

PREPAREDNESS OF MAINSTREAM TEACHERS

**Preparedness of Mainstream Teachers to Have ELLs in Their Classrooms**

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**Abstract**

This capstone aims to examine the problem that mainstream teachers are not prepared to have English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms and how to assist teachers to be better prepared to educate ELLs in mainstream classrooms. ELLs are the fastest growing student population in the U.S. and are required to be in mainstream classrooms, yet this capstone project will discuss why teachers are not prepared to educate this rising number of ELLs. Contributing factors in teacher unpreparedness include negative perceptions of ELLs, lack of education in culturally responsive teaching and ESOL strategies, lack of support from administration and need for continued professional development. To help prepare mainstream teachers to have ELLs in their classroom, this capstone includes a professional development series that will address these problems and be implemented in the Greenfield school district. The PD will be based on research in the literature review and will focus on teaching mainstream teachers ESOL strategies, ESOL laws and guidelines, culturally responsive teaching, ELL family involvement, discussions with peers and times of self-reflection.

*Keywords:* Mainstream teachers, English Language Learners (ELLs), culturally responsive teaching, professional development

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

English Language Learners (ELLs) are a growing population in U.S. public schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), about 5 million ELLs are in public schools. However, many general education teachers are not prepared to have ELLs in their classroom (Villegas et al., 2018). By general education teachers I am referring to content area teachers who are not specifically certified to be TESOL educators. In a recent teacher survey study in North Carolina, teachers reported that they “would like the county to do more for professional development regarding ELL students” (Hegde et al., 2018, p. 781). After the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, ELLs were mandated to take part in state testing programs that began more ELL immersion into mainstream classes (Villegas et al., 2018, p. 139). Mainstreaming ELLs is a positive move to be more inclusive; however, prior to this act teachers had little to no preparation for teaching ELLs, and the same holds true today. In fact, only “26.8% of US teachers have had some preparation in ELL education” even though “42% of the mainstream teachers have ELLs in their classroom” (Guler, 2020, p. 83).

Transition, ELLs’ academic achievement levels are lower than their non-ELL peers. According to New York State Department of Education (2021), in 2016; the graduation rate for current ELL students was 46%, whereas the graduation rate for White high school students was about 91%. Thus, there is a significant need for ELLs to be better supported by ESOL trained teachers. To train teachers to be better prepared to teach ELL students, training and classes in ESOL strategies and education make teachers feel more prepared to help ELLs in their classroom (Villegas et al., 2018). Many teachers feel that they need more professional development opportunities in order to learn more about meeting the needs of ELL students (Hegde et al., 2017). Effective training for teachers includes online teacher education classes (Guler, 2020) and

other in person workshops and professional development. Content knowledge in these classes and professional development included overview of ELLs needs, standards for ELLs, second language acquisition (SLA) theories and principles, research-based effective strategies, how to make academic language comprehensible and BICS (basic international personal communication skills versus CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) (Li & Peters, 2017; Villegas et al., 2018).

Therefore, the purpose of this capstone project is to bring awareness for the need of more ESOL education and preparedness for general education teachers, so they can teach ELLs in their classrooms. In Chapter 2, I will review research on teachers' lack of preparedness to teach ELLs in their mainstream classroom and solutions to help make teachers more prepared to teach ELLs in their classrooms. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how I will conduct a professional development for the Greenfield district teachers to help them be better prepared to teach ELLs in their classroom. In Chapter 4, I will conclude the discussion of general education preparedness for teaching ELLs and directions for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter 1 introduced the problem that general education teachers are unprepared to have ELLs in their mainstream classroom. I will begin Chapter 2 with discussing the educational, SLA and ESOL theories of Stephen Krashen and Lev Vygotsky. These educational theories are needed to understand ESOL education and teaching ELL students, as well as to better understand this literature review, PD, and capstone project. This chapter includes a review of the literature about the problem of general education ELL unpreparedness and the need of more ESOL education and preparedness for general education teachers, so they can teach ELLs in their classroom. Much research reviewed in this chapter is drawn on the concern of teachers' perceptions of ELL students (Bacon, 2020; Guler 2020), lack of professional development in ESOL strategies (Coady et al., 2015; Hedge, 2018), lack of culturally responsive teaching knowledge (Coady et al., 2016; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018), and lack of support from administration (Guler, 2020; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). After I discuss each of these themes, I will present the strategies that can help teachers be prepared to teach ELLs such as types of professional development and instructional strategies.

### **Educational Theories Necessary in Teaching ELLs**

Psychologist Lev Vygotsky is very familiar in education for his theories on Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Sociocultural Theory. It is important to review these theories when teaching ELL students and understand how they still relate to teaching ELL students, as I continue to explain the problem and solution in this capstone project. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory explains how learning is a "social process" and that students learn by interacting with each other. This is especially true for ELLs who need to be in the mainstream classroom, interacting with English speaking peers, which will increase their language and content learning.

ZPD is a part of this theory as well and refers to the “distance between what children can do and what they can do with the guidance” and help from a teacher or other skilled person. Scaffolding is how one can guide students along in their ZPD. Scaffolding “can create supportive conditions in which the novice can participate.” When speaking of ESOL strategies to use with ELLs, this is scaffolding the content to be appropriate and accessible for these students (Nemati, 2014, p. 263). Many of the incorrect ESOL strategies used with ELLs or lack of knowledge in ESOL strategies I will explain in this literature review will emphasize the need to scaffold for ELLs so they can be in the ZPD.

