

## Abstract

Title of dissertation:           ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE,  
PRACTICES, AND PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING  
ENGLISH LEARNERS

Wauchilue D. Adams, Doctor of Education 2017

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For decades, the academic achievement of English Learners (ELs) has consistently fallen below that of non-ELs on standardized achievement tests. The purpose of this study was to examine the continuous achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs and how the knowledge, practices, and perceptions of teaching ELs can impact the academic progress of the ELs. The study focused on Title I schools, because nearly half of the elementary ELs in the district attended a Title I school.

Bay Shore Public Schools was used for this study. An electronic survey was sent to the 50 intermediate teachers (grades 3, 4, and 5) of the four Title I schools in the district, with a 50% response rate. The survey consisted of 14 questions and 79 indicators to address five research questions that examined the following: knowledge about the laws, policies, and assessments; use of specific instructional strategies and practices; use of specific instructional materials; supports for ELs; and teachers' perceptions about the instruction of ELs. Through the use of a Likert scale it was discovered that; the majority of the respondents indicated having little to no knowledge of the laws and regulations that govern their work; most respondents used only 11 out of 20 recommended instructional strategies daily; and the use of specific materials of instruction and suggested supports varied in frequency. In addition, the demographic characteristics of the respondents did not seem to impact their responses, specifically in terms of their perceptions.

The study provided information for future studies, particularly for relatively small districts that may be considered low-incidence and have teachers with little to no first-hand experience teaching ELs. Based on the results of this study, case studies should be considered to examine the actual interactions between ELs and their non-EL peers as well as ELs and their teachers. Positioning theory could be applied to examine how the interactions change from situation to situation and the impact on the resulting academic outcomes for ELs. Additionally, study local policies and practices for communication between ESOL teachers and classroom teachers for understanding ELs' performance on ACCESS and what the outcomes mean.

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE,  
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By

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who supported and encouraged me to persevere and continue to develop my passion for learning. My dearly departed Granny, who always taught us that we could achieve anything, would be pleased. To my son, Matthew, who is on his way to greatness in public education, may you always be a life-long learner. This work was also possible because of the influence of a former teacher and mentor, the late Patricia Gray, and an incredible guidance counselor and family friend, the late Morgan Dilver. Both of these individuals had amazing character and integrity and were tremendous role models for most of my life.

## Acknowledgements

I must first express thanks and praise to God for providing this opportunity for study and professional growth. I am reminded that Philippians 1:6 says, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”. Only God knows the next chapter of my life, but I trust that He is equipping me for it.

I thank Dr. Margaret McLaughlin and Dr. Drew Fagan for their guidance as I progressed through the exploration and development of this research. I greatly appreciate their patience and expertise. I will be forever indebted to them for helping to shape my work while allowing me to explore my interests.

I am deeply appreciative of the support provided by my family. My husband, Charles, was very accommodating and understanding, stepping in when I was consumed with coursework and research. He motivated me to press on when I was fatigued. My youngest sister, Altivia Jackson, was my primary cheerleader and coach. She spent numerous hours proofing drafts and providing objective feedback. The remainder of my family supported me with encouragement, flexibility, and understanding regarding my limited availability for family gatherings. I thank you all.

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“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

Confucius (n.d.)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem**

As the number of ELs increases in schools across the United States, teachers must learn how to address the resulting language barriers while simultaneously teaching grade-level-specific standards (Flynn & Hill, 2005; McBride, 2008; Zehr, 2007). Increasing teachers’ knowledge of the laws and policies that define and dictate the instructional requirements and accountability for educating ELs could give them a clearer understanding of their role in this process (Kim & Herman, 2012). Researchers also note that teachers should understand concepts like *language development* and effective instructional strategies and practices that have proven effective for teaching ELs (Ackerman & Tazi, 2015; Hakuta, 2011). One of the best ways to ensure that EL students receive proper instruction is to ensure that teachers use research-based instructional strategies and materials. Implementation of strategies taught to teachers through professional development opportunities facilitates consistency in the instruction provided to students within individual schools and throughout the broader school system. Hill and Hoak (2012) posited that a high level of consistency in the use of research-based practices in the classroom should help reduce the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs in U.S. public schools.

Because each teacher is as unique as her students, it is important to understand classroom teachers’ perceptions about ensuring that their EL students meet their language goals and are academically successful (Mantero & McVicker, 2006). Garrett and Holcomb (2005) emphasized the need to examine teacher perceptions of ELs and the influence these perceptions may have on EL students’ academic achievement. Teachers’ perceptions about,



and ability to work with, ELs can have a major impact on the classroom environment and student achievement (Mantero & McVicker, 2006) and may influence teachers' decisions about the level of supports and structures they will provide to these students (Chant, Heafner, & Bennett, 2004; Fairbanks et al., 2010; Hill & Flynn, 2006; Progress for Education Reform, 2013). If teacher knowledge, practices, and perceptions lead to academic achievement for ELs, the achievement gap can be reduced (Hill & Flynn, 2006).

**English learners in Bay Shore Public Schools (BSPS).**<sup>1</sup> Data indicate that ELs in BSPS are performing below their English-speaking peers at all grade levels on the most recent state assessments (Maryland State Department of Education, 2016), which schools administer to students in Grades 3-5 each year. Data also show that more than 50% of the elementary ELs will attend Title I schools next year.

BSPS is one of 24 districts in the state of Maryland, and is located in a semi-rural community with a population of 110,000 residents. In 2013 the median income was just over \$78,000. Its primary economic source is a military installation with more than 10,000 military service members and civil servants (Bay Shore Economic Development, n.d.). The district is located near two counties that are similar in size, but there are large, metropolitan cities as close as 60 miles away. In 2014, 13 of the 24 districts in the state reported total enrollments of less than 18,000 students. BSPS had a 2014 enrollment of 17,887 students. In 2009, five of the 24 districts in the state had less than 100 ELs enrolled; two of them had 25 or fewer ELs. By 2014, only three districts had less than 100 ELs. From 2009 until 2014, of the districts with total enrollments below 18,000, six experienced at least a 49% increase in the enrollment of ELs. During that time, BSPS saw an increase of 63% in EL enrollment. It

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<sup>1</sup> Bay Shore Public Schools (BSPS) is a pseudonym for the actual school district to protect

must be noted that most of the districts included in this size category are somewhat rural and would likely be considered low-incidence (MSDE FactBook, n.d.f, n.d.g, n.d.h).<sup>2</sup>

The geography of BSPS, and other districts like it, make it challenging to provide sufficient instruction to ELs from specially-certified teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) because they are forced to travel from school to school to meet with their assigned ELs. This travel time reduces the number of instructional hours that the teachers can provide to ELs. Additionally, when one ESOL teacher must serve several schools, there are fewer opportunities for collaboration between classroom and ESOL teachers, and research shows that these collaborations are essential to the success of ELs (Dellicarpini & Gulla, 2009).

Although the increase in the enrollment of ELs in BSPS was quite notable from 2009 to 2014, the overall representation of ELs in classrooms throughout the district is still considerably sparse because BSPS is a low-incidence district. Teachers in schools that historically have not had many ELs may not have the depth of knowledge about policy, instructional strategies, and instructional resources that researchers have identified as beneficial to the success of ELs. Data indicate that this comprehensive knowledge of policy and practice is considered essential in efforts to close the achievement gap between ELs and their non-EL peers (Dodson & Fulbright, 2017; Zacarian, 2012).

The small concentration of ELs in BSPS's Title I schools made these schools ideal sites for this study, which examined the knowledge, practices, and perceptions that elementary school teachers brought to the practice of teaching ELs. The data obtained in this

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<sup>2</sup> The Massachusetts Department of Education (March 2006) defines low incidence as those districts with small numbers of ELs. Because the term "small" is relative and not easy to measure, low incidence will refer to districts where the percentage of ELs makes up less than 5% of the total student enrollment.

inquiry will aid educational leaders in their efforts to address the achievement gap between EL students and their non-ELs counterparts. The study will focus specifically on intermediate teachers who serve Grades 3, 4, and 5.

### **Scope of the Problem**

Student achievement is at the crux of American education. When students do not achieve, it can lead to an increase in high school dropout and a reduction in the graduation rate. Research has found a correlation between socioeconomic status and educational attainment, and one's ability to be a contributing member of society in adulthood. ELs are a subgroup of all students, so their success is as important any other subgroup to the success of our nation.

**Academic achievement and accountability of ELs.** In the educational arena, the term *achievement gap* refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students (Education Week, 2004). The "Policy Notes" from the Educational Testing Service (2008) noted a sizable gap in achievement between ELs and their English-speaking counterparts. According to the data, ELs are the lowest scoring subgroup nationally and in state-level assessment data (Educational Testing Service, 2008). This finding held true in Maryland and in BSPS (Maryland State Department of Education, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.j).

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) indicated that the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs tended to widen as children got older (2016). To illustrate, NCES reported that the gap between the reading scores of a cohort of ELs and non-ELs increased from 39 points in the fourth grade to 53 points in the twelfth grade. In addition, the gap for math grew from 25 points in fourth grade to 46 points in grade twelve (NCES, 2016). In 2015, The White House (2015) issued a report titled "The Every Student

Succeeds Act (ESSA): A Progress Report on Elementary and Secondary Education,” which included a review of the accomplishments made in public education. The report noted that “states must set ambitious targets to close student achievement and graduation rate gaps among subgroups of students in order to meet their goals” (Executive Office of the President, 2015, p. 9). This statement stresses the important role that subgroup performance plays in school and district efforts to meet state and federal academic benchmarks. To meet their goals, schools must first close existing performance gaps among subgroups.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also provides a key illustration of existing achievement gaps in their report of national scores by grade levels and sub-groups. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA; 2016) used NAEP data to graph longitudinal data for fourth graders from 2000 through 2015. Although the gap between ELs and non-ELs went from 47 to 36 points and from 27 to 25 points in reading and math respectively during that time period, the data still indicated that a considerable discrepancy in performance remained. According to the OELA, this pattern continued as students reached the eighth grade. For these older students, the gap in reading scores between ELs and non-ELs moved from 45 point to 44 points. These data showed almost no change from 1998 through 2015 and a demonstrated a wider gap than when the students were in elementary school. In math, the gap decreased by 11 points, from 49 to 38 points (OLEA, 2016).

Schools in six states and the District of Columbia currently administer The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test annually (PARCC, n.d.). Students earning a score of 4 or 5 on the test are considered proficient. The 2014-2015 cross-state results for reading and math proficiency showed double-digit

variances between ELs and “All” students in Grades 3, 4, and 5. Although the overall student performance was higher in reading than in math, the gaps between the two groups were greater in both subjects (see Table 1). These achievement gaps suggest that there is much work to be done in order for ELs to reach the achievement level of their non-EL peers. With PARCC being the measure of academic proficiency, the alignment of PARCC performance and EL performance on ACCESS has been questioned.

Table 1

*2014-2015 PARCC Results: State-to-State Averages with Scores of 4 and 5*

Grade	English/Lang. Arts			Math		
	EL	ALL	Difference/Gap	EL	ALL	Difference/Gap
3 <sup>rd</sup>	14.5	38.5	24	18.1	38.1	20
4 <sup>th</sup>	9.8	42.5	32.7	8.9	32.1	23.3
5 <sup>th</sup>	7.5	42.5	35	8.1	32.4	24.3

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) considers ELs to be a subgroup for annual state-level assessments. Consequently, ESSA has shifted accountability for EL performance from Title III to Title I (USDE, 2015). Federal and state education agencies have used the assessment results to determine how well ELs were making academic progress in schools and school districts. MSDE (n.d.d) explained the following:

The English Language Proficiency Assessment, ACCESS for ELLs, is administered to English Language Learners (ELLs) in grades K through 12 annually. The assessment measures a student’s English language proficiency in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, writing, comprehension, oral, and literacy. English Language Proficiency Assessment results are used by the State and the local education systems to report information related to the English language proficiency targets, referred to in NCLB, Title III as Annual Measurable Achievement Objective

(AMAO). AMAO I measures ELLs' progress in learning English; AMAO II measures the number of students who attain English proficiency during the school year. (p. 1)

It is important to emphasize that AMAO I has typically examined students' growth from year to year on the ACCESS assessment, which demonstrates how students have progressed in learning the English language. Cook, Boals, Wilmes, and Santos (2007) explained that the AMAO I (a) expected students to show progress in learning the language and (b) expected the district to show growth from year to year. The authors expressed concern that the established goals may not have been realistic and failed to align with research data demonstrating that language learning and acquisition occurred at different rates. Cook et al. instead emphasized the importance of tracking continuous improvement.

