

Sustaining ENL Students with Disabilities in K-12 Academics

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Abstract

The goal of this professional development is to provide general education teachers, special education teachers, and TESOL teachers with the information they need in order to support ENL students with disabilities in a K-12 classroom. This research and professional development analyze the various methods that educators can implement in the classroom in order to provide accommodations and modifications to support this demographic of students. The professional development will educate all teachers on their legal responsibilities that are tied to Individualized Education Plans, IEPs, as well as how to read them. This will help educators when lesson planning to ensure all student's needs are met. Additionally, the professional development will educate all teachers on the different levels of English proficiency levels and how to provide for their needs. This includes ensuring ENL students are receiving the testing accommodations they are legally required to have in conjunction to testing accommodations per what is specified on their IEP. Lastly, the professional development will cover accommodations for students using current technology that is aligned with content specific courses offered at a 5th and 6th grade level. All in all, this research allows teachers to understand how they can best support ENL students with disabilities in their classroom.

Keywords: ELLs, individualized education plans, testing accommodations, ENL teachers, professional development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Alshaikhi and Khasawneh (2025) discusses the importance of having relevant professional developments accessible to teachers in order for educators to instruct successful lessons that reach ENL students who have disabilities. Regardless of lack of resources or other factors that affect teacher's abilities to perform, differentiated instruction is critical in order to help students be successful with curriculum. One way students with disabilities can be more successful is through the use of properly cotaught classrooms. Students feel more successful in classrooms that have smoothly run lessons with two teachers such as a general education teacher and a special education teacher as they often feel heard (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019).

Kangas et al. (2024). articulated the statistical performance of ENL students with disabilities compared to students with disabilities that are not ENL. Kangas articulates this information demonstrating the obstacles that ENL students with disabilities endure on a daily basis in their academics.

Fenner et al. articulated key information in her book discussing the importance of a fair and equal education that is accessible to all learners per laws that have been implemented. Furthermore, she discusses various program models and discusses how to implement them with ENL students as well as with students who have disabilities. Ensuring students have a fair and equal education can be done by staying current with technology. The use of AI such as Chat GPT allows educators to assist students through the writing process (Escalante et al., 2023). Additionally, Grammarly can be a tool to assist students in ensuring they are receiving instantaneous support through their writing process (Ma et al., 2024, p.2641).

While more research needs to be done on the various cotaught models that students with disabilities benefit from, some of these models include, One Teach-One Observe, One Teach-

One Drift, Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, Alternative Teaching, and Team Teaching (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019, pp. 92-93). One Teach-One Observe consists of one teacher who instructs the entire class while the other teacher watches the students taking notes on what they see. One Teach-One Drift pertains to one teacher that instructs the class with the required lesson for the day while the other teacher facilitates and supports students based on the needs at hand. Station Teaching is when two teachers hold two separate groups of direct small group targeted instruction.

Parallel Teaching allows the class to be split into two groups and each teacher instructs the same lesson, however this allows for differentiation to occur as well as various models to be presented based on the needs of the class. Alternative Teaching allows the class to be split up differently. One teacher teaches the majority of the class while the other teacher selects a handful of students who typically are at a lower level and require supplemental learning in order to grasp concepts to grade level expectations. Team teaching is the final method in which both teachers are instructing a lesson feeding off of each other. This is a blended model in which some students are not able to tell who is the actual lead teacher (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019, p. 92-93).

These different models of coteaching can be beneficial for students depending on the various factors including the lesson, level of learning, and content. Combinations of coteaching can also be beneficial depending on what is required in order for students to grow.

Throughout Chapter 2, I will analyze modern research pertaining to special education students and ENL students in order to create a professional development that allows educators the essential knowledge they require to instruct this demographic of students. By examining data from research and cross referencing a variety of methods of instruction, I created a professional

development that will assist educators in fostering a learning environment to sustain ENL student with disabilities in K-12 academics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There is currently a lack of support in educational settings to support ENL students with disabilities. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of the correct identification of ENL students which directly impacts an educator's understanding of the challenges that this demographic of students face. Such challenges can include linguistic and cultural obstacles. Having an understanding of a student wholistically allows teachers to focus on areas in which students may require more support. This is often achieved through professional developments allowing teachers the proper training to eliminate barriers between their students and them through the use of collaborative and inclusive practices. These components allow teachers to better service their students. Furthermore, this allows educators to stay up to date with current technology which includes assistive technology for students with disabilities. These practices are closely aligned with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and zone of proximal development.

