

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: STATE POLICIES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE:
ADAPTING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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A qualitative case study was employed to address if and how fifth grade teachers adapted instruction for English language learners in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), and the role of the Program as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for these students. This case study was conducted at two elementary schools in Maryland from March 1999 through May 2000, using observation, participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. Findings indicated that teachers used common instructional strategies to teach English language learners, that teachers' beliefs about language and cognition shaped teaching craft, and that the Program shaped instruction, but was only one of many factors shaping education for these students. Findings illustrated the relationship between state policy and classroom practice, that state policies influence, are nested in, and co-exist with classroom practice.

STATE POLICIES AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE:
ADAPTING INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children, Zara and Zain Memon, and to my husband, Fayyaz Memon. I also dedicate this work to my parents, Pat and Floyd Bentley, and to my mother in-law, Nujma Memon. Without them this would not have been possible.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Overview of the Study

“At this school, we start thinking about what we can do in kindergarten to prepare them for the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP).”
(M. Bora, personal communication, April 19, 1999)

This is a study of whether elementary school teachers adapted instruction in response to a state reform program, if so, how, and the role of the reform program, along with other factors, in shaping instruction. This study is a qualitative case study conducted in two public elementary schools in Kenhowe County, Maryland, with a focus on how fifth grade teachers adapted instruction for students who were English language learners in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP). Did teachers adapt their instruction for students who were English language learners in response to the Performance Program, and if so, how? What was the role of the Performance Program as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for these students? The answers to these questions are framed within the multiple contexts which shaped instruction for ELLs, including federal and state regulatory pressures, traditions of teaching, and student backgrounds. This study will reveal how state policies influenced, were nested in, and co-existed with classroom practice in two schools.

Background

At Green Fields Elementary School, a kindergarten through grade two school in Kenhowe County, Maryland, teachers reported that they were already adapting curriculum and instruction in order to prepare students for assessments which they would take in third grade as part of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). The MSPAP was the centerpiece of the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), which was used by the Maryland State Department of Education

(MSDE) from 1989-2002 to measure the progress of schools and districts across the state. Green Fields' teachers' statements are notable as the MSPAP was not even administered until third grade, a grade not even taught at Green Fields, but taught in Green Fields' feeder school, White Springs Elementary School. The MSPAP was a set of performance-based assessments administered in the third, fifth, and eighth grades in Maryland from 1993-2002. In the MSPP, assessment results on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) were combined with attendance and retention rates to provide information about school and district progress toward state standards and achievement objectives. The state received national recognition for the technical quality and comprehensiveness of this assessment and accountability program. In 2004, Maryland and New York were the only states which received an "A" rating in standards and accountability for four years in a row, according to *Education Week's* annual *Quality Counts* report (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], January 14, 2004, para. 2).

At the same time that Maryland and states across the nation are implementing standards-based reforms and new accountability systems for public schools, the population of students enrolled in U. S. public schools is becoming increasingly diverse. Schools are enrolling more students from a greater variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Across United States, the number of students who are English language learners is increasing. Approximately 4,584,946 limited English proficient (LEP) students were enrolled in U.S. public schools in grades pre-kindergarten through 12 in 2000-2001, the latest year for which complete data is available (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs

[NCELA], 2002). Over 67 percent of limited English proficient (LEP) students were enrolled at the elementary school level, where they composed more than 11 percent of the total public school elementary school enrollment. Furthermore, the LEP student population has grown approximately 105 percent since the 1990-1991 school year, in contrast to the general school population, which has grown only 12 percent ([NCELA, 2002).

In Kenhowe County, Maryland, the district where the school research sites for this study are located, the number of students receiving services for limited English proficiency has increased steadily over the last ten years. During the time that this study was conducted, from 1999-2000, Kenhowe County had the highest number of students receiving services for limited English proficiency of any district in Maryland. In 2000, 8.5% of the elementary school population in the County received services for limited English proficiency, as compared to 3% statewide. These students spoke more than 114 different languages (MSDE, 2001). In some Kenhowe County schools, such as the research sites for this study, the proportion of English language learners is 25% of the school or higher.

The purpose of this study was to look at the intersection of these two realities at the school and classroom level; the implementation of state standards and assessments, and the presence of students who are English language learners. A discussion of terms used throughout the study provides further explanation of the students included in this study, and the various terms used to describe them in the field of English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual education.

Definition of terms.

Several different terms are used interchangeably by researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to refer to students who are learning English as a second language. Some of the most commonly used terms include: “English language learners” (ELLs), “limited English proficient students” (LEP students), “English as a second language students” (ESL students), and “English for Speakers of Other Languages students” (ESOL students). The term “English language learners” (ELLs) is the preferred term in the ESL/bilingual education field and is used in this study. According to the glossary (December 2002, ELL section) provided by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA), “English language learners are students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English.” In this study, the term “English language learners” is understood to encompass both students who are limited English proficient, as well as those who are formerly limited English proficient (FEP). Formerly limited English proficient students are those who have scored at the proficient level on an English language proficiency assessment or assessments, and are no longer receiving services for limited English proficiency, but may still be mastering English.

Formerly limited English proficient (FEP) students may have mastered a sufficient level of English required to score proficient on an English language proficiency assessment, but may not have fully mastered “cognitive/academic language proficiency” (CALP) (Cummins, 1981). According to the glossary provided by NCELA (December 2002, Cognitive academic language proficiency section), “cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) is the language ability required for academic achievement in a

context-reduced environment. Examples of context-reduced environments include classroom lectures and textbook reading assignments.” Students at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools, the research sites for this study, as a group, demonstrated a wide range of English language proficiency, in particular, cognitive/academic language proficiency. While conducting field work for this study, I observed how teachers adapted instruction for all English language learners in their classrooms, including those enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, and those not enrolled in such programs. I observed teachers’ work with students who demonstrated a broad range of English proficiency levels, from those who did not exhibit any spoken command of English to those who had achieved high levels of conversational fluency, and were further developing their academic vocabularies and knowledge of rhetorical patterns used in writing in English.

The term “limited English proficient” also deserves discussion as it is used by the federal government and many states and districts to describe English language learners. The term “limited English proficient” has its origins in the Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968. “Limited English Proficient” is defined in Title IX of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and refers to students who were not born in the United States or whose native language was not English, and who face difficulty in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending English, which in turn hinders their academic success (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title IX, Part A, Section 9101(25)).

Finally, the terms “ESOL student” and “ESL student” are sometimes used by districts or schools to refer to students enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other

Languages (ESOL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional program.

According to the glossary provided by NCELA (December 2002, ESL section):

English as a second language (ESL) is an educational approach in which English language learners are instructed in the use of the English language. Their instruction is based on a special curriculum that typically involves little or no use of the native language, focuses on language (as opposed to content) and is usually taught during specific school periods.

In the ESL/bilingual education field, the term, “ESL” is used interchangeably with the term, “ESOL.”

When quoting the research of others throughout this study, I have retained the terminology employed in the original research. For example, the term “limited English proficient” (LEP) is used in the reference listed above (NCELA, 2002), which cites statistics on enrollment of LEP students in public schools, as that is the term employed in the reference. This section provided definitions of terms used in this narrative. The following section includes the research questions upon which this study was based.

Research questions.

This study is a qualitative case study of whether teachers at a public elementary school adapted instruction for one student population, English language learners, in response to a state assessment system, if so, how, and the role of the assessment system in shaping instruction for these students. Qualitative inquiry and methodology, including participant observation, observation, interviews, and document analysis were used to address the following questions:

1. Did teachers at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools adapt instruction for English language learners in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP)? If so, how?
2. What was the role of the MSPP as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for English language learners at these two schools?

Findings and interpretations from this study inform the larger discussions of what happens at the classroom level when teachers instruct diverse groups of students to state standards, and of how state policies influence, are nested in, and co-exist with classroom practice. The significance of this study follows, which then leads to an overview of the study methodology and research sites.

Significance of the Study: State Context

The significance of this study can be established by the prevalence of federal and state regulations on testing and the unresolved and contemporaneous challenges of including English language learners in assessments. The significance of this particular study can be further established through a brief review of some of the most relevant research that has been conducted on the Maryland School Performance Program. This study provides information about the role of a reform program at the classroom level, for students whose numbers are increasing across the state, English language learners

State achievement targets and English language learners

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, states must set targets for the percentage of students, including limited English proficient students, that will score at the proficient and advanced levels on state assessments every year, through 2013-2014. It is particularly difficult to apply these targets to English language learners because these

students are still learning English, and therefore may not demonstrate the level of English language proficiency required to score at the proficient level on state achievement assessments. State and federal responses to this conundrum are discussed in detail in chapters two and eight; however, this issue of the difficulty of applying state achievement targets to English language learners deserves preliminary discussion because it is the heart of the significance of this study.

States have attempted to address this issue by either providing English language learners time-based exemptions from participation in state achievement assessments, or by providing accommodations to these assessments, including native language versions of assessments. These options are further discussed in chapter seven, but deserve brief mention in order to lay out the significance of this study. During the administration of the MSPAP, the Maryland State Department of Education enacted a policy which permitted limited English proficient (LEP) students to receive an exemption from one test administration of the MSPAP. The decision on whether to exempt LEP students from the MSPAP was based on results from an English language proficiency assessment. Students at the lowest level of English language proficiency were eligible for an exemption if this exemption was also recommended by the students' teachers (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1998, LEP and special education policy section). As the MSPAP was administered in grades three, five, and eight, this policy translated into LEP students having a period of two to three years to learn English before they were required to participate in state achievement assessments.

State achievement targets and second language acquisition research

The issue of time becomes important when state policies collide with research in second language acquisition. Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas's multiple longitudinal studies addressing the question of how long it takes LEP students to achieve English language proficiency make up one of the most frequently cited bodies of literature in ESL/bilingual education. Collier (1987, 1995) and Collier and Thomas (December 1997; November 8, 2001) have shown that English language learners need five to seven years to acquire a level of academic English that will enable them to successfully navigate academic content delivered in English. Most English language learners across the nation, including those in Maryland, participate in state achievement assessments in English and exit programs to develop their English proficiency before having studied English in U.S. schools for five to seven years. How did teachers then adapt their instruction for English language learners in order to teach content and skills required to achieve at high levels on the MSPAP, when students did not yet know English?

All English language learners, whether or not they were exempt from a MSPAP administration, participated in daily classroom and school activities related to the MSPAP and MSPP. The MSPAP was designed to impact all elements of the curriculum, from the written content area curriculum, to teaching strategies used in instruction, and specifically, methods of assessing students. As Darling-Hammond (1997) explained, assessment reforms have consequential validity, e.g., a positive impact on the teaching and learning process. The questions investigated in this study, including if and if so, how

teachers adapted instruction for English language learners in response to the MSPP, have not been investigated by any researchers.

In the section below, I will describe research that has been conducted which bears directly upon this study, and helped to shape the theoretical framework, methodology, and methods for data analysis used in this study. Researchers have focused largely on the impact of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), the centerpiece of the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP). This research can be categorized into four broad categories of research on the MSPAP: impact on teaching, effective schools, investigating equity, and impact studies.

Research on the MSPAP: Impact on teaching.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education, the MSPAP was designed to have consequential validity. The stated purpose of the Maryland School Performance Program was to bring about curriculum change and "...focused, high-quality teaching," according to the Maryland State Department of Education and State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Grasmick (October 2002). Madaus (1989), Glatthorn (1997), and others have noted that the assessed curriculum drives what is taught and learned, and that teachers adjust their curriculum and instruction to match the form and content of material covered on assessments. The work of local and national researchers, as well as my own observations, has confirmed that the MSPAP did shape instruction at the classroom level.

Three studies which explored aspects of the consequential validity of the MSPAP and other Maryland assessments are Rees Krebs's (1998) and Ross's (1994) dissertations, and Ketter and Pool's (2001) study. Rees Krebs and Ketter and Pool used qualitative

approaches similar to the approach used in this study. Ross used a survey to determine which teacher background factors were associated with the alignment of classroom assessments with the MSPAP. All three of these researchers used studies of teachers to investigate how the MSPAP and other Maryland assessments shaped instruction.

Rees Krebs (1998) conducted her research on the study of mathematics instruction through a descriptive case study of five female elementary school teachers. Rees Krebs conducted semi-structured interviews and asked participants to complete a brief survey in order to reveal how teachers conceptualized mathematics instruction as compared to the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics' recommendations for mathematics instruction. In addition to studying the impact of the Council's report on teachers' perceptions of teaching, Rees Krebs also studied "contextual factors" which influenced the development of teachers' thinking about mathematics teaching. Of the "contextual factors" influencing instruction, Rees Krebs (1998) found that,

The State's performance-based testing program, MSPAP, was the most frequently mentioned factor that influences mathematics instruction. All of the participants mentioned MSPAP several times. Third grade teachers talked frequently and often at great length about MSPAP. They see MSPAP as influencing not only what they teach but also how they teach it. They spoke of pressure to increase student test scores, time constraints, performance assessments, and their ambivalent feelings about the testing program. (p. 207)

In my own classroom-based research at Big Dune Elementary School in Marion County, Maryland, conducted from 1997-98, findings affirmed the views expressed by participants in Rees Krebs's study. I observed the pervading influence of the MSPAP in

many aspects of third grade classroom life, from hall and classroom bulletin board posters on MSPAP rubrics and tasks, to teacher use of “practice” MSPAP task worksheets in class, and teachers’ continuing references to the assessments (M. Bentley-Memon, unpublished paper).

Ketter and Pool (2001) studied how the Maryland state writing assessment shaped teacher instructional practice and student attitudes about writing. Their qualitative case study on the effect of a direct writing assessment on instruction in two Maryland high school classrooms followed a similar method of inquiry as this study, and focused particularly on students who had been identified for special education services (Ketter & Pool, 2001). Other researchers tried to make connections between teachers’ professional backgrounds and their alignment of classroom assessments to skills and knowledge areas on addressed in the MSPAP.

Ross (1994) conducted a survey of more than 1,000 eighth grade teachers across Maryland to determine what factors affected their alignment of classroom assessments with the MSPAP. She found that teachers’ academic exposure to assessment courses, what subject they taught, and whether their class was low achieving were statistically significantly linked to how they aligned their classroom assessments with state assessments. Teachers of low achieving classes were less likely to align classroom assessments with the MSPAP. Ross’s finding is significant in light of this study, which focused on adaptation of instruction for English language learners, a population that did not perform as well on the MSPAP as the overall student population. While researchers such as Ross, Rees Krebs, and Ketter and Pool have sought to document and describe how the MSPAP shaped teaching, other researchers have used MSPAP achievement as a

proxy for school success, and conducted studies of high achieving schools in order to try to learn what these schools did that made them successful. This research is part of the research on effective schools.

Research on the MSPAP: Effective schools.

Hector, Ochoa, and Perez (1995), McLeod (1996), Anstrom (1997) and others have studied schools and classrooms that have been found to be effective at increasing academic achievement of English language learners. In Maryland, several groups of researchers took a similar approach to studying the features of schools and classrooms that could be linked to achievement on the MSPAP. State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick charged staff from the Maryland State Department of Education to study fifteen schools that had demonstrated success on the assessments from 1993-96. Research teams visited schools and used interviews and classroom observations to find out what they had done instructionally and at the school level to make such substantial gains on the MSPAP. The teams found that characteristics common across schools composed a “web of success” in approaches to instruction, school leadership, curriculum, and other areas. Two examples of characteristics associated with increased performance included the use of the MSPAP to guide instructional decisions, and integration of the assessment into the way teachers reflected on teaching (MSDE, March 7, 2002, Effective instructional practices section).