Unlike the AMAO I, the AMAO II focused on those students who had earned a composite score of five on the seven areas assessed on ACCESS, which measured students' proficiency in English. This difference between AMAO I and AMAO II was crucial to schools and school systems because students who demonstrated proficiency were removed from ESOL programs. Cook et al. (2007) suggested that when students exited the subgroup of ELs, thus reducing the size of the cohort, it became more challenging for districts to show the expected growth for AMAO I. In 2016 the federal government changed the policy so that (state educational agencies) SEAs could continue to include ELs who reached proficiency in the subgroup when they calculated the AMAOs for the school and the district (ESSA, 2015). This new practice will allow districts to track the progress of students who exit the ESOL program and assess the need for additional services. Districts will be able to track students in this manner for up to four years after they exit ESOL services (MSDE, 2016).

Although it was not based on the English Language Proficiency Assessment, AMAO III measures the school's progress on the AMAO targets—student achievement and participation in reading and mathematics and graduation rate (MSDE, 2016). AMAO III focused on student performance on the state academic assessment for reading and mathematics (MSDE, n.d.a). As mentioned previously, MSDE utilized the PARCC test as its state academic assessment. As previously stated, because states no longer utilized AYP (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) to determine the success of schools and school districts, it is unclear which measures SEAs and local educational agencies (LEAs) will utilize moving forward; but the ESSA presents the clear expectation that the measures will be consistent throughout the state (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2016).

An examination of ELs performance on Maryland's state assessments revealed that while the data were clear at the state level, they were often nebulous at the local level. For example, the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade reading scores for the second administration of the PARCC assessment in the spring of 2016 showed that 37.5%, 40.3%, and 39.4%, respectively, of all students in Maryland obtained a score of 4 or 5, both of which represented the highest levels of proficiency. However, when examining the same results for ELs in the state, the percentage of students who obtained a score of 4 or 5 fell to 6.9%, 2.9%, and 3.7%, respectively (see Table 2). The district reading results for the same grade levels showed that 34.2%, 39.9%, and 37.1% of all students obtained a score of 4 or 5, while the local results for ELs indicated scores of  $\leq 5.0\%$ , 9.5%, and 8.3%, respectively (see Table 3).<sup>3</sup> The low participation rate makes it difficult to determine their performance with precision, as  $\leq 5.0\%$  is publicly reported. Although the ELs in BSPS outperformed the ELs at the state level (see

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<sup>3</sup> The Maryland State Department of Education uses an asterisk (\*) or  $\leq 5.0$  to denote that no students or fewer than 10 students were tested in a specific category.

Table 4), these data demonstrated that there is much work to be done to improve the academic performance of ELs locally, statewide, and nationally.

Table 2

*2016 PARCC ELA Results Comparing ELs with Non-ELs in Maryland*

Grade	English learners	All students	Achievement gap
3rd	6.9	37.5	30.6
4th	2.9	40.3	37.4
5th	3.7	39.4	35.7

Table 3

*2016 PARCC ELA Results for BSPS*

Grade	English learners	All students	Achievement gap
3rd	≤ 5.0	34.2	*
4th	9.5	39.9	30.4
5th	8.3	37.1	28.8

\*= no students or fewer than 10 students were tested in a specific category

Table 4

*2016 PARCC ELA Results Comparing ELs from BSPS with ELs in Maryland*

<u>Grade</u>	<u>BSPS</u>	<u>Maryland</u>	<u>Achievement Gap</u>
3rd	≤ 5.0	6.9	*
4th	9.5	2.9	6.6
5th	8.3	3.7	4.6

\*= no students or fewer than 10 students were tested in a specific category

Just as there are mechanisms in place to support students with disabilities, there are provisions in place to provide testing accommodations to ELs. Unfortunately, there is no way



to know if the reported scores reflect accommodations and/or modifications. Section 9 of the Maryland Accommodations Manual for Use in Instruction and Assessment contains a checklist for teachers to complete when determining the need for ELs to receive accommodations during PARCC and ACCESS (MSDE, 2012). The accommodations available to ELs are the same as those offered to students with disabilities. These accommodations must be formally documented and made available to students throughout the school year. According to the manual, a student may self-advocate and request accommodations, but parents and school administrators must provide their approval (MSDE, 2012). This provision of accommodations raises the question of how true proficiency can be measured if students are receiving supports to which others do not have access.

**Classifications and characteristics of ELs.** Federal, state, and local school representatives consider a student to be an EL when her home language is not English, and she is not proficient in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English (ESSA, 2015; MSDE, n.d.i; NCLB, 2002). Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) found because assessment tools varied, there was a marked lack of consistency across the nation in the ways that schools and districts classified students as ELs.

**Title III definition.** Title III of NCLB, and the newly adopted ESSA of 2015, mandate that when students are enrolled in school, their parents must complete a home language survey that allows families to provide information about the language(s) spoken in the home, as well as any pertinent developmental concerns (NCLB, 2002). Although ESSA has been signed into law, MSDE has provided a disclaimer that it is currently reviewing the new law to develop the state's plan.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the information provided by the families,

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<sup>4</sup> MSDE ESSA, 2016

a teacher may refer a student to an ESOL teacher or other individual for a language assessment to determine the need for placement in the ESOL program (MSDE, n.d.e). According to Title III, when school representatives identify a student as an EL, they must inform parents “within 30 days of the beginning of the school year, and within two weeks of enrollment during any other time during the school year” (Zacarian, 2010, p. 7).

**Characteristics of ELs in BSPS.** An internal report from BSPS indicated that during the 2016-2017 school year, the district enrolled 216 ELs (BSPS, 2016). Fifty-five of these students attended middle and high school, and the remaining 161 attended elementary schools. The report also stated that 44 EL students held an immigrant status: 13 in elementary, 27 in middle, and four in high school. Seventy-five, or 47%, of the elementary EL students attended a Title I school; however, none of the ELs enrolled in the county’s four Title I schools had immigrant status. The document also reported that among the EL students, more than 15 languages were spoken. Forty-nine percent of the students spoke Spanish in the home, and Japanese was the second highest first language, representing 7 percent. The variety of languages represented in the schools was likely due to the presence of a naval installation, Bay Shore Naval Installation,<sup>5</sup> which had “9,800 civilian employees, 5,700 contractors, and 2,400 active military duty personnel” (BSPS, 2016, p. 1). These employees come from all over the world, bringing with them their children who speak many different languages. The report also indicated that 19 of the students, almost 10%, had an Individualized Education Program (IEP; BSPS, 2016).

In 2016, 57.3% of BPS ELs showed progress in learning English, measured as AMAO I. The state had established a target of 57%, so the district slightly exceeded the

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<sup>5</sup> To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the name of the military installation is a pseudonym.

mark. In the same year, 19.6% ELs in BSPS were proficient on the AMAO II. Again, the district exceeded the state-determined target of 15% (MSDE English Language Proficiency Assessment, 2016). As mentioned above, the AMAO II measured the number of students who (a) attained English proficiency by scoring at least a five on the ACCESS exam and (b) exited the EL subgroup.

**Services provided to ELs in BSPS.** The delivery of targeted English language instruction to EL students in BSPS varied from school to school and grade level to grade level. According to the BSPS (n.d.) website, “The goal of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program is to help the students with limited or no English to function linguistically and culturally in the Bay Shore Public School System and in American Society.”

For the 2016-2017 school year, the instructional model in BSPS included five teachers who provided instruction to 216 ELs in more than 20 schools. Each teacher held a specific certification for teaching ESOL, so they met the “highly qualified” classification, as defined by NCLB.<sup>6</sup> According to one of the five ESOL teachers, the high school students in BSPS receive daily ESOL instruction for at least one class period daily (A.B. Teacher, personal communication, October 12, 2016)<sup>7</sup> Elementary school students may receive up to two hours of ESOL instruction per week through the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) that allows teachers at the secondary level to “push in,” providing in-class support, and “pull out,” which allows the students to receive instruction outside of the general student population in individual or small-group settings. Teachers practice the pull-

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<sup>6</sup> As previously mentioned, ESSA (2015) has no specific requirement for districts to report the number or percentage of highly qualified teachers it employs.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudonym used to maintain anonymity

out model more frequently at the elementary level in BSPS (A.B. Teacher, personal communication, October 12, 2016). This noted discrepancy in the amount and frequency of services between elementary and secondary students could contribute to the wide gaps in achievement between ELs and non-ELs at the elementary school level.

The pull-out method of instruction involves a number of benefits and challenges. One benefit of the pull-out method is that ELs learn English at their instructional level. This customization of instruction can reduce anxiety, because the texts they require are often at a lower maturity level than their chronological age and they do not experience embarrassment when using them, as they often do in the general classroom setting. The ELs create a sense of community among themselves because they share some of the same experiences (Lass, n.d). One of the primary costs of the pull-out model is that ELs miss core instruction when separated from their English-speaking peers (Lass, n.d.). In addition, when ELs are separated from their English-speaking peers, they may feel inadequate, and increased anxiety can build as they realize that they may struggle even more to catch up on the content that was missed while they were receiving specialized instruction. Dennis (2014) found that students may also feel isolated by the pull out instructional model. According to Dennis, the pull-out approach is “the most expensive and least effective model” (p. 2).

Lass (n.d.) noted that when EL students receive specialized instruction in the general classroom (i.e. the push-in, immersion model), ESOL teachers can modify the content and the students can learn along with their English-speaking peers. This approach, however, depends on the age and proficiency level of the EL. Sometimes secondary-aged ELs are embarrassed when their peers see them receive this level of support in the classroom. According to Lass, this embarrassment can lead to anxiety and low self-esteem.

## **Policy and Law**

Examining the history of ELs from a legal perspective can shed some light on how policy makers established mandates for schools to provide specialized instructional support to ELs. In 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (McBride, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 1964). One year later, in 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which placed a particular focus on the education of children in poverty. In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of ESEA, was implemented to address the disparities in the education of non-English, or limited-English, proficient students, as well as those students from low-income and minority families (Colorín Colorado, n.d.).

In 1974, Congress passed the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, which stated that language should not impede students from participating in federally funded educational programs. In the same year, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Lau v. Nichols* determined that groups of students should not be segregated, or separated, from their peers. In this case, a Chinese student was not afforded the same educational opportunities as were his English-speaking peers because of his limited-English proficiency. The court determined that it was unlawful for schools to separate limited-English-proficient students from their English-speaking peers (Hakuta, 2011; McBride, 2008; Zacarian, 2012).

The decision in *Castañeda v. Pickard* in 1981 led to additional legal implications for ELs in the educational setting. In this case, the court ruled that by ability grouping Mexican-American students, the Texas school district had discriminated against them by failing to provide them with the same educational opportunities afforded to their English-speaking peers. The ruling established three criteria designed to protect the educational rights of ELs:

(1) any program for ELs must be predicated on research-based educational theories; (2) the program must have adequate resources and staffing; and (3) the school district must find a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and make adjustments in response to the findings (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 648, F. 2d 989 [5th Cir. 1981]; McBride 2008).

The ESEA was reauthorized in 2001 and renamed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This act represented the first time that the federal government imposed strict accountability rules and consequences on states for schools and school systems that did not achieve established benchmarks. NCLB provided flexibility to state education agencies in regards to instructional programming for ELs (Durán, 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Public Law 107-110).

In December 2015, Congress reauthorized the ESEA yet again, and renamed it the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Title I of the ESSA continues to address the needs of economically disadvantaged students and now includes accountability measures—formerly covered under Title III (ACE, 2016; CCSSO, 2016)—which outline the specific rules and requirements associated with ELs. These regulations include funding, language instruction, state plans and laws, options for bilingual education, English proficiency, and proficiency standards (Abedi, Hoffstetter, & Lord, 2004; Wright, 2010; Zehler et al., 2008).

This historical summary serves to contextualize the importance of instruction for ELs in U.S. public schools and its importance has been demonstrated since the inception of ESEA. As the present study concluded, details of ESSA were still being determined. This shift from Title III to Title I, however, was one of many reasons the researcher chose to examine the knowledge, practices, and beliefs of teachers in Title I schools, specifically.

## **Maryland Assessment Requirements**

Every student is unique, and their knowledge and use of the English language are critical to their academic success in the US. According to Freeman and Freeman (2004), it is important that teachers know and understand the various backgrounds of students so that they can differentiate instruction and plan strategically to help students attain academic proficiency.

Because it can be complex, it is important that states and local districts carefully consider the issue and process of language acquisition Hill and Flynn (2006). At present, neither the state nor the federal government has established a timeline for students to reach language proficiency; however, national statistics show that there is an achievement gap between ELs and their native English-speaking peers (Policy Evaluation and Research Center, 2008). Haynes (2009) explained that the language acquisition process includes five key stages: (a) pre-production, (b) early production, (c) speech emergence, (d) intermediate fluency, and (e) advanced fluency. A student's progression through each of these stages depends upon the complexity of language and the number of vocabulary words he can manage (Haynes, 2009).

According to Hill and Flynn (2006), a student's age and level of prior learning at the onset of an EL's identification and instruction can have a major impact on that student's rate of growth. EL instruction has a dual purpose: to help the student reach proficiency in the use of the English language and to help the student learn content-specific information in English (NCLB). In addition, Hakuta (2011) asserted that it takes, on average, five to seven years to become proficient in a second language.