Identification of ENL students

The correct identification of students allows school districts to provide the proper services in order to sustain ENL students with disabilities. There tends to be a swinging pendulum when representing ENL students with special education services (Adams & Burns, 2021). Districts can either over support and identify this demographic of students or lack identifying them. Either way, not having the proper identification and supports may negatively impact this group of students due to the fact that they are not receiving the essential skills and resources that will allow them to be successful. Research has been found that a select portion of the extreme identification of ENL students with disabilities particularly correlates to a communication disorder and supports that language barriers can prevent a lack in understanding a disability from language acquisition of an L2 (Adams & Burns, 2021). Additionally, there is a

relationship between students with disabilities and a weakness in reading (Kangas et al., 2024). The identification of ENL students with disabilities can be interconnected to the advantages or disadvantages of resources available (Kangas et al., 2024). Kangas et al., 2024, conducted a ten year study ending in 2019 in which data from The Nation's Report Card, specifically the reading assessments, was collected. Kangas et al. 2024, documented the academic proficiency of various demographics of students including ENL students as well as students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who were also ENL students generally had the lowest scores. This group of students statistically was the largest group that had levels at the "below basic" level (Kangas et al., 2024).

Understanding these outside factors allows educators to ensure proper identification of students occurs. Properly diagnosed students are able to have the essential services that they require in order to be successful. Individualized Education Plans, IEPs, allow students to be legally qualified for various services throughout their educational day in order to meet or be working towards grade level standards. These services might include, physical therapy, occupational therapy, consultant teacher services in core subjects, speech services, or a self-contained classroom that targets specific learning objectives tailored to their needs.

Understanding Challenges Facing ENL Students

After correctly identifying students, educators should understand the obstacles that ENL students face. Students have stated the importance of how direct instruction affects their ability to comprehend questions and understand what is being asked of them (*A Sociological Lens on Linguistic Diversity*, n.d.). While educators can modify or accommodate ENL students by supplementing assignments through the use of various strategies such as answering multiple-choice questions, ENL students often require additional support in understanding how to figure

out what is being asked of them. They require support and repetitive practice identifying words that will assist them in this process (*A Sociological Lens on Linguistic Diversity*, n.d.). This process is similar to students with learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities often are not able to understand what is being asked and require skills to help them comprehend this. These correlated skills are essential building components in guaranteeing lessons are accommodated to learners of various levels. This also confirms that there is not an opportunity gap but an achievement gap (Kangas et al., 2024).

ENL students who also have a disability compose a significantly lower percentage of students in education compared to other demographics of students (Kangas, 2020). With the challenges these students face in order to be successful, they are less likely to continue on after high school in some capacity, whether that is pursuing an advanced job or higher level of education, "...ELSWDs are at-risk for dropping out, graduating at a rate nearly 20 percentage points lower than their peers with disabilities" (Kangas, 2020, p.268). Likewise, Kangas (2020) researched to understand the perspective of an English Language Learner with disabilities on their education they were receiving.

Kangas (2020) found that there were two perspectives of ENL students with disabilities based on their perceptions of how teachers view them. They feel as though teachers either see their academic and language abilities as limiting or they look at their strengths to see how they can be successful (Kangas, 2020, p. 274). The way in which a teacher analyzes the student's educational situation and projects the information back to them effects the student's perception on themselves. It can be a positive or negative perception based on the teacher's responses. Likewise, the teachers whose ENL students are successful is linked to the mindset of the teacher having a positive outlook on their students (Li & Jee, 2021). The outlook and attitude of the

teacher is a critical role in the success of their students. Schools who have done this successfully did not strictly look at their standardized assessments which stated that they were below grade level. On the contrary they looked at the student wholistically on various grades that they held (Kangas, 2020). These assignments allowed the students to feel proud of their work because they were meeting grade level expectations on what was asked of them without modifications (Kangas, 2020).

Language and Cultural Challenges

In addition to the perceptions that teachers have regarding the students' abilities based on their needs, teachers have recognized the lack of academic language that ENL students with disabilities have in both their L1 and L2 (Kangas, 2020). One eighth grade ELA teacher even noted that due to the lack of concrete language skills in their student's L1, their L2 was directly affected (Kangas, 2020, p. 277). A Special Education Director stated that, "They don't have a language proficiency in either language" (Kangas, 2020, p. 277). This effects the foundational skills as educators have even more limited funds of knowledge that they can pull from during lessons in order prompt scaffolding support.