A team of University of Maryland researchers conducted a study similar to the MSDE study in 1997, using quantitative and qualitative research approaches to study ten low socioeconomic status (SES) schools that had made significant gains on the MSPAP, and five high SES schools that had not made significant gains. Schafer, Hultgren,

Hawley, Abrams, Seubert, and Mazzoni (1997) found that factors such as integrating the MSPAP into instruction and aligning curriculum with the testing program were linked to improved scores (Schafer et al., 1997). Both the Maryland State Department of Education researchers and the University of Maryland researchers employed classroom observations and interviews to study what was occurring at the school and classroom levels. Other researchers administered questionnaires and conducted quantitative analysis to study issues related to equity and the MSPAP.

Research on the MSPAP: Investigating equity.

Two researchers, Jackson (1993) and Wright (1994), investigated aspects of the MSPAP as it related to equity. Jackson (1993) studied teachers and administrators' perspectives toward and implementation of techniques presented in a MSPAP in-service session that were designed to enhance equity for minority students. She used a questionnaire, observation checklist, and interviews to collect data on participants' attitudes and implementation, and then compared data from teachers and from administrators using quantitative analysis. Jackson found that all of the teachers who had participated in the training were implementing the math and in-service equity model during teaching. She also found that teachers and administrators had different perceptions of the performance-based assessments: teachers focused on the assessments and the impact of these assessments on themselves and their students, while administrators focused on the district and state guidelines pertaining to the assessments.

Wright (1994) compared the results of Student Biographical Surveys to performance on the 1991 MSPAP, with an interest in looking at ethnicity, gender, and other factors in relation to assessment performance. She found that positive attitudes

towards mathematics and frequent use of learning activities in the classroom were statistically significantly related to achievement. Wright also concluded that overall, White students scored higher than African-American students on the MSPAP, even when controlling for attitudes and learning activities. She referred to the low scores of Hispanic students on the MSPAP, but did not directly address this population in her study. Other researchers have investigated the impact of the MSPAP on instruction.

Research on the MSPAP: Impact studies.

Several studies focused on the impact of the MSPAP on instruction were conducted during the final years of MSPAP administration, from 1999-2003. Lane, Parke, and Stone (1998) conducted a study of 90 elementary and middle schools in Maryland to examine the impact of the MSPAP and the Maryland Learning Outcomes (MLO's) on school curriculum, classroom instruction, assessment, and test preparation activities. The researchers used a combination of methods to conduct the study, including questionnaires and samples of classroom activities provided by teachers. In their study, 82% of teachers indicated that the MSPAP had a moderate or great impact on their classroom activities, and 83% of teachers indicated that the impact of the MSPAP increased over years of implementation. Eighty-nine percent of the teachers in the study reported that they made a general improvement in their daily instruction to help students prepare for the MSPAP (p. 13). Teachers also indicated that the impact of the MSPAP was greater than the impact of the Maryland Learning Outcomes and the Maryland Curriculum Framework (p. 50). Seventy-seven percent of teachers somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement that the MSPAP was a useful tool for making positive change in their own instruction (p. 34).

Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, and Alban (2000) attempted to link instructional practice directly to student achievement on the MSPAP, by conducting meta-analyses of the effects of instructional practice in reading on student achievement on the MSPAP. They found that improvements in reading achievement on the MSPAP were directly associated with characteristics of school reading programs in the higher elementary grades. They noted that the MSPAP

...required extensive use of cognitive strategies of searching for information, comprehending multiple texts, combining knowledge from text with knowledge from such sources as science experiments and geographical maps, and expressing that knowledge coherently in writing. (p. 222)

Guthrie et al. (2000) found that reading engagement, required to successfully complete reading tasks on the MSPAP, was facilitated by integrated instruction and other characteristics of reading programs, and that integrated instruction was contained in those reading programs associated with student achievement gains.

Research Sites: White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools

In this study, I investigated instruction for English language learners in fifth grade mainstream (regular) classrooms at two schools with high proportions of these students. I conducted an initial period of fieldwork to familiarize myself with the field site, its students, staffs, and programs, and to understand schoolwide issues surrounding MSPAP preparation. This broad fieldwork informed sustained observations and focused study of fifth grade classes at White Springs Elementary as they prepared for the 2000 MSPAP. White Springs Elementary School and its feeder school, Green Fields Elementary School, provided ideal settings to study how teachers adapted their instruction of English language learners in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), and

the role of the MSPP in instruction for these students. When studying instructional adaptations in response to the MSPP, like the researchers whose work was described above, I focused on instructional adaptations in response to the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). “White Springs” and “Green Fields” Elementary Schools, and “Kenhowe County” are pseudonyms used in the study as are all of the names of schools and districts mentioned in the study. A list of pseudonyms for all teachers, students and school staff included in the study is shown in Appendix A.

Both White Springs and Green Fields serve a highly diverse student population, and are located less than a mile within the district lines for Kenhowe County Public Schools. During the time frame of the study, 1999-2000, both schools were led by one principal, Mrs. Joy, who had been the principal at Green Fields for twelve years. She was asked to assume the principalship of a second school, White Springs, in 1998, the only joint principalship in the County. The two schools are in the same neighborhood, but are separated by several busy intersections. The schools’ mottoes, “Success in Unity,” and combined activities and programming, such as “open gym” after school and the students’ “Author’s Fair,” reflected Mrs. Joy’s holistic approach to managing the daily activities of both schools.

Both schools served students with diverse backgrounds. At both schools, although only one-fourth to one-third of the student population received services for limited English proficiency, the majority of the student population was comprised of English language learners, or students who came from homes where English was not the primary language (M. Joy, personal communication, March 2, 1999). At White Springs Elementary School, in the 1999-2000 school year, 41% of students were Hispanic, 35%

were African American, many of whom were from African or Caribbean origins, and 15% of students were Asian. At Green Fields Elementary School, in the 1999-2000 school year, 53% of students were Hispanic, 25% were African American, many of whom were from African or Caribbean origins, and 10% were Asian. The two schools had a high (15%) mobility rate, as many students interrupted their schooling to make long or short visits to their home countries (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], 2004).

Although White Springs and Green Fields shared many characteristics, they served a student population that was vastly different from other schools across the district. For example, both White Springs Elementary and Big River Elementary Schools are located in the Kenhowe County district, and, in the 1999-2000 school year, at White Springs Elementary, 83% of students received free or reduced price meals, whereas only 2.2% of students received free or reduced price meals at Big River Elementary. Only 2.5% of students at Big River received services for limited English proficiency, compared to 25% at White Springs (MSDE, 2001).

A fuller description of White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools is provided in chapter four. The brief sketch of the schools above serves to contextualize the research questions within the school research sites. My research in schools and conversations with teachers and education experts drew me to questions of how standards-based reforms, filtered through instruction, were shaping education for English language learners in public schools.

Overview of Conceptual Framework and Study Methodology

During classroom-level research and conversations with education experts in 1997-98, I learned that there were substantial variations between the written curriculum

supported by the MSPP, and the operational curriculum used to teach English language learners in the classroom. As I conducted research in a fifth grade classroom at a school neighboring White Springs Elementary during MSPAP preparation in 1997-98, I observed regular classroom teachers and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers developing assignments, instructional groupings, and assessments for English language learners students that were different from those developed for their native speaking peers (M. Bentley-Memon, unpublished paper). According to one former Maryland State Department of Education Bilingual/English as a Second Language Director, English language learners' eventual preparation for the content and format of these assessments depended upon the flexibility and creativity of the English as a second language teacher in the local setting (J. Bayse, personal communication, April 24, 1998). My understanding of these differences between the written curriculum and written policies and actual practice led me to design this qualitative case study, where I could record actual classroom events, and teachers' adaptation of instruction.

Education reform and versions of the curriculum.

The intended impact of the Maryland School Performance Program was expressed in the written curriculum prescribed by the State and County. Curriculum includes more than what is written in textbooks and curriculum guides, however, as Goodlad, Klein, and Tye (1979) and others have shown. Curriculum includes what administrators recommend teachers incorporate into instruction, what teachers actually teach, and what students actually do, as well as other actions and perspectives which shape what happens in the classroom. Goodlad, Klein, and Tye (1979) thus distinguish among versions of the curriculum: "official," "perceived," and "operational" curriculums. Goodlad, Tye, and

Klein (1979) also write of the “experiential” curriculum, that which students understand and experience, as well as the “personal” curriculum, backgrounds that individual students bring to the classroom. As this study focused on perceptions of the curriculum and articulation of the curriculum in the classroom, rather than case studies of individual students, the “experiential” and “personal” curriculum were beyond the scope of the research. These multiple ways of looking at the curriculum, and conceptualization of the curriculum as including more than what was just written on paper, informed the broad concept of instruction as investigated in this study.

Differences among versions of the curriculum can become more marked when top-down reforms are applied in local settings, and teachers, principals, and others must adapt broad reforms and policies for their individual schools. My initial thinking about teachers’ perceptions and articulation of multiple types of curriculum informed the development of a theoretical framework for the study. The categories described in the literature turned out to be less relevant, however, as I embarked on data collection, and the voices of teachers and their actions in the classroom provided new ways of thinking about the research questions.

Exploring instructional adaptations through qualitative inquiry.

This study addressed the research questions through qualitative research traditions, as defined by Marshall and Rossman (1995):

...that entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, values and seeks to discover participants’ perspectives on their worlds, views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, is

both descriptive and analytic, and relies on people's words and observable behavior as the primary data. (p. 4)

"Immersion," "inquiry," and the collection of "primary data" were achieved through the use of multiple methods of investigating the research question, including participant observation, observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple methods increases the reliability of the case through triangulation, and "...serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen" (Stake, 1994, p. 241). This clarification of meaning through multiple methods and perspectives enriches the depth of the case.

In this study I sought to generate descriptive data on instruction delivered, and teachers' perspectives on their instruction, in order to come to a better understanding of the role of a state assessment program and other factors that shaped instruction for ELL students. As a former teacher of English as a second language, I knew that there are many factors which shape instructional planning, decision-making, and execution. Decisions about what to teach and how to teach it are made based on mandated standards and assessments, the curriculum and direction provided by educational leaders, a teachers' own strengths and interests within the curriculum, the skills and backgrounds that students bring to school with them, and the realities of the everyday flow of school life, from students arriving late to class, to special activities or assignments in other classes, as well as other factors.

My classroom observations revealed that teachers and instructional assistants actually did prepare students for the MSPAP throughout the year. I recorded time spent on MSPAP-related instruction, methods of student grouping, assessment, curricular

adaptations, and other aspects of instructional delivery related to the MSPAP. Interviews with teachers revealed teacher perceptions of the MSPP and adaptation of instruction for English language learners. A document analysis of school materials was used to examine the role of the MSPP, along with other factors, in shaping instruction for English language learners.

Summary and Study Organization

This chapter encompassed the basic background for the study, including the definition of key terms used in the research, and the two research questions addressed. The study questions were framed within the overall questions of how standards-based reform filters down to the classroom level, and the challenges and realities of implementing these reforms for diverse groups of students. The state context and national context are also important to the significance of the study, and are laid out further in chapters which follow. This chapter also included an introduction to the research sites, which will be further described in chapter four. Finally, an overview of the conceptual framework that serves as the basis for the study, and the rationale for studying the research questions using qualitative traditions, was also provided.

The next two chapters, chapters two and three, will provide a deeper discussion of the context related to the study, of the MSPP itself, and of issues related to teaching English language learners in an era of standards-based reform. Chapter four contains detailed information on the methodology for the study and on the research sites. Chapters five through seven are organized according to the categories which emerged from the data, in response to the research questions, and are presented in narrative form, with categories explained through primary source data. Chapter eight includes a

summary of findings, conclusions, and interpretations, with recommendations for future study.

Chapter II: Education Reform in Maryland: The Maryland School Performance Program in Context

Education reforms are framed within multiple contexts. These contexts include the background to the reform, such as programs and initiatives which were in place prior to the time that the reform was carried out, and other factors which shape how the reform is interpreted by educational actors. These contexts serve as filters through which reforms are mediated and refracted. In order to study whether teachers adapted instruction for English language learners in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), and if so, how, it was important to consider the big picture, the context of the program, and the little picture, the assessments in the program. This chapter will frame the reform program within its larger contexts and then discuss format, administration, and content of the Maryland School Performance Assessments.

The Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), like other educational reform programs, can be framed within multiple contexts which represent an array of potential influences on instruction. These contexts are composed of factors external to the classroom, and those which are internal to the classroom. External factors include mandates which exist at the federal, state, and district levels, and may shape teachers' adaptation of instruction. Internal factors include those background characteristics which teachers and students bring with them to the classroom and may shape teachers' adaptation of instruction. Finkelstein, Malen, Muncey, Rice, Croninger, Briggs, Jones, Thrasher (June 2000) and others have written of the importance of the implementing context, from the local to the national context, to the success of educational policies and plans. Below I will consider the contexts which appeared to be most relevant to this

study. These contexts include regulatory pressures, traditions of teaching, and student backgrounds.

Federal and State Regulatory Pressures

The Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) can be framed within the multiple regulatory pressures across time and space that are an array of potential influences on Maryland Schools. The category of “regulatory pressures” was described by Finkelstein, Malen, Muncey, Rice, Croninger, Briggs, Jones, Thrasher (2000) in their report on an educational reform in Maryland schools, as being a “...history of continuous external pressure from courts, the federal government, and state agencies” (p. 7). In this study, “regulatory pressures” are manifested in mandates at the federal, and state levels, many of which were put in place to evoke responses at the school and classroom levels. These regulatory pressures exist across time and space, as they can be embedded in the history of federal and state agencies’ efforts to control education. Maryland’s development and implementation of the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) from 1989-2002 can be viewed as a response to these regulatory pressures. Federal and state regulatory pressures existed prior to the MSPP, during implementation of the MSPP, and intensified even further after the dismantling of the MSPP, and subsequent replacement of the MSPAP with the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) in 2003. Below I will describe the regulatory pressures which existed at the federal and state levels prior to, during, and after the implementation of the MSPP.

Federal mandates 1994-2001.

This discussion of regulatory pressures will begin with the federal mandates set forth in legislation effective during the time of this study and which all states agree to meet when they accept federal funds. During the time that this study was conducted, the

Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) was in effect. IASA was a 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act, passed in 1965, and contained extensive requirements for the development and implementation of state accountability and assessment systems. First, under IASA, states were required to develop and implement state content standards and achievement assessments once in each of the grade spans: three through five, six through eight, and once in high school. Second, states were required to insure that 95% of students overall participated in these achievement assessments, and that 95% of each of the subgroups of students also participated in these assessments; students with disabilities, students receiving free and reduced price lunch, students from racial/ethnic categories, and students with limited proficiency in English. Under IASA, it was permissible for limited English proficient students to receive exemptions from assessments that were time-based or language-based. During the time that this study was conducted, Maryland had such a policy in place, which permitted students with low levels of language proficiency to be exempted from one administration of the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). As the MSPAP was administered once in each of the grade spans, this could translate into several years before a child was required to take an achievement assessment. Third, under IASA, beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, states were required to disaggregate the performance of subgroups on school, district, and state report cards (Improving America's School Act, 1994; U. S. Department of Education [USDE] 1997; USDE, 2000). Maryland disaggregated the scores of LEP students on all required reports for the first time in the 2000-2001 school year, the year after this study was conducted.