The ESSA continues to require schools, districts, and states to divide students into subgroups, including ELs, and disaggregate their performance data; however, the act does not define the minimum number of students required to determine a subgroup's size (CCSSO, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

### **ESOL Services in BSPS**

Zehler et al. (2008) established that there are five categories of factors that impact the services that ELs receive: (a) personnel, (b) instruction, (c) administration, (d) assessment, and (e) outreach. NCLB legislation provided regulation for the first four components. The outreach category deals with the students, parents, community, and social service agencies. The extent to which BSPS staff has been involved with this last component is unclear. MSDE representatives do provide district leaders with an LEA Planning Guide and Checklist to help them complete their action plans each year. The document is structured very much like the Title I School Improvement Plan template and provides specific details about the plan for serving ELs in Bay Shore County.

**Professional development opportunities.** In response to the increased number of ELs in BSPS and their uneven distribution among the schools, satellite colleges and universities have begun to offer graduate programs that lead to certification in ESOL. The district has encouraged teachers to take advantage of these programs by offering tuition reimbursement (EABS Negotiated Agreement, 2014). District leaders have also invited teachers to take part in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training, which provides insight into instructional strategies and cultural barriers that could impede learning for ELs.



**Early childhood education for ELs.** In 2013, the district discontinued EL services to pre-kindergarteners, because there were not sufficient resources to include these young learners. Pre-kindergarten is not a required program, so district leaders deemed it more important to focus services on students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Another contributing factor in the dissolution of the pre-kindergarten program was the expectation that early childhood programs are language focused for all students, including language and vocabulary development (S.S., personal communication, October 2013).

In summary, BSPS has much work to do to help its ELs perform proficiently on the state-mandated PARCC assessment. Despite all efforts, huge achievement gaps remain between ELS and non-ELs nationally, state wide, and in the local district. There are many factors to consider in examining these discrepancies in student performance, including the legal mandates, resources provided to ELs, and teachers' knowledge of these requirements. In addition, the federal government has placed accountability for ELs squarely on Title I schools; this level of accountability served as an impetus for this study's focus on the four exiting Title I schools in the district.

There are a number of acronyms frequently used in the educational arena. The chart in Figure 1 presents meanings and explanations for key terms utilized in this study to facilitate understanding.

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>ACCESS</b>	Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English from State to State	The official test from the WIDA consortium administered annually to English learners in grades K-12
<b>AMAOI</b>	Annual Measurable Achievement Objective One	Measures the number or percentage of English learners <b>making progress</b> in learning English during the school year
<b>AMAOII</b>	Annual Measurable Achievement Objective Two	Measures the number or percentage of English learners who <b>reach proficiency</b> in English by the end of the school year
<b>AMAOIII</b>	Annual Measurable Achievement Objective Three	Measures adequate yearly progress for the subgroup of English learners on the federally required state assessment
<b>AYP</b>	Adequate Yearly Progress	Determines whether schools and school systems meet the required on standards on federally required state assessments
<b>ELD</b>	English Language Development	Instruction designed to help students reach proficiency in the reading, writing, listening, and speaking of the English language
<b>EL</b>	English Learner	A student whose home language is not English
<b>ELPA</b>	English Language Proficiency Assessment	English language assessment to determine levels or receptive and expressive language
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language	English for students whose first language is not English
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages	English for students whose first language is not English
<b>ESSA</b>	Every Student Succeeds Act	The new name for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 that was reauthorized in December 2015
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Agency	The school system/district responsible for overseeing public education
<b>MSA</b>	Maryland State Assessment	The federally- required state assessment for students in Maryland public schools
<b>MSDE</b>	Maryland State Department of Education	The state education agency for Maryland
<b>NAEP</b>	National Assessment of Educational Progress	Provides national reports on student academic progress and other statistics for the United States
<b>NCES</b>	National Council for Educational Statistics	Provides reports and analyses about the academic performance of students in the United States and other countries
<b>NCLB</b>	No Child Left Behind	Name given to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 from 2001-2015
<b>OELA</b>	Office of English Language Acquisition	A part of the United States Department of Education that provides research and statistics about English language acquisition and English learners
<b>PARCC</b>	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers	A consortium of states that follow the College and Career Readiness Standards of instruction. The PARCC is also the name of the assessment that measures student progress on the standards

<b>SEA</b>	State Education Agency	The title given to every state for the responsibility of overseeing the educational programs and system in the state
<b>SIOP</b>	Sheltered Instruction Observation	An instructional model for teaching English learners academic content while also learning English
<b>BSPS</b>	Bay Shore Public Schools	A local school system in Maryland
<b>WIDA</b>	World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment	A multi-state consortium that provides instructional standards for English learners as well as assessments to measure their progress on these standards. (MSDE)

Figure 1. Glossary of acronyms.

## Literature Review

To situate this study, the following sections will present a review of the literature that examines a number of key topics related to this inquiry: types of ELs, instructional strategies, teacher beliefs, culturally relevant pedagogy, and positioning theory. The instructional strategies and materials presented are researched-based and proven to contribute to the academic success of ELs.

**Types of ELs.** Researchers have referred to ELs using a wide variety of terms, including dual language learners, limited-English proficient (LEP), bilingual, English learners, language minorities, second-language learners, and culturally and linguistically diverse students (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Howes, Downer, & Pianta, 2011; Tabors, 2008). As noted earlier, for the purposes of this study, the term EL will be used to describe students who have limited-English proficiency and whose home language is not English.

There are three major types of ELs: long-term individuals who have attended school in the US for at least seven years but continue to require support with the English language, recent arrivals with limited or no formal schooling, and recent arrivals who have had “adequate schooling” or the equivalent of on-level instruction in their first language (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Long-

term ELs typically have reached middle or high school. Menken and Kleyn (2009) found that there were several distinct characteristics of long-term ELs. In addition to the fact that they were secondary-age students, they represented a wide variety of countries. The authors noted that these students tended to have oral fluency in English and their home language; but they demonstrated many grammatical and language usage errors, and their academic literacy skills were often weak in both English and their home language (Menken & Kleyn, 2009).

According to Freeman and Freeman, in 2004, 57% of ELs who were U.S. citizens fell into this category, in part, due to high mobility and differing language programs in the schools they attended. Furthermore, some of these long-term ELs travelled to and from the US, so their formal schooling was disrupted (ETS, 2008; Menken & Kleyn, 2009; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Accounts from long-term ELs indicated that these instructional gaps contributed to frustration and diminished motivation because their skills did not align with grade-level expectations.

The second group of ELs includes students who are recent arrivals with limited or no formal schooling, or *students with limited or interrupted formal education* (SLIFE) (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009; Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Many of these students immigrate to the U.S. without having experienced a formal education in their first language that would give them skills commensurate with those expected of them upon their arrival. The older the students, the wider the gap in their existing skills, and this gap can limit the knowledge that they can transfer to their new learning situation. In addition, most ELs come from impoverished or low-income families, which further impacts their exposure to the English language and mainstream American culture (Howes, Downer, & Pianta, 2011; Klingner, & Eppolito, 2014).

The third type of EL includes students who are recent arrivals to the United States and have had adequate formal schooling in their first language. These students have developed academic skills that can be transferred to their English experience. This category of ELs has typically exited from ESOL services at a faster rate than do students in the other categories (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Paradis, Genesee, & Crago, 2011).

**Instructional strategies.** Many agencies, research organizations, and educators have examined the instructional needs of ELs in terms of strategies and materials. Guided and explicit instruction, paired and small-group activities, and cooperative learning opportunities are highly recommended teaching strategies for successful learning among ELs (Thomson, 2012; Virginia Department of Education, 2006) Several authors have supported the notion that teachers should provide direct, focused instruction, as well as a more interactive instruction for ELs. In addition, the notion of interactive instructional activities that are structured like cooperative learning promote and facilitate opportunities for students to practice the English language orally and audibly. Depending on the work of a small group, these exchanges may also help the ELs to practice reading, writing, and applying academic language in the context of a specific subject and in real-life situations (Ballentyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Bongola, 2005; Reed & Railsback, 2003; Calderón, Slavin, Sanchez, 2011; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & River, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Li, 2012; Thomson, 2012; Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

Reed and Railsback (2003) and Thomson (2012) also stressed the importance of tapping into and building on ELs' prior knowledge. Data show that this practice helps teachers assess what the ELs know and provides ELs opportunities to contribute actively to

discussions and share personal experiences. ELs may also express their prior knowledge in the context of their cultural background. Calderón et al. (2011) and Herrell and Jordan (2015, p. 103) supported the notion that providing opportunities for ELs to share their culture can help them to develop a greater sense of community and belonging,

Visual aids like graphic organizers, word and picture cards, sentence strips, word walls, and labels have also proven successful in aiding the learning of English, as well as any other language, in research settings (e.g., Ballentyne et al., 2008; Herrell & Jordan, 2015) and across school districts (e.g., Virginia Department of Education, 2004, 2006). Visual aids help students build memory, and word walls and labels are quick resources for students to easily access while in the classroom. These items, along with other tools like counting cubes and other mathematical manipulatives, allow students to be actively engaged in problem solving and mapping/organizing data and information. A sequencing chart, for example, could be used to help the EL to remember the order of events in a story or the steps in a scientific investigation.

The Virginia Department of Education (2004, 2006) has also identified practices like cloze reading, journals, avoiding the use of idioms without explicit instruction, and purposefully enunciating when working with ELs. Idioms are expressions that can easily be misunderstood because the literal meaning would make no sense. For example, the expression “to beat around the bush” does not involve the action of beating nor does it include a bush. Instead, it means not being direct or forthcoming in communication. An EL could be easily confused by such phrases; so unless they are explicitly taught, teachers should avoid using them (Reed and Railsback, 2003).

There has been a lot of controversy about the use of the ELs' home language while learning English in the classroom. Goldenberg (2008) and Thomson (2012) promoted the use of the first language, citing benefits like the transference of knowledge from the home language to the target language. Researchers have also recommended the use of cognates, words that have similar spellings and meanings in two languages, as a useful tool when seeking to expand students' English vocabulary more quickly (Calderón et al., 2011; Li, 2012). Goldenberg (2008) cautioned, however, that educators must be careful to avoid false cognates, or words that appear the same from one language to the other, but have different meanings (e.g., "sopa" in Spanish does not mean "soap" in English, but rather "soup").

The issue of accommodations and modifications are usually associated with some type of formal assessment. Goldenberg (2008) and the Virginia Department of Education (2004, 2006) stressed the importance of accommodating ELs throughout their learning experiences through time allotments, settings, preferential seating, and more. ELs can also benefit from various modifications to their assignments such as the use of word banks or less complex text on the same topic as non-EL peers to facilitate comprehension. Both accommodations and modifications may change as the EL gains skills.

In addition to the standard instructional resources provided to all students, items like bilingual dictionaries, bilingual texts, or texts in the EL's home language may help to facilitate learning (Herrell & Jordan, 2015, pp. 91, 94; Thomson, 2012) and increase comprehension and vocabulary development (Virginia State Department of Education, 2006). Additionally, formative assessments allow teachers to provide immediate feedback to students while the students are engaged in the learning process. Calderón et al. (2011) concluded that this ongoing, immediate feedback was beneficial to ELs because it increased

opportunities for correction and self-correction. Herrell and Jordan (2015) also found that the use of technology to deliver instruction, such as multimedia presentations, could provide ELs with a unique context for learning (p. 138).

Data show that one of the most crucial resources that contributes to the success of the ELs is their parents. Calderon et al. (2011) suggested that schools reach out to the parents of ELs to help them become engaged in their children's learning. Typically, there are cultural differences, so inviting parents to formal and informal gatherings to explain expectations and show them how the school operates can help them feel comfortable. In addition, sharing information about community resources and inviting them to volunteer can help establish a sense of belonging among parents of ELs. Ballentyne et al. (2008) recommended that school representatives use parents' home language as often as possible and also noted that staff persons in the building who speak the parents' home language can become critical in assisting with the communication and helping teachers and other school personnel understand key cultural differences.

**Teacher beliefs.** A number of researchers have explored teacher perspectives on ELs from a linguistic (addressing language barriers) and instructional (identifying effective instructional strategies to implement) standpoint (O'Neal, Ringler, & Rodriguez, 2008). While instructional practices are important to the learning process, the way teachers perceive their roles in the instruction of ELs also can directly or indirectly impact learning outcomes (Bruening, 2012; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Garcia-Navarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005). Youngs and Youngs (2001) found that while most classroom teachers recognized the legal rights of ELs and their legal obligation to educate them; not all teachers shared the same views and opinions about who specifically should teach these students, the instructional approaches to



be used, the inclusion or exclusion of the students' first language, and their ability to meet the needs of these students.