Expert in second language acquisition (SLA), Stephen Krashen, has many theories relating to educating ELLs such as the “five main hypotheses of the theory of second language acquisition.” These theories are essential to understanding how ELLs learn languages and how to help teach them effectively. The five hypotheses include the “Acquisition-learning hypothesis, Monitor hypothesis, Natural order hypothesis, Input hypothesis and Affective filter hypothesis. Acquisition-learning hypothesis is the theory that students will learn language from meaningful and natural interaction in the target language. The Monitor hypothesis is the theory that ELLs use a “monitor” as an internal corrector or editor to filter correct use of language and language rules. The Natural order hypothesis is the theory that there is a predictable order in learning a language. Some grammatical structures are learned first, and other language structures need more time to master. The Input hypothesis is the theory that ELLs learn language by “comprehensible input” which is learning information that is understandable and just a little over their proficiency level, so they are able to learn the language and be challenged just right. ELL strategies in this capstone project help mainstream teachers to teach “comprehensible input.” The final hypothesis is the Affective filter theory which claims if a student has anxiety, low motivation, and lack of

confidence then the affective filter will block language learning from occurring (Patrick, 2019). When speaking about the importance of teaching ELLs with culturally responsive teaching, it welcomes students to be comfortable and accepted in the classroom where they can put their affective filter down and be able to increase their language learning.

### **Teachers' Negative Perceptions of ELL Students**

Negative perceptions of ELL students such as not believing it is their (mainstream teacher) job to educate these students, discriminatory biases, assimilation beliefs, and beliefs of not wanting to differentiate for ELLs may be reflected in their teaching of these students. Indeed, teachers also have positive perceptions of ELL students. Teachers with positive perceptions of ELL students can see teaching ELLs as a benefit, to diversify their learning community, enjoy differentiating and collaborating with ENL teachers and other teachers. Guler (2020) researched 11 teachers' perceptions of ELLs through collecting data in online classes, interviews, and writing responses. He found teachers with positive perceptions of ELL students want to have ELL students in their classroom and eager to help these students (Guler, 2020). These positive perceptions will encourage teachers to want to differentiate and include ELLs in lessons, in result the ELL student will learn more. However, some mainstream teachers have negative perceptions of emergent bilingual students, which can hinder their ability to educate these multilingual students. Teachers with these negative perceptions of ELLs may not want to teach this student group and think that teaching these students is not their responsibility and only the responsibility of the ENL teacher (Guler, 2020, p. 84). Carley Rizzuto's (2017) research was similar to Guler's research findings and also interviewed and observed 11 mainstream teachers' perceptions of ELLs. Findings revealed negative perceptions of ELLs hindered the teacher's ability to educate these students. For example, teachers emphasized different aspects of the curriculum based on



their beliefs of which students “deserve and who can master rigor in instruction” (p. 184), meaning they did not consider differentiating for ELL students. Also, Carley Rizzuto uncovered that disproportionate numbers of ELL students are labeled as poor readers and placed in the lowest reading groups (p. 184).

Negative perceptions of ELLs that affect teachers’ preparedness to teach this group of students include the incorrect idea of necessary assimilation and monolingualism which can also be seen in previous U.S. laws. It was not long ago when many states like Arizona, California, Colorado, and Massachusetts had “English only” education laws. In Massachusetts, these laws were not overturned until 2017 (Bacon, 2020, p. 173); that is, these monolingual ideas are still very present in classrooms around the United States. When teachers believe monolingualism ideologies and policies, they believe that English only in the classroom is the right way to learn. Bacon’s (2020) research of 100 mainstream educators showed that a factor in forming a teacher’s perception of ELLs came from their interpretation of district, school and state language policies and laws (p. 183). The analysis of interviews and observations revealed that laws and policies that encouraged a monolingualistic education was understood by teachers that they should encourage English only in the classroom, and not use a student’s L1 in the classroom to help them learn English.

Teachers who have an “English-only” perception will not know strategies of using a student’s first language to help them learn English. For example, the use of Spanish cognates to help students understand the vocabulary word in Spanish. Halpern et al.’s (2021) study of teacher perceptions included 37 teachers. Data was collected through written responses in an online class, interviews, and observations. Halpern et al. (2021) also found that teachers had a

monolingualistic, “English only” perspective that affected ELL students. One participant in the study reported,

“I saw first-hand that, despite having bilingual teachers, the readings and classwork were solely in English and never relevant to the students’ cultural or experiential backgrounds. I learned how challenging school is for these students because of bad practices by educators, administrators, and lawmakers” (p. 7).

As a result, these negative perceptions of ELLs can be harmful to emergent bilingual students. Carley Rizzuto (2017) also found that 70% of the 11 teachers in the research study held negative perceptions of ELL students. This finding was based off a questionnaire to which early child educators reported that they disagreed that “teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students” (Carley Rizzuto, 2017, p. 191). That is, Teachers with this negative perception of ELLs do not want to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the ELL students and do not believe it is their responsibility to teach them in their mainstream classroom. Teachers with negative perceptions about emergent bilingual students also report having “lack of time to address the needs of ELLs, lack of training in ELL education, lack of sufficient materials to help ELLs, and lack of knowledge in second language acquisition (SLA)” (Guler, 2020, p. 84). These problems that contribute to these negative perceptions of ELL students will be discussed next in the literature review. Guler’s study discovered “the most consistent and important factor that impacts mainstream teachers’ attitudes towards ELL students is education” (Guler, 2020, p.84), which will be explained next in this chapter.

**Lack of Culturally Responsive Teaching Knowledge**

Many teachers who have emergent bilingual students in their classrooms currently lack training in culturally responsive teaching and knowledge. Coady et al. (2016) studied four different teachers as they taught in classrooms with ELL students after graduating from various colleges in Florida. The analyses of interviews, surveys and in person observations revealed the following findings of culturally responsive teaching with ELL students. The findings showed teachers “did little to plan for ELLs' linguistic development and cultural learning during class time through differentiated instruction or assessment” (Coady et al., 2016). Hiatt and Fairbairn (2018) surveyed 126 teachers on their preparedness in teaching ELLs using the “five overarching domains” from the TESOL professional learning standards (p. 232). These domains include language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism. The survey item in the “culture domain” is what participants felt the least prepared in their abilities to teach ELLs and were unsure how to reach out to ELL families and understand their culture. Teachers mostly agreed with the question about “understanding of how culture influences learning” (p. 244). That is, teachers know the importance of culture in the classroom and how it will help learning, but they are unaware on how to implement it and how to teach in a culturally responsive way with ELL students. Because many teachers lack this training and knowledge in culturally responsive teaching, they are unprepared to teach the ELLs in their mainstream classrooms.