To determine if states had met the IASA requirements, the U.S. Department of Education conducted peer reviews of state assessment systems during the year 2000, and found that, by 2001, only 17 states had met all of the requirements for developing state assessment and accountability systems. The two areas in which the majority of states failed to meet requirements were in assessment and accountability for students with disabilities and for students with limited proficiency in English. States that did not meet federal requirements received either a timeline waiver or a compliance agreement from the U.S. Department of Education that outlined steps that had to be taken in order to meet all IASA requirements (General Accounting Office [GAO], 2004, p. 6; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2001).

Just as the U. S. Department of Education was finding that most states did not meet all IASA requirements, a new, farther reaching piece of federal legislation, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, was passed. NCLB built upon and extended the requirements of IASA. With the passage of NCLB, states have committed to developing and implementing state content standards and achievement assessments in every grade, three through eight, and once in high school, beginning in the 2005-2006 school year. Under NCLB, states are also required to include all students in achievement assessments, including limited English proficient students, regardless of the time that they have been enrolled in U.S. schools, and regardless of their level of English language proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, March 3, 2003). In 2004, the USDE announced new flexibilities to this requirement, which will be further discussed in the epilogue in chapter eight.

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act also marks the first time ever in federal legislative history that states have been required to develop and implement state English language proficiency standards and to annually assess the English language proficiency of all limited English proficient students, grades kindergarten through twelve. Under Title III of NCLB, states must ensure that these English language proficiency assessments are aligned to the state English language proficiency standards, and that these standards are linked to state content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics. Under Title III, states must also establish state targets for student progress in learning English, and attainment of English language proficiency. In order for states and districts to meet the Title III annual measurable achievement objectives, Title III served-students in these states and districts must meet both of these targets for English language proficiency, and must also meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets in reading/language arts and mathematics under Title I (USDE, February 2003). States demonstrate that they are meeting these and other federal requirements through the U.S. Department of Education's Consolidated State Application, and submission of State Accountability Plans. On October 20, 2003, Maryland received full approval from the U.S. Department of Education for its State Accountability Plan. (USDE, 2003).

During the time that this study was conducted, federal requirements to establish state English language proficiency standards, assessments, and objectives did not exist, and Maryland did not have state English language proficiency standards and state targets for student achievement in learning English in place. Schools in the state used the IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT) and Language Assessment Scale (LAS) for identification and placement of limited English proficient students.

Regulatory pressures from federal mandates existed prior to, during, and after Maryland's use of the MSPP to measure school and district performance toward state standards. Just as Maryland received full approval for meeting federal requirements under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), a new law with additional requirements was enacted. Shortly thereafter, the MSPP and accompany assessments, the MSPAP, were dismantled, and a new assessment, the Maryland State Assessment (MSA), was put in place.

The current context: State mandates.

In 2003, a new assessment program was launched statewide in Maryland. The Maryland State Assessment (MSA) program replaced the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) and Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). This change ended an era of nearly thirteen years of measurement of school, district, and state progress using one standards-based assessment system with performance-based assessments. This new series of assessments will enable Maryland to meet federal requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act to test students in reading/language arts and mathematics in every grade, grades three through eight, by 2005-2006. Both the former and current assessments measure performance on state standards and provide information to the state regarding progress towards state accountability targets. Under No Child Left Behind, schools and districts that do not meet state targets are subject to sanctions, including the development and implementation of school improvement plans, the activation of school choice options for parents, and the provision of additional supplemental services such as tutoring. (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001)

Although the MSPAP and the MSA are different assessments, they have both been used for similar purposes, i.e., to measure progress towards state standards, to guide the curriculum, and to produce data that will determine consequences. To that extent, I believe that teachers are likely to have similar perceptions of the two assessments' impact on instruction. As my cousin's husband, a middle school teacher in Maryland, quipped over the Christmas dinner table, the new assessments are not different from the old ones, as the MSA will "Have the same pressures" as the MSPAP (J. Smith, personal communication, December 25, 2003). The MSA is a test of reading and mathematics achievement which shows how well students have mastered the Maryland Content Standards in these subject areas. The test includes short-essay and multiple choice questions which students must complete independently. Unlike the MSPAP, the MSA does not require that students work in groups (MSDE, October 2002, Frequently asked questions section). Maryland's change in assessments can be attributed to many factors, including new federal requirements, recommendations from state-appointed educational stakeholder groups, and some of the technical concerns raised about MSPAP scoring, including inter-rater reliability. This change in assessments can be viewed within the larger political historical context in which the MSPAP was developed.

Political-historical context of the MSPP.

The federal and state regulatory pressures which existed prior to, during and after the MSPP are grounded in the political-historical context in which this reform program was developed and implemented. The institutionalization of the MSPP can be embedded in a larger political-historical context, where increased state power in education was intended to improve education for all students. This broadening of regulatory pressures on education has taken place in Maryland and in other states across the nation over the

last thirty years. Kirst (1995) wrote of this “dramatic increase of state influence during the last two decades” in requirements for accountability, and in policies and programs for diverse groups of students, including English language learners (p. 44). States have expanded their control of education beyond influence on policies regarding “categorical groups” of students, to influence on instructional policy for all students (p.50).

In Maryland, the origins of the MSPP can be traced to testing programs that have been in place in the state for decades. The MSPAP was not the first or the last state-designed or standardized assessment program to be administered in Maryland public schools. The Maryland Functional Tests were introduced in the 1980’s, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and criterion-referenced tests have also been used to measure student achievement over the last few decades.

The Maryland School Performance Program originated in the 1980’s as part of Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer’s efforts to review and improve public education in the state. Governor Schaefer charged a group of educators and citizens, called the Governor’s Commission on School Performance, to review student achievement and suggest strategies for improvement. The Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Commission’s recommendations as student learning goals for the year 2000, which were published in *The Report of the Governor’s Commission on School Performance* (1989). The Maryland State Department of Education created the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) to measure progress toward these goals, and toward the State Department of Education’s curriculum benchmarks in reading, writing, language usage, mathematics, social studies, and science. The Department developed performance assessments in response to the Commission’s

suggestion that new criterion-referenced tests replace norm-referenced tests, as criterion-referenced tests could be linked directly to curriculum and instruction (Governor's Commission on School Performance, 1989; MSDE, 1998; Wright, 1994).

The Maryland Performance Program was then used by the state from 1989-2002 to measure K-12 public school and district performance. The Maryland State Department of Education measured progress on the Performance Program in the elementary years using school attendance rates and students' scores on the MSPAP. Performance assessments were added to the Performance Program in the 1993-94 school year (MSDE, January/February 1998). According to the Maryland State Department of Education (1999), the

MSPAP is an assessment or testing program whose primary purpose is to provide information that can be used to improve instruction in schools. The MSPAP measures the performance of Maryland schools by illustrating:

- how well students solve problems cooperatively and individually
- how well students apply what they have learned to real world problems
- how well students can relate and use knowledge from different subject areas. (p. 1)

The stated purpose of the Maryland School Performance Program and Assessment Program was to improve instruction. Both were significant to educators in the state because they were used for accountability purposes, however. Under the MSPP, all public schools across the state were expected to meet standards for "satisfactory" and "excellent" performance on the MSPAP. This goal was to be accomplished through reaching intermediate targets over time. Schools that were unable to meet state standards

had to develop and implement a school performance plan. If schools continued to produce consistently low scores on the MSPAP, they could have been designated as “Challenge Schools,” which received funding and outside guidance, or as “Reconstitution Schools,” which were to be taken over by the state or other entity (Yen & Ferrara, 1997). These consequences could result in changes in curriculum, school governance, and school personnel.

All of these changes have the potential to influence instruction for English language learners in Maryland. As federal regulations morph into state regulations, teachers must find ways to teach all students so that they achieve on state assessments, the results of which are used to determine if schools will face sanctions or rewards. Teachers’ decisions about the planning and execution of instruction are made in the context of the regulatory pressures through which the success of their students, and ultimately, their teaching, is defined. Teachers do not teach in a vacuum, and the importance of their daily work to decisions and consequences at the state level were iterated to me throughout this study. When teachers make decisions about the planning and execution of instruction, they draw upon their own craft knowledge (B. Finkelstein, personal communication, July 2004), either intentionally or unintentionally, to make sense of the regulations imposed upon them, and to transmit information to students.

Traditions of Teaching

Teachers’ craft knowledge is rooted in what Cuban (1987) has called “...deep-seated traditions of teaching and learning” (p. 32). My own methods of teaching professor, Dr. John Aydelott, told his classes that teachers teach as they themselves were taught (J. Aydelott, personal communication, September 1991). Cuban’s characterization and Dr. Aydelott’s remark begin to uncover the complexities of how teachers teach,

which is reflective of their professional and life histories. Teachers make decisions about instruction, unconsciously and consciously, based upon their own experience having been a student, and based upon deep-seated traditions of teaching and learning. Instructional decisions are made by the teacher who is also an individual with his/her own personal biases and background experiences. In her study of “teacher behavior” in primary schools in the 19th century U.S., Finkelstein (1989) writes of the “...pre-structured realities which informed the classroom behavior of teachers, but originated outside the schoolhouse door,” and noted the role of “teachers as agents of cultural transmission,” who carry, along with their students, “forms of cultural baggage” (p. 6). Educational anthropologists such as Erickson (1987a; 1987b) and Ogbu and Gibson (1991) have written extensively about the cultural distances between teachers and their students, particularly for diverse students. According to many of these anthropologists, the teacher is a transmitter of and representative of American culture. Teachers enter the profession with their own personal experiences and biases about students that may be evident in subtle ways. These personal histories of teachers become part of individual teaching traditions, and part of the array of influences on instruction.

Herrera and Murry (2005) have written about the role of these experiences in shaping teaching, with a particular focus on how teachers’ experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse communities shape their teaching of students that come from these communities. As Herrera and Murry (2005) explain,

An educator’s prior experiences and prior socialization concerning cultural and linguistic diversity can and will influence school and classroom practice with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Beginning teachers typically bring

at least twenty-three years of prior socialization and experiences in a particular culture to the classroom. More experienced teachers may bring forty or more years of their own socialization to their practice with culturally and linguistically diverse students. (p. 130)

In order to explain how teachers' experiences are reflected in their classroom practice, Herrera and Murry have developed an "Accommodation Readiness Spiral;" a double helix model which demonstrates teachers' preparedness to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. The stages in the spiral range from initial readiness, "readiness for critical reflection on practice," to "readiness for application and advocacy" (p. 127). Herrera and Murry further explain that readiness for each stage of accommodation exists in "two forms:" "espoused readiness and practical readiness." According to the authors:

Espoused readiness defines what the educator says, and may believe, about her or his level of readiness for accommodation. Practical readiness, on the other hand, is so deeply ingrained in the educator's consciousness that the educator may not be able to fully articulate the nature of that readiness. (p. 129).

Practical readiness is developed over an educator's socialization, and is not easily articulated or changed. In this study, I found that fifth grade teachers White Springs Elementary did use common strategies for teaching their English language learners, though they were not able to fully articulate their decisions and beliefs behind these strategies. This finding is further discussed in chapter five.

When considering traditions of teaching, it is important to consider the physical setting of the school and classroom, along with the institutional structures which shape

teaching. Teaching in the United States takes place in a fairly uniform setting where the teacher and students each have prescribed roles as they act out the “micro rituals” (Finkelstein, 1989) of daily classroom interaction. Teaching is further structured by a school schedule, class size, curriculum, assessments, and the physical realities of the school and classroom, such as whether or not the classroom is large enough for students to form a circle in a large group. Cuban (1987) pointed out that the majority of teachers use “teacher-centered instruction” due to “situationally constrained choice,” (p. 26) which is delimited by the structures of scheduling, class size, and other educational realities. Cuban further characterizes instruction as being composed of “creative responses by teachers to cope with workplace conditions and structural arrangements over which they have little influence” (p. 26). Tyack and Cuban (1995) later write of how these “creative responses” by teachers are used to “hybridize(ing)” reforms, as teachers adapt aspects of reforms which interest them and which they find useful and “incorporate” them in “unanticipated ways into their daily routines” (p. 136). In this study, I found that teachers did adapt their teaching in response to the MSPAP, and that these adaptations, such as the use of MSPAP-related vocabulary and frequent instruction on problem-solving skills, were a type of “hybridization” of state reforms. This finding is further discussed in chapter five.

Teaching is also highly individualized. The teacher makes decisions in the classroom in conscious and unconscious ways, such as by deciding which student to call on, how to correct a student’s error, which words to use to scaffold a new concept, and in countless other ways. These decisions, and the formal professional history, teacher background, and teacher experience upon which they are based are, to some extent,

unique to each teacher. Goodlad, Klein, and associates (1970) have written extensively on how what happens “behind the classroom door” is within the domain of the individual teacher, and have attributed policy-practice disjunctures to this reality of teaching. Teachers’ instructional decisions, made in their own domains, add up over time to de facto policies for instruction, according to Lipsky, who labels teachers as “street-level bureaucrats” that have discretion to make individualized decisions once the classroom door closes (Brieschke, 1983).

Furthermore, teaching is active, not static. These characteristics of teaching make it difficult to determine what led a teacher to make a certain instructional decision. When given the opportunity to talk about their teaching, most teachers can describe factors upon which their instructional decisions are based, but not all such factors. For example, a research team at the Center for Assessment Validity at the University of Maryland recently conducted focus groups of more than 100 teachers in Maryland to determine how teachers make decisions about providing instructional and assessment accommodations for English language learners. The team found that, for the most part, teachers were unable to articulate how they arrived at their accommodations decisions, and that they reported that they just “knew” what they thought was appropriate for their students (Samuelsen, 2004). In this study I found that there is an element of craft knowledge, of things which teachers just “know,” that they may not be fully aware of themselves or be able to articulate. Conducting full-day observations of different teachers’ classrooms over time enabled me to document how some of this craft knowledge was manifested. This finding, along with others, will be described in detail in

chapters four through seven. Just as teachers' background experiences and traditions of teaching shape how teachers teach, students' backgrounds shape how they learn.

Student Backgrounds

Just as teachers enter the profession with their own personal histories, grounded in traditions of teaching, students enter the classroom with their own personal histories, grounded in family, linguistic, cultural, social, and economic characteristics, and in traditions of learning. Finkelstein (1995) has described these characteristics as "the context of children's lives," and describes how historians,

...in one way or another, typically neglect to recover the whole of the context of children's lives. The nature and character of associations into which children entered as they grew up have been virtually unexplored, as have the processes through which their consciousness might have been informed, their affiliative loyalties organized, and their behavior influenced...they have ignored the psychological and social meanings of transformation in childhood experience, and have neglected to explore the processes that influenced the manners, morals, mentalities, dispositions, and sentiments of the rising generation. (p. 112)

Just as historians "typically neglect" to "recover the whole of the context of children's lives," so do many schools and teachers, not necessarily by intentional neglect, but by the constraints of time and space on the delivery of education.

A primary goal of teaching is to transmit knowledge to students. The transmission of knowledge is enormously complex, however, and reflects numerous active, many undocumentable, characteristics of the teacher, student, and classroom and school environment. Culturally sensitive teachers try to understand their students' backgrounds in order to find the best ways to transmit knowledge to their students. This

process of understanding students' lives, abilities, and academic performance is at the heart of teaching, yet is very difficult.

This study has also neglected to focus on “the whole of the context of children’s lives,” though this was a deliberate decision in order to narrow the research questions. The data reveal, however, that some parts of the “context of children’s lives” at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools did shape teachers’ instruction. Most salient of these characteristics was students’ home setting, which included their membership in a family of immigrants, and their access to linguistic, social, and economic capital. Other parts of the “context of children’s lives” which shaped teachers’ instruction, including students’ arrival and placement within school and district structures and regulations, are discussed further in chapter seven.

Children of immigrants.