NCLB mandated that teachers be highly qualified and defined this high qualification by their ability to earn a certification in the area(s) they teach (O'Neal, Ringler, & Rodriguez, 2008; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). With the influx of immigrant students and ELs requiring ESOL services, many colleges and universities have begun to offer special ESOL certifications (Mantero, & McVicker, 2006). These individuals receive specialized training and typically spend time working with ELs as part of their programs. The classroom teachers who do not have this type of training, however, often express concern about their ability to teach ELs effectively because the students come with varying levels of schooling in their first language and a wide variety of English proficiency levels, socioeconomic statuses, family histories, and cultural differences (Hill & Flynn, 2006, p. 3; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). It is important to note, though, that ESSA does not require that schools report the number of highly qualified teachers they employ (ESSA, 2015; CCSSO, 2016), so it is uncertain how that will impact the achievement of ELs.

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) recognized that many factors could impact the experiences of adolescent EL students, such as physical and cognitive development, sleep patterns, personal goals, academic performance, self-confidence, and self-esteem. A student's culture can also have a significant influence on his schooling experience (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Classroom teachers need to be cognizant of factors that may cause a student to behave a certain way in certain situations. Lindahl (2015) expressed concern that failure to require highly qualified status for teacher of ESOL is a failure to acknowledge that, "effectively

teaching ELLs requires a sophisticated awareness of language and pedagogical practices” (p. 1).

Calderón et al. (2011) explained that the level of respect that teachers hold for the ELs’ first languages, primary cultures, and home cultures could help determine their attitude toward ELs. De Jong and Harper (2005) suggested that, “teachers need to acquire specific knowledge and skills related to language and culture” (p. 116). Garcia-Nevara et al. (2005) also found that teacher negative attitudes about the preservation of a student’s first language could be transferred to the EL, which can have a negative impact on the student’s academic achievement. A teacher’s belief that a student’s home language should not be used during instruction could cause stress for the student and limit his academic growth because his language is a valuable resource for him. Some teachers believe, for example, that providing accommodations for ELs equates to the lowering of academic standards (Abedi, Hofstetter, Lord, 2004). NCLB (2001) specifically allowed for testing accommodations for ELs, so to deny the students was equivalent to breaking the law. ESSA (2015) continues to support the provision of accommodations that may include providing content assessments in languages other than English so that students can demonstrate their knowledge of the content.

Youngs and Youngs (2001) explored the relationships of six potential predictors on teachers’ ability to teach ELs. These predictors of “mainstream” teachers’ attitudes included “general educational experiences, specific ESL training, personal contact with diverse cultures, prior contact with ESL students, demographic characteristics, and personality” (Youngs & Youngs, 2001, p. 99). The researchers conducted a survey of teachers in three junior high and middle schools in the same school district to determine if the predictors influenced teacher attitudes towards ELs and their instructional needs. They also examined

teachers' educational preparation for the classroom and the degree to which course work focused on multiculturalism would influence teachers' attitudes towards ELs.

Young and Youngs (2001) hypothesized that specific training related to working with ELs would correlate to positive attitudes towards the students. The team explored the teachers' exposure to and experience with persons from cultures different from their own, looking to support their belief that this, too, would foster positive attitudes towards ELs. The researchers also asked teachers about the number of ELs they had taught in the past six years, wondering if those with the most experience with ELs would have more positive attitudes towards the students than did those with less experience. Young and Youngs collected demographic information like age, gender, years of teaching experience, and subjects taught through the survey to see if there were any correlations between those factors and teachers' perceptions about ELs. Finally, they asked teachers about their trust in others in an effort to associate such responses with teachers' attitudes about teaching ELs (Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

Based on their findings, Youngs and Youngs (2001) concluded that they were not able to determine that ESL training had any significant influence on teachers' positive attitudes toward ELs. They explained that their study did not examine the various types of specific ESL training deeply enough and recommended a more in-depth examination for future study. The researchers highly recommended that school districts provide cultural diversity training to its teachers, because they found that teachers who reported having specific ESL training were considerably more positive towards ELs than were those who had not received such guidance. Young and Young (2001) also found that teachers who had lived and/or taught in a foreign country reported a much more positive attitude towards ELs than

did those teachers who had not had similar experiences. In addition, the data revealed that while age did not seem to correlate to a positive attitude towards ELs, gender among teachers was shown to have a high correlation. The researchers concluded that female teachers had notably more positive attitudes towards ELs than did their male counterparts (Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

Youngs and Youngs (2001) also noted the importance of considering a classroom teacher's level of self-efficacy or the teacher's belief that he possesses the skills to teach ELs effectively. Similarly, Karabenick and Noda (2004) found that teachers connected their positive outlooks on administrative support for ELs with their self-efficacy. The Education Commission of the States (2013) concluded that, "classroom teacher attitudes toward ELs can significantly impact the instruction they receive" (p. 4). The Commission went on to explain that teachers viewed the education of ELs to be the responsibility of specialists with ESOL certifications. This attitude suggests that these classroom teachers refused ownership of their responsibility and may have presented with resistance to finding ways of effectively teach this growing population of students.

**Culturally-relevant pedagogy.** Paradis, Genesee, and Crago (2011) emphasized that the profound concept of language socialization recognizes that language is the center of culture and cultural development. The authors also explained that dual language learners, a category into which ELs fall, must navigate between at least two cultures. This effort goes beyond simply knowing the languages; it requires a clear understanding of how to use each language in the social contexts of each culture (Paradis et al., 2011). Fránquiz and Nieto (2005) insisted that culture goes beyond stereotypes and the celebration of ethnic holidays. They explained that teachers must learn about their students and their cultures so that they

can incorporate elements from students' cultures into instruction to make learning more relevant, engaging, and meaningful (Fránquiz & Nieto, 2005). According to Rajagopal (2011), students whose teachers use culturally relevant instructional strategies are more likely experience academic success than those with teachers who do not.

De Jong and Harper (2005) provided examples of activities that could elicit reactions from students that would cause teachers to develop erroneous conclusions about said students. For instance, in some cultures, the teacher is considered the authority both in the classroom and of the knowledge presented and shared therein. Students from such a culture may feel uncomfortable expressing opinions about a piece of literature because they would not want to appear disrespectful to the teacher. Teachers in U.S. public schools may perceive that this demonstration of respect as simply a lack of participation and assume that it is indicative of defiance or an inability to perform the assigned task.

Karabenick and Noda (2004) conducted a survey of more than 700 teachers in a midwestern school district to examine their attitudes towards ELs. The researchers sought to explore the attitudes of teachers, district-wide, and compare characteristics of teachers whose responses indicated a more favorable opinion and appreciation for ELs. The survey incorporated 14 categories of questions that included teacher self-efficacy, school climate, assessment variability and flexibility, second-language learning, beliefs about EL parents, interactions between ELs and non-ELs in the classroom, and more.

The authors found that even though most of the teachers surveyed expressed confidence in their overall teaching abilities, many of them were less confident about teaching ELs (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). While several teachers expressed a belief that having the ELs as part of the student body contributed to a more diverse learning

environment and stated that they valued the diversity, several respondents were not comfortable having ELs in their classrooms. The survey also revealed major gaps in the teachers' knowledge of and experience with language acquisition, instructional strategies and approaches, and the history of bilingual education. Their research resulted in a restructuring of the district's array of services for ELs (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

Dantas-Whitney and Waldschmidt (2009) stressed that teacher education programs must ensure that pre-service teachers understand the relevance of the cultures of ELs, not just the linguistic differences that ELs bring to the classroom. These researchers closely examined the reflections of two pre-service teachers who participated in a longitudinal study. The researchers asked the participants to journal their experiences as they attended classes and workshops to develop pedagogy. The authors discovered a pattern in the entries of the pre-service teachers as they focused on the instructional strategies that were learning, but did not analyze their use for individual students or specific situations. Both of the pre-service teachers spoke two languages and had traveled internationally, yet their journal entries did not demonstrate self-reflection and/or evidence that they were connecting their new knowledge to the various student populations they had encountered (Dantas-Whitney & Waldschmidt, 2009). If teachers do not consider possibilities beyond the context in which they learn new instructional strategies, they may limit their opportunities for success when instructing ELs through the inclusion of the many aspects of their cultures.

In addition to the need to consider the cultural backgrounds of ELs, the importance of equality in education has garnered much attention from researchers of EL instruction and learning. Reeves (2004) examined the concept of "difference blindness" where, by treating everyone the same, there is no discrimination and everything is equitable. Reeves reported

that when schools rush to rapidly mainstream ELs “out of ESL or bilingual courses, (it) raises the question of whether the equal treatment of ELLs through inclusion is an extension of difference-blind practice or a truly equitable way to equalize educational opportunity” (p. 47). Reeves suggested that policies in school districts that appeared to create equity may have actually contributed to the problems that ELs experience. Making everyone alike, for instance, could make ELs feel that their culture was undervalued. Institutional attitudes helped to create and maintain the culture in the district and its schools with teachers in forefront (Reeves, 2004).

**Positioning theory.** Teacher-student and student-student interactions have been used to explain the concept of positioning theory. The concept of positioning theory has traditionally centered on the roles and positions participants are assigned or, in some cases, self-assigned, based on specific interactions and relationships (Yoon, 2008). Harré et al. (2009) stated the following:

What you are is partly constituted by what roles you have—in conversations, both personal (ruminating) and social. And that depends in part on how one is positioned—that is, what rights and duties you are effectively able to exploit, and so on. (p. 12)

Harré and van Langenhove (1999) defined positioning theory as “the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting” (p. 1). In the context of EL instruction, the position assigned to ELs by teachers or their peers helps to determine the dynamics in the classroom. In addition, the position(s) an EL chooses for himself will contribute to the discourse and emotions associated with the classroom experience. Yoon (2008) explained that an EL may position

herself as very passive and shy if she feels inadequate or overwhelmed with the dynamics and demands placed on her. By the same token, a more confident EL may have a more dominant role or position among his classmates because he is able to participate actively and comfortably.

Yoon (2008) further argued that teachers tended to consciously or unconsciously assign positions to students in the classroom, as well as to themselves. If, for example, the teacher saw the EL as a student with lots of deficits and limitations, he may have a tendency to avoid engaging the student at the same level as non-ELs. This practice could create a feeling of isolation or insecurity for the EL, which could have a negative impact on her learning. Yoon also addressed the notion of *hidden power relations*. This refers to the relationship of the persons involved, as well as the way they communicate and interact with one another. Typically, one person has more power than the other, be it conscious or unconscious. Teacher-to-student and peer-to-peer relationships are a good example of hidden power relations.

In her examination of positioning theory, Yoon (2008) also explored the concept of *intentional self-positioning*, which draws from the premise that everyone experiences and sees their environment from a specific position. Yoon stated that “individuals’ self-positioning guides the way in which they act and think about their roles, assignments, and duties in a given context” (p. 499). Reeves (2009) discussed this phenomenon in great detail when examining a case study of a high school teacher during his fourth year of teaching. Throughout the study, the researcher asked the teacher about (a) his identity and position as a teacher, (b) how he perceived himself and his colleagues, and (c) the positioning of the ELs in his class. The results revealed that the teacher changed his positioning as the semester



progressed. The teacher initially described himself as unlike his traditional peers in that he was closer in age to his students, understood them better, and was well informed about the pop culture his students enjoyed, which resulted in a great rapport with his students. In terms of his ELs, he positioned them as equal to his non-ELs and believed that if he did not treat them any differently than he did his non-ELs, they would make the same progress. The study demonstrated how intentional self-positioning implied a level of personal investment, thereby resulting in the intentional positioning of others. Reeves noted that when teachers' assignment of positions to ELs could be a double-edged sword. First, seeing ELs as no different from their non-EL peers could prevent teachers from differentiating instruction appropriately. On the other hand, viewing and treating ELs differently could result in lowered standards, less rigor, and contributing to the existing achievement gap.

Yoon (2008) also discussed the notion of *interactive positioning*, which suggests that one person's comments can dictate the behavior of another. For example, in the context of the classroom, if an EL experiences encouragement and positive feedback, she is more likely to take risks while participating in discussions and other instructional activities. If, on the other hand, the EL experiences ridicule from peers or negative interactions with the teacher, he may be more likely to retreat because of a lack of confidence and feelings of rejection. According to Harper and de Jong (2009), social isolation often occurs when schools place EL students in mainstream classrooms; hence, interactive positioning has potential for great impact on the success of ELs.

These studies demonstrate that positioning theory provides unique insight into the various aspects of student-teacher and student-student interactions and the ways that these interactions influence teacher and student attitudes about the instruction of ELs. The works of

Harré and van Langenhove (1999) and Yoon (2008) could also be integrated with culturally responsive instruction in the establishment of positive relationships for ELs and their peers as well as ELs' relationships with their parents. Perhaps if teachers understood positioning theory and how they may assign positions to all of their students, not just ELs, they may be able to notice inequities that may exist.