Similarly ENL students face various obstacles such as financial strains to access resources, limited access to technology, limited knowledge on the United States education process, differing views about disabilities based on their culture, and social seclusion due to various reasons such as language barriers or gaps between home life and school life (Crecelius & Neild, 2022, p.43). Likewise, Utley et al. (2011) stated that the differences between educators and their students create obstacles for teachers to create culturally relevant curriculum. Utley et al. (2011) found that due to the obstacles that culturally and linguistically diverse students face, these students learn differently than the majority of students who are of Caucasian ethnicity. This

has led to an increase in number of students with misclassification of special education services based on the needs of the student culturally (Utley et al., 2011). However, some students who have a learning disability are not classified because of their behaviors which project as the problem when the root of it is a disability (Utley et al., 2011). Misinterpretation further occurs when the student is also an ENL student. By having so many variables to decipher, it is challenging to correctly identify the student based on their needs and the behaviors presented as this is effecting the student's ability to have the proper services and classification (Utley et al., 2011).

The behaviors students can present cause educators confusion when they are interpreting whether or not there is a disability or a language barrier for things such as if they appear to not want to perform a given task, if they are unable to follow multi-step directions, or if they can properly read grade level texts without miscues and errors (Kangas, 2020, p. 676). With these unknowns and lack of educators properly identifying students, there have been a misrepresentation of students with disabilities of different ethnic backgrounds than what the majority of the teachers are (Blanchett et al., 2009). Kangas (2020) found that when individual students are questioned whether it is language or disability, the student was given a disservice because their unique situation was looked at as either one or the other, either a language barrier or a disability. This creates a problem as the student is not being looked at wholistically for their needs. Kangas noted that this student likely failed to progress due to the lack of academic challenges that were not available to them.

When classifying students based on their needs, it is imperative that they are in the least restrictive environment to prevent this from occurring. When working with special education students, newly classified students require a least restrictive environment, which typically is

considered consultant teacher services. With appropriate data tracking, progress monitoring, and various interventions at the Teir I, Teir II, and Teri III level, the committee of teachers and professionals can then distinguish if a more restrictive environment is warranted. When interacting with students who are both multilanguage learners with disabilities it is important to understand that where they are academically is not strictly a drawback to their education, rather educators need to see how to integrate what students bring to the table in order for them to be successful within every lesson (Kangas, 2020).

In order to prevent mislabeling from reoccurring, culturally responsive practice are imperative to implement into classrooms. Teachers require to have a cultural lens when ensuring their curriculum is appropriate to the needs of their students. This has steamed from the push in Every Student Successes Act which has allowed ENL students with disabilities to be a separate demographic in statistics pertaining to their performance levels (Kangas, 2020). By teachers being in tune with how relevant the material is to the cultural audience, they can tailor assessments and classroom discourse ensuring that trust is built between their students and themselves (Kangas et al. 2024).

Likewise, some families of ENL students tend to have limited access to technology in their personal life. This includes the use of computers and the internet which has created further challenges for their involvement in their child's education (Crecelius & Neild, 2022). This effects their child's ability to be successful due to the inevitable lack of support in their homelife, not by parental and or the guardian's choice, but simply due to the lack of resources available. These challenges create a stronger push for a universal design for learning, UDL, in order to ensure all student's educational needs are met through, "...engagement, representation and action and expression" (Crecelius & Neild, 2022, p.4 9). Embracing the UDL model in the classroom can be

implemented through small actions along the way in order to bridge the gaps from home culture to school culture. Crececius and Neild (2022) found through the CAST in 2018 that when schools had a UDL put in place for families to be successful in supporting their child on technological devices, the child would be given a smoother transition from one culture to another allowing the student to have the means necessary to complete what was required of them in school. This particular family was given information on the schools online learning platform in their L1 which significantly assisted the parents. While some schools face obstacles such as funding for resources, it is necessary that some level of UDL be implemented into the classroom. This can include culturally responsive posters or images in the classroom, to assist students in feeling welcomed despite the inadequate research on the academic effectiveness of pan-diversity (Li and Jee, 2020).

While there is limited research on the effectiveness of pan-diversity, integrating modifications to various forms of teaching approaches does accommodate the language barriers of English Language Learners. It is fundamental that linguistic and cultural differences are recognized in culturally appropriate ways within the classroom (Li & Jee, 2022). Simply referring to all cultural aspects in the classroom under the umbrella term cultural learning is not sufficient enough for students. Being mindful of the cultural practices implemented and the challenges students face is vital to ensuring all students are given the same level of education.