Many ELLs face challenges to their achievement which are related to their immigration or to their membership in a family of immigrants. Shields and Behrman (2004) have analyzed demographic and other data and documented some of the strengths of immigrant families: healthy, intact families; strong work ethic and aspiration; and community cohesion, to name a few. Shields and Barman (2004) have also documented some of the challenges faced by children of immigrants, including less-educated parents, low-wage work with no benefits, language barriers, discrimination and racism, poverty and multiple risk factors, and of supports from government and other agencies. Many, many ELLs have overcome these barriers, capitalized on their funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge, and become bilingual leaders who can traverse comfortably across multiple cultures and languages. Of course, just as no child is alike, no immigrant family

is alike, and there is enormous variation across different countries of origin, social classes, and other factors. The data in this study reveal that students at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools faced many of the challenges listed above, and that these challenges had an impact on their education. One way of categorizing these challenges is as access to linguistic, social, and economic capital.

Linguistic, social, and economic capital.

A great deal has been written by sociologists, education researchers, and others about the concept of social capital, which was originally coined by Coleman (1988). As described by Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland of the Civic Practices Network (2004):

Social capital refers to those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, sports clubs, and cooperatives, are an essential form of social capital, and the denser these networks, the more likely that members of a community will cooperate for mutual benefit. (para. 1)

In this section, I will briefly focus upon linguistic capital, which I am defining as knowledge of and access to primary languages used in mainstream culture. In this study, families' linguistic capital was often directly related to their social capital and economic capital. Parents with limited knowledge of English, lack of literacy in their native language, and limited education in their home countries, for the most part, only had access to low-paying jobs. As a consequence, many of these parents worked several jobs to make ends meet, and endured financial, cultural, and linguistic struggles as they tried to adapt to their lives in the United States. Families' involvement with their children's

education was, in many cases, mitigated by their level of economic capital and concern for survival. Furthermore, many of these parents often had limited contact with the English-speaking world in which their children were immersed during school, which further limited their involvement with their children's education, such as in their ability to help their children with homework in English or to talk directly with their children's teacher or with the school principal. At White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools, only approximately 30% of students at the two schools received English as a second language services, though the majority of students at both schools either had received such services at one time or another, or came from an environment where a language other than English was spoken in the home. In Ms. Hart's fifth grade class, for example, only four students of twenty-one were placed in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, but nineteen of her students either had learned English as a second language or had a parent who spoke English as a second language. ELL students' backgrounds are very complex, and include their knowledge of English, their acquisition of academic English, their academic training in their first language, and their exposure to academic language in English and in their first language. Students' access to linguistic, social, and economic capital is part of the context in which their education is delivered and received.

In this section, I have outlined those parts of the context which seemed to bear most directly upon this study: regulatory pressures, traditions of teaching, and student backgrounds. This study could have been conducted through the lenses of any one of these contexts, in order to further flesh out their role in shaping instruction. Instead, however, in this study I sought to determine if teachers adapted instruction in response to

the MSPP, if so, how, and the role of the MSPP as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for English language learners at these two schools. Rather than approaching the study by looking through a particular lens, I sought to look at what I saw happening in classrooms. These contexts are, of course, important for interpreting the data generated from the study, and analyzing study findings. In the following section I will transition to a discussion of the actual Maryland School Performance Assessments themselves, including their format, administration, and content.

The MSPAP: Format, Administration, and Content

Teachers, paraprofessionals, and other trained staff administered the MSPAP annually each spring from 1993-2002 to students in the third, fifth, and eighth grades. Students took the MSPAP for 105 minutes per day over a period of five days, completing tasks both individually and in groups. They were randomly assigned to sections of the assessments, and took some, but not all, of assessments in the six content areas of reading, writing, language usage, math, science, and social studies (MSDE, 1998). These content areas were organized by domains. The reading domain, foreexample, was organized according to three purposes for reading: reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task. MSPAP readings across content areas contained “authentic” readings which had been previously published and were unabridged (Yen and Ferrara, 1997, p. 63-64).

MSPAP tasks required students to use “real life” critical thinking skills, such as developing and carrying out a plan to solve a problem, explaining how and why they arrived at an answer, comparing and contrasting ideas, and other similar activities (MSDE, 1998). Test items were written by teams at the Maryland State Department of Education, along with teachers, who scored the exams during the summer (Drennan,

1997). The MSPAP was a set of performance assessments, or a “type of alternative assessment” in which students “...demonstrate (s) specific skills and competencies in relation to a continuum of agreed upon standards of proficiency or excellence” (Pierce & O’Malley, 1992, p. 2). The MSPAP was the first performance-based assessment program to be introduced in the state large scale. A brief description of performance- based assessments follows.

Performance-based assessments.

In the 1990’s, Maryland, and numerous other states put in place state assessment systems based on performance-based assessments. These performance-based assessments were used by states as the means for measuring schools’ progress toward state standards. One of the reasons that performance-based assessments were chosen by States were the criticisms levied by educators and the public about norm-referenced tests (Pierce and O’Malley, 1992). As Navarrete and Gustke (1996) explain, performance assessments represent a departure from the “traditional psychometric model” that is a basis for norm-referenced tests. Performance assessments are criterion-referenced, and aim to “...acknowledge achievement of a specific learning outcome,” and to “show growth” in content areas, rather than to compare a student’s scores to that of his/her peers, as norm-referenced tests are designed to do (p. 7). Performance-based assessments also measure students’ skills through the completion of real-life tasks. There is some debate within the educational community, however, about what types of tasks can be considered real-life for school-age children. Popham (1995), for example, pointed out that some proponents of performance-based assessments maintain that they should

include “real world” tasks, while others believe they should only include “school world” tasks. The MSPAP included both.

Due to the nature of the test items and responses, performance-based assessments are scored using different procedures than those used for norm-referenced tests, which can be machine-scored. Performance-based assessments are scored by trained individuals, such as teachers, who, following a closely monitored system which enhances inter-rater reliability, score students’ responses using rubrics. The MSPAP was scored using such procedures. The inclusion of English language learners in assessments, and the use of performance-based and other types of assessments for English language learners has generated substantial discussion in the bilingual/English as a Second language education research community. In the following section, I will discuss state policies for participation in the MSPAP administration, state performance on the MSPAP during the time that this study was conducted, and issues of equity related to the inclusion of English language learners in the MSPAP.

State policies for inclusion in the MSPAP.

State policies required that the majority of students participated in the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). According to the State Department of Education and State Superintendent, the MSPAP, and the instructional and curricular changes it brought about, would include and benefit all students. Overall, as reported by the Maryland State Department of Education, exemption policies and practices reflected this philosophy. For example, for the spring 2000 test administration, the window of time for this study, only 8.7% of fifth grade students statewide were exempt from the MSPAP reading assessment. The majority of these exemptions (7.5%) were granted for

students receiving special education services. Only 1.1% of fifth grade students statewide were granted an exemption from the MSPAP reading assessment for reasons of limited English proficiency (MSDE, 2001).

Students who were English language learners were eligible for an exemption from one administration on all or part of the MSPAP if they were found to be at the lowest level of English language proficiency on an English language proficiency assessment. Exemptions from the MSPAP were based on language proficiency assessment scores documented in school records, along with supporting teacher recommendation, agreement in writing by students' parent/s or guardian/s, and certification by the school principal.

English language learners with limited proficiency in English who were not eligible for a language-based exemption from the MSPAP could receive accommodations to the regular test administration if these accommodations were approved by teachers and school principals. In 2000, 30% of ELLs statewide received accommodations for limited English proficiency. Further discussion of the use of accommodations for ELLs will be provided in subsequent chapters. The discussion of student participation in the MSPAP leads naturally to a discussion on performance on the MSPAP.

State progress on the MSPAP.

On the MSPAP, schools' performance was reported by grade level and subject area according to five proficiency levels, with level one being proficient. It is important to distinguish between states' definitions of proficient in the academic content areas, which refers to mastery of academic content and applies to all students, and states'

definitions of proficient in English, which refers to English language proficiency attainment, and applies only to English language learners.

The Maryland State Department of Education had set the following targets for schools to meet by 2000: “satisfactory-70% of students scoring at proficiency level three or above,” and “excellent-70% of students scoring at level three or above, with at least 25% of students at level two or higher” (MSDE, 1998, pp. 1-2). By the year that this study was conducted, 1999-2000, students across Maryland had made considerable progress toward this target, though the 70% goal had not been met. The MSPAP composite index for grade five was 32.1 in 1993 and 45.9 in 2001, for example (MSDE, 2001). Although Maryland piloted the MSPAP in 1989 and began implementation in 1991, the State Department of Education reported in the late 1990’s that schools and teachers were still undergoing a transition period as they adjusted to the assessments (MSDE, January/February 1998). By 2000, despite overall gains statewide, many schools throughout Maryland were still scoring low on the assessments, with only 10-20% of students scoring “satisfactory” (MSDE, 1997). Many of these schools were schools with diverse student populations, including students from many different racial/ethnic categories, disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with limited proficiency in English. As can be expected, the state, educators, and the public became particularly interested in these students’ performance on the MSPAP.

The MSPAP and issues of equity.

From 1993-2002, the state and the public showed an increasing interest in the relationship between students’ scores on the MSPAP, and their background characteristics, including socioeconomic status (Schafer, 1997), gender and ethnicity

(Jackson, 1993; Myerberg, 1996; Wright, 1994), and special education classification (McLaughlin & Warren, 1994). The public's heightened level of interest in issues of equity related to the MSPAP was well illustrated in *The Washington Post's* May 1999 series on the MSPAP. This series featured, among other articles, an analysis of MSPAP scores by socioeconomic status, and a story on immigrant students who had limited knowledge of English. Brown and Nakamura (1999) depicted the focus of this study in their narrative about a student who had recently arrived at Bladensburg Elementary School in Kenhowe County:

In teacher Jason Berg's second-grade classroom, the boy from Burkina Faso sits in a chair. He is taller than the other children. He laughs when they laugh. He tries to sing when they sing. But he does not understand. His eyes speak what he can't. Next year, this boy probably will take the MSPAP. And the test will give no consideration to the fact that he cannot read English. (p. B4)

Brown and Nakamura's assertions may not have been correct; this student may have received an exemption from participation in the MSPAP due to his low level of English, or, may have participated in the assessment with accommodations. Consideration may have been given "to the fact that he" could not "read English." Their depiction of the dilemma faced by public school teachers, however, was true-to-life. All students, including those with low levels of English, participated in MSPAP preparation activities throughout the school year. In order for all students to succeed on the MSPAP, teachers had to find ways to teach all students to state standards, including English language learners. Although the state-mandated assessment in Maryland has changed since that time that this study was conducted, the dilemma facing public school teachers remains

the same, and may even be intensified, as teachers will soon need to prepare all students in every grade, three through eight, to participate in the Maryland State Assessment.

Summary

This chapter included part of the big picture important to understanding the place of the MSPAP and MSPP in the multiple contexts of federal and state regulatory pressures, traditions of teaching, and student backgrounds. This chapter also included the little picture of exactly what the MSPAP was. The focus of this study was not on viewing the influence of any one of these contexts in an in-depth way, but on documenting teachers' responses to a state assessment program. This study describes a moment in time; a snapshot of how teachers at two schools shaped instruction in response to a state assessment program. This chapter pays small homage to the multiple contexts that shape instruction at the classroom level. This study was not conducted through the lenses of any of these contexts, however, but these contexts serve as important frames within which to view study findings. This is one case study of teacher behavior at a time when state imposed testing mechanisms were in place, though they would be more extensive in years to come.

In this study, I sought to determine whether teachers adapted their instruction for ELLs in response to the MSPP, and if so, how, and the role of the MSPP as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for ELLs at two schools. As I will discuss in the chapters which follow, I found that teachers did adapt their instruction for ELLs in response to the MSPP in common ways, and that the MSPP was one of the factors that shaped instruction for ELLs and for all students at the two schools. Data from the study revealed that the regulatory pressures imposed by the federal government and by the state, as manifested in the MSPP, did shape instruction. Data from the study also

revealed that other factors also shaped instruction, including students' backgrounds, and traditions of teaching as exemplified through teachers' craft knowledge. These findings will be further discussed in the chapters which follow, after a discussion of one more topic which bears upon the study, challenges in assessing English language learners.

Chapter III: State Assessment Programs and English Language Learners

This chapter includes a discussion of issues relevant to the inclusion of English language learners in state assessment systems. At the same time that state testing requirements have increased, the number of English language learners in U.S. public schools has also increased. The co-existence of these two realities brings forth a host of complex issues related to the purpose of educational reforms which include assessment programs, their influence down to the classroom level, and their use in measuring the progress of diverse students. Below I will review these issues which bear upon this study.

Arguments for and Against Assessment Programs

The premise of measurement-driven educational reform is that the use of regular assessments affects instruction (Madaus, 1989). This point, whether the implementation of external assessments has an impact on the way schools work and what happens in classrooms, has been debated by both proponents and opponents of assessment driven reforms. Opinions of standards-based assessment programs vary greatly within states and even schools. Guskey's (1994) collection of articles in the book, *Kentucky High Stakes Performance Assessment*, is a good example of how informed stakeholders can diverge substantially on their view of the value of state assessments. Articles in this edited text refer to "high stakes" assessments, which are those that "...involve(s) testing students for purposes such as grade level retention or advancement, high school graduation, selection for special programs or services, or for other 'high stakes' consequences" (Holmes & Duron, 1997, p.1). Not all assessments administered as part of state assessment programs qualify as "high stakes," but many, particularly high school assessments, do. As these assessments are intended for all students, and are directly linked to students' passage

through the educational system, they are highly contentious in both policy and public circles, arousing heated debates in academic and public forums. Airasian (1988) has noted that, regardless of their actual influence on teaching, testing programs are powerful symbolically, as tests symbolize order and control, and have an important “perceptual impact” on the public at large.

Proponents of assessment driven reforms maintain that these reforms have the potential to make a long-reaching positive impact on education. Supporters of the MSPAP pointed to evidence that showed that the introduction of these assessments had changed the ways schools were organized, what and how teachers taught, and what students learned and could show they were able to do. Researchers and practitioners have written on the substantial impact of external assessments on the curriculum, instructional methods, administrative decisions, fiscal allocations, and other aspects of school life (Madaus, 1989; Navarrete & Gustke, 1996; Trimble, 1998). In Maryland, State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick (1998), when speaking about the MSPAP, heralded the “...focused, high quality teaching these challenging tests bring about” (MSDE, p. 1). While some educational leaders have come to view high standards and accompanying assessments as the lever for educational change, others have less faith in their power to effect reform and universalize high achievement.

Opponents of state assessment programs can be broadly divided into two camps: those who believe that the assessments have a substantial and deleterious impact on schools, and those who believe that they have little or no impact on schools. Scholars such as Madaus (1988) have cited the potentially negative effects of assessments, especially those that are high stakes, on the curriculum and on instructional practices,

such as by narrowing of the curriculum, “teaching to the test,” and exclusion of students who are not likely to perform well in instruction. They have suggested that assessments are being used inappropriately to satisfy the public concern about public school performance. Haertel (1999) explained that the introduction of assessments could have “additional consequences,” such as students being retained, principals putting their “best teachers” in the testing grades, and shifting of resources, such as from gifted and talented education to remedial programs for students at risk of failing the assessments (p. 69). These scholars have pointed to school, administrative leadership, and teacher responses to assessments as evidence that they do have an impact on what happens at the school and classroom levels. Other scholars, particularly educational historians and scholars of federal education policy, express doubt that externally imposed, top-down reforms like state assessment programs have a long lasting impact on school policy, curriculum, and practice.