## Chapter 2: Study Design

As the number of ELs continues to grow in BSPS, without a subsequent increase in the number of certified ESOL teachers assigned to these students, it has become increasingly apparent that classroom teachers in the district will need to become better equipped to lead the charge of educating ELs. To provide clarity about the needs of teachers who serve EL students, this study examined the (a) knowledge of laws and mandates, (b) use of instructional strategies and resources, (c) characteristics, and (d) perceptions demonstrated by intermediate teachers (Grades 3-5) in the four Title I schools in the district regarding the instructional needs of ELs. To this end, the researchers conducted a descriptive, exploratory study that involved the administration of an online survey that helped to provide insight into the following five research questions that guided the development and implementation of this inquiry:

1. To what extent do Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 demonstrate knowledge of the laws, policies, and assessments regarding the instruction of ELs?
2. To what extent do Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 use specific instructional strategies and practices specifically designed for the instruction of ELs?
3. To what extent do Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 use instructional materials specifically designed for the instruction of ELs?
4. To what extent do Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 use supports specifically designed for the ELs in their classrooms?
5. What perceptions do Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 espouse regarding the instruction of ELs?

## Study Design and Methods

To address the five research questions that grounded this inquiry, this investigator conducted a quantitative inquiry using a descriptive, exploratory research design. As mentioned previously, the data collection process involved the administration of an online survey to 50 intermediate teachers in the four Title I elementary schools in the district.

**Rationale for research design.** Gay et al. (2012) suggested that surveys are an appropriate quantitative method for examining and describing the current status or condition of a phenomenon or situation. In the present study, the use of a survey allowed for the acquisition of first-hand information about intermediate teachers' perceptions of their work and the tools and resources they believe are necessary (Schonlau et al., 2002) for the successful instruction of ELs. Schonlau et al. (2002) also noted that surveys are a convenient way to gather information from targeted sources while maintaining the confidentiality and/or anonymity of one's sources. Gay et al. found that this anonymity allowed participants to respond openly and honestly because they had the assurance that their identities would be protected. A tremendous advantage to using software is that it managed data collection and data analysis to include sorting and organizing results, creating various displays and visual representations of results, calculating statistical tests, coding, and more (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Porter (2004), some advantages of using electronic survey packages included:

1. **Cost.** It is less expensive to communicate via the Internet than it is to pay for postage when mailing a survey. This point proved true, as this researcher also saved on the cost of printing the documents associated with the study. In addition, there was no

cost for data entry because responses were entered as participants completed the survey.

2. **Time.** Porter explained that because technology allow one to communicate with large numbers of people almost instantly, conducting an online survey would require far less time than with traditional mailings. In the present study, communicating via email took less time than would the traditional postal service. This researcher also saved time because there was no need to make copies, fold, stuff and address envelopes for traditional mailings.
3. **Management of data and communication.** Many software packages have been designed to manage and monitor all activity pertaining to the study. In addition, all the data were warehoused in one location.
4. **Data analysis.** Not everyone is a statistician and understands how to calculate statistical tests accurately. Basic computer knowledge allowed a novice to navigate and create data tables to present the results.

Some drawbacks to using the online survey were the accuracy of email addresses for respondents and potential errors in respondent use. The email addresses for the respondents had to be verified for accuracy prior to sending the invitation and survey. Recognizing the benefits, the researcher decided that an electronic survey would be the best tool for collecting the required data from the 50 intermediate teachers in the four target schools.

The researcher used Qualtrics, a professional online software package, to create and design the survey instrument. The software also provided a tool for preparing the contact lists for the prospective survey participants. The researcher uploaded and emailed all materials, including the initial letter and consent form required by the Institutional Review Board,

follow-up reminders, and thank-you notes, to the respondents from Qualtrics. The software package then monitored the responses, providing data on the number of surveys completed and the number that were in process over the course of the data collection process. At the end of the survey period, Qualtrics provided frequency reports and customized data reports, and it allowed the researcher to manage the entire research project in one place using one platform.

### **Participants**

The researcher invited all teachers of Grades 3-5 in the district's four Title I schools (n=50) to participate in the survey. The large concentration of ELs in BSPS's low-income schools led the researcher to focus solely on the Title I schools in the district (W.T., personal communication, November, 2016). During the 2016-2017 school year, there were a total of 216 students receiving ESOL services in the district. Fifty-five of these ELs were secondary students, while the remaining 161 were elementary students. The total ELs for the four Title I schools was 75, or 47% of all elementary ELs and 37% of all ELs. The Title I schools had poverty rates from 50.6% to 78.5% (Maryland Report Card, 2016).

The researcher chose to focus on teachers of Grades 3-5 because students began taking the state-mandated high-stakes assessments (PARCC) in the third grade and continued to take it each year in Grades 4 and 5. Teachers of these grade levels also provide instruction in reading, math, science, and social studies, all of which are considered core instruction and are assessed on PARCC. As of fall of 2016, the four Title I elementary schools in BSPS had a total of 17 third-grade teachers, 18 fourth-grade teachers, and 15 fifth-grade teachers, providing an overall pool of 50 teachers who were invited to participate in the survey.

**Research procedures.** To determine which teachers would be invited to participate in the study, the researcher reviewed the home page for each of the four Title I schools. The

schools in the BSPS district publicly display a list of the staff, along with each person's position. After compiling a list of eligible teachers from the websites, the researcher emailed a corresponding list to the principal of each school with a request for verification. After receiving confirmation of the lists' accuracy from each principal, the researcher developed in Qualtrics a mailing list, which consisted of the first and last name of each teacher and their email address. Because the researcher was the principal of one of the four Title I schools, the list of teachers for that school was submitted to a colleague to prepare it for survey distribution. After receiving approval of the survey from the Institutional Review Board and preparing it for distribution, the researcher shared it, through Qualtrics, with the same colleague.

The researcher emailed the survey, which also contained a letter of invitation and consent (see Appendix B). The researcher's colleague received the same information, along with instructions, to email the survey to the teachers at the researcher's school. The letter of invitation explained that the purpose of the study was to gather information from participants to learn about the knowledge, practices, and perceptions of Title I intermediate teachers regarding the instruction of ELs in BSPS. The invitation and consent form explained that participation in the survey was voluntary and that the results would be reported in the aggregate to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Reminder letters were sent weekly via email over a period of two weeks after sending the initial invitation to the prospective participants.

### **Instrument**

The researcher used Qualtrics to develop and administer a 14-question survey with a total of 79 indicators. The survey (see Appendix B) asked questions that aligned with the

research questions and requested demographic information for the purpose of comparison. The questions were influenced by the information discovered and shared in Chapter 1.

Survey Item 1 introduced the instrument and requested the consent of the prospective participant, as required by the Institutional Review Board. Item 2 sought data related to Research Question 1, and queried respondents about seven areas of knowledge related to ELs. The item specifically obtained data on the extent to which Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 had knowledge of the laws, policies, and assessments relating to the instruction of ELs. For this section, participants indicated a response ranging from “no knowledge” to “extremely knowledgeable.” More specifically, the first three queries refer to how ELs were assessed and the resources available to assist them. The question regarding teachers’ knowledge of SIOP was included to measure their understanding of the current practices used by the ESOL teachers assigned to their ELs (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Survey Item 3 explored the frequency with which participants used a list of 20 instructional strategies and practices. The researcher selected these strategies because they were highly recommended by researchers and education institutions. Data collected from this section provided data relevant to Research Question 2, which explored the extent to which Title I teachers of Grade 3-5 use specific instructional strategies and practices for the instruction of ELs. Responses ranged from “do not use” to “daily.” The highly recommended practices included using scaffolding, providing accommodations and modifications, student-centered practices like cooperative learning and small-group activities, teacher modeling, explicit instruction, and EL-targeted practices like referencing the ELs’ cultural background and allowing them to use their first language (Ballentyne et al., 2008; Bongola, 2005; Caldron et al., 2011; Virginia Department of Education, 2004, 2006).



The frequency with which the participants used a list of 20 research-based instructional resources was the focus for Survey Item 4. Collected data provided insight into Research Question 3, which examined the extent to which Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 use specific instructional materials for the instruction of ELs. Like Item 3, responses ranged from “do not use” to “daily.” These questions explored the many resources that researchers and practitioners have identified as useful for instructing ELs, including bilingual texts and dictionaries, technology-based interventions and applications, Can-do activities from WIDA, graphic organizers, and visual aids (Ballentyne et al., 2008; Goldberg, 2008; Virginia Department of education, 2004, 2006).

Survey Item 5 investigated the frequency with which the respondents used 10 listed supports for the ELs in their classrooms. The resulting data informed Research Question 4, which explored the extent to which Title I teachers of Grades 3-5 use specific supports for the ELs in their classrooms. Responses ranged from “never” to “always.” The types of supports included in this section were inspired by Fránquiz and Nieto’s (2005) notion of culturally-relevant instruction and the importance of looking beyond the language differences between the teacher and EL.

Recognizing the challenge of determining teachers’ beliefs and perceptions, the researcher deemed appropriate a series of statements that related to teachers’ perspectives about ELs. Survey Item 6 investigated the degree to which participants agreed with 14 specific statements about ELs. Responses provided key data related to Research Question 5, which examined the perceptions that Title I teachers of grades 3-5 have about the instruction of ELs. Participants responded to this item using a Likert scale that ranged from “disagree” to “agree.” The researcher drew the content for this item from Karabenick’s and Noda’s (2004)

work, which identified disconnects between teachers' perceptions of their general teaching abilities and their perceived abilities to teach ELs. Additionally, these questions also drew from Ballentyne et al.'s (2008) findings that parents were a resource to be included in the process of instructing ELs, and Garcia-Nevara et al.'s (2005) conclusion that one's first language has value and is only part of a person's culture.

Survey Items 7-14 addressed demographic information like age; years of teaching experience; subjects taught; exposure to speakers of other languages; international experiences; and experience reading, writing, and/or speaking a language other than English. These questions drew from the predictors used by Youngs and Youngs (2001) to determine correlations between these factors and teachers' perceptions of ELs. Researchers have found that teachers' ages, years of teaching experience, exposure to and interactions with persons of different cultures, and their experiences with ELs can shape teachers' perceptions and contribute to the types of interactions and positions assigned to teachers, general students, and/or ELs (deJong & Harper, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2009).

### **Chapter 3: Results**

This chapter presents the results of the survey, discusses the overall research findings, and the relevance of those findings to the focus of the study. After examining the demographic data and their relationship to the research questions, the chapter provides a summary of the results related to each research question.

#### **Respondents**

Before diving into the specific research questions, it was necessary to identify the demographic characteristics of the participants; as these characteristics may have influenced their responses. Of the 50 teachers invited to participate in the research study, 28 individuals began the survey, but only 25 completed all of the sections. Therefore, the number of responses per question ranged from 25 to 28. The demographic portion of the survey collected data on teachers' age, subjects taught, years of teaching experience, and their living and language experiences that allowed for potential interactions with persons from cultures other than their own. When asked about the subjects taught, all but one of the teachers indicated that they taught reading, math, social studies, and science. The one outlier taught only reading. Therefore, all of the respondents were teachers of reading.

There was nearly an even distribution of teachers among the three grade levels of focus (Grades 3, 4, and 5). Of the 25 teachers who completed the study, eight taught third grade, eight taught fourth grade, and nine taught fifth grade. A cross tabulation between the ages of the respondents and their reported years of teaching experience indicated that nine indicated that they had 1-5 years of teaching experience. Of that group, one was in the 40-49-year-old category and two were age 50 or over. These findings illustrated that attempting to

align age with years of teaching experience should be avoided because it could result in erroneous assumptions; not all beginning teachers are in their early twenties.

Research indicates that a correlation exists between cultural proficiency, other language use, and living among persons from other cultures. Five of the respondents reported having lived outside the U.S., while 12 had resided in a neighborhood where their neighbors spoke a language other than English. In addition, two of the respondents reported that they fluently spoke a language other than English, and an equal number could read and write in a language other than English. A closer examination of these results revealed that one participant responded, “yes,” to reading, writing, and speaking a language other than English. One respondent reported that (s)he could read and write in another language, and a different respondent indicated that (s)he could speak a language other than English. Gender was not examined in this study, as there were only six males in the initial pool of 50 prospective respondents, and revealing this characteristic could have compromised their anonymity.

The following sections present the study findings that relate to each research question.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 2, which explored the depth of knowledge the participants reported about the legal practices, assessments, and accountability for Title I schools, had 28 respondents for all but one indicator. Samson and Collins (2012) stressed that teachers should clearly understand the stages of language development. Table 5 illustrates that knowledge of the stages of language development was almost evenly divided among the study participants, with ten respondents reporting having little to no knowledge; nine reporting having some knowledge; and nine reporting having solid to extreme knowledge. The participants reported

having a higher knowledge of the stages of language development than they did any other body of knowledge represented in the survey. At least 16 of the respondents reported that they had little to no knowledge of the WIDA, ACCESS, Can-Do activities from WIDA, Title I accountability, reclassification requirements, or SIOP. Of the last group, two respondents reported being extremely knowledgeable. Twenty-two respondents reported that they had little to no knowledge of SIOP. Responses to this set of questions indicated that the survey participants had very little knowledge, if any, about the laws and guidelines that governed their work with ELs.