Professional Development & Models

Given that teachers are expected to accommodate and modify work according to the needs of their students, it is essential that professional developments are tailored to supporting educators based on student needs. Once educators are given the proper training required to implement appropriate models into the classroom, they then can be successful in their teaching practices.

Professional developments can ensure educators are provided with the knowledge they require to support ENL students with disabilities. According to Alshaikhi and Khasawneh's (2024) research was taken from a number of volunteer teachers for the study in one primary school district in Saudi Arabia. This was done over the course of one school year and proved that statistically, the teachers performed better when assisted with professional development trainings as the pre-test scores for teacher competence was at 3.32 and the post-test scores increased to 3.75. Similarly, Fang et al. (2023) preformed a study consisting of 124 teachers through the use of surveys to determine the effectiveness of virtual project-based learning professional developments. After the study was completed, the teacher's knowledge of project-based learning increased proving that they could implement this form of learning more effectively in their classroom (Fang et al. 2023). Through Fang et al. (2023) and Alshaikhi and Khasawneh (2024), it is evident that effective professional developments allow teachers to be more equipped with successful teaching practices that they can utilize.

Additionally,, co-teaching is an instructional model used with general education teachers and special education teachers which benefit from professional developments. It is important to critically understand how effective coteaching with a special education teacher can be. Coteaching can be effective compared to educating students with disabilities in a self-contained classroom. When this model is properly done, it provides the services students require to be successful. Coteaching typically is performed with a general education teacher and a specialized teacher such as a special education teacher. In Tremblay's (2013) study, four first grade classroom teachers and four second grade classroom teachers were given different coteaching models and assistance on how to collaborate effectively. Through an observational study, the results of both the student's individual assessments and group assessments indicated that having

an inclusive model, a cotaught classroom, allowed students to achieve higher in academic testing (Tremblay, 2013). Cotaught models continuously demonstrate benefits such as in Strogilos and King-Sears 's (2019) study in which they researched ten sixth graders in two different cotaught classrooms. The study focused on the student's perception about cotaught models. The analyses of the ten interviews revealed that those students felt more successful and heard in an inclusive model. Varying students reported different positive outcomes such as instruction being taught in a variation of ways as well as extra support during classroom instruction compared to having to wait to be heard (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019). One student reported, "Sometimes he might show it differently on board then have Ms. Z will show it then he might..." (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019, p. 96). Both Tremblay (2013) and Strogilos & King-Sears (2019) demonstrate that co-teaching can be an effective model implemented into the classroom to assist student academics and is directly aligned to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in which he states the importance of social interaction to help shape a child's development (Marginson & Dan, 2017, p.118).

While professional developments can instruct teachers on different teaching models, they can also prepare and educate teachers on how to use various technological programs to sustain ENL students. Ma et al. (2024) discussed the benefits of their two-step training for educators. The first step was the training that occurred pertaining to corpus technology which consisted of a 3-hour workshop educating them on corpus technology. The second part was how to implement the corpus technology into their classroom effectively through lessons. In addition to resources given to teachers, they were required to create lesson plans created around the skills of a specific English proficiency level (Ma et al., 2024). Through this two-step training, and the interviews from teachers, educators can be more competent in what they are teaching when provided with

the hands-on experience and training required. Similarly, guided educational training prior to teachers implementing the use of assistive technology in the classroom is essential. Atanga et al. (2019) stressed the importance of implementing assistive technology to help students who have learning disabilities achieve similar results to those without disabilities, however this can only be successfully done with the proper training for teachers (Atanga et al., 2019). Atanga et al.'s study was composed of 62 teachers in Texas. This study, through the use of surveys, found a direct correlation between the awareness of assistive technology in the classroom to the training that is provided prior to teaching. When proper training and professional development is given to teachers, both Atanga and Ma et al. demonstrate that teachers are more equipped to support ENL students with disabilities in an academic setting.

Barriers to Implementing Collaborative Practices

Educators face obstacles that prevent them from incorporating models from professional developments to their own classroom. For example, educators are encouraged to collaborate with the teachers that they co-teach with. However, in Migliarini & Stinson's study, ten teachers in New York ranging from elementary to high school settings, have reported through their interviews that they are not given the proper shared planning with ENL teachers and special education teachers in order to ensure the curriculum is modified properly (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021). One teacher states, "Barriers would definitely be planning time, so it's rare to have common planning time with everybody" (Migliarini & Stinson, 2021, p.81).