Assessment Programs and Education Reform

Well published education scholars such as Cuban (1984, 1987, 1990) and Tyack and Cuban (1995) have addressed the feasibility and pace of school change, cautioning that education reforms flow in cycles, and that we merely “Reform Again, Again, and Again” (Cuban, 1990, p. 1). They have looked at educational innovation from a long-term historical perspective and characterized top-down change as having a short-lived impact, as opposed to local innovation, which takes time to build, but can carry continuing momentum. Elmore and Fuhrman (1994) explained that state-designed reform programs are, by virtue of the way they are often designed and put in place, problematic. State reform programs and assessments may be designed by state officials removed from the classroom setting, and may not be introduced with the needed supports

of systemic change and resources. All of these scholars, writing from the traditions of the history of education and educational policy, have analyzed the effects of reform programs from a macro-level and chronological perspective. These scholars have made an important contribution to the study of educational change using broader frameworks of policy and history.

Other researchers based in education and anthropology have looked more closely at micro-level classroom and school events, and documented the substantial impact of assessment programs, and the MSPAP in particular, on school policies, curriculum, and instruction. My study was based on this body of research, and focused on the discovery of school and classroom level responses to the Maryland State Performance Assessment Program, the MSPAP.

Assessments from Policy Perspectives

Some scholars have studied assessments using policy frameworks, and placed them in the context of larger educational events, power brokering, and public engagement. Baker and O'Neil (1985) wrote that the purpose of testing has been obscured, and that, instead of being true measures of student progress, some assessments have become educational reforms themselves, and serve as "policy instruments," not "indicators," as they were originally intended (pp. 3-5). When assessments are used as policy tools, they drive curriculum, so that what is tested is taught. Ben Oldham (1994) explained that this assessment environment widens the gap between student test scores and "real achievement," suggesting that the introduction of assessments may induce test-driven curriculum and instruction, but may not enhance sustained achievement (p. 10). Researchers who have studied classroom practice developed in response to assessments

have documented teachers' responses to and incorporation of assessments into their thinking about teaching and teaching.

Research on English Language Learners and Standards-Based Assessments

As every state across the nation has implemented accountability systems and standards-based reforms, teachers, state education agency officials, researchers who study English language learners, and others have voiced concern over the inclusion of these students in state accountability systems and assessments. Vincent and Schenck (September 2001) and Rivera and Stansfield (2001) identified inclusion of English language learners in assessment and accountability systems as one of the most common difficulties states face as they develop and implement these systems. Many researchers such as August, Hakuta, and Pompa (1994), D'Amico (1992), Navarrete and Gustke (1996), and Zehler, Hopstock, Fleischman, and Greniuk (1994), along with advocacy groups, have supported exposing English language learners to grade appropriate curricula, but cautioned that assessments used to evaluate native English speaking students' content knowledge may not be valid or reliable for ELLs. As August, Hakuta, and Pompa (1994) explained,

Current assessment instruments in English are inappropriate because they actually assess both content concepts and language ability, particularly reading comprehension and writing. The interconnection of language and content makes it difficult to isolate one feature from the other. As a result, it is difficult to know whether a student is unable to demonstrate knowledge because of a language barrier or whether the student does not know the content material being tested.

(p. 9)

Kopriva (2000, 2001), Abedi (2002, 2004), and others have advocated for the improvement of the validity of content assessments for English language learners, through the careful development of assessments and use of appropriate accommodations. Other scholars have advocated for the inclusion of English language learners in assessments, the use of accommodations for English language learners during testing, and the disaggregation of ELL students' scores as means of making schools accountable for ELLs' academic achievement (August, Hakuta, & Pompa, 1994; D'Amico, 1992; Olson & Goldstein, 1997; Rivera & Stansfield, 2001; Vincent & Schenck, September 2001).

Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all students, including limited English proficient students, were required to participate immediately in academic content assessments, without any exemptions permitted. The passage of this legislation has propelled states to rethink how they would include these students, now nearly 10% of the public school student population, in assessments, as schools and districts face sanctions under Title I, Part A, if they do not meet achievement targets (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Researchers and state policy makers have not, however, published studies on the instruction which is delivered in response to state assessments, and to which all students are exposed throughout the school year, months before they even participate in these assessments.

Challenges of Assessing English Language Learners

As the number of assessments and the number of English language learners (ELLs) has grown across the nation, researchers in second language acquisition have developed guidance for sound practices for assessment of these students. Particular guidance is required because ELLs face unique psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic challenges when taking standardized assessments, such as lack of familiarity of lexical

and grammatical features of English, more time required to access knowledge in English, the complicating role of expectation in reading, and sociocultural discontinuities between their home or native language classroom experiences, and the American school experience. Many researchers and practitioners who serve ELLs favor the use of alternative assessments such as performance and portfolio assessments, as well as the use of multiple, rather than single measures, as more accurate means for gauging ELLs' academic achievement than traditional norm-referenced assessments (August, Pompa, & Hakuta, 1994; D'Amico, 1992; Navarrete & Gustke, 1996; Pierce & O'Malley, 1992). Additionally, the usefulness and equity of assessment for ELLs is enhanced through the use of native language assessment, the alignment of assessments with the curriculum taught, and the disaggregation of ELLs' scores (August, Pompa, & Hakuta, 1994). Nonetheless, performance assessments, like any assessments, must be modified for ELLs so that they "...understand and respond appropriately to the demands of the assessment" (Navarrete & Gustke, 1996). Performance assessments that are "...more authentic, functional, descriptive," and "more individualized" have the potential to more accurately depict what ELLs know and are able to do in English than norm-referenced tests (D'Amico, 1992).

Through modifications, accommodations, and appropriate instructional preparation, there will be a greater chance that ELLs' achievement, rather than merely their language proficiency, will be measured, enhancing the validity of achievement assessments for ELLs (Rivera & Stansfield, 2001; Rivera, Stansfield, Scialdone, & Sharkey, 2002). Additionally, researchers advise that individuals scoring achievement assessments should be able to have a good understanding of students' "...underlying

language proficiency and learning potential” in order to improve the validity of inferences about students’ performance from test scores (D’Amico, 1992, p. 2). Scorers should be aware of how first language transfer or other differences between ELLs’ and native English speaking students’ test performance are manifested, and how they affect language production, for example. Perhaps most importantly, the connections between the assessment and instruction, educational reform, and curriculum determine their usefulness (Baker & O’Neil, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Assessments can play a large role in directing education if they are part of an aligned system of standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction.

Regardless of the type of assessment, ELLs face unique linguistic and cultural challenges when taking an achievement assessment in English. Some of these challenges are rooted in the fact that most state assessments like the MSPAP have not been universally designed, with the academic needs of ELLs incorporated into assessment design. As Navarrete and Gustke (1996) explained, “linguistically diverse students” are “...the fastest growing population in the nation and a population of students whose assessments needs have been systematically ignored in local and national assessment systems” (p. 2-3). In summary, many researchers and stakeholders favor the participation of ELLs in achievement assessments, but emphasize that tests and/or administration practices must be adapted in order for inferences from data generated by these assessments to be valid representations of students’ knowledge.

Exemptions and accommodations for English language learners.

Discussions about assessing ELLs have frequently focused on exemptions and accommodations. Surveys of state assessment programs and analyses of state policies,

such as those conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2001) and Rivera, Stansfield, Scialdone, & Sharkey (2002), have outlined state policies on exemptions and accommodations for LEP students in state assessment programs. Research conducted by Sireci, Li, & Scarpati (2003) and Abedi (2002, 2004) has also illustrated the progress and lack of progress that is being made in this area. Currently, every state permits some type of accommodations on state assessments for students who are identified as LEP. The majority of states, however, permit accommodations that are adopted from those used for students with disabilities, such as extra time, rather than linguistic accommodations, despite research that has shown that these accommodations are not effective in increasing the validity of inferences from ELLs' scores on achievement assessments. The purpose of accommodations is to provide students' with access to assessments, without invalidating the inferences from the scores on these assessments. The research on accommodations is inconclusive, however. Several states are also using either a native language version of the content assessment, or an alternate assessment, as means for ELLs to participate in the regular assessment.

In states across the U.S., a variety of criteria, and, as in the MSPAP, a combination of criteria is used to determine exemptions and/or accommodations. Criteria frequently used to exempt students from testing include students' language proficiency, teacher/administrator recommendation, academic background, and parent recommendation (Rivera, Stansfield, Scialdone, & Sharkey, April 2002). The Maryland State Department of Education developed guidelines, reviewed annually, for MSPAP exemptions and accommodation, as well as a reporting system to show the number and type of exemptions.

More than 20 states changed their exemption policies and practices in the 2000-2001 school year in response to a federal requirement outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994 (USDE, 2003). This requirement specified that, in schools receiving funds from Title I, Part A, Education for Disadvantaged Children and Youth, no student should be exempted from participation in a state assessment for more than one academic year, and that states were responsible for reporting out disaggregated data on the achievement of LEP students on state assessment systems beginning with the 2000-2001 academic year. During the time of this study, Maryland had a language-based exemption policy in place for English language learners. The State began disaggregating the academic achievement assessment scores of LEP students for the first time in 2001. States are now making further changes to their inclusion policies to abide by the more stringent requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, that all children be immediately included in academic content assessments.

Further research needed on ELLs and assessment.

In response to the proliferation of state assessments and states' needs for guidance on developing and administering valid and reliable assessments for ELLs, the bilingual/ESL education research community has developed some consensus around recommendations for the administration, interpretation, and application of these assessments for ELLs. Most scholars agree that these assessments, if used properly, have the potential to help bring ELLs and all students up to high standards. If used improperly, they may further isolate and alienate language minority students, evaluating them using assessments which are incomprehensible and inappropriate, and which do not yield valid inferences about students' knowledge. Researchers have not for the most part,

however, addressed the instruction students receive in preparation for standards-based assessments such as the MSPAP. School-level and classroom-level research has the potential to yield important information about the impact of reforms on student performance and on teaching. As George Madaus (1988) summed up in *The Influence of Testing on the Curriculum*, “In short, once again there is a need for carefully designed studies of the impact of high-stakes state-level achievement tests on schools, teachers, and students” (p. 110).

These studies are particularly critical at schools with high proportions of ELLs. The conundrum provided by assessment programs and state-set Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets is that schools may start out at different assessment points and have very different student populations, but are all required to reach the same level of performance. Even schools with high proportions of ELLs or disadvantaged students must meet the same targets.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of some of the issues and topics central to inclusion of English language learners in state achievement assessments, also called content assessments. These issues and topics were first framed by state and national perspectives, as they are not unique to White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools, but prevalent at schools, districts, and state educational agencies throughout the nation. Furthermore, state and federal requirements drive state policies which direct schools to include English language learners in state assessment systems. Assessments must therefore be viewed from multiple perspectives. The implementation of state assessment programs is not universally supported by educators and researchers, and is, in some circles, highly contentious. The implementation of state assessment programs is

further complicated when these programs are applied to diverse groups of students. The assessment of English language learners on state achievement assessments is by nature challenging, as these students are still learning English and may not be able to fully demonstrate everything they know and are able to do in the academic content areas because, in most states, including Maryland, achievement assessments are written and administered in English. Policies on the use of exemptions and accommodations for English language learners are still being revised in Maryland and other states, so therefore, research on the use of exemptions and accommodations is largely inconclusive.

The next chapter, chapter four, will bring the reader from this broader discussion of issues to a focus on the world of this particular study. The research sites, theoretical framework, and study methodology will be considered in detail.

Chapter IV: Research Sites and Study Methodology: White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools

This chapter brings the reader into the world of this particular study through a description of the research sites and study methodology. The schools are described from the outside in through my own perspective as well as through the voices and eyes of the school principal, staff, and students. The physical appearance of the schools and their surrounding communities are described, followed by student demographics and academic programs. White Springs and Green Fields are then compared to other schools in the County. My own background and informants' backgrounds are discussed, followed by consideration of the conceptual trail which led to development of the research questions and theoretical framework upon which the study is based. Details of data collection, coding, and analysis are then provided. This chapter tells where the study was conducted, by and about whom, and how.

White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools

This study was conducted over a 16 month period from March 1999 to June 2000 at two public elementary schools in Kenhowe County, Maryland, White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools. White Springs, which included grades three through five, was a feeder school for Green Fields, which included grades kindergarten through two. The unit of analysis for this study was the five fifth grade teachers and their classes which were based at White Springs. Observations were conducted in grades kindergarten through five at both schools, however, as well as during whole-school activities at both schools, in order gain an understanding of the whole school contexts. A description of the schools follows.

White Springs: From the outside in.

White Springs Elementary School is a public school located in Kenhowe County, Maryland. It is close to several busy intersections with major thoroughfares into urban areas, where commercial enterprises, including Bollywood Bazaar, Balle Vietnamese and French Sandwiches, Irene's Pupusas, Goodwill Industries, MacDonald's, and Shopper's Warehouse, are lined up side by side. Many cars, pedestrians, and bus riders fill the streets, particularly in the morning and late afternoons. Residential neighborhoods made up of apartment rental complexes, individual brick homes with flowers on front lawns, and housing projects are tucked behind strip malls with peeling paint and colorful storefronts. White Springs Elementary School is located just beyond a small shopping center with a chain grocery store and parking lot where white trucks park at night selling tamales from side windows. There is also a pawnshop, a convenience store, and a public library within walking distance of the school.

White Springs Elementary School is an elongated brick building that was built in 1973. The school is at the top of a hill, and a parking lot curves in front of and to the left side of the school. To the right of the school there are 10 portables; white painted trailers that are used for classrooms, and a long field and large concrete pad with hopscotch squares and a basketball hoop. All visitors to White Springs are required to enter the school through the red front door. One of the first things visitors see as they enter are school announcements and fliers that have been posted on the glass next to the door. There are welcome signs in English, Spanish, Cambodian, and Vietnamese. Immediately inside the building there is a large bulletin board with Polaroid photographs and the names of White Springs teachers and staff. Entering the school, there are administrative

offices near the front door and a long hallway with a colorful tile mosaic at the end. The following excerpt from a field note describes the school:

As I enter White Springs, I see a large banner on the mosaic at the end of the hall “Welcome Grandparents.” There are signs posted around the door to the front office (on the right) and photocopying and teachers’ room (to the left) announcing “Grandparents’ Day May 28, 1999 8:30-11:30 a.m.” A child’s desk with a sign-in sheet and orange round visitor stickers (what I wear) have been placed next to the office. As I look at these materials, Mrs. Joy, the Principal, approaches from the end of the hall and greets me by name. I enter the office, and sign in on the visitor’s log on the bulletin board. The secretary, Mrs. Valdez, recognizes and greets me...

I walk down the light green tiled hallway, and pass the multi-colored community mosaic, the lunch room on the left, the library on the right (media center), and several classrooms, marked by teachers’ names printed neatly on or next to red apple signs...The “ENN” ESOL News Network bulletin board is still up; a blue and white display of students’ printed papers. Each paper has a student's photo and an interview transcript about their likes and dislikes and other topics underneath...

(Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 28, 1999)

The hallways are decorated with a “birthdays” calendar, and many examples of student work that are frequently changed, from student poetry typed on “Dream Writers,” keyboards that students use for word processing, to stories written on mock buffalo hide created from paper bags.

White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools: “It’s sort of like a continuation.”

During the 1999-2000 school year, both White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools were led by one principal, Mrs. Joy, who had 35 years of experience working in education. Each school was also led by a vice-principal, both whom were new to the schools that year. Mrs. Martinez, vice-principal at White Springs, came to work in Kenhowe County after years of experience in a neighboring county. Mr. Velez, vice-principal at Green Fields, came to the County from California. There were more than 60 teachers and 50 instructional assistants employed at the two schools, as well as reading specialists, Headstart staff, a guidance counselor, parent liaison, and others.