Table 5

*The Extent of Teacher Knowledge*

Knowledge Type	No Knowledge	n	Little Knowledge	n	Some Knowledge	n	Solid Knowledge	n	Extremely knowledgeable	n	Total
World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)	28.57%	8	39.29%	11	17.86%	5	14.29%	4	0.00%	0	28
Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS)	35.71%	10	35.71%	10	21.43%	6	3.57%	1	3.57%	1	28
Can-Do activities from WIDA	51.85%	14	29.63%	8	11.11%	3	7.41%	2	0.00%	0	27
Stages of language development	7.14%	2	28.57%	8	32.14%	9	25.00%	7	7.14%	2	28
Title I accountability for ELs	32.14%	9	25.00%	7	32.14%	9	10.71%	3	0.00%	0	28
Reclassification requirements of ELs	50.00%	14	14.29%	4	28.57%	8	7.14%	2	0.00%	0	28
Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)	75.00%	21	3.57%	1	14.29%	4	0.00%	0	7.14%	2	28

With the exception of language development, the teachers reporting the most solid and extreme knowledge about the legal and technical rules for EL instruction had 16 or more years of experience. Teaching experience for those with little to no knowledge in any area did not seem to be a factor (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Solid and Extreme Knowledge by Years of Teaching Experience*

Knowledge	Degree of Knowledge	Years of Teaching Experience						Total
		1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26+	
WIDA	Solid Knowledge	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
State for English Language Learners (ACCESS)	Solid Knowledge	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Can-Do	Solid Knowledge	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Lang. Dev.	Solid Knowledge	2	0	0	1	3	1	7
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
	Total	2	0	1	2	3	1	7
Title I Accountability	Solid Knowledge	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Reclassification requirements of ELs	Solid Knowledge	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)	Solid Knowledge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Extremely knowledgeable	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	Total	0	0	1	0	0	1	2

## Research Question 2

The survey items related to this question asked respondents to indicate the frequency with which they used 20 identified instructional strategies. There were 27 respondents for this question, but only 26 participants provided responses for four of the instructional strategies (cooperative learning, cloze activities, vocabulary development, and explicit instruction). Of the 20 research-based instructional strategies listed in this question, the highest number of respondents (n=22) reported using modeling and scaffolding daily (see Table 7). At least 14 (51%) of the respondents reported using 11 of the 20 strategies on a daily basis. Twenty respondents reported daily use of explicit instruction and guided instruction. Think alouds and listening, speaking, reading and writing practice tied, with 19 respondents reporting daily use. It should be noted that all respondents indicated that they implemented cooperative learning at least 2-3 times per week.

Researcher have found it beneficial to allow ELs to use their home language with a same-language peer (Goldenberg, 2008; Thomson, 2012); however, only nine respondents reported allowing this practice daily, and two permitted it two to three times per week. In contrast, 11 respondents indicated that they never allowed ELs in their classroom to use their home language with a peer. Results indicated that the least frequently used strategies were: labeling objects in the classroom (n=2), cloze activities (n=3), avoiding the use of idioms (n=4), and referencing the ELs culture (n=4).

When comparing the “language enhanced” teachers (those who spoke, read, or wrote in a language other than English) with the results for their “non-language enhanced” peers, there were no differences in their support for allowing their ELs to speak in their first language with a same-language peer or to include the ELs’ culture in the lessons (see Table

8). While the number of “language–enhanced” teachers was small, there was no discernable pattern of daily use of strong language support for ELs.

**Table 7**

*Frequency of Use of Instructional Strategies*

Instructional Strategies	Frequency										
	Do not use	n	1-2 times/month	n	Weekly	n	2-3 times/week	n	Daily	n	Total
Cooperative Learning	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	26.92%	7	73.08%	19	26
Modeling	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	14.81%	4	81.48%	22	27
Guided instruction	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	18.52%	5	74.07%	20	27
Listening, speaking, reading and writing practice	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	11.11%	3	18.52%	5	70.37%	19	27
Cloze activities	7.69%	2	42.31%	11	23.08%	6	15.38%	4	11.54%	3	26
Label classroom objects in multiple languages	77.78%	21	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	7.41%	2	7.41%	2	27
Activate background knowledge	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	0.00%	0	29.63%	8	62.96%	17	27
Scaffolding	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	11.11%	3	81.48%	22	27
Reference ELs' culture	11.11%	3	55.56%	15	7.41%	2	11.11%	3	14.81%	4	27
Provide accommodations	7.41%	2	7.41%	2	11.11%	3	18.52%	5	55.56%	15	27
Provide modifications	3.70%	1	14.81%	4	18.52%	5	18.52%	5	44.44%	12	27
Allow ELs to use home language w/ same-language peer	40.74%	11	7.41%	2	11.11%	3	7.41%	2	33.33%	9	27
Avoid Using Idioms	51.85%	14	11.11%	3	3.70%	1	18.52%	5	14.81%	4	27
Vocabulary Development Activities	0.00%	0	3.85%	1	23.08%	6	34.62%	9	38.46%	10	26
Explicit Instruction	0.00%	0	3.85%	1	11.54%	3	7.69%	2	76.92%	20	26
Before, During, and After Reading Strategies	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	7.41%	2	22.22%	6	66.67%	18	27
Think Alouds	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	7.41%	2	18.52%	5	70.37%	19	27
Purposeful Enunciation	11.11%	3	14.81%	4	11.11%	3	11.11%	3	51.85%	14	27
Formative Assessment	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	18.52%	5	25.93%	7	48.15%	13	27
Writing Workshop	0.00%	0	25.93%	7	29.63%	8	18.52%	5	25.93%	7	27



Garcia-Nevara et al. (2005) emphasized the importance of teachers gaining an understanding of ELs' need to use their first language as well as the legal responsibilities and consequences should the schools fail to meet the goals or standards established by state and federal governments.

Table 8

*Teacher Language Skills and the Inclusion of EL Background and First language*

Frequency	I fluently speak a language other than English.			I can read and write in a language other than English.			
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	
Reference ELs' culture	Do not use	0 0.00%	3 100.00%	3 100.00%	0 0.00%	3 100.00%	3 100.00%
	Use 1-2 times/month	1 7.69%	12 92.31%	13 100.00%	1 7.69%	12 92.31%	13 100.00%
	Weekly	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	2 100.00%	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	2 100.00%
	2-3 times/week	0 0.00%	3 100.00%	3 100.00%	0 0.00%	3 100.00%	3 100.00%
	Daily	0 0.00%	4 100.00%	4 100.00%	0 0.00%	4 100.00%	4 100.00%
		2	23	25	2	23	25
	Total	8.00%	92.00%	100.00%	8.00%	92.00%	100.00%
Allow ELs to use home language with same-language peer	Do not use	0 0.00%	11 100.00%	11 100.00%	1 9.09%	10 90.91%	11 100.00%
	Use 1-2 times/month	0 0.00%	2 100.00%	2 100.00%	0 0.00%	2 100.00%	2 100.00%
	Weekly	1 33.33%	2 66.67%	3 100.00%	0 0.00%	3 100.00%	3 100.00%
	2-3 times/week	0 0.00%	1 100.00%	1 100.00%	0 0.00%	1 100.00%	1 100.00%
	Daily	1 12.50%	7 87.50%	8 100.00%	1 12.50%	7 87.50%	8 100.00%
		2	23	25	2	23	25
	Total	8.00%	92.00%	100.00%	8.00%	92.00%	100.00%

Table 9

*Least Frequently Used Instructional Strategies by Teaching Grade*

Strategy	Frequency	Grade Level Taught			
		Third	Fourth	Fifth	Total
Cloze activities	Do not use	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	2 8.33%
	Use 1-2 times/month	3 37.50%	6 75.00%	2 25.00%	11 45.83%
	Weekly	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	5 62.50%	6 25.00%
	2-3 times/week	0 0.00%	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	2 8.33%
	Daily	2 25.00%	0 0.00%	1 12.50%	3 12.50%
		8	8	8	24
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
		7	6	7	20
Label classroom objects in multiple languages	Do not use	87.50%	75.00%	77.78%	80.00%
	Use 1-2 times/month	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 11.11%	1 4.00%
	Weekly	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 11.11%	1 4.00%
	2-3 times/week	0 0.00%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	1 4.00%
	Daily	1 12.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	2 8.00%
		8	8	9	25
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
		2	0	1	3
Reference ELs' culture	Do not use	25.00%	0.00%	11.11%	12.00%
	Use 1-2 times/month	0 0.00%	6 75.00%	7 77.78%	13 52.00%
	Weekly	1 12.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	2 8.00%
	2-3 times/week	3 37.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	3 12.00%
	Daily	2 25.00%	1 12.50%	1 11.11%	4 16.00%
		8	8	9	25
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
		5	3	6	14
Avoid Using Idioms	Do not use	62.50%	37.50%	66.67%	56.00%
	Use 1-2 times/month	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	2 22.22%	3 12.00%
	Weekly	1 12.50%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 4.00%
	2-3 times/week	1 12.50%	1 12.50%	1 11.11%	3 12.00%
	Daily	0 0.00%	4 50.00%	0 0.00%	4 16.00%
		8	8	9	25
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

### **Research Question 3**

In Research Question 3, which explored the frequency with which teachers use instructional materials to teach ELs, none of the respondents reported using bilingual dictionaries (see Table 10). Two of the respondents indicated that they used bilingual texts once or twice per month, while the remaining 25 teachers reported not using them at all. Only one teacher reported using texts with content that reflected the culture of the ELs in the classroom. The respondents' failure to use these types of resources conflicted with recommendations for helping to create culturally responsive environments for ELs (De Jong and Harper, 2005; O'Neil et al., 2008).

Twenty-six of the participants reported using standard school supplies daily. Twenty-three, 22, and 19 respondents reported, respectively, using leveled text, technological devices, and approved technology applications daily. The frequent use of these resources could allow for building skills and could allow for the differentiation of instruction (Calderón et al., 2011; Herrell & Jordan, 2015, p. 138; Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

### **Research Question 4**

The survey items related to Research Question 4 asked respondents to report on the frequency with which they used 10 specific supports for ELs (see Table 11). Seven of the respondents reported that they had never requested an interpreter to support their interaction with the families of ELs, while another seven indicated that they always or often requested an interpreter. In addition, the majority of respondents reported that they never or rarely invited the parents of ELs to volunteer or share their culture, but 16 reported having invited parents of ELs to school *always*, *often*, or *sometimes* to help them understand classroom expectations. About half (n=13) of the teachers reported contacting the families of ELs

*always* or *sometimes* after an absence of two days or more to express concern and/or to offer support, and only 8 of the teachers reported that they *sometimes* or *often* connected parents of ELs to community resources.

Table 10

*Frequency of Use of Instructional Resources*

Instructional Resource	Frequency										
	Do not use	n	1-2 times/month	n	Weekly	N=	2-3 times/week	n	Daily	n	Total
Bilingual dictionaries	100.00%	27	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	27
Bilingual texts	92.59%	25	7.41%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	27
Leveled text	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	7.41%	2	85.19%	23	27
Multicultural text with images of people who reflect the culture(s) of my ELs	19.23%	5	38.46%	10	7.69%	2	19.23%	5	15.38%	4	26
Text by authors who represent the culture(s) of my ELs	33.33%	9	40.74%	11	18.52%	5	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	27
Technology (Computers, iPads, Kindles, etc.)	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	11.11%	3	7.41%	2	81.48%	22	27
Apps approved by the district	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	14.81%	4	7.41%	2	70.37%	19	27
Can-Do activities created by WIDA	88.89%	24	3.70%	1	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	27
Online resources that accompany textbooks or interventions	26.92%	7	11.54%	3	26.92%	7	3.85%	1	30.77%	8	26
Instructional Websites	3.70%	1	3.70%	1	37.04%	10	22.22%	6	33.33%	9	27
Manipulative Visual aids (i.e. pictures of objects, environmental print)	0.00%	0	7.41%	2	18.52%	5	25.93%	7	48.15%	13	27
Graphic organizers	3.70%	1	11.11%	3	18.52%	5	18.52%	5	48.15%	13	27
Toolkits designed for ELs	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	37.04%	10	33.33%	9	25.93%	7	27
Sentence starters	62.96%	17	22.22%	6	11.11%	3	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	27
Sentence strips	7.41%	2	22.22%	6	25.93%	7	18.52%	5	25.93%	7	27
Flash Cards	40.74%	11	29.63%	8	7.41%	2	11.11%	3	11.11%	3	27
Materials sent home for practice	25.93%	7	3.70%	1	22.22%	6	25.93%	7	22.22%	6	27
Standard school supplies (i.e. paper, pencils, erasers, rulers, etc.)	29.63%	8	11.11%	3	14.81%	4	7.41%	2	37.04%	10	27
Support staff (ESOL teacher, Instructional Resource Teacher, paraeducators)	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	3.70%	1	96.30%	26	27
	18.52%	5	7.41%	2	25.93%	7	7.41%	2	40.74%	11	27

In terms of peer support, the majority of the teachers (n=19) reported that they *always* or *often* assigned a peer helper to ELs. In addition, 14 of the respondents reported that they *always* or *sometimes* sought mentors for ELs. Research indicates that these types of supports can contribute to the social well-being of the ELs by helping them to develop relationships that could help them feel accepted.