Halpern et al.'s (2021) study also revealed the mainstream teacher's lack of knowledge and preparedness in culturally responsive teaching for ELLs. This study investigated pre-service teachers' ability to teach immigrant children during one academic semester through a cultural competence lens by observing teachers in the classroom and discussions with other teachers. Results showed teachers have “reservations about teaching immigrant students because they

lacked knowledge concerning their culture, traditions, challenges and languages” (Halpern et al., 2021, p. 6). Hedge (2018) also found that mainstream teachers lacked knowledge in culturally responsive teaching for emergent bilingual students when interviewing and surveying 20 kindergarten teachers from North Carolina. Hedge’s research (2018) found that teachers reported having a lack in culturally responsive teaching and expressed wanting more education to learn “more about different types of religions and different countries” to assist them in teaching ELL students. Of these same teachers, reportedly “60% took a course in their preparation programme specifically developed for teaching students from culturally diverse backgrounds” (Hedge, 2018, p. 781). Thus, showing that at least 40% had no training or knowledge in culturally responsive teaching for ELL students.

Indeed, culturally responsive teaching is important in teaching ELLs because it welcomes their culture into the classroom, but it also helps students to improve academically. Cavallaro and Sembiente (2021) examined a culturally responsive literacy program and how it affected ELL student’s literacy progress and classroom performance. The results were that ELL students became more “enthusiastic and participatory with encouragement and upon hearing peers’ narratives” on their cultural experiences “welcomed into the space” (p. 169). Also, when students were able to draw on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds with reading and their language, students’ confidence and engagement in class improved allowing for more language risks and opportunities in class. When an emergent bilingual student’s language confidence is strong, their affective filter is not as active which encourages students to take more language risks and improve their language skills.

**Need For Continued Professional Development in ESOL Teaching Strategies**

Most mainstream teachers want more ESOL training to meet the needs of their emergent bilingual students. If these teachers are not receiving the education in college programs, then there is a need for professional development in TESOL through their teaching districts. Hiatt (2018) found that the majority of the 126 teachers felt “underprepared [in teaching ELLs] and could benefit from EL professional development” in the domains of TESOL: language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism.” (p. 239). There was an emphasis on the need to learn ELL strategies in the professional development based on teacher responses to interview and survey questions. Teachers reportedly felt “poorly to somewhat prepared” in their knowledge of ELL strategies and reported wanting more practical training on strategies for ELL students (p. 245). The much apparent need for ENL professional development was also discovered with Hedge’s (2021) study. Teachers reported learning effective ELL instruction from professional development such as, learning about the importance of “language objectives and different strategies that we could put into different subject areas for support for our students” (p. 780). The findings also revealed that most teachers utilized what they learned in the professional development to implement with emergent bilingual students in their general education classrooms. Teachers in this study were excited to report that techniques and strategies they were able to learn in ESOL professional development were used in their classrooms such as, language objectives, vocabulary picture cards and modeling. Likewise, Hansen-Thomas et al.’s (2016) study of 179 teachers’ answers to a study survey and observations in school showed that “better-trained teachers (in ESOL) perceived themselves ... as effective in applying instructional methods and teaching strategies in ESL” (p. 319). Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) found teachers felt more effective in teaching ELLs because they were trained through professional

development opportunities in ESOL education and strategies to use with ELL students. These findings show the importance of continuing professional development in TESOL for mainstream teachers to prepare them to have ELLs in their class.

However, “only 20 US states require some kind of training for teachers of ELLs, but the parameters of this training are not clearly spelled out” (Hansen- Thomas, 2016, p. 310). To Hedge (2018), professional development in ELL education should not be a “one shot in a workshop or staff development does not install these strategies in teachers or force them to practice these strategies in the classroom” (p. 776). For example, for teachers in Texas to be certified in ESOL, due to a high need, they just need to pass one certification examination in order to teach ELLs. Some teachers “hold the required certification but may not have taken any preparation classes or even PD in the discipline” (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016, p. 310). Without continued professional development teachers may not deeply understand and implement strategies to teach ELLs and an understanding for how culturally responsive teaching benefits ELL students. That is, many strategies can only be learned through experience and reflection based professional opportunities, not just by passing a test.

Many teachers report wanting to have TESOL professional development but there are little to no opportunities for it in their district. In Hedge’s (2018) study, teachers reported the desire to be offered more professional development opportunities “specific to ELL instruction” where they could learn about teaching strategies that are helpful in the classroom and “resources that (they) could give to parents or get them in homes” (p. 781). However, only 59% of all the kindergarten teachers in the district actually participated in professional development for ELL education (Hedge, 2018). The teachers that did not participate reported “the workshops are less advantageous than they are inopportune of their time, energy, and/or resources” (Hedge, 2018, p.

782). In another study, 20 teachers at four different school districts were interviewed, most responded that they would “participate in the professional development training regarding emergent bilingual students if it was offered” (Li, 2016). Indeed, teaching is already a very demanding and underpaid profession, so it is important that teachers have some monetary reward of some sort for participating in these professional developments. Thus, more research should be done to find a way for teachers to participate in these professional developments, so they feel valued and as though it is a good use of their time.

Teachers also need continued education in TESOL so they avoid using “wrong accommodations to teach these [ELL] students due to their lack of knowledge in ELL education” (Guler, 2020, p. 83). Such as oversimplified materials that are below the student’s grade level, may not include ELLs in class discussions or other unnecessary accommodations for these multilingual students. Other teachers reported that they were not equipped to appropriately instruct their ELL students in literacy instructions so they “presented students with a diluted curriculum” (Carley Rizzuto, 2017, p. 195). This is not an appropriate strategy to educate emergent bilingual students. With more opportunities for TESOL education through professional developments for general education teachers, teachers could be more prepared to teach ELLs in their classes.

#### **Lack of Support from Administration**

Many times, the lack of education and training for mainstream teachers of ELLs stems from a lack of support from administration. Guler (2020) found that the teacher perceptions of ELLs were “changed when they observed the attitudes of school administrators and other mainstream teachers towards this student group” (p. 90). That is, if attitudes towards ELLs from administration were supportive and positive, so were teachers’ perceptions of ELLs. However, if

administrations attitudes and perceptions towards ELLs were more negative, then teachers' perceptions towards ELLs were more likely to be negative as well. Guler (2020) also discovered administrations are "not aware of the unique needs of ELLs and importance of ELL pedagogy in teaching ELLs" (p. 89). For example, Guler observed placing a non-certified ESOL teacher in charge of ESOL classroom and placing an ESOL teacher in charge of a Spanish class, incorrectly thinking that because the teacher is certified in ESOL than she or he must be certified in Spanish too.

As a result, some teachers were also turned into advocates for their ELL students or reached out for more TESOL education when they were met with lack of support from administration. When one teacher met with administration on needing a new ENL class section she was met with "a bit of resistance" (Guler, 2020, p. 88). Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) also reported that teachers felt they needed schedule adjustments and more time to meet the needs of the ELL students but without the support of administration to make schedule changes, they were not given this extra time to prepare to teach ELL students (p. 319). In Bauler and Kang's (2020) research in co-teaching ELL classrooms over three years reported one of the "strongest predictor of co-teaching success" is administrative support (p. 341). Some districts had administration that "implemented many of the changes suggested by teachers" (Bauler & Kang, 2020, p. 346), which lead to increase teacher preparedness and collaboration for teaching ELL while other districts struggled to get assistance and support from administration. When administration is not aware of ELL needs, they are not aware of how to support teachers with ELLs. In result, teachers are not prepared to teach ELLs.



**Strategies to Prepare Teachers to Have ELLs in Their Classroom**

The reviewed literature in this chapter has shown the best way to help prepare teachers to have emergent bilingual students in their classrooms is TESOL education for these mainstream teachers. Relatedly, there are different successful forms of education such as online classes (Guler, 2020; Halpern et al, 2021) and in person ENL experiences (Hedge, 2018; Li, 2017). The education should be a combination of learning about ESOL strategies and culturally responsive teaching to help teach ELL students. Online courses for mainstream teachers were very effective in preparing them for ELLs in their classroom in Guler's (2020) study. One was an eight-week course, and the other was a sixteen-week course. The online course gave busy teachers the flexibility to finish the courses on their own time and the in-person practicum was working with ELLs in their mainstream classroom or school. Teachers were able to use the ENL strategies learned in the online class in their classroom with ELL students. Then online reflect on how the ELL strategies were used and discussed these experiences with their teacher peers. During the online classes Guler observed that collaborative discussions were found to be "very effective in mainstream teachers' perception changes" to be more positive towards ELL teaching (2020, p. 92).

These discussions incorporated teacher collaboration by sharing about new ELL strategies that worked for them and asking for suggestions for specific ways to help their ELL students. In the same vein, Halpern et al.'s (2021) study reported the success of online discussions for teachers to discuss various TESOL strategies and mainly incorporating culturally responsive teaching to effectively teach immigrant children. The 37 teacher participants reported that the online discussions helped them to become more self-aware and see themselves through the experiences of immigrant children. It also helped the teachers to have "compassionate

competence” which emerged from online discussions to understand the lives and struggles of immigrant families. One teacher said,

“I realized that I had personal feelings and opinions about immigrants. But, by putting myself in their shoes, I could understand why we need to help them. Our society can complain about immigrants, but we, as educators, have the power to change that” (p. 6)

Halpern et al. (2021) also reported that these teachers had, in result of the professional development, a better understanding of the “importance of applying culturally responsive teaching skills into their future lessons” (p.6). A large part of these online discussions engaged candidates in self-reflection which has also been found effective in educating teachers about ELLs. Villegas et al. (2018) found with their empirical literature review that when study participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with ELLs, they were able to examine “their assumptions of ELLs”, “gain insights into their personal beliefs about ELLs,” and their role as a mainstream teacher educating ELLs (p. 150).

In person PD experience with emergent bilingual students is another effective professional development strategy. In Li’s study (2017), 48 teachers participated in a professional development which involved research and service. A questionnaire asked teachers what strategies were effective in teaching ELLs. Most teachers listed the same strategies such as visual aids, small group instruction, peer tutoring and additional time as the top instructional strategies for ELL students. But after the ESOL training, a significant increase of strategies were listed in addition as effective such as modeling, graphic organizers, pre-teaching, KWL charts and think-pair-share. This finding shows the success in teacher training to learn more ways to teach emergent bilingual students. Li’s study also found that effective professional development additionally included learning about TESOL standards, overview of ELLs’ needs in the

classroom, SLA theories and principles, and how to make academic language more comprehensible for ELLs (p. 1501). Hedge (2018) also concluded that teachers found they did not feel “truly prepared to teach ELLs until they are in the classroom” (p.779) drawing on the importance of both professional development and in person experience with ELLs. If teachers do not have ELLs in their classroom, they could reach out to others to observe and work with ELLs in other classrooms.

Hiatt and Fairbairn (2018) suggest content for professional development surrounding the five domains of the TESOL Professional Teaching Standards to prepare teachers for ELL students in their classroom. The five domains being: language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism. Professional development in these domains might include an introduction to the language domain such as information about language acquisition theories. Information on the culture domain could include information on different cultures represented in schools and how to incorporate the ELL’s background into teaching. Information on the instructional domain could include information on “Basic instructional strategies or best practices for teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom” (p. 251). The assessment domain could include information on the best assessments for ELL students. The professionalism domain could educate teachers on sharing responsibility for emergent bilingual student education and the importance of increasing professional development opportunities.