White Springs served grades three through six through the 1998-1999 school year, and in 1999-2000, began serving grades three through five. The total school enrollment in 1999-2000 was 317 students in grade three (115), grade four (98), and in grade five (104). Students attended Green Fields for grades pre-kindergarten through grade two before beginning third grade at White Springs. Staff and students at both schools met regularly for joint activities, such as monthly staff development meetings and the annual Young Author’s Fair. One of these activities was a visit for Green Fields second graders to White Springs third grade classrooms at the end of the school year. This activity was designed to ease the transition from one school to the next. Second grade students from Green Fields came to third grade classrooms at White Springs to meet the third grade teachers, eat snacks, hear an overview of the third grade curriculum, and ask questions about third grade:

The second grade teacher asks if her students can use the time to ask questions about third grade. A student asks a question about grades, and Mrs. Sant explains the letter grade system, assuring that none of the students there will "...get a D or an E." The second grade teacher then asks about writing in cursive, something about which she says her students have expressed concern. Mrs. Sant assures the second graders that they will learn cursive gradually, by practicing a few letters at a time. She tells them about some of the things they will do and units they will study in third grade: "map skills, countries; Japan, Ghana, Mexico, making musical instruments..." She takes instruments, like a string instrument made of a shoebox and rubber bands, and other materials from the shelf as she explains them, holding them up in front of her for the group of students to see.

The second grade teacher points out that the third grade classroom has "more computers" (on tables in a small room at the back of the room), and one "hooked up to the Internet."

Another student asks a question about third grade: "Are you going to be writing a lot of letters?" Mrs. Sant responds, "Yes. You can write letters...(and take a)"big test at the end of the year" (where you "explain" what you did). The second grade teacher prompts her students, "Have we been practicing some of that?" "Yes." "On our tests we've been explaining some of our answers."

The second grade teacher asks her students another question, "Do we have reading every day?" Mrs. Sant responds that there is ESOL, the Reading Club, and a special reading teacher (one of the ones in the room). The second grade

teacher tells her students, “You are used to that...ESOL/reading/regular division...”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 28, 1999)

After listening to Mrs. Sant’s description and asking several more questions about school life at White Springs, one student commented, “From Green Fields to here, it’s sort of like a continuation” (S. Lopez, personal communication, May 28, 1999). Mrs. Joy and many of the staff made a concerted effort to create a sense of “continuation” between the two schools. Several teachers remarked to me on the difficulty of forging these connections across schools, and the importance of helping second grade students become academically prepared for third grade. These teachers contextualized this challenge in light of the larger challenge all teachers face in making linkages between grades, even within the same school.

Programs for English language learners.

During the time that the study was conducted, the student populations were similar at the two schools, but the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs varied. The term, “ESOL,” will be used to refer to English as a second language programs and teachers at White Springs and Green Fields, as this is the terminology used by Kenhowe County. Below I will describe the ESOL teaching staff and programs at the two schools.

At Green Fields Elementary School, there were four full-time and one part-time ESOL teachers, and ELLs designated as needing language support attended ESOL classes for blocks of time, or ESOL teachers worked in the classroom alongside regular classroom teachers. At White Springs, there were two full-time ESOL teachers, and

students attended blocks of “pull-out” ESOL instruction three times a week in grades three and four. A “pull-out” ESOL program is characterized by the use of English as the only language of instruction in the classroom, and the physical relocation of English language learners from the regular classroom to a classroom where English as a Second Language is taught (NCELA, August 2001). During “pull-out” instruction, the student receives instruction from a teacher other than the regular teacher or from an instructional assistant separate from the regular classroom and regular class activities. This program is a method of instructing English language learners where they are taken out of the regular classroom on a regularly scheduled basis in order to receive specialized instruction from a teacher specifically trained to teach English as a second language.

“Pull-out” instruction can be distinguished from “push-in” instruction, where the ESOL teacher and/or bilingual or ESL instructional assistant will come into the regular classroom to work with the students designated as English language learners. The instructional program at Green Fields was both a pull-out and push-in program. The program at White Springs was a pull-out program. Both models of instruction, in particular, the pull-out program model, are commonly used for instructing English to Speakers of Other Languages in schools across the United States (NCELA, August 2001).

School communities according to Mrs. Joy: The principal’s perspective.

Green Fields offered before and after school day care, and also had a parent resource center, one of five in the County, that was open six days a week. At White Springs, students could participate in after school activities and clubs such as the “chess club” or “free sports” in the gym. Mrs. Joy reported that Green Fields only offered a few

evening classes or workshops for parents, as many were afraid to come out of their homes at night. In order to combat some of the complaints about a nearby housing project, Mrs. Joy and a group of community members formed an “action team” to partner with police and the community to address complaints such as landlord neglect, rats, and other problems. There was a full-time counselor at both schools, as well as an “Amigos counselor” at Green Fields, who met with groups of Spanish speaking mothers on Monday mornings to educate them about public services.

Mrs. Joy reported that most parents of White Springs and Green Fields students held two or three jobs. She indicated that, though they may not participate in traditional PTA meetings, they “come through in other ways” by supporting assemblies and other activities when they can (M. Joy, personal communication, March 2, 1999). At evening events at the schools such as ESOL Parent Night (September 9, 1999) and a fall PTA meeting (November 2, 1999), large numbers of Spanish speaking parents were in attendance, and the meeting activities were conducted both in English and Spanish. According to Mrs. Joy, both schools were “very good places,” where the “kids are needy” (M. Joy, personal communication, March 2, 1999).

Mrs. Joy explained her view of working with her schools’ communities, saying she believed that we should look holistically at student needs, and that poverty is not a barrier to good care. In her words, you might be poor, but you “don’t have to be filthy,” and you can still have “nutritious meals.” She reported that parents of students at the schools needed training in how to take care of their children in the environment in which they live. She gave examples of parents’ lack of education or understanding of how things work in the U.S. that caused problems, such as when a child had a broken arm, and

the mother said that he would be fine and did not take him to the hospital. Another child had a dog bite, and was not taken to see a doctor for three days. She talked about the importance of “treatment” and “breaking cycles.” She ended by talking about the difficulties of transitions to middle and high schools, and the need to follow students through and do research on how they progress and perform academically (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, July 23, 1999).

White Springs compared to other schools in the County.

White Springs Elementary School is different from many other schools in Kenhowe County. Student demographics at White Springs and neighboring schools in some parts of the County are markedly different than demographics at schools in other parts of the County. In the 1999-2000 school year, 25.1 percent of students at White Springs were identified as limited English proficient, and 83.8 percent received free or reduced price meals. The school received Title I, Headstart, and other federal funds. MSPAP results at White Springs were below most other schools in the County and State. On the 2000 MSPAP grade five assessments, 29.9 percent of students at the school scored “satisfactory” or better on the reading assessment, and 25 percent scored “satisfactory” or better on the math assessment.

White Springs Elementary possessed other unique features that differentiated it from other schools in the County school district. The school participated in the Reading Initiative, which enabled the school to have a low class size (15:1 targeted) and specialized blocks of reading instruction for students identified as at risk for reading difficulties. Students at all grades and from all ethnic backgrounds had high attendance rates, surpassing the state satisfactory rate of 94%. Students’ diverse backgrounds were

highlighted by teachers at the schools, and acknowledged during school community activities, such as the annual international dinner. The motto of Green Fields Elementary, “Success in Unity,” characterized the school leadership’s efforts to unify and respect students and their communities. Although school culture was not the focus of the study, it pervaded the daily school activities, through which respect, politeness, and understanding were promoted by the school leadership team, in particular, the principal, Mrs. Joy.

School cultures.

One of the school activities that best exemplified the school culture (Erickson, 1987a) of both White Springs and Green Fields schools was school wide assembly. Mrs. Joy led the entire staff and students in a school wide assembly at the start of the school day every Friday at White Springs and every Monday at Green Fields. During these assemblies, teachers brought all of their students together in the multipurpose rooms for a half hour of announcements by the principal, vice-principals, teachers, and students, the distribution of class awards for good cafeteria and hallway behavior and other successes, the singing of the school song, and review of one week and planning for the next week. Mrs. Joy shared her vision for the schools, her expectations for staff and students, and her assessment of what she saw as critical to school success during these whole school meetings, as well as during joint staff meetings and other events. At the first pre-service meeting of the 1999 school year, Mrs. Joy charted the path for the year, and set the tone for the work to come. The following excerpt from field notes taken at this meeting illustrates Mrs. Joy’s vision and expectations for White Springs for the 1999-2000 school

year, and provides a picture of the topics and issues seen as important for instructional staff.

Starting the 1999-2000 school year at White Springs.

I enter White Springs on a sunny and warm morning, a few minutes before the start of the first pre-service session of the year... I enter through the front door, along with groups of other teachers and staff dressed in skirts, shorts, jeans, or other summer clothes, and see Mrs. Joy standing at the end of the hallway in front of the school mosaic next to the cafeteria. She is wearing a denim jumper. She warmly greets and hugs everyone (including me) as they say hello to her on the way to the cafeteria, and Mrs. Martinez stands next to her and greets staff members with a warm smile... I help myself to breakfast, then head back to my table, and begin to introduce myself to those at my table, chatting with them until I hear the loud music.

Mrs. Joy strides to the middle of the room in front of the stage, walking in step and raising her arms to the beat of “Here we go,” a loud rap-like song by the group In Sync. Some teachers around the room stand up and raise their hands in time to the music. Mrs. Joy turns off the stereo and, taking the microphone, tells the audience, more than 100 teachers and staff from White Springs and Green Fields Elementary that some students introduced her to this musical group. She greets everyone and welcomes them, and the room goes quiet. She announces that this year begins her 35th year in education, and starts off by introducing the two new vice-principals. Mrs. Joy tells us that we will start the morning off with a “reading game,” and hands out lists of clues with blank spaces next to them to

each table. She explains that each clue represents the name of a children's book, and that a "recorder" at each table should write down the group's best guess...

Mrs. Joy explains that these are books with which all elementary teachers should be familiar. She points to the plastic containers on the stage, and tells us that we each have a number in our folders that corresponds with a container of "goodies" which includes hall passes, books, and school supplies...

Mrs. Joy begins the next part of the meeting, describing the "new changes" for the year. There is a new County Superintendent who values the "curb appeal" of schools, like improvements in the "hill" and "gardens." She describes him as also "driven by data," and being one to "tell(ing) things how they are," "for example, if there is a gap between Hispanic and White students, he will talk about it." He "wants honesty," and "intends to visit every school." She explains that there are also two Associate Superintendent positions that are not yet filled, and that the Deputy Superintendent position will be occupied by a former Assistant Superintendent.

Mrs. Joy then begins to talk about the expected student class size; 17-19 children per class, and organized so that instructional assistants are "with you" during reading, language arts, and math. At White Springs there are blocks of time so "ESOL staff can help" and there are "no overlaps, gaps." She tells us that she has already put in a request to the new County administration for white boards, rocking chairs, and other "stuff," and has been granted \$10,000. She also asked the Superintendent's permission for her to "keep the two schools."

Mrs. Joy gives an overview of some of the things the staff will experience throughout the year, from “EMT” for “kids with trouble,” “nuggets of training,” a “long time from January to April,” “sports, red, and twin day,” “spring break,” “then it’s testing...MSPAP...CRTs, and Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills:” “testing until kingdom come!”

She reminds us that there should be “no homework before religious holidays.” This year “safety and security” will be a “big thing,” and there is a “whole plan based on what happened at Columbine,” as “Kenhowe County wants every school to have a plan.” At Columbine, there was “no emergency plan,” “no one in charge,” “no copy of the school floor plan,” and the “fire alarm kept going off,” but it couldn’t be heard. This plan is a “big priority in the school system.” At Green Fields there was a gunman down the corner a few years ago, and a SWAT team came out to the school. Mrs. Joy explains that there will be “other things you have that pertain to school safety,” and that “all will be explained at different times.” All teachers must have “emergency plans” placed in “substitute folders...” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, August 26, 1999)

Mrs. Joy’s personable style, combined with her concern for the academic growth and overall welfare of her students is evident from these field notes. Her emphasis on strengthening instruction of reading and mathematics was prevalent during whole school meetings for students and staff throughout the year. Her overview of the myriad events, both internal and external to the school, that would make up the school year and impact on instruction, illustrates how, at the school level, the MSPAP was just one of many factors that shaped students’ and teachers’ lives.

The description above provides a picture of the world of White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools, through the eyes of study informants and the researcher. In the following section, I will describe how research was actually conducted at these two school sites.

Study Methodology

A discussion of the study methodology includes consideration of the backgrounds of the researcher and informants, and details regarding the theoretical framework upon which the study was based and decisions made during site selection, data collection, and data analysis which shaped the direction of the study. Below I will describe how I selected the study sites, and how I initiated entry into these sites as a researcher. I will also describe my emergent thinking during the research process which shaped the development of interview questions and focus during observations. Finally, I will describe each of the methods used for data collection; observation and participant observation, interviews, and content analysis of documents, and limitations to data collection procedures. My own background and the background of study informants are discussed first, as they serve as the lenses through which events were experienced and recorded, and information collected and analyzed.

Researcher background.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have posited that the personal biography of the qualitative researcher shapes the qualitative research process. They have explained that the qualitative researcher approaches the research process with a set of questions, interests, ideas, and tendencies which shape how she or he approaches the research process. The researcher's personal biography is made up of his or her gender, class, racial, and cultural perspectives. In order for the reader to better understand the findings

presented in this study, and the perspective through which these findings were developed, I will briefly present the elements of my own personal biography that may be relevant to how I conducted research and analyzed data. I will then briefly present elements of study informants' backgrounds which I believed to be relevant to this research.

I am a White female who became interested in the topic of how teachers teach English language learners in an era of standards-based reform when I worked on k-16 projects at the University System of Maryland in the late 1990's. At that time, the MSPAP was being used statewide, and the Maryland State Department of Education was in the process of evaluating school and district performance on the assessments. Prior to my work at the University System of Maryland, I worked as a teacher of English as a second language, grades pre-kindergarten through adult, in the United States and overseas, for more than ten years. I used my identity as a former teacher when initiating entry into schools and classrooms during the research process. My experience as a teacher provided me with a high comfort level as I conducted research in school settings, and enabled me to participate in the routines of everyday school life during the research process with familiarity and ease.

My interest in policy-practice intersections, in particular, in how standards-based reforms were filtered down to the classroom level through instruction, was further peaked when I began work at the federal level at the U.S. Department of Education. At the Department, I serve as an Education Program Specialist in the Office of English Language Acquisitions (OELA), and am responsible for monitoring and providing technical assistance to state educational agencies, districts, and schools as they implement federal education laws and policies. In this role, I interact with teachers from across the

United States from my office in Washington, and at professional conferences in Arkansas, California, Illinois, and other states, and have listened to many teachers talk about how new state standards-based assessments are requiring them to “teach to the test.” These professional experiences have convinced me that questions about how teachers are adapting instruction for English language learners in response to state assessment systems and the role of these systems in these students’ education are important to ask, and complicated to answer. In order to answer these questions, we must observe and speak with teachers, and learn of aspects of their backgrounds which shape their teaching.

Informant backgrounds.