Table 11

*Supports Provided to ELs in the Classroom*

Supports	Frequency										
	Never	n	Rarely	n	Sometimes	n	Often	n	Always	n	Total
Request an interpreter to clearly and accurately communicate with the parents of ELs	28.00%	7	20.00%	5	24.00%	6	16.00%	4	12.00%	3	25
Invite parents of ELs to volunteer or share about their culture with the class	40.00%	10	24.00%	6	24.00%	6	4.00%	1	8.00%	2	25
Look for opportunities to draw the ELs into discussions by including their interests as appropriate to a lesson or topic being taught	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	24.00%	6	44.00%	11	24.00%	6	25
Immediately assign a peer helper to help the EL become acclimated to his/her new environment	8.00%	2	0.00%	0	16.00%	4	24.00%	6	52.00%	13	25
Monitor social interactions to ensure the safety of all students	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	8.00%	2	4.00%	1	84.00%	21	25
Invite parents of ELs to school to help them understand classroom expectations	16.00%	4	12.00%	3	36.00%	9	8.00%	2	28.00%	7	25
Provide school supplies (i.e. paper, pencils, calculator, etc.) to ELs if they don't have them	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	8.00%	2	88.00%	22	25
Contact the family of EL after an absence of 2 days or more to express concern and/or offer support	4.00%	1	16.00%	4	28.00%	7	24.00%	6	28.00%	7	25
Seek mentors for ELs if needed	16.00%	4	0.00%	0	28.00%	7	28.00%	7	28.00%	7	25
Connect the parents of ELs to community resources like ESOL classes for adults	28.00%	7	20.00%	5	20.00%	5	20.00%	5	12.00%	3	25

### Research Question 5

If Lee Atwater (n.d.) was correct when he said, “perception is reality,” the responses to the last research question could be important in understanding the dynamics between the respondents and their ELs. Research Question 5 explored the respondents’ perceptions about teaching ELs. Almost every teacher (n=24) reported that having ELs in their classes contributed to a positive learning environment, and 22 indicated that having ELs in the classroom benefitted all students and staff (see Table 12). In addition, 22 of the participants responded that scaffolding and modifying assignments were good instructional practices to use when teaching ELs. Similarly, 20 teachers reported that allowing accommodations like extended time to complete a task was an appropriate practice that benefitted ELs (Ballentyne, et al., 2008; Goldenberg, 2008).

In terms of responsibility, 21 teachers indicated that classroom teachers should be expected to teach ELs, and 19 *disagreed* or *somewhat disagreed* with the idea that ELs should be excluded from the general classroom until they attained a minimal level of English proficiency. The wording of the question made it somewhat unclear that to disagree was actually a positive response toward ELs. Allowing ELs the use of the home language in the classroom has been a controversial topic (Goldenberg, 2008; Li, 2012), and 19 respondents *agreed* or *somewhat agreed* that ELs should have access to materials in their home language.

The survey also asked respondents about the degree to which their formal training prepared them to work with ELs, and 9 reported that they *agreed* or *somewhat agreed* that it was effective. Nine teachers *disagreed*, and 5 *somewhat disagreed* that their professional training was effective in helping them teach ELs. Young and Young (2001) found that this

perception of preparation could affect a teacher’s sense of self-efficacy, and thus, the instructional process.

Table 12

*Teacher Perceptions Regarding Teaching English Learners*

Perceptions	Level of Agreement										Total
	Disagree	n	Somewhat Disagree	n	Neither Agree or Disagree	n	Somewhat Agree	n	Agree	n	
Having ELs in my class contributes to a positive learning environment	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	96.00%	24	25
Having ELs in my classroom benefits all students and staff	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	8.00%	2	88.00%	22	25
EL students should not be included in general education classes until they attain a minimum level of English proficiency	60.00%	15	16.00%	4	16.00%	4	8.00%	2	0.00%	0	25
Students new to the U.S. school system should be given up to one year of specialized English instruction before being placed in the general classroom.	32.00%	8	16.00%	4	28.00%	7	20.00%	5	4.00%	1	25
Classroom teachers should not be expected to teach students who do not speak English	56.00%	14	28.00%	7	12.00%	3	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	25
Teachers should provide resources to ELs in their home language	0.00%	0	12.00%	3	12.00%	3	36.00%	9	40.00%	10	25
Parents of ELs do not make learning English a priority	44.00%	11	12.00%	3	28.00%	7	8.00%	2	8.00%	2	25
ELs have no interest in learning English	68.00%	17	24.00%	6	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	0.00%	0	25
Classroom teachers do not have time to meet the needs of ELs	20.83%	5	12.50%	3	20.83%	5	29.17%	7	16.67%	4	24
Accommodations such as extended time to complete tasks are appropriate for ELs	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	16.00%	4	80.00%	20	25
English learners should not always be graded the same as the general students	4.00%	1	4.00%	1	20.00%	5	28.00%	7	44.00%	11	25
Scaffolding and modifying assignments are good instructional practices to use when teaching English learners	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.00%	1	8.00%	2	88.00%	22	25
My formal training has prepared me to work effectively with English learners	36.00%	9	20.00%	5	8.00%	2	8.00%	2	28.00%	7	25
I panic when an EL is assigned to my class	52.00%	13	8.00%	2	16.00%	4	20.00%	5	4.00%	1	25

Table 13

*Panic by Teacher Living Environment*

Living Arrangements		Level of panic when an English learner is assigned to class					Total
		Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	
I have lived outside the United States.	Yes	3 23.08%	0 0.00%	1 25.00%	1 20.00%	0 0.00%	5 20.00%
	No	10 76.92%	2 100.00%	3 75.00%	4 80.00%	1 100.00%	20 80.00%
	Total	13 100.00%	2 100.00%	4 100.00%	5 100.00%	1 100.00%	25 100.00%
I have lived in a neighborhood where my neighbors spoke a language other than English.	Yes	7 53.85%	0 0.00%	2 50.00%	2 40.00%	1 100.00%	12 48.00%
	No	6 46.15%	2 100.00%	2 50.00%	3 60.00%	0 0.00%	13 52.00%
	Total	13 100.00%	2 100.00%	4 100.00%	5 100.00%	1 100.00%	25 100.00%

When asked if they felt panicked when an EL was assigned to their class, 13 respondents *disagreed*, and two respondents *somewhat disagreed*. In contrast, one respondent indicated that they *agreed*, and five respondents *somewhat agreed* with the statement. Youngs and Youngs (2001) used the term “panic” in their survey. It is often associated with fear or anxiety. It is not unusual for one to become anxious about situations that are new or unfamiliar. This reaction could be particularly common among teachers who have little to no experience teaching ELs. Because the word “panic” tends to elicit a strong reaction, it was also used in this survey with the expectation that respondents would receive the question as it was intended. The query did not elaborate or ask why one might feel panic, so the responses were open for interpretation. Table 14 illustrates the responses to this question based on respondents’ reported experiences living in a neighborhood with persons who spoke



languages other than English and/or respondents who had lived abroad. Teachers' experiences and exposure to persons of other cultures did not have a notable influence on their response to this question, since several of them still either felt panic or were indifferent. The responses for the participants who admitted that they had experience living among persons who spoke other languages were much different from those of respondents who had not such an experience.

Table 14

*Proper Training by Years of Service*

		My formal training has prepared me to work effectively with English learners						
		Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Total	
Years of teaching experience	1-5	2 22.22%	4 80.00%	1 50.00%	0 0.00%	2 28.57%	9 36.00%	
	6-10	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 4.00%	
	11-15	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	2 28.57%	4 16.00%	
	16-20	2 22.22%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 50.00%	2 28.57%	5 20.00%	
	21-25	1 11.11%	1 20.00%	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	0 0.00%	4 16.00%	
	26+	1 11.11%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 14.29%	2 8.00%	
				5	2	2	7	25
	Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

**Discussion**

This section discusses the major findings from this study. It begins by detailing the characteristics of the respondents and summarizing the results by research question. Despite the 50% response rate, there was a good variety in the age of the respondents and the grade levels taught, and a number of the participants had lived in neighborhoods with language diversity.

**Research Question 1.** The data related to Research Question 1, which examined teachers' knowledge and understanding of laws, policies, and assessments related to instructing ELs, revealed that the teachers were not familiar with the assessments designed specifically for ELs, such as ACCESS. SIOP was also very unfamiliar to the majority of the respondents. In addition, the findings indicated that they did not have any notable knowledge of the WIDA consortium, which has established standards and materials that teachers can access online for use with ELs in the classroom.

The participants also indicated that they lacked an understanding of the requirements, expectations, and consequences that pertained specifically to ELs in Title I schools, the very schools in which they worked. Even though the details of the ESSA were not completely established by the conclusion of this study, it was very clear that the new federal policy moved accountability for the successful instruction of ELs from Title III to Title I, making it even more crucial for teachers to have a solid understanding of the expectations of the legislations, as well as the potential consequences should they fail to meet those expectations.

It was noteworthy that only a few of the teachers indicated having knowledge of WIDA, ACCESS, and the WIDA Can-Do activities. These assessments were used to determine eligibility for services, as well as the growth that students made on the AMAOs. If teachers did not understand how ELs were assessed, they may have missed critical opportunities to help to meet the students' needs.

**Research Question 2.** The data related to Research Question 2 revealed that most of the respondents used more than half of the instructional strategies on a daily basis. All of the strategies were research-based and have proven effective for teaching ELs. The strategies that most teachers reported using daily included modeling and scaffolding, guided instruction

and explicit instruction, cooperative learning, listening, speaking, reading and writing practice, and think alouds. Most of these strategies required a considerable amount of teacher direction. Additionally, cooperative learning, in particular, requires student interaction that, depending on the structure, task and topic, could be quite beneficial for ELs, particularly for their language and vocabulary development (Calderón et al., 2011; Reed & Railsbak, 2003). Other activities that have also proven beneficial to ELs, like cloze activities and labeling classroom objects (Herrell & Jordan, 2015, p. 219; Virginia Department of Education, 2004), were used less frequently by the respondents.

It is curious that more than 40% of the teachers reported not allowing students to use their home language with a same language peer. It is possible that this decision resulted from the fact that there was not a same-language peer in the classroom. The choice may also have been a philosophical determination for the teacher, suggesting that they did not understand the value of ELs having the opportunity to use their home language to build understanding of English. Future research might explore why some teachers choose not to allow the utilization of students' home language in the classroom. Another area for future study might be the reasoning behind some teachers' decision not to label classroom objects in multiple languages. Researchers could explore whether this type of practice ends in the primary grades and the degree to which idiomatic expressions could complicate language and contribute to misunderstandings in language. If teachers are not cognizant of the impact of idioms on students learning, they could contribute to student misunderstanding and confusion regarding vocabulary and word usage.

The data revealed that teachers understood the concept of cultural proficiency to varying degrees, although some of them did note that they found opportunities to refer to EL

students' cultures in classroom instruction. Because more than half of the respondents reported that they referenced the ELs' culture once or twice per month, future explorations might inquire about the instances when these references occurred. If teachers only referred to the culture of their ELs around holidays or special occasions, then they were demonstrating the phenomenon that Franquíz and Nieto (2005) referenced, which would only allow a cursory inclusion of the ELs' culture.

**Research Question 3.** When looking closely at the results for Research Question 3, which examined the teachers' use of instructional materials designed for ELs, there was alignment consistent with some of the materials shared in the previous question. The responses for use of the WIDA Can-do activities, indicating that 88.89% of the teachers did not use them. These findings aligned with the participants' indication that they were unfamiliar with these resources. WIDA resources are free and could help the teachers to provide significant levels of support for ELs. Future research might explore the number of school staff persons who speak the language(s) of the ELs, the roles and responsibilities of these individuals, and the degree to which the school utilized them to support ELs.

Responses to Research Question 3 indicated some extreme choices of instructional materials. The participants rarely used items like bilingual dictionaries, bilingual texts, and multicultural books. Not one teacher reported using a bilingual dictionary. On the contrary, the majority of respondents reported regular use of standard classroom supplies, leveled texts, technology, and electronic applications. The instructional strategies and materials on the list were highly recommended for use with ELs by several researchers and educational entities (Li, 2012; Reed & Railsback, 2003; Virginia Department of Education, 2004, 2006). Leveled text was a preferred resource, not just by the respondents, but also by many

researchers and school districts. Technology seemed to have a prominent role in daily instruction, as well as web-based applications. Future research could explore the reasons that teachers choose not to send home practice materials, and whether the decision not to do so pertained only to their ELs or to all of their students.