When teachers are working together and co-teaching, it is essential that they have the time to collaborate and share ideas in order for lessons to run smoothly. This allows for the natural progression of a lesson to occur which results in students feeling supported and heard (Strogilos & King-Sears, 2019).

Likewise, a teacher in Indiana pushes into 14 different classrooms to support ENL students, some with disabilities. Through the use of interviews in this study it is evident that there is a lack of collaboration between different teachers supporting the same student as there is little to no time given to the teachers to co-plan lessons (Adams & Burns, 2021). Through the use of professional developments and enough time given to educators to co-plan lessons that would be co-taught, educators would be more successful in ensuring ENL students with disabilities needs are met.

Lastly, administration support within a school district can impact collaborative practices. Altering the ways in which instruction is presented within classrooms often comes from higher authority such as administration within a school. Through 3-4 interviews, 45 surveys that were completed amongst two elementary schools, and through a combination of formal as well as informal interactions between all personal in a school, successful and positive change was demonstrated to occur (Penuel et al., 2010). Dickerson Elementary School proves this success as they held discussions at various meetings ranging from team meetings to different volunteer opportunities.

Regardless of the different opportunities for teachers to get involved, these opportunities are available due to the organization and support brought down from administration. Likewise, Journell et al. (2025) advocated for ways in which administration can further support teachers. This study was conducted through the use of interviews amongst 102 teachers who taught 6-12 grade. Teachers who were resilient were provided with an environment that fostered them to grow and be supported (Journell, 2025). One of the common components attributing to this was the common theme of “supportive leaders” (Journell, 2025). Administration support is a leading effect of successful instructional practices within a school.

Inclusive Practices

With administration support, school districts can understand that inclusive practices are key for assisting ENL students with disabilities in a primary or secondary educational setting. When inclusive practices are implemented into the classroom, students are given the strategies they need in order to complete academic tasks that are given to them.

Teachers can ensure they integrate culturally appropriate content in order to guarantee that students are socially represented. This allows students to connect to the material provided. Though curriculum continues to advance and attempts are given to integrate inclusive practice, Motschenbacher (2019) found that through the qualitative analysis of two textbooks that the inclusive programs tend to not be representative to the minority groups that typically are present within a classroom. These textbooks were resources in which students had to refer to during a foreign language class. Textbooks have a tendency to support the learning style of the native language speaker, not ENL students.

The specific textbook that was analyzed in this study was supporting English speakers learning German. The textbook referenced to cultural experiences from an English speaker's life to support their learning, not keeping in mind the cultural differences among other students (Motschenbacher, 2019). This affects ENL student's abilities to relate to the text and does not build off of their funds of knowledge. Through Piaget, one can understand the importance of integrating knowledge that the student previously has acquired into the classroom as this continues to build on their cognitive understanding. Piaget articulated that information is gained in individuals through hands on experiences in the world around them. When culture is tied into the classroom, Piaget's theory is connected as culture is an individual's life experience and rooted to their cognitive understanding (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 25).

Non-linguistic cues are another way that can be incorporated into classrooms to benefit ENL students in order that they can be supported in a classroom despite the challenges they face. One of these methods includes “non-linguistic cues” or teaching with visuals to help support students’ level of understanding on a topic if their vocabulary might be limited (Marchese, 2021). Additionally, giving students “wait time” is imperative for their success as they might require further time to process information. This then gives the students the necessary time they require to translate a response. Lastly, students benefit from “Modeling and Thinking Aloud” (Marchese, 2021). ENL students benefit from tasks being broken down into steps and each step being given to them individually to prevent confusion. Students also benefit from being given a demonstration of what is required of them in order for them to mirror the task. (Marchese, 2021).

Use of Technology

The use of technology continues to advance and develop in new ways for educators to support students who have various needs. The use of AI is one way in which teachers can effectively give support to students while managing their time as the feedback given from AI is comparable to humans (Escalante et al., 2023). Additionally, there are various other forms of AI such as Grammarly that support students grammar throughout writing pieces giving them the instant feedback they require in order to meet writing expectations for assignments (Escalante et al., 2023). Furthermore, we see the increasing use of technology expand through various platforms such as Corpus technology, “...a large electronic language database operated through a search engine (concordance), allows learners to observe rich language examples and study various linguistic features, providing an ideal venue for authentic language examples” (Ma et al., 2024 p. 2032). This database allows individuals to expand their vocabulary assisting ENL

students. Similarly to Grammarly, students can be supported through corpus technology in their use of grammar.