The background characteristics of the five regular classroom teachers who were the primary informants in this study deserve consideration, as these are the lenses through which these teachers taught and viewed their students. The similarities across teachers, as well as their differences, deserve consideration, because they enhance generalizability of findings across classrooms. Four of the five teachers; Ms. Hart, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Robins, and Mrs. Day, had joined the school and district within the last few years, and had less than ten years of teaching experience. These four teachers were all fairly recent graduates of teacher preparation programs, and relatively new to the teaching profession. Ms. Hart, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Robins are White women who were between twenty-four and thirty years of age during the time that this study was conducted. Mrs. Day is an African-American woman who was between thirty and thirty-five years old during the time that this study was conducted. One of the teachers, Mrs. Siddiqhad more extensive teaching experience in the United States and in her home country, India, as compared to

the other four teachers. She was also the only fifth grade teacher who spoke English as a second language. Mrs. Siddiq was between forty and fifty years old at the time that this study was conducted.

All of the five fifth grade teachers except one, Ms. Hart, had begun their professional careers as teachers. Ms. Hart had entered the teaching profession through an alternate certification program after working in the financial services industry for several years, then deciding to go into teaching. None of the teachers had completed undergraduate or graduate coursework related to teaching ELLs, or earned ESL/Bilingual certification.

In addition to learning about teachers' backgrounds, I also learned first-hand how they taught. By conducting classroom observations of all fifth grade classrooms at White Springs, I was able to make conclusions about the instruction delivered by all five regular classroom teachers. During the study, I also conducted observations of classes taught by ESOL teachers, music teachers, art teachers, and the school librarian, though I focused the majority of my research on regular fifth grade classrooms. All five fifth grade regular classroom teachers used MSPAP-related preparation activities in their classrooms, though some individual differences were apparent across teachers. Mrs. Siddiq, the most experienced teacher, was the only teacher who spoke about developing entire instructional units based on the MSPAP. Each teacher had their own instructional style. For example, Ms. Hart typically began lessons with a long teacher-directed dialogue with students during which she would introduce the topic to be taught, and ask students to relate the topic to their own personal experience. Mrs. Day frequently began lessons by guiding her entire class in exercises in oral language development, by writing examples

of spoken language and having students study and correct the grammar. Each of the five fifth grade teachers at White Springs had their own approach to developing and delivering instruction that had been shaped by their teaching experiences, professional training, and subject area interest and knowledge. Illustrations of how teacher informants in the study constructed their experience and backgrounds into what I have called “craft knowledge” (B. Finkelstein, personal communication, July 2004), or a version of what Polanyi calls “tacit knowledge” (Polanyi, 1967; Herschbach, 1995) are further discussed in the chapters which follow.

Theoretical foundations for a qualitative case study.

This case study was grounded in conceptualizations of curriculum and instruction that were multi-faceted and broad, and in the conceptualization of schooling as a complex process. Schooling and the application of reforms were understood to be flexible and multi-layered, rather than linear responses to courses of change outlined in strategic plans, top-down directives, or other blueprints for educational transformation. For the purposes of this study, schools were viewed as “natural systems” made up of inter-related parts that were engaged in complex relationships (Goodlad, Klein, & Tye, 1979). Qualitative methods, including fieldwork, interviews, and other means of collecting data, are especially useful in developing an understanding of multi-faceted phenomena, such as the filtering of state reforms down to instruction.

In this case study, I used the grounded theory approach to investigate how teachers at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools adapted instruction for English language learners in response to the MSPAP, and the role of the MSPAP as part of the constellation of factors that shaped instruction for English language learners. The

grounded theory approach was developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and is an approach that is used to systematically study and analyze a phenomenon, while permitting hypotheses about that phenomenon to emerge inductively from data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents” (p. 23). This approach was selected for the study as it fit well with the open nature of the research questions, while also providing structure to address these questions.

Development of research questions.

In this section, data collection procedures that were used at the research sites are described, including decisions that were made in order to focus the study, both theoretically and practically. The research questions for this study had their inception in a qualitative study that I conducted in fifth grade classrooms at Big Dune Elementary School in neighboring Marion County, from the spring of 1997 through the spring of 1998. During classroom observations of regular fifth grade classrooms, I observed teachers following practices of student grouping, individualized instruction, and differentiated teaching for English language learners as students were being prepared for the MSPAP throughout the school year (M. Bentley-Memon, 1998). The findings from this study led me to develop research questions and a study design for a focused study of regular classroom teachers’ adaptations of instruction for the MSPAP, and of the role of the MSPAP in the constellation of factors that shaped instruction at the classroom level.

Research site selection.

I applied to the Marion County Public Schools to continue my research at Big Dune Elementary, and, although my permission to conduct research was granted, I was

advised to study another site due to the large number of reforms being implemented at Big Dune by the County. When unable to find a school site in Marion County, I turned to neighboring Kenhowe County, which had a similar population of immigrant families .

After permission was obtained from Kenhowe County Public Schools to conduct the study, the County research office recommended three school sites with large numbers of English language learners. The principals at these sites were contacted, and permission was granted to begin the study at White Springs Elementary School and its feeder school, Green Fields Elementary School.

Initiating entry as a researcher.

I held an initial orientation meeting with the principal, Mrs. Joy, on March 8, 1999, during which the objectives of the study and procedures for fieldwork were discussed. Mrs. Joy informed me that written permission from informants would only be required when conducting interviews, and permitted me to make my own introductions to teachers in order to receive permission to observe their classes. From March-June 1999, I conducted observations in classrooms in grades kindergarten through five, in order to become acquainted with the two schools, their staff, student population, and other characteristics.

The role of the researcher during qualitative research.

While interacting with school staff and students, I presented myself as a doctoral student at the University of Maryland who “used to be a teacher,” and was doing research on ESOL students and the MSPAP. I engaged in participant observation and observation while observing school activities or instruction. Participant observation was employed when my interactions with students and staff would not interfere with classroom or

school activities, such as when students were working in small groups, or at schoolwide meetings. Observation was employed when my participation might disrupt classroom or school activities, such as during periods of direct instruction by the teacher, or when assessments were being administered. During school assemblies, I walked with classes down to the multi-purpose room, and sat in folding chairs with other teachers. While in the classroom, I walked around the room, looking at student work when the teacher or instructional assistant did so, and sat in the back of the room or at a student's desk during periods of direct instruction. During lunch breaks, I ate lunch at the rectangular table in the teachers' room and chatted with staff, or joined the students on the playground or in the cafeteria. While with students in the playground or cafeteria, I played with them, supervised them when asked to do so by a teacher, and talked with them. While on site, I made a conscious effort to become part of the school communities, in order to gain a more "emic" understanding of daily classroom and school activities (Geertz, 1983).

Throughout the study, I participated in school activities in order to further acquaint myself with the research sites, including "Young Author's Day," "ESOL Parents' Night," the "International Dinner," community fair, and other activities. I also conducted visits to shops, restaurants, the public library, and other locations in the neighborhood in order to further understand the community around these two schools. My daily integration into the school community and use of observation and participant observation was patterned after qualitative research methodologies commonly used in education research, which borrow traditions from anthropology, though these methodologies are usually defined slightly differently in the two disciplines (B. Stuart, personal communication, September 27, 2004).

A case within the schools: Fifth grade.

I initiated entry into fifth grade classrooms in the fall of 1999 after presenting information about my study at an August faculty meeting, then following up with letters to fifth grade teachers (Appendix B). My selection of fifth grade was based on several factors. First, I wanted to select a grade in which the MSPAP was administered. Second, I was guided by the principal and vice-principal to select fifth grade for study, rather than third grade, due to their perception of the higher level of validity of inferences from scores on the MSPAP assessment at that grade level. I arranged visits to classrooms in advance by telephone, through notes in teachers' mailboxes, or in person. The majority of visits lasted the entire school day, so I was able to observe each class during all of the subject periods. During the 1999-2000 school year, I visited all of the five fifth grade classrooms several times, for a total of more than 30 full school day visits. As I learned more about the student composition of each class, I elected to schedule the majority of my visits to two classes that had the highest number of ESOL students: Ms. Hart and Mrs. Smith's classes. Through dialoguing with fifth grade teachers, I learned which classes were low performing and which was considered "gifted and talented." The two classes identified by teachers as low performing were those with the highest numbers of ESOL students.

Emergent thinking during data collection.

My initial intention was to study students receiving English as a Second Language services, and how teachers prepared them for the MSPAP. As I conducted my observations, however, several discoveries changed my thinking about the focus of my study. In the qualitative research tradition, I permitted these emergent findings to shape

the focus of the study (Ely, Anzul, Friendman, Garner, & McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991). First, I found that ESOL students and many former ESOL students who had been redesignated as proficient in English, who are sometimes called, “formerly limited English proficient” (FEP), were enrolled in all of the fifth grade classes. Most of these students had achieved sufficient proficiency in English so that they were no longer receiving English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) services, however, most did not have sufficient proficiency in English to achieve at the same level as their native English-speaking peers. Ms. Hart reported, for example, that although only eight of her nineteen students were receiving services for English as a Second Language, all of her students had either come to the United States from another country, or had parents who did, so that a language other than English was a part of their home environments.

Second, I found that in four of the fifth grade classes, there were several students who were what I have called “new arrivals,” students who had recently arrived in the United States, and had a very low level of even basic oral communication skills in English. These students participated in ESOL and regular classrooms, but posed special challenges to teachers because of their recent arrival to the United States, often well into the school year. The challenges of instructing these students were relayed to me directly by teachers, and also observed during classroom observations.

Finally, I found that, due to the nature of the pull-out ESOL instructional program at White Springs Elementary School, even ESOL students spent the majority of the day in their regular classrooms, only attending ESOL class three times per week for 90 minutes each. This situation reflects the classroom setting that the majority of English language learners across the United States experience, as few districts and schools have

the resources to provide an all-day specialized program, and most emphasize the importance of incorporating the student into the regular program. Additionally, both at my research sites and on a national level, the regular teachers, those who spend the most time with English language learners, are those who feel the least prepared to teach them (Menken and Antunez, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1996; Public Education Network [PEN], 2004). This information about the students at the two schools, their teachers, and the ESOL program at the schools led me to focus my observations on all English language learner students in regular fifth grade classrooms at White Springs Elementary School.

Procedures for data collection: Observation, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis.

A qualitative case study was conducted through the use of observation, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. Procedures for each of these methods of data collection are described below. During the data collection process, research practices of Marshall and Rossman (1995) and other qualitative researchers were employed, such as testing emergent hypotheses through informant checks and further observations, and developing alternative explanations to critically evaluate developing hypotheses. While conducting observations and participant observations of classes or school activities, I took ethnographic field notes in a journal, writing down 1) the setting and any changes to the setting since my last visit, 2) daily class activities, from announcements over the intercom, to student presentations, 3) activities and speech of the teacher, and, to the extent possible, 4) activities and speech of the class and individual students (Appendix D). I focused observations of individual students on ESOL, new

arrival, and formerly limited English proficient students. During these observations, I recorded a general account of all classroom activities, curricula studied, bulletin board notices posted, etc., and I took particular notice of any of the above that related directly to the MSPAP and/or to English language learners.

My field notes were recorded in the present tense, and I reported on my own actions when I was directly involved with a student, teacher, or instructional assistant. I made written records of verbatim speech of teachers, students, or others when relevant to the MSPAP and/or to English language learners to the extent possible. When it was not possible to make a written record of an entire interchange due to speed of delivery, or multiple individuals talking simultaneously, I paraphrased the interchange, or inserted ellipses if necessary.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with all five of the fifth grade regular classroom teachers in the spring of 2000. Interview questions and the purpose of the interviews were shared with the teachers in advance (Appendixes C, B). Teachers completed permission forms prior to participating in the interviews (Appendix F). Interviews lasted between 30 and 70 minutes each. Two interviews were transcribed by hand, and three were recorded with a cassette recorder, then transcribed. In both interviews and field notes, italics were used to indicate speaker emphasis, and ellipses were used to indicate when any portion of speech was either not recorded or not intelligible. Field notes from classroom observations and interviews were transcribed and typed, and copies were given to teachers throughout the research process. All teachers were asked to review and comment on or ask questions about field notes, but none

responded with particular feedback, although they all indicated interest in reading the notes, and seemed pleased to have received them.

I collected classroom level and school level documents from both schools throughout the duration of this study, from March 1999 through June 2000. These were documents used in the course of the school day, such as student worksheets or fliers for parents, as well as those distributed by the principal's office for distribution to community members or teachers, or during schoolwide activities and meetings (Appendix E). These documents, along with transcripts from interviews with fifth grade teachers, were coded for concepts, categories, and subcategories, along with all field notes. The list in Appendix G shows the categories and themes contained in these documents.

The set of data generated during this research was a collection of more than thirty sets of field notes from full day classroom observations, transcripts from five interviews, and stacks of classroom level, school level, district level, and community documents. Each type of data was analyzed, then themes from each of the types of data were considered in relation to one another, to arrive at overall conclusions in response to the research questions. Primary data is presented throughout this study and cited as "personal communication," in accordance with APA style. When data consists of a quote that can be directly attributed to an individual, then the pseudonym for that individual is provided. When data consists of field notes, then my own name, followed by the citation, "personal communication," appears. Further details of data analysis are described below.

Data analysis.

As I designed the study initially, I had planned to group my observations and findings around Goodlad, Klein, and Tye's (1979) conceptualization of the curriculum, looking at goals and objectives, content (material), instructional technique, and assessment. I found, however, as I conducted observations and transcribed and coded data, that these categories often overlapped, and that a truer reflection of my data would be to base my conclusions on categories that emerged from the data themselves. Use of the grounded theory approach and data analysis techniques described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) were used in order to generate categories which emerged from the data, based on the two research questions.

Procedures for data analysis were further modeled after procedures used in a study with a similar research methodology and questions to this one: Ketter and Pool's (2001) qualitative case study on the impact of a state-mandated writing assessment. In this study, researchers investigated teacher instructional practice and student attitudes about writing in two Maryland high school classrooms. The researchers analyzed teacher interview transcripts and field notes using coding techniques described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In this study, I also followed the pattern of data processing described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and coded data using open general coding by paragraph and "chunks" of events within each set of field notes, interview transcripts, and documents. I coded data according to general concepts that related to the research questions, such as "student grouping," "performance-based pedagogy," and "vocabulary." I then broke concepts down into categories, which were then connected across categories and subcategories using axial coding. I studied concepts and categories both for frequency

and for relative importance in context across the data set (Appendixes K, L, M). The resulting themes and supporting data are outlined in chapters five through seven. I arrived at over-arching conclusions after further diagramming study findings and their conceptual relationships multiple times, using the organizing framework of the research questions.

Limitations of the data collection process.

Certain limitations to the data collection process were inherent to the nature of the assessment and accountability system in Maryland during the time that the study was conducted. First, the MSPAP was designed to provide information on the performance of schools, and on grades within these schools, rather than on individual students.

Therefore, it was not possible to track individual student progress and relate it back to the findings of the study, which may have provided some additional information on the significance of teacher instructional practice as it related to student achievement on the MSPAP. Second, as the MSPAP was a secure test, it was not possible for me to conduct formal classroom observations during a full administration of the assessments. I was able to observe part of the MSPAP spring 1997 and 1998 test administration at Big Dune Elementary School while conducting research on site at that school, however. This experience, as well as my own review of documents available from the Maryland State Department of Education, helped me to familiarize myself with the MSPAP testing format, items, and linkages to the curriculum. I also conducted observations at White Springs on test administration days as the testing sessions were ending, so was able to observe students completing the assessments and reflecting with the teacher on the assessment experience. As I knew this information about test security when

conceptualizing the study, I developed the research design to focus on instruction throughout the year related to preparation for the assessments. The focus on instruction interested me because I had found a gap in the literature in this area, and because I had found through my research at Big Dune Elementary School that instructional practices were being adapted throughout the school year in order to prepare students for the May administration of the MSPAP.