**Research Question 4.** The findings from this study revealed that more information is necessary to understand the responses related to Research Question 4, which explored the involvement and engagement of ELs' parents and families. The fact that the majority of the respondents reported never inviting parents to school to volunteer, never arranging for an interpreter to assist with communication, and never connecting them to community resources suggested that the teachers have not even begun to explore this major form of support to ELs. This lack of engagement between the family and teacher lead one to ask why this would be the case in schools that have parent liaisons and who are required, by Title I, to offer a number of activities to encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education throughout the school year. These findings raise questions like: Are interpreters available? Do the teachers know how to access them? Are these practices the same with all families or just ELs?

**Research Question 5.** The data related to Research Question 5 revealed some mixed beliefs and perceptions about ELs among the respondents. There did not seem to be any specific demographic characteristic that appeared as a common thread, but some contradictions did become apparent. For instance, although teachers believed that the inclusion of ELs was beneficial to all, most of them did not report that they demonstrated ways to value EL students, like using their language or providing bilingual materials to them.

## **Limitations**

Among the limitations of this study were the relatively small sample and low response rate. It was difficult to draw any definitive conclusions with only 25 respondents. Although the research utilized perception characteristics developed by Youngs and Youngs (2001), it is possible that there were too many variables to examine in one inquiry. This exploratory study was designed to gain a baseline of teachers' perceptions of instructing ELs and their use of instructional strategies and other supports for EL students; however, the survey never inquired about the number of ELs in each of the teachers' classes. This omission served as another limitation of the study. The number of actual ELs in their classrooms could have influenced the frequency with which they used recommended strategies and materials. This study also did not address the socioeconomic demographic of the ELs; but recognizing that Title I status is based on the level of poverty of the students served, this would add another dimension to the data and offer some additional comparisons of factors.

## **Implications**

Close examination of the characteristics of BSPS makes one recognize that teaching ELs is still a relatively new phenomenon because it is a low-incidence district. Though not all of the findings were definitive, they demonstrate the need for BSPS and districts similar in size and geographical characteristics to launch deeper studies including case studies, program evaluations, and examinations of local policies and procedures regarding the use and allocation of resources. District leaders may also consider establishing scheduling procedures that support collaboration between classroom teachers and ESOL teachers. Additional considerations include conducting a needs assessment for classroom teachers to inform

professional development opportunities that provide an in-depth examination of just one or two teacher beliefs.

A case study in a Title I school would allow for more specific information about the ways the teachers in the district interact with ELs as outlined by the theorists and researchers who studied positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). It is important to know that ELs play various roles with teachers and their peers every day. They must navigate numerous situations while trying to learn a language, a school culture, and the at-large culture of American society. Helping teachers understand this concept could help them become *intentional positioners*, a notion described by Yoon (2008) and Reeves (2009) wherein a person purposefully positions himself, and sometimes others, during a social exchange.

One of the most prominent findings from this study was the limited knowledge reported by the respondents of the laws, assessments, and resources that govern their work with ELs. Research has shown that teachers in general can better meet the needs of ELs if they understand procedures and requirements for assessment and reclassification (Cook et al., 2007; Zehler et al., 2008). Policies like ESSA add layers to the levels of accountability for schools and the academic achievement of ELs (Abedi et al., 2004; Wright, 2010), so a lack of such understanding could make the school and the district vulnerable. The ultimate goal is to increase the achievement of ELs and close the achievement gap.

Classroom teachers will be better able to achieve this goal when they have a clear understanding of both policies and best practices for teaching ELs, including knowledge of language acquisition and the accommodations and supports that research has found to be effective (Goldenberg, 2008). Classroom teachers could benefit from increased understanding of the WIDA standards and professional development on the use of WIDA

and other instructional resources. Districts can aid teachers by identifying the relevant resources that are available to classroom teachers, such as bilingual texts and dictionaries, texts with images and topics that reflect the cultures of the ELs, as well as manipulatives and visuals (Bongolan & Moir, 2005; Herrell & Jordan, 2015, p. 91, 172; Virginia Department of Education, 2004). Without a true understanding of state and federal expectations, or the resources that are available, teachers may not be properly equipped to strategize and plan for instructing ELs in ways that can maximize the students' experiences and help close the achievement gap.

This study could spark a great deal of interest in the instruction of ELs and shine a spotlight on what may still be a relatively new phenomenon for many districts that have a low-incidence of ELs and find themselves ill-prepared to respond to increases in their enrollment. Some potential questions for future studies include the following:

1. What policies and practices are in place for communication between ESOL teachers and classroom teachers to ensure an understanding of ELs' levels of performance on ACCESS?
2. How are parent engagement opportunities planned and executed for general students and for ELs?
3. How are similar districts within the state managing their resources for teaching ELs?
4. What policies and procedures are in place for the collection and sharing of instructional and demographic data for all students? Who has access to this data?
5. What resources are available from the local military installation that could support teachers of ELs?



## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: RECRUITING MATERIALS**

#### **Invitation to Participate in Study**

Dear Intermediate Teacher,

I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Maryland for a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and I need your help. I have received permission from the Independent Review Board at the University of Maryland and have been approved by Bay Shore Public School to conduct my research.

My study is designed to gather feedback from the intermediate teachers in our title I schools regarding English learners (ELs). I have targeted Title I schools because 47 percent of the elementary ELs attend a Title I school, demonstrating a concentration of these students in the southern end of the district. I am hoping that you will help me, through the results of this survey, to inform the district about your experience and potential needs for educating our ELs.

Please know that your participation is strictly voluntary and anonymous. I will be using Qualtrics, an electronic software package, to communicate with you and monitor the response rate. Your responses are completely confidential. You should be able to complete the entire survey in 15 minutes or less.

In order to begin the survey, click the link below. Thank you, in advance for supporting our students and our district through your participation.

Sincerely,

Wauchilue Adams

## **APPENDIX A: RECRUITING MATERIALS**

### **Reminder #1 Message**

(sent three days after the initial invitation)

Dear Intermediate Teacher,

Three days ago I invited you to participate in a study about English learners as part of a research project I am conducting for completion of my doctorate with the University of Maryland. Please take just a few minutes to complete the survey. It will close on \_\_\_\_\_ . Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,

Wauchilue Adams

## **APPENDIX A: RECRUITING MATERIALS**

### **Reminder #2 Message**

(Sent seven days after the initial invitation)

Dear Intermediate Teacher,

A week ago I invited you to participate in a study about English learners as part of a research project I am conducting for completion of my doctorate with the University of Maryland.

The survey will close on \_\_\_\_\_ and it is important that your input be included. Please take just a few minutes to complete the survey. Thank you again for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Wauchilue Adams

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY

### A Survey of Elementary Teachers' Knowledge, Practices and Perceptions of Teaching English Learner

#### Q1 Invitation and Consent Form

<b>Project Title</b>	A Survey of Elementary Teachers' Knowledge, Practices and Perception of Teaching English Learners
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	The purpose of this study is to examine the knowledge, practices and perceptions of intermediate teachers in Title I schools regarding the teaching of English learners (ELs) and to examine the potential need for professional development and instructional resources. This study is being conducted by <b>Wauchilue Adams</b> at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Margaret McLaughlin and Dr. Drew Fagan. We are inviting you to participate in this study because you teach at the intermediate level in a Title I school where you are likely to have ELs in your classes.
<b>Procedures</b>	Your participation in this study involves the completion of an anonymous online survey that will ask about your experience, training, beliefs and attitudes regarding teaching ELs. The survey will also ask you about your professional development needs and any resources you may need in order to effectively teach ELs so that they can reach proficiency on the PARCC assessment. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey has been developed by Qualtrics, a professional web-based software package. Your submitted responses will be coded and there is no way to link your identity to the completed survey.
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no known risks to you for participating in this survey, as your responses will be confidential.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	There are no direct benefits for participating in this research. However, the data from the study could be used to inform the district about the potential professional development needs of teachers and other resources needed to teach ELs.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>The survey is anonymous. When you enter the survey, the Qualtrics software will assign you a unique code, which will not be linked to your email or other identity. All data will be reported in the aggregate, so no identifying information will be shared. In addition, Qualtrics will store all data on specific servers that are protected by high-end firewall systems. The only individuals who can access the data are Wauchilue Adams (Principal Researcher) and Dr. Drew Fagan (Advisor).</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>

<b>Incentives</b>	There are no incentives for participation in this study.
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:  <b>Wauchilue Adams</b></p>
<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p>University of Maryland College Park  Institutional Review Board Office  1204 Marie Mount Hall  College Park, Maryland, 20742  E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a>  Telephone: <a href="tel:301-405-0678">301-405-0678</a></p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	Your consent is required for participation in this study. You will be asked to provide an electronic signature indicating that you have read, understand, and agree to participate. You are also encouraged to print a copy of this consent form, if you choose. If you agree to participate, please click on “Yes” below and you will be taken to the survey.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2 To what extent do you consider that you have knowledge of:

	No Knowledge (1)	Little Knowledge (2)	Some Knowledge (3)	Solid Knowledge (4)	Extremely knowledgeable (5)
World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can-Do activities from WIDA (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stages of language development (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Title I accountability for ELs (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reclassification requirements of ELs (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 This section asks about the types of instructional strategies you use with one or more ELs in your classroom:

	Do not use (1)	Use 1-2 times/month (2)	Weekly (3)	2-3 times/week (4)	Daily (5)
Cooperative Learning (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Modeling (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guided instruction (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening, speaking, reading and writing practice (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cloze activities (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Label classroom objects in multiple languages (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activate background knowledge (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scaffolding (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reference ELs' culture (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide accommodations (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide modifications (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow ELs to use home language w/ same-language peer (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoid Using Idioms (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vocabulary Development Activities (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explicit Instruction (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Before, During, and After Reading Strategies (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Think Alouds (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purposeful Enunciation (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Formative Assessment (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing Workshop (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q4 Click to write the question text

	Do not use (1)	Use 1-2 times/month (2)	Weekly (3)	2-3 times/week (4)	Daily (5)
Bilingual dictionaries (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bilingual texts (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leveled text (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multicultural text with images of people who reflect the culture(s) of my ELs (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Text by authors who represent the culture(s) of my ELs (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology (Computers, iPads, Kindles, etc.) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apps approved by the district (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can-Do activities created by WIDA (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online resources that accompany textbooks or interventions (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instructional Websites (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manipulatives (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual aids (i.e. pictures of objects,	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

environmental print) (12)					
Graphic organizers (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Toolkits designed for ELs (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sentence starters (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sentence strips (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flash Cards (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Materials sent home for practice (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Standard school supplies (i.e. paper, pencils, erasers, rulers, etc.) (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support staff (ESOL teacher, Instructional Resource Teacher, paraeducators) (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Over the course of my career, I have used the following to support ELs in my classroom:

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
Request an interpreter to clearly and accurately communicate with the parents of ELs (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invite parents of ELs to volunteer or share about their culture with the class (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Look for opportunities to draw the ELs into discussions by including their interests as appropriate to a lesson or topic being taught (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immediately assign a peer helper to help the EL become acclimated to his/her new environment (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor social interactions to ensure the safety of all students (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invite parents of ELs to school to help them understand classroom expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>(6) Provide school supplies (i.e. paper, pencils, calculator, etc.) to ELs if they don't have them (7)</p>	○	○	○	○	○
<p>Contact the family of EL after an absence of 2 days or more to express concern and/or offer support (8)</p>	○	○	○	○	○
<p>Seek mentors for ELs if needed (9)</p>	○	○	○	○	○
<p>Connect the parents of ELs to community resources like ESOL classes for adults (10)</p>	○	○	○	○	○

Q6 This section asks about your perceptions regarding teaching English learners.

	Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree or Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)
Having ELs in my class contributes to a positive learning environment (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having ELs in my classroom benefits all students and staff (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EL students should not be included in general education classes until they attain a minimum level of English proficiency (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students new to the U.S. school system should be given up to one year of specialized English instruction before being placed in the general classroom. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classroom teachers should not be expected to teach students who do not speak English (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers should provide resources to ELs in their home language (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents of ELs do not make	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

learning English a priority (7)					
ELs have no interest in learning English (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classroom teachers do not have time to meet the needs of ELs (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accommodations such as extended time to complete tasks are appropriate for ELs (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
English learners should not always be graded the same as the general students (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scaffolding and modifying assignments are good instructional practices to use when teaching English learners (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My formal training has prepared me to work effectively with English learners (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I panic when an English learner is assigned to my class (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 I teach \_\_\_\_\_ grade.

- third (1)
- fourth (2)
- fifth (3)

Q8 I teach the following subjects to my students.

- Reading, math, social studies, and science (1)
- Reading and math only (2)
- Math only (3)
- Reading only (4)

Q9 I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

- 21-29 (1)
- 30-39 (2)
- 40-49 (3)
- 50+ (4)

Q10 I have \_\_\_\_\_ years of teaching experience.

- 1-5 (1)
- 6-10 (2)
- 11-15 (3)
- 16-20 (4)
- 21-25 (5)
- 26+ (6)

Q11 I have lived outside the United States.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q12 I have lived in a neighborhood where my neighbors spoke a language other than English.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q13 I fluently speak a language other than English.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q14 I can read and write in a language other than English.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

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