One important strategy to help mainstream teachers be more prepared to teach ELLs is learn through professional development how to connect and communicate with ELL parents due to the language barrier. Hansen- Thomas (2016) cited that “involving new immigrant parents in their children’s learning as a challenge that school personnel perceived” and that “there is a need for increased awareness from teachers about the perception that parents have of authority and

their first-language role in the success of their children” (p. 309). But this is not the case. Blair and Haneda (2021) examined one school districts’ ELL family-teacher partnership through observations and interviews. Blair and Haneda (2021) explain how teachers should view families from an “assets-based perspective” meaning that a genuine connection where all parties are embracing different values, views and practices is beneficial and a learning process (p.19). Teachers, ELLs, and families all benefit from this communication. Creating a connection with ELL families can be done with home visits and using a translator if needed, these are just some examples that should be shared when educating mainstream teachers about communicating with ELL families.

Another strategy to help prepare general education teachers to prepare for ELL students in their classroom is to collaborate with the ENL teacher. This can be done through a co-teaching relationship or classroom. Bauler (2020) conducted a three-year study of twelve teams of ESOL co-teachers and found the benefits of the general education and ENL teachers’ ability to share ideas and strategies together actually benefited the students. During these three years there was an increase in the co-teaching classes ELL students’ English proficiency levels (p. 342).

This review of literature and studies show how and in what ways mainstream teachers are not prepared to have ELL students in their classroom. This literature review has also shown in what ways to help mainstream teachers become prepared to have emergent bilingual students in their classroom. I will use this information from the literature to form my professional development explained in Chapter 3. I then will present the professional development sessions to mainstream teachers in a K-12 school building in the Greenfield school district to help better prepare them for ELL students in their classrooms.

### **Chapter 3: Description of Product and Tools**

Chapter 2 discussed the literature review of general education teachers' unpreparedness to have ELLs in their mainstream classrooms. Research shows teachers' negative perceptions of ELLs (Bacon, 2020; Guler, 2020), lack of culturally responsive education (Coady et al., 2016; Halpern, 2021) and lack of support from administration (Bauler and Kang, 2020; Guler, 2020). Thus, there is a need for continued professional development in ESOL teaching strategies.

In this Chapter, I describe my product of professional development, which aims to educate mainstream teachers in ESOL teaching strategies, culturally responsive teaching, and family connections to prepare them to have emergent bilingual students in their classrooms. Below I will present the agenda, components, and activities of the professional development sessions.

#### **Agenda**

Participants will be teachers from the Greenfield School District, with preschool through 12th grade being in one large building. In this school district currently, there are about 30 ELL students that stretch between all grade levels. There are about 100 teachers and 1,000 students. I will invite all district teachers to a four-session workshop. I will facilitate each of the four sessions using PowerPoint slides (Appendix D). The first PD will take place in the school district in the week before school starts so teachers can begin to have the tools to teach ELL students before the school year starts. The PD will then have three sessions spaced out throughout the year that teachers can attend via Zoom. The reason for the Zoom option is so teachers have the flexibility of attending from anywhere. Indeed, online discussions have proved to be successful in getting teachers to participate (Guler, 2020, Halper, 2021). The times for the first two Zoom sessions will be within the first half of the year and the second two in the Spring. Doodle Polls

will go out to teachers to select the best times for the sessions for everybody. Additionally, before the PD starts, I will send the “needs assessment for professional development” survey (Appendix A) via email to participants to get an understanding of their training in ESOL, culturally responsive teaching, and thoughts of ELLs. This will then give me an understanding on what to focus more on in the sessions for this participant group. This survey is taken from Li’s (2017) study. The spacing is designed so teachers can have a chance to implement strategies learned and then bring their experiences and questions to the following sessions.

The first session will be in person where the outline of the PD will be presented, importance of the sessions, NYS ELL laws, and introduction to strategies to use with ELL students. The second session will include information on culturally responsive teaching, ELL strategies and discussion time. The third session will be about ELL family involvement, ELL strategies and discussion time. The fourth and final Zoom session will be completed in the spring and will be a time of reflection for teachers to ask questions and share experiences of how they applied what they learned. The multiple sessions will better prepare teachers to teach ELLs by providing them space to learn and ask questions about classroom teaching strategies that can promote ELLs’ success. Halper (2021) and Guler (2020) reported teachers feeling more prepared to teach emergent bilingual students after using a combination of in person and online workshops.

### ***Session One***

The first PD session will have the learning goals of- “I can discuss the importance of educating ELLs in my classroom” and “I can use effective ENL strategies in my classroom with ELL students.” These will be presented in a PowerPoint slide and will be 90 minutes long to ensure time to give all information and answer questions. To start off the session a KWL chart

**Commented [AM(1)]:** Only one spacer after periods. Apply throughout.

will be presented to the participants titled “English Language Learners and Effective strategies to teach ELLs.” It will have columns of what teachers “know, want to know, and learned.” In this session teachers will fill out the “know” and “want to know. Participants fill out the “learned” portion in the last session. This will give the participants some background knowledge to the topic and give the session leader some ideas of what to spend more or less time on based on what the participants know and want to know. This is also a great ENL strategy to model how teachers can use this in their classroom. In Li and Peter’s study (2017), KWL charts was an effective strategy teachers reported learning in their professional development that they could use in their mainstream classroom with ELLs.

Then I will share a summary of the NYS laws and regulation surrounding ELL education by presenting the New York State “Blueprint for English Language Learner/ Multilingual Learner Success” which is a clearly laid out document that emphasizes that “all teachers are teachers of English Language Learners/ Multilingual Learners” (NYSED, p.3). Bacon (2020) argued how some teachers are unaware of the current laws and regulation for ELL students and how many teachers believe in the “English-only,” seclusion laws that are no longer current. That is, it is very important that all teachers know current New York State TESOL/ bilingual laws to educate emergent bilingual students.