Corpus technology teachers who are educated in this database and the use of technology integrated throughout lessons are more successful with the use technology throughout their lesson (Ma et al., 2024). Wilson et al. further elaborates on this explaining how teachers can better be supported as the use of technology continues to expand. Wilson explains that one effective way is to educate teachers on platforms and then allow them time to become familiar on how to use the specific platforms. This gives them the practice that they require in order to effectively implement up to date technology in the classroom such as the use of AI (Wilson et al., 2025).

When students are given access and supported through lessons on how to effectively use technology that assists them in understanding the linguistic patterns of their second language, they will be more successful in the development of their second language acquisition.

Furthermore, in a technologically advanced society, some educators are moving towards the use of AI to assist them in confirming they are meeting the growing needs of their students in the classroom. In one study, ChatGPT-4 was given to ENL students in an English class setting to articulate feedback as well as another group receiving feedback from an English language tutor. The findings were that both groups were able to advance their learning at a similar rate (Escalante et al., 2023). This assistance given from ChatGPT-4 is a modern approach to receiving scaffolded support in which Vygotsky articulated importance of in the zone of proximal development (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 25). "...Vygotsky defined the ZPD as 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in

collaboration with more capable peers.’ (Vygotsky, Citation1978)” (Eun, 2019, p.19-20). As technology advances, educators can take advantage of AI such as ChatGPT in order for students to achieve their highest potential.

Additionally, Google Classroom has been successful in supporting ENL students with grammar through the use of technology (Annamalai et al., 2025). Annamalai articulates the importance of online learning as it encourages all students to participate as well as develop critical thinkers (Annamalai et al., 2025). This study consisted of teaching Grammar to English Language Learners. The data was collected through surveys given throughout the duration of their virtual class on Google Classroom. The findings were that students preferred online learning because of the vast visual resources provided for them to learn (Annamalai et al., 2025).

Assistive Technology for Disabilities

Students with disabilities face challenges that impede their ability to perform to grade level expectations that are required of them. In order to lessen the gaps between these expectations and what they are capable of independently, assistive technology is warranted. Depending on the learning disability, some students, generally those with reading challenges, might receive text-to-speech or speech-to text software (Nordström et al., 2019). Additionally other students with learning disabilities benefit from other assistive technology such as word processor and spell check (Raskind, 1993). Spell check assists individuals with ensuring that the words in their document are spelled properly where as word processor checks for a variety of things such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Raskind, 1993).

Nordström et al. (2019) performed a study in which he analyzed the effectiveness of assistive technology such as speech-to-text and text-to-speech on students with disabilities particularly those with learning disabilities associated with reading. These students were at or

lower than the 10th percentile for their ability to decode words. After two to three months of data collection, it was reported that 82% of teachers in 4th grade reported that their students were able to use assistive technology to accommodate the challenges they face in reading and 46% of the teachers reported a change in reading comprehension (Nordström et al., 2019).

Assistive technology can be beneficial in providing accommodations to students with various needs. iPad apps can promote learning in the areas of reading (Atanga et al., 2019). While there are challenges that can occur for this to be effective such as funding and proper training, when integrated properly, students can be successful (Atanga et al., 2019).

Summary

All in all, there are a variety of means in which ELLs with disabilities can be sustained throughout their education in primary school through high school. As articulated, educational awareness, cultural awareness, and current and relevant information are imperative in order for teachers to do this effectively. While this can be an overwhelming task, there are ways in which teachers can begin integrating culturally responsive material and fostering an environment through various models, such as UDL, in order to ensure their students are successful. Additionally, being aware that the advances in technology in western culture are not always the same advances in other cultures is essential to sustaining students in the educational system in the United States and allows individuals to be culturally responsive. Overall, ensuring educators are moving towards an inclusive model for diversity of all is crucial for the success of all students.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product & Tool

In Chapter 2, research indicated that teachers excelled when given the proper training required to support students of various needs in the classroom (Alshaikhi & Khasawneh, 2024). The goal of this professional development is to assist all teachers, general education teachers, special education teachers, and TESOL teachers in sustaining ENL students with disabilities in their classrooms. Indeed, all teachers must invest in the growth of all students regardless of disability or native language. All students are entitled to a free and equal education which is the job of each individual teacher to ensure this happens. While general education teachers can utilize specialized teachers to ensure students are receiving the best education they can, the general education teacher should be equally invested in ensuring their curriculum can be applicable to a vast variety of learners.