Another limitation to data collection related to my experience as a researcher on site. I was well received by the majority of teachers and administrators at the two schools, and gained open access to classrooms as needed. I was welcomed into classrooms, recognized and greeted by fifth grade children, and invited by fifth grade teachers and the principal and vice-principal to have lunch with staff and to participate in other school activities during and after school. I visited ESOL classrooms and met with the two ESOL teachers, but, overall, the regular fifth grade teachers were more receptive to my participation in their classes than were the ESOL teachers. This fact, as well as my growing interest in English language learners in the regular classroom, led me to conduct the majority of my observations in the two regular fifth grade classes with the largest numbers of ESOL and formerly ESOL students.

During my study, multiple factors shaping instruction for ELLs were observed, including individual teachers' teaching styles and experience, the fifth grade curriculum, and the MSPAP. I tried to account for the differences across fifth grade teachers and the role of the fifth grade curriculum in shaping instruction by 1)observing all fifth grade teachers and coding across teachers, 2)looking at the fifth grade curriculum and MSPAP test items and practice tests, 3)becoming familiar with the vocabulary, types of tasks, and

other qualities of the MSPAP in order to recognize if and how it shaped instruction, and 4) dialoging directly with teachers about the influence of the MSPAP on instruction. The objective of this study, however, was to gain an in-depth picture of what was happening at the classroom level, through regular visits and rapport with a small number of teachers and classes.

Limitations of the study.

Above I have described some of the major limitations to the data collection process used in this study. Limitations to data collection further limited the overall study design and research questions. First, due to the design of the MSPAP and the secure nature of the test, it was not possible to clearly determine if teacher adaptations to instruction resulted in improved student achievement. As individual student data on the MSPAP was not available, and I was not permitted to observe test administration, it was not possible to link student scores to teacher behavior, and in turn, to student achievement. The MSPAP was not designed to provide information on the progress of individual students, but to provide information on the progress of schools and districts towards state standards. Through this study I was able to generate qualitative data on whether teachers adapted instruction in response to the assessment program, how they did so, and how the MSPP competed with other factors which shaped ELLs' education.

Second, this study did not include an in-depth analysis of all of the aspects of the school setting that may have shaped instruction, such as school culture or teacher instructional experience. This study was also not conducted through the lenses of any of the multiple contexts shaping instruction for ELLs, including regulatory pressures, traditions of teaching, or student backgrounds. This study could also have been

conducted across several schools, rather than at a pair of schools, which would have enhanced the reliability and generalizability of the findings. Instead, this study was a small in-depth study conducted over time at two schools.

Summary

This chapter outlined where the study was conducted, by and about whom, and how. This chapter demonstrated how the research questions were pursued in these two school settings, and how the settings themselves shaped data collection procedures. The rationale for studying a case within the case; five fifth grade classes and their teachers within these two schools, was also presented. The mechanics of how this case within a case was studied were also presented, followed by study limitations. The next chapters are organized around analytic categories that emerged from classroom and school visits, through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The research questions and a summary of resulting themes and data sources supporting these themes are shown in Appendixes H, I, and J. The chapters which follow are both “descriptive” and “interpretive” (Merriam, 1988) as they include descriptions of the phenomenon under study, and a narrative of conceptual categories which describe the phenomenon (p. 29, 38).

Chapter V: Teacher Strategies and Beliefs

This chapter is the first of three chapters where primary data from the research will be discussed as it relates directly to the research questions. The voices and observable behaviors of informants, including teachers, students, and instructional staff, will be presented in order to address the question of how teachers adapted instruction for English language learners in response to the MSPP. This chapter will demonstrate how state policies were nested in and co-existed with classroom practice. Policy-practice intersections took shape through teachers' use of common instructional strategies, mitigated by the underlying beliefs which shaped their teaching.

Common Instructional Strategies

During the time that the study was conducted, from March 1999-May 2000, all five fifth grade regular classroom teachers at White Springs Elementary School used several common strategies when working with English language learner (ELL) students in their mainstream (regular) classrooms. What makes this finding impressive is that teachers used common instructional strategies to teach ELLs without any specific direction from school leadership to do so, and without any specific training on teaching ELLs. Teachers used common instructional strategies without evidence of peer conversations about effective instruction in teaching ELLs. In the privacy of their own classrooms, all five fifth grade teachers drew from a repertoire of common instructional strategies when planning and executing instruction for limited English proficient students in their classes.

In the section which follows, I will describe these instructional strategies, and show how they shaped the instruction of ELLs. These strategies were often used when

teachers were engaged in performance-based pedagogy; instruction related to preparation for the MSPAP. Many of these strategies, such as permitting students to use their native language to complete an assignment, are those recommended by experts in ESL/bilingual education as means of promoting students' language development, while providing them access to academic content knowledge (Antunez, 2002, Grouping section; DiCerbo, 2000, Table 1 section).

Of the five fifth grade regular classroom teachers at White Springs, all reported that they had not received specific training relevant to teaching English language learners, either while teaching at White Springs or at other schools. Two of the teachers reported that they had had some experiences teaching English language learners. Mrs. Siddiq reported that she had taught English as a second language in her native country, India, and Mrs. Day spoke of experiences in New York state teaching ELLs. All teachers used specific strategies in working with these students in their classes, and particularly when working with new arrivals; students who had just arrived at White Springs, and were either new to the school or new to the United States. Classroom observations of teacher strategies were reinforced by teacher reports during interviews, when teachers spoke of their deliberate use of these strategies.

Student peer translators.

One of the most frequently observed strategies used by all teachers was the use of student peer translators from Spanish and Vietnamese to English. Peer translators translated instructions for a written assignment, teacher directions delivered orally, or throughout the completion of an assignment as needed for their student peers with limited knowledge of English. Some of these peer translator relationships were formally

established by teachers, such as Mrs. Day's arrangement for Juan, who had recently come to White Springs from Nicaragua, "This is his first week, and he has a translator in here..." (M. Day, personal communication, October 18, 1999). Other peer translation occurred spontaneously and informally when needed during instruction, as teachers either actively sought out peer translators for ELLs, or permitted use of the native language in the classroom during class assignments.

Use of peer translators is well illustrated by several excerpts from an interview with Mrs. Day, and vignettes from observations of her class. During an interview, Mrs. Day described her work with ELLs in her classroom,

Day: "Okay, in this classroom, there are only two children that...umm...spoke absolutely no English. As a matter of fact, one just came this week!"

Bentley-Memon: "Really, you just got one."

Day: "Just got in this week. The other child was here from the beginning and he is doing really well. He goes to ESOL, and when he's not in ESOL, you know, he's with me, and I do other things with him. I have a translator, but I also help him to read in English. I do things in English with him, umm...but I do have someone translating lessons, so he's given information and he's doing a great job. He's starting to read. He's reading in English. He's speaking more English..."

"His strongest point is his math skills, and, as far as I have sensed, he is not on grade level year, but I'm getting there, and the reason it is taking so long is (pauses) he can't read the English by himself. But now, he's able to read now by himself, so when they translate, um, sometimes when you translate, it was hard for him to understand really what are they actually 'cause he couldn't get it, it's

kind of hard 'cause I'm asking children themselves to translate, so it was difficult on their part too, trying to translate the words on the paper. Umm, but now he's starting to master language, he's finally able to move, you know..."

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Mrs. Day described how she combined strategies to help Juan to participate in class, providing native language translation for him so he could participate in class activities, and also providing reading practice and "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985) in English. She acknowledged that the use of peer translators may not always result in a complete and perfect translation, but suggested that it is one of the strategies that is helping Juan to "...start(ing) to master language" (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000).

The following vignette from field notes illustrates how peer translators assisted Juan in completing an assignment:

Mrs. Day comes over and sits by Juan, the boy who "doesn't talk English," and reads the word on the worksheet aloud for him, "bison: buffalo, " (we point at the map of Wyoming behind him, where there is a picture of a buffalo) "cone-shaped tent: teepee."

She asks me if I speak Spanish, and I respond, no, then she calls another student over to translate, asking her what the Spanish word for teepee is. Mrs. Day stands up from helping Juan and tells me, "He's so bright....He can do it by himself. He blows the others away in math." As she walks away, saying, "You need to study more," to the group, the students continue their conversation in Spanish, and Juan, after having translations on vocabulary and instructions from the other students,

completes the worksheet with all of the words filled in correctly on the crossword. He then begins to work on identifying the states, with more instructions in Spanish from the other students. He is able to identify Texas and Wyoming. At the other tables, many of the FEP students have completed the worksheet and identified 15 or more states. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 18, 1999)

The following vignette from a mathematics lesson in Mrs. Day's class illustrates the use of peer translation, brokered by the teacher, so that another student who spoke very little English, Henry, could complete an assignment:

At 9:45, Mrs. Day tells the entire class "Now we're going to move on. If I give you something, a shape, it has the same size, the same shape, it is said to be?"

The class answers in chorus, "Symmetrical."

"Congruent. Looking at my book. You guys remember fourth grade? On a separate piece of paper now, draw something with the same size and the same shape." The students go to the front of the room to get paper, Mrs. Day gets rulers, and some students talk in Spanish. The instructional assistant reminds students, "Show your work."

Dahlia explains to Henry, pointing with her ruler, "Como esto, como esto..."

Mrs. Day asks, "How do you say 'shape' in Spanish?" She asks another student,

"Oscar, how do you say 'shape' in Spanish?" She then asks me, "You don't

speak Spanish, do you?" Mrs. Day explains to Dahlia, "Basically, if you place one paper on top, they will be." To Dahlia, "He doesn't understand at all?"

Dahlia replies, "No."

Mrs. Day says, "Let me see. How do I explain this to him?" She tells Dahlia, "Then tell him to make another one with the same shape. Tell him its congruent." Dahlia replies, "I don't know how to say 'congruent.'" Henry begins tracing over the shape with a ruler.

At 9:52, Mrs. Day tells her group, "Okay, let me help you guys out." This is "much easier." The students are excited, saying "Yeah!" as she goes to the shelf to take out "geo boards," boards with patterns of nails sticking up and rubber bands to make shapes. All three of the students make shapes using the bands. Mrs. Day asks Rabia, "What is that?" She replies, "A parallelogram."

At 9:55, Mrs. Day tells her group, "Okay, I'm going to try something different now." "Slide, flip, turn." "When you move a figure, slide, flip, turn, size and shape stay the same. Slide it over your geo board." The instructional assistant's group is working on worksheets individually or in pairs at their desk on multiplication and addition. Mrs. Day explains to her group, "Flip it," and the students practice flipping shapes as she gestures. "Three motions, flip, turn, slide." "Flip," Mrs. Day points at Henry's paper, and asks him to repeat. Dahlia translates, "Flip." Mrs. Day then hands out worksheets to her students. "Number four is what?" "*Slide*. Very good. Are the two shapes congruent? They must have _____ the same size and shape."

At 10:04, another student (16 now) who was taking a quiz enters the room. Mrs. Day asks her group, "How about number 8, number 9, was that congruent?" Students give a choral answer. Mrs. Day turns Henry's paper over and tells him, "Do the back four. Homework, congruence and motion. You understand a little

bit?” She tells Dahlia, “Remind me to ask Mrs. Garcia what those words are in Spanish so I can tell him.” She then tells the group, “Okay, let’s pack up!” and collects their geo boards. She reads about from students’ math book, “Page 364, developing a concept-quadrilaterals. A quadrilateral is a closed plane figure that has four sides. Here are several kinds of quadrilaterals.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, March 21, 2001)

When peer translation was not sufficient to communicate with Henry, Mrs. Day searched for other linguistic resources to support him, asking me, then talking about how she would ask an instructional assistant who spoke Spanish to work with him, in order to find the vocabulary that he needed to comprehend the lesson. She also delved into her own repertoire of instructional strategies, deciding to “help” her students “out,” by giving them “geo boards” to use during the assignment. By using these manipulatives, students could draw upon their visual and kinesthetic abilities to help them to understand the mathematics concepts being taught. When the first strategy of peer translation was not sufficient to communicate information required to understand the concept of congruence, Mrs. Day sought out additional linguistic and non-linguistic resources to help Henry. Like other teachers, Mrs. Day used a combination of instructional strategies, some planned and other spontaneously applied, in order to help her students access the curriculum.

Teachers acknowledged the limits of different instructional strategies, so combined them with other strategies to compensate for these limits and to try to make the academic content comprehensible to ELL students. Some of the limits of peer translation, for example, included the translating student’s English vocabulary, his/her

own understanding of the academic content being taught, and the ability of the students to focus their conversations on the assignment at hand. During a mathematics lesson on another day, Mrs. Day commented on another disadvantage of using peer translators, that students may be off task without the teacher being fully aware of it:

At 10:06, Henry and Manuel are talking in Spanish and Mrs. Day tells them, “Hey, there is a reason I separated you two!” She tells me, “We have switched translators because they became best friends. He’s good at translating, but I ask them, is this related to school?” Mrs. Day tells the class to switch their books and go over their partner’s math problem from the morning. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, March 21, 2001)

The use of student peer translators for Spanish and Vietnamese was observed in all of the classes at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools. Use of this strategy provided a transitional means for students with low levels of English proficiency to participate in classroom activities, until their knowledge of English improved and they were able to use English during the completion of assignments.

In addition to peer translation of oral instructions or vocabulary on assignments, several of the fifth grade teachers encouraged students with very limited proficiency in English to use their native language on written assignments. Mrs. Day described how she permitted a new arrival, Juan, to write in Spanish when he first entered her classroom. Although not fluent in Spanish herself, Mrs. Day expressed that permitting Juan to write in Spanish at least provided her with some evidence that he comprehended classroom instruction and/or assignments. She explained, “In the beginning, I would have him write it in Spanish, ‘cause it was so difficult, and like, I’m just trying to see if he comprehends

what was taught, okay, and, but now he writes it totally in English” (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000).

She continued, and described how this student later transitioned to using English, performing better on classroom assignments than even a gifted and talented child who was a native speaker of English. In addition to teacher-directed student peer translation, and the use of the native language on written assignments, spontaneous peer translation was often observed in all of the White Springs classrooms. In many instances, peer translation had already been facilitated by the teacher.

Often, students would translate spontaneously for one another when an ELL did not understand a direction or question from the teacher, assistant, or me. When in the library with Mrs. Smith’s class, I asked a new arrival, Trin, if she had a library book. The girl sitting next to her, Van, volunteered, “She doesn’t speak English” (S. Van, personal communication, September 13, 1999). Van then translated my question for Trin, who left her seat to pick out a library book. Student consciousness of others’ limited English proficiency was observed in all of the classes at White Springs. On some occasions, particularly those when a teacher or other authority figure was present, a bilingual or formerly limited English proficient student would translate for a new arrival in an effort to help him/her. At other times, these students would ostracize a new arrival, as the following vignette describing an interaction of these same two Vietnamese girls illustrates:

I stay next to one group, crouching down to their desk level to observe their work. There are two Vietnamese girls sitting side by side, Trin, who has recently arrived in the class and in the United States, and Van, who was in ESOL, but has

now gained sufficient proficiency in English to be in this regular class full-time. A Hispanic boy and a girl from the Caribbean are also in this group. Trin points to words in the text, and looks them up in her dictionary silently as the rest of the group talks. At one point during the conversation, she wordlessly grabs Van's arm, who yells, "Hey tell her to get off me." A few minutes later she looks at Van and asks, "Are you a psycho?" Trin smiles, not understanding what Van is asking her.

At 10:35, Trin takes her lined notebook out of her desk and colors in pictures of flowers. She then goes to the shelf against the wall and begins to sort through the boxes of plastