likewise, participants will benefit from the active learning techniques that will be implemented throughout the session. While descriptions of the problem and responses to these problems will be shared, ENL professionals will have the opportunity to consider real-world scenarios and work cooperatively to brainstorm solutions. Through sharing and discussions of these solutions, the participants will be able to demonstrate their learning and practice in a low-stakes environment, ultimately preparing them for success beyond the professional development session.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone project explored the role of ENL educators as advocates for their learners and the barriers they encounter as they complete this work. Despite the expectation that ENL teachers act as advocates for ELLs, they are not always prepared to do so (Linville & Whiting, 2020). Whether it is due to a lack of clarity around their role, lack of awareness about effective advocacy strategies, or an unsupportive environment (e.g., Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Jaffe-Walter, 2018), working to improve the educational and life outcomes of ELLs can be quite challenging. Accordingly, the project created an illustrative guide for professionals within the Joyce Central School District to apply when acting as advocates and when encountering barriers to this advocacy work.

I have reviewed various studies related to the advocacy efforts of teachers and the barriers they face in enacting their work to the benefit of ELLs. They include survey data of teachers' advocacy efforts (e.g., Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Linville, 2020), case studies of advocacy in action (Haneda & Sherman, 2018; Jaffe-Walter, 2018), and interviews of teachers (e.g., Jones et al., 2017; Maddamsetti, 2020; Raubaugh & Purmensky, 2021). These studies have revealed that while ENL teachers engage in advocacy efforts, and there is resistance faced by them, as well, that prevents them from acting effectively. Solutions to this identified problem were defended by the researchers. Overall, the literature calls on countless voices from the field of ENL teachers, leading me to conclude that various advocacy strategies can be implemented to improve the educational and life outcomes of ELLs. In this Chapter, I summarize the findings of this project and then discuss implications for teaching ELLs and recommendations for future research.

Summary

Advocacy occurs in diverse forms and is interpreted differently by each ENL educator. Teachers' beliefs about the topic impact the amount of advocacy that they complete, as well as the types. Broadly speaking advocacy efforts can be differentiated into the following categories: instructional advocacy, political advocacy, and community advocacy (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Linville, 2020). Due the knowledge and experience of ENL educators, as well as their connections with their students, they are in a unique position to complete such work. Within the classroom setting, ENL teachers can develop, use, and share effective instructional materials to support students' development of content knowledge, skills, and language (e.g., Harrison & McIlwain, 2020). These teachers also educate and inform colleagues, community members, and legislators about ways to support ELLs (e.g., Linville, 2020). Within their local communities, ENL teachers connect ELLs and their families to needed resources and help newcomers find the resources they need (e.g., Linville, 2020). The aforementioned advocacy examples are not exhaustive and do not represent all the actions undertaken by all ENL teachers. Rather, this is a summary of the varied and diverse activities that extend beyond the scope of "teacher." However, advocacy efforts by ENL teachers are not solely informed by them, their beliefs, or knowledge.

Teacher-advocates encounter resistance to their work in the forms of xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes (Parkhouse et al., 2020), unsupportive colleagues and administrators who do not provide support or actively undermine their work (Harrison & McIlwain, 2020; Maddamsetti, 2021), and ideological differences around the idea of advocacy (Linville, 2020; Raubaugh & Purmensky, 2021), among others. Despite barriers that teachers may encounter, there are solutions to navigating and overcoming such resistance. Recommendations for overcoming such barriers are suggested for educators, such as sharing the responsibility of the

work by collaborating with others, sharing materials with non-content area teachers, educating themselves on local, state, and national policies, voicing their concerns to stakeholders, and confronting xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes both within themselves and within their colleagues. Each situation must be assessed independently, using the tools developed herein (see Appendices C and D), as well as the practical experience and expert knowledge of the individual teacher.

Preparing pre-service and current ENL teachers to advocacy is a demonstrated need as current practices lack the teaching of effective strategies and practical tools for this specific work (Linville & Whiting, 2020). Considering the way that teachers' beliefs predicts their engagement with advocacy, it is important that equal opportunity is provided for teachers to see themselves as advocates and to develop competencies as an advocate. While the professional development session designed for the purposes of this project aims to assist in this area the need extends beyond one school district and one professional development session. Accordingly, colleges and universities are encouraged to begin examining their curriculums and to address the National TESOL standard for advocacy in their course work for preservice teachers of ELLs.

In response to these conclusions, a professional development session and accompanying tools were developed. This session and tools seek to inform teachers on what advocacy is and what it looks like on a practical level, as well as prepare them to overcome barriers they may face to their efforts. The specifics of the session and tools were designed to meet the needs of the Joyce Central School District where the ELL population is increasing at a quick rate. Accordingly, ENL teachers have a demonstrated need to prepare for their advocacy efforts despite lack of preparation in their professional training.

Implications for Student Learning

The professional development created will help to improve student learning as teachers begin to implement the strategies in their work with ELLs. If the goal of advocacy is to improve the educational and life outcomes for students, then teachers who implement the suggested practices will help students to be more successful both inside and outside of the classroom. Specifically, the use culturally responsive teaching can be used as a way to increase motivation and feelings of belonging in the classroom and school environment, positively affecting language acquisition and development (e.g., Gay, 2013; Krashen, 1982). As we know of students' need for safety, motivation, and lack of anxiety to support their acquisition of a second language (Krashen, 1982), welcoming their whole identities into spaces of learning through culturally responsive teaching practices will likely do so. Likewise, when teachers collaborate with instructional colleagues, administration, and parents to improve the teaching and learning in their classrooms, students reap those benefits (e.g., Palmer, 2018; Shapiro & Ehtesham-Cating, 2019). For example, during the professional development teachers were introduced to a tool that promotes the co-planning, co-teaching, and co-collaboration between ENL experts and content-area teachers. Working as teammates in designing and delivering instruction and seeking ways to improve this instruction will benefit all students, but especially ELLs.

Implications for Teaching ELLs

The professional development session and accompanying tools will aid teachers in practically acting as advocates for their ELLs. The collaborative lesson planning templates will assist teachers, both ENL specialists and classroom teachers, to work together to design instruction that is student-centered and inclusive of the needs of all learners. Information related to national and state legislation will prepare teachers to effectively communicate about the rights of these students, while calling into question legislation that might not be in the best interest of

all students. Additionally, discussion of implicit bias and access to Harvard's Implicit Bias Test will offer teachers the opportunity to confront discriminatory attitudes they may face. They can also use such a resource to encourage other teachers to confront their own discriminatory attitudes. To conclude the professional development session teachers will engage in a low-stakes simulation of advocacy scenarios. Educators will be able to share ideas, create action plans, and use a checklist to confirm that the advocacy is effective.

Recommendations for Future Research

This professional development will benefit teachers as a first step towards improving the Joyce Central School District community. However, the work does not stop there. Future professional developments should continue the work presented here by providing teachers with additional strategies for advocating, providing opportunities for collaborative advocacy efforts, and encouraging ENL teachers to reflect on the efficacy of their advocacy work thus far and making plans for future work. As with teaching advocacy work must be reflective if teachers are to improve and grow in this field. Furthermore, if teachers share what they have learned they can learn from the successes and failures of their colleagues to inform their future efforts. While the current professional development was limited due to time constraints, future opportunities may explore these suggestions to improve learning and achievement for ELLs. Likewise, teacher preparation programs should consider reviewing their curricula to include practical and extensive training for future ENL teachers who will be expected to act as advocates.

Future research might seek to quantify the gains in educational or life outcomes that ELLs experience as a result of advocacy efforts from ENL teachers. Understanding the exact relationship between specific strategies and their effects on students will help to improve the work completed by ENL teachers. Furthermore, future research that investigates which advocacy

efforts most benefit students and their families can help to make professional development

sessions for ENL teachers even more specific. This research may be enhanced by the inclusion of

interviews and/or surveys from ELL students and families that discusses the impacts of

advocacy. Focusing solely on ENL teachers and not the intended benefits of their actions makes

positive outcomes of advocacy less likely. Finally, future professional development sessions may

choose to highlight solutions to the institutional and systemic barriers that ELL students and

families face in accessing resources, learning and achieving, and having their daily needs met.

Without exploring the effects of these forces on learners and how advocacy work might be

impacted we will not realize our true potential as advocates for ELLs.

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Appendix A:

Identity Box Introduction Activity

Welcome to "Effective Advocacy Strategies for the Teacher of ELLs: How to Improve

Educational and Life Outcomes for Learners."

As you enter, please consider who you are as an individual. How do you share your identities

with your students? Using the materials provided (crayons, markers, colored pencils) draw items

that you would bring into your classroom to show your students who you are. You might

consider your race, culture, language, gender, religion, ability, etc.

Now, consider what your students might include in their boxes if asked to bring in items

that represent their identities. Who are they and how do they see themselves? How are

their identities similar or different from yours? Share your thoughts below!

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B:

Scenarios

Group 1

A new student in the 3rd grade has just arrived from El Salvador and speaks Spanish at home. He does not have proficiency in English yet and has been placed into a general education classroom. You will be providing pull-out services to him, as per the principal's directives. When speaking with the general education teacher, she is quoted as saying, "I have no idea what to do with this student." How might you advocate for this student?

Group 2

One of your ELLs in the 7th grade comes to you at the end of the school day and informs you that he is trying to join the baseball team, but neither the student nor their parents can locate any information or find anyone to help. When the student tried to ask one of his non-ELL peers, the peer responded, "Your parents have to call the nurse and talk to her about approval." The students' parents do not speak English. How might you advocate for this student?

Group 3

In a recent faculty meeting, the administrator began a discussion about ELLs' content and language progress within the school. Unfortunately, the ELLs in the building have not made the gains that the administrator was expecting. This result led to xenophobic, racist, and discriminatory comments from your colleagues about these students' home lives, cultures, and languages, as well as their belonging in the community. How might you advocate for your students?

Group 4

Today is the first day of school. You are speaking with your co-teacher to prepare for this week's lessons. Your co-teacher shares with you their materials for the year on their online cloud storage and says, "I am very organized and keep everything I use for the year on my cloud storage. Follow along with my materials in the folders and you'll be fine." How might you advocate for your students in this situation?

Group 5

You are mentoring a new ENL teacher in your school. He has come to you because many of his newcomer students struggle with finding the resources they need within the school building. For example, one of his students was asked to go to the nurse's office and was gone for 30 minutes because she was unable to locate the nurse's office, nor communicate with the nurse once there. How might you and/or the new teacher advocate for the ELLs in the building?

Appendix C:

Advocacy Checklist

Instructions: Use the following checklist as you create a plan of action for your advocacy work. Keep in mind each of these elements to help aid in advocating effectively.

- ☐ The sustaining of students' varied identities and home languages were considered and prioritized

- ☐ The problem was discussed with my students and/or their families and their input and suggestions were prioritized

- ☐ I have considered my own identity and positionality and how this might affect my perspective

- ☐ My advocacy engages allies within my building and district, or I can effectively advocate on my own in this case

- ☐ I am aware of any laws or policies at the local, state, and national level that may impact the problem or solution

- ☐ I have considered possible resistance (lack of administrative and/or community support, resources, ideological differences with others, etc.) I may face and brainstormed solutions

Appendix D:

Link to Slides and Presentation of Professional Development

Link to Slides

Wolf-PDSlides.pptx

Link to Presentation of Professional Development

https://brockport.voicethread.com/share/20378536/