This will require adaptations, modifications, and use of technology. In Chapter 3 an outline for a professional development will be given in which teachers will learn how to understand and read an IEP as well as create a reference sheet for students with disabilities who may or may not be ENL students. This will allow teachers to reference the needs of their students throughout the year. Furthermore, teachers will learn the various levels of English proficiency, and ensure National TESOL standards, language objectives, and modifications are implemented in lesson plans. Lastly, teachers will be given demonstrations on how they can integrate a variety of ways to support English Language Learners despite there being a language barrier.

Agenda

The professional development will take place in the summer of 2026 over the course of two sessions. Each session will be about 20 minutes and will be located in one of the classrooms at the middle school. Participates will be expected to listen to the first session as they will be

understanding how they can create a student profile for ENL students as well as students with disabilities. Participants will be given student profile templates, Appendix D, that they can use in the future to assist them in understanding who their students are.

The first session will target how teachers can utilize a template to create a student profile which highlights the important information of the student as an English Language Learner and as a student with disabilities. Furthermore, the first session will help teachers to understand how to read an IEP to ensure that their students are receiving the services they are legally required to have provided to them even if they are general education teachers. They will be provided with a reference sheet for this, Appendix C. Additionally, teachers will be given information on the testing accommodations that all ENL students must have access to despite if they have a disability or not, Appendix A.

Through the second session, teachers will begin with an activity where they have to analyze a lesson plan to distinguish the modifications and language goals that either are or are not present. They will collaborate in a small group to complete this task. This session will end with examples I will provide of different ways modifications and accommodations can be implemented into the classroom that are correlated to units that are currently being taught in this school.

Activities

During the first session, teachers will be given a brief informative segment on how to read an IEP with a resource to reference, Appendix C. While it is important that they read the entire document, there are certain sections that they absolutely need to pay attention to like the supplemental aids and service section, the academic section or PLEPs section, the social developmental section, the physical developmental section, and the management needs section.

This professional development will also discuss the difference between the testing accommodations from the IEP and the testing accommodations that all ENL students are required to have access to regardless if they have a disability or not. The ENL testing accommodations informational sheet will be provided to them, Appendix A. In understanding all of this, teachers will be able to correctly utilize the student profile resource given to them where they can reference the important information pertaining to a student's language needs and disabilities that they fill out themselves.

The second session of the professional development will start off with an activity where teachers review one lesson plans and critique it, Appendix B. They will see how the lesson plan was modified but also collaborate in a small group to see how further modifications and accommodations can be put in place to further support ENL students with disabilities. Guiding questions will be displayed on the presentation slides. Additionally, groups will identify the linguistic needs that are or are not addressed. Likewise, they will see what national TESOL standards are or are not addressed in the lesson plan.

The second half of the second session will be a time where I give teachers examples on different ways they can support ENL students despite the language barrier in their classrooms as this tends to be the biggest area of concern. There will be a few examples of different tools such as the use of AI and assistive technology in order for them to support their students (Escalante et al., 2023; Nordström et al., 2019). The goal is for these tools to be useful within the current lessons that may be being taught in this school. This will help teachers to feel more successful as they will be walking out with content specific tools that can be applied to their current lesson plans to sustain ENL students. The intended outcome of this professional development is for teachers to feel more equipped to support ENL students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Summary

All in all, this professional development is composed of a combination of lecture, hands-on, and examples that can be taken and used that day in order to help teachers feel supported in understanding how to sustain ENL students with disabilities within their own classrooms. This professional development allows teachers to understand that all teachers, including general education teachers, are responsible for ensuring that every student receives an equal education with supports in place. The activity that starts session two allows teachers to reflect on practices that are often forgotten about. Reflection and analyzing lesson plans are imperative to grow as an educator. It allows individuals to develop new strategies so that educators can ensure their students flourish. The professional development will end with a reflection question where teachers will be asked, “What is one way you can implement a new modification/accommodation into your first unit of the year to support ENL students with disabilities?”

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Throughout this research process, I created a professional development in which I was able to instruct educators on how to read an Individualized Education Plan, IEP, understand the various levels of English proficiency, dissect a lesson plan with teachers, and provide examples on how educators can support ENL students with disabilities despite having a language barrier. In order for educators to support ENL students with disabilities in their classrooms, they need to understand how to read the legal paperwork that is associated with students with disabilities. This legal document, the IEP, requires all teachers and service providers to understand the needs associated to that student. When educators have a clear understanding of their student's needs, they can proceed to learning different accommodations and modifications that are appropriate to the student. Staying current and up to date on technology advancements such as AI, is another aspect that was covered in the professional development.

Often times, individuals tend to think that in order to provide accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities who are English Language Learners they have to be immense actions. This can often overcomplicate what the student requires to be successful. When there is a language barrier, it will often feel as though educators cannot provide enough in order to give the student what they need. Through the use of AI and various websites provided by the state, such as the Bilingual Glossaries, resources can be tailored by teachers in order to support their specific student's needs. While this does require more time, there are ways that can efficiently and proficiently complete this task such as through the use of Gamma slides. This is an AI generated way to create PowerPoints. Teachers can ask AI to translate the slides on this program to Ukrainian or another languages. This significantly saves time for educators while

creating slides in English as well as translating slides for their students who come into their class and might be at an emerging or transitioning English proficiency level.

Implications for Students

When educators can be instructed and informed on current practices that are effective, the rate of student success will increase. The ability for students to accel can be correlated to the effectiveness of teaching. To a certain degree, the way in which educators instruct is linked to professional developments. With successful and rich professional developments, students will receive the proper accommodations and modifications that are current. This will help students to be as successful as they can in their academics. Furthermore, students will understand all of the tools and resources available to them and know how to use them effectively in order to complete assignments to grade level expectations.

Implications for Teachers

A vast variety of teachers, such as TESOL teachers, special education teachers, and general education teachers can benefit from understanding how to sustain students in a general education classroom. Such ways include learning a variety of ways to integrate technology into the classroom, understanding quality professional development throughout their teaching profession, and understanding a variety of accommodations as well as modifications to support students with learning disabilities and assist them through the development of their second language acquisition. It is imperative that all educators understand how to read an IEP as well as understand the English proficiency levels of their students. Understanding such information is essential and required in order to provide all students with an equal and fair education. This is not the responsibility of only specialized teachers, such as ENL teachers or special education teachers, but also the responsibility of general education teachers.

Further Research

Further research needs to be done specifically in analyzing students with disabilities who are English Language Learners. There is limited research on this specific demographic of students as they make up a smaller portion of the school communities. Individuals currently have to cross analyze data for English Language Learners and special education research separately to understand various ways to support this demographic of students within a classroom. Moreover, research specifically needs to be done on how to support ENL students with content specific modifications and accommodations. There tends to be vague accommodations that can be implemented universally throughout core classes, however educators tend to want specific examples on how to integrate ways to support their students for their grade level content and programs they are currently using. While this is extremely specific research, educators would benefit from learning and seeing examples in order for them to replicate into their curriculum or programs.

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Appendix A

Testing Accommodations for ENL Students

Testing Accommodations for ENL Students

1. Separate location
2. Use of Bilingual Glossaries provided by the state
3. Extended time

(New York State Education Department, n.d.)

Appendix B
Lesson Plan Activity

[Link to Lesson Plan](#)

Appendix C
How to Read an IEP

[Link to How to Read an IEP](#)

Appendix D

Student Profile Template

<p>Name: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____ Classification: _____</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Testing Accommodations</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Tests Read</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Use of Breaks</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Separate Location</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Word Processor</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Spell Check/ Grammar Check</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Small Group</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Directions Rephrased By Student</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Use of Mask / Marker</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Use of Math Chart and/or Calculator</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Noise Cancelling Headphones</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Testing Accommodations		Tests Read		Use of Breaks		Separate Location		Word Processor		Spell Check/ Grammar Check		Small Group		Directions Rephrased By Student		Use of Mask / Marker		Use of Math Chart and/or Calculator		Noise Cancelling Headphones		<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <i>EP at a glance</i> </div> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Goals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Reading/Writing</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Math</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Speech</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Social/Emotional/Behavioral</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Goals		Reading/Writing		Math		Speech		Social/Emotional/Behavioral	
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Services	Hours																																	
OT/PPT																																		
Speech																																		
Counseling																																		
Reading																																		

ENL Student Profile	
<p>Name: Age: Date of Birth: Grade:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Notes:</i></p>
<p>Primary Language: Language(s) Needed to Communicate to Parents/Guardians: Birth Country:</p>	
<p>English Proficiency Level: What classes are ENL services provided in for this student?</p>	

Appendix E

Professional Development

[Link to slides](#)

[Link to professional Development](#)