I will then share the five levels of English proficiency as described in Fairbairn and Jones-Vo’s book *Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for English Language Learners* and how to differentiate for the different proficiency levels. The “differentiated assignment/ assessment template” (Appendix B) which provides an excellent example of how to differentiate for ELLs at various language proficiency levels. These will be printed for teachers as well.

Teachers will then watch the three-minute video titled, *Differentiating Instruction: A Guide for Teaching English-Language Learners* (Education Week, 2019). Which offers tips on how to differentiate instruction with strategies for ELL students in the mainstream classroom such as collaborative grouping, visuals and background knowledge from veteran teachers. Next, I will ask them to share one way the teachers differentiated in this video. Teachers will then have 10 minutes to find two strategies they could use in their classroom with ELLs from *The GO TO Strategies: Scaffolding Options for Teachers of English Language Learners, K-12* (New Levine et al., 2013). I will then place participants in equal groups to participate in a “jigsaw” group activity where the participants teach each other about the strategies they found. This activity will be about 20 minutes. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers “did little to plan” for differentiation strategies (e.g., Coady, 2016), even though these strategies can be very easy to implement in the mainstream classroom. Also, many teachers do not use the correct ESOL strategies for ELLs due to lack of knowledge and training in this area (e.g., Guler, 2020). Thus, there is such an emphasis on ESOL strategies in this PD.

For closing there will then be 20 minutes of open discussion. This is when teachers can ask any questions, ask for advice with working with ELLs, or share what strategies have worked in their classroom. Discussions and self- reflections are implemented a lot throughout this PD as they are effective in changing teacher’s perceptions and assumptions of ELLs (e.g., Halpern et al., 2021; Villegas et al., 2018) and learning effective ESOL strategies (e.g., Guler, 2020). Going into the new school year, this session gives real strategies that can be used right away in the classroom. TESOL strategies is what teachers have reported wanting to be more trained about in professional development opportunities to be more prepared to have emergent bilingual students in their classrooms. (Hedge, 2018; Hiatt, 2018).



***Session 2***

Session two will focus on educating mainstream teachers on culturally responsive teaching to help prepare themselves for ELLs in their classroom. When students use their culture, language, and identity in class they form a connection to content that includes them in their learning. Many ELLs are immigrants and from different countries, cultures, and religions so it is important that a teacher has culturally responsive knowledge. In the literature review, it describes studies where teachers reported wanting more education on different cultures of their students and they lacked the education in their preservice and professional education (Halpern et al., 2021; Hedge et al, 2018). The learning goal for this session is “I can describe and implement culturally responsive teaching in my classroom.” Within a PowerPoint we will describe the definition of culturally responsive teaching, benefits and how to implement it. The benefits will describe studies such as Cavallaro and Sembante (2021) who discovered how students became more “enthusiastic and participatory with encouragement and upon hearing peers’ narratives” on their cultural experiences “welcomed into the space” (p. 169). The strategies to use in teacher classrooms I will present from Liz Kleinrock’s book “Start Here, Start Now” (2021). Activities explained will include classroom community agreements, identity maps, writing prompts centered around identity, different cultures in books and art. The teachers will participate in a “think-pair-share” where teachers will describe a culturally responsive teaching strategy they have learned about and how they could use it in their classroom or one that they have used in class before and how it was effective. This is also an ELL teaching strategy described in Li’s (2017) study, teachers are learning an ELL strategy at the same time learning about culturally responsive teaching. The session will close with twenty minutes of open discussion where teachers can ask questions and reflect on culturally responsive teaching.

***Session 3***

The next session will concentrate on the importance of ELL family involvement and more ENL strategies. The learning goal will be “I can describe ways to involve ELL families in the classroom.” I will start by showing the video from Colorin Colorado, “ELL Parent Engagement Ideas.” Teachers will then receive a graphic organizer (Appendix C) to complete while listening to the video and presentation. This session will tell teachers six different ways to get ELL parents involved in their child’s education. The graphic organizer is an ENL strategy listed as very effective in Li and Peter’s (2017) study, so teachers are learning how to implement this strategy in the session as well. There will then be a 20-minute discussion time where teachers can share how they have been implementing the strategies in their classrooms as well as any questions they may have about family involvement in ELLs. These strategies in family involvement are needed to learn because many immigrant families have the perception that there is not a need to get involved in their child’s education (Hansen-Thomas, 2016). Blair (2021) explains that there is such a benefit to the ELL student when family is involved in the classroom, both for the teacher and student.

***Session 4***

Session four in this PD will focus on final discussions and reflections about teaching ELL students successfully. The learning goal will be “I can reflect upon and discuss ELL strategies.” The KWL chart we wrote will be shown again. Teachers will share what new things they have learned and will complete the chart. Again, this is practicing an ENL strategy that can be useful in the classroom. What is left of the hour will be remaining for reflections, questions and discussions. The closing for the sessions will be this. Leaving time for reflections and discussions have been proven very successful in helping prepare teachers in educating ELLs. In

Halpern et al.'s (2021) study, teachers reported having a better understanding of ELLs after workshop discussions and online discussions helped them to more self-aware and see themselves through the experiences of immigrant children. Guler (2020) reported teachers having perception changes of ELLs into more positive ones because of self- reflection being included in PD.

### **Intended Outcomes**

There are many intended outcomes of sharing this professional development with the teachers at Greenfield Central School District. First, teachers will leave the PD with a better understanding and positive perception of ELL students. They will learn ESOL strategies to easily use in their classroom to better educate ELL students. Learning culturally responsive strategies will help teachers to better include student's identity and experiences in the classroom, which will benefit all students. Reflecting on ELL strategies and continued discussions will allow the outcome of self-realization as well as learning from others which can begin collaborative relationships that can continue after the professional development is over. The most important intended outcome from this professional development is that it will benefit the ELL students. Just as Bauler and Kang (2020) discovered that co-teaching relationships where reflection and sharing of ENL strategies were implemented helped increase ELLs English proficiency levels, I would expect similar outcomes in Greenfield's ELLs too.

#### **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

This capstone project has explored the lack of preparedness to teach ELL students in the mainstream classroom and provided a PD to solve this problem. Reasons for teachers' unpreparedness include their incorrect perceptions of ELLs (Bacon, 2020; Carley Rizuto, 2017), lack of culturally responsive teaching knowledge (Coady et al., 2016; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018), need for continued professional development (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Hedge et al., 2021) and lack of support from administration (Bauler, 2020; Guler, 2020).

Findings in the literature review explored that teachers' perceptions, lack of training and support contributed to their unpreparedness to teach ELL students. Teachers may have incorrect perceptions that it is not their job to educate ELLs, but solely the responsibility of the ESOL teacher (Guler, 2020), or think that there is not a benefit in using a student's L1 to learn English (Bacon, 2020) which results in teachers not differentiating for ELL students and labeling them as poor readers and low performing (Carley Rizzuto, 2017). These negative perceptions may stem from outdated "English-only" laws and policies (Bacon, 2020).

The literature findings also discovered that a contributing factor to a mainstream teacher's lack of preparedness to teach ELLs is because of their lack of training in ESOL strategies and culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is proven to be beneficial for ELL students because it can minimize their affective filter to feel welcomed in the classroom and allow for more language risks and opportunities to practice language in class (Cavallaro, 2021). Training should also be in ESOL strategies. Only 20% of U.S. states require training for teachers of ELL students (Hansen- Thomas, 2016) so there is an immediate need for ESOL training to help mainstream teachers educate ELLs. Without training in ESOL strategies teachers will use the incorrect strategies (Guler, 2020) or not know the differentiation strategies

to help scaffold content learning for ELL students. These strategies such as collaborative grouping, KWL charts, and graphic organizers are explained for teachers in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, I created a professional development plan to address the problem of mainstream teachers who are unprepared to teach ELL students in their classroom. The topics of the professional development are based on the research reviewed in Chapter 2. I followed researchers including Guler (2020) and Villegas et al. (2018) in that my PD will be delivered mostly online. An online PD course allows teachers the flexibility to attend workshops. This PD provides teachers an opportunity to engage in self-reflection. According to Villegas et al. (2018), PD courses help teachers reflect on “their assumptions of ELLs”, “gain insights into their personal beliefs about ELLs,” think about ways they can differentiate for ELLs, share experiences and their role as a mainstream teacher educating ELLs (p. 150). The PD for my capstone includes self-reflection time in each session for this reason. During this time of self-reflection teachers can be open about their learning of TESOL education strategies, their thoughts of ENL education, experiences and learn from others.

ELL education for mainstream teachers should be more than just a one-time session (Hansen-Thomas, 2016; Hedge et al., 2018). It requires time for practice and reflection to put the ELL strategies into place. Therefore, the PD in this capstone project is 4 sessions long spread out throughout the school year. The content for these sessions includes information on ENL strategies, culturally responsive teaching, and family involvement, all of which are topics that mainstream teachers lack knowledge or expressed need for more education on.

### **Implications for Learning and Teaching**

The PD helps teachers to be more prepared to teach ELLs in their mainstream classroom, and in turn student learning is directly affected. When teachers are educated in ELL strategies,

they will know the best way to teach an emergent bilingual student. Unprepared teachers may use incorrect strategies simply because they do not know better. This PD gives teachers specific examples of what the best strategies to use with ELL students and time to implement them. Through learning about culturally responsive teaching in this PD, teachers will learn how to incorporate a student's identity, culture, and voice into the classroom. Through culturally responsive teaching, teachers will build meaningful relationships with students, which will be a foundation to a student's learning in the classroom. Studies like Bauler and Kang (2020) showed that students' teachers who participated in ENL education professional development found that their English language proficiency level increased, more results of increase in student performance would be encouraging for mainstream teachers.

From educating mainstream teachers in ESOL education, teachers will find strategies that will benefit themselves as well as ELL students. ENL and bilingual teachers are often thought of as the only one responsible for an ELL's education; however, this is not true. With this PD teachers will learn to collaborate with the ENL and bilingual teachers which will lighten the load on these teachers. Mainstream teachers will have a better understanding of what the ENL teacher and bilingual teacher do, and as a result it will be easier to plan lessons that accommodate ELL students and discuss ways to help them together.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

More research should examine the need and outcomes of ENL education professional development. More mainstream teacher participants in the study and more studies done within New York State. All of the studies seen in Chapter 2 had less than 100 participants, many with just 20-50 participants. Guler (2020) and Carley Rizzuto's (2017) research was only with 11 teacher participants. To get more data on how prepared mainstream teachers are to teach the

rising number of ELLs in their classroom, more participants should be involved in more research studies. Also, I would like to see more research from New York State public schools on the preparedness of teachers to educate ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Although research explained in chapter 2 was effectively balanced between suburban, rural, and urban districts, there was no studies within New York State. I would like to see more research studies that focus on the effect on students whose teachers participate in professional development to better prepare themselves for ELL students. I would like to see if more increase in student English language proficiency would be seen like in Bauler's (2020) study.

### **Final Thoughts**

English Language Learners (ELLs) are a fast-growing population in U.S. public schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), about 5 million ELLs are in public schools. ELLs are now required to be in mainstream classes, yet many mainstream teachers are not prepared to have these students in their classroom with the largest reason for this is lack of teacher education in TESOL. With continued professional development, as seen in this capstone PD with the Greenfield school district, mainstream teachers can be prepared to educate ELLs in their classroom.

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**Appendix A**  
Needs Assessment

*Li and Peters*

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<i>NEEDS ASSESSMENT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</i>		
<p><i>Years of Teaching</i> _____ <i>Grade Level to Teach</i> _____ <i>School District</i> _____</p>		
<p><b>Part I.</b> Please read the following questions carefully and provide your answer to each of these questions by marking your choice in the right column marked as "Yes" or "No."</p>		
QUESTIONS	YES	NO
1. In your teacher preparation program, did you receive explicit instruction in language acquisition through a dedicated course?		
2. In your teacher preparation program, did you receive strands of information regarding English Language Learners (ELL) woven throughout a variety of courses?		
3. In your teacher preparation program, were you required to take a course in teaching students of culturally diverse backgrounds		
4. If you did not have any formal coursework, would you have enrolled in any had it been available?		
5. Would you participate in professional development regarding English Language Learners if offered?		
6. Do you feel responsible to teach the English Language Learners in your classroom?		
7. Do you feel confident and prepared to teach ELLs in your classroom?		
8. Do you feel to possess second language acquisition knowledge and skills to teach English Language Learners?		
<p><b>Part II.</b> Please provide any additional comments related to how work effectively with ELLs:</p>		

**Figure 1.** Needs Assessment Survey Instrument.  
 Note. This Assessment Survey Instrument was used to assess the project needs. The responses from teachers demonstrated the great needs of the ELL Center Project with the following results. ELL = English language learner.

**Appendix B**

Differentiated Assignment/ Assessment Template

<b>Differentiated Assignment/Assessment Template</b>					
<i>Assignment:</i> Read a short story and draw personal connections in group discussion					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Fully English Proficient
<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using provided words and phrases) personal connections to	<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using occasional content/academic vocabulary and simple sentences) personal connections to	<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using some content/academic vocabulary and simple/complex sentence structures) personal connections to	<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using some content/academic vocabulary and complex sentence structures) personal connections to	<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using a variety of content/academic vocabulary and complex sentence structures) personal connections to	<i>Language-Based Expectations:</i>  Read and discuss (using grade-level vocabulary and sentence structures) personal connections to
<i>Standards-Based Content or Topic (from the curriculum):</i>  a short story					
<i>(continues)</i>					

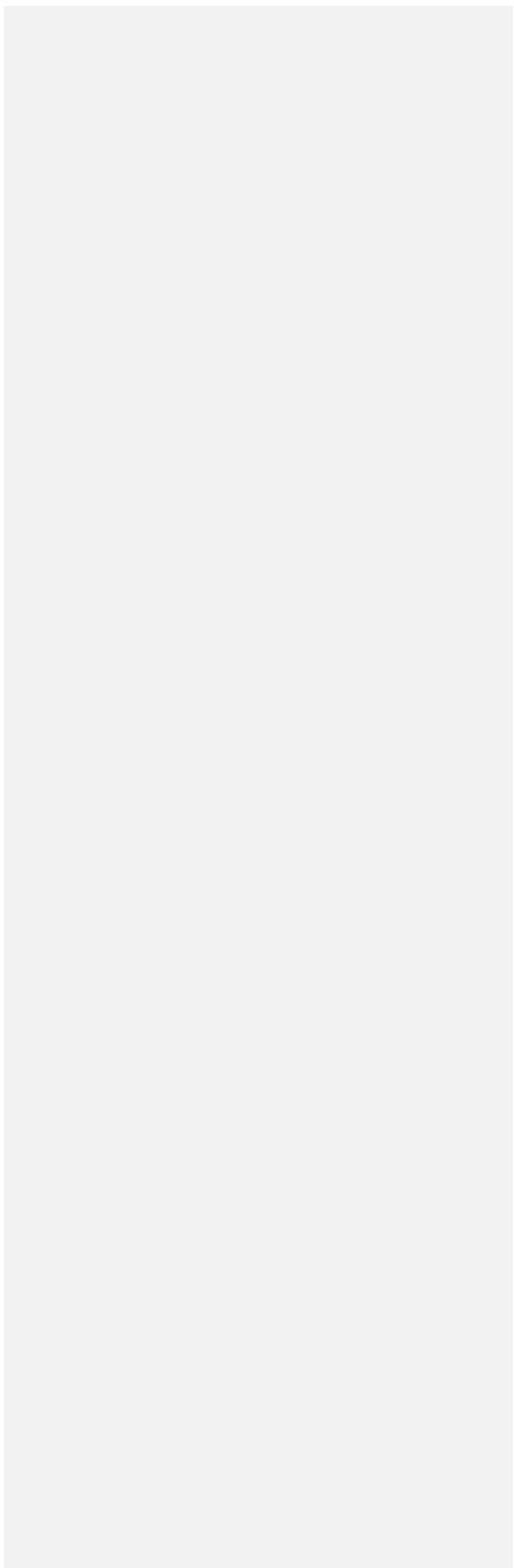
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<b>Differentiated Assignment/Assessment Template Continued</b>					
<i>Assignment:</i> Read a short story and draw personal connections in group discussion					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Fully English Proficient
<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that uses minimal language, includes visual support, and focuses on a familiar topic,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> <li>with reading assistance from a paraeducator or trained volunteer</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught words and phrases,</li> <li>using everyday language,</li> <li>where appropriate, repeating teacher cues.</li> </ul>	<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that uses simplified language, includes visual support, and focuses on a familiar topic,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> <li>with reading assistance from a paraeducator or trained volunteer</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught language that is part of environmental print (e.g., on a language wall),</li> <li>using everyday language.</li> </ul>	<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that uses simplified language, uses visual support, and focuses on a familiar topic,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> <li>with reading assistance from a paraeducator or trained volunteer</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught language (including some content/academic language) that is part of environmental print (e.g., on a language wall).</li> </ul>	<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that is on grade level but includes visual support,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught academic language that is part of environmental print (e.g., on a language wall).</li> </ul>	<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that is on grade level,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught academic language that is part of environmental print (e.g., on a language wall).</li> </ul>	<i>Scaffolding and Support:</i>  <i>For reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that is on grade level,</li> <li>using strategies explained by the teacher,</li> </ul> <i>For discussion:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using pretaught academic language that is part of environmental print (e.g., on a language wall).</li> </ul>

**Appendix C**

ELL Parent Engagement Ideas Graphic Organizer

Ideas for ELL parent involvement I learned from the video
Questions I still have



**Appendix D**

Professional Development Session Slides

**Link : <https://brockport.voicethread.com/share/18087535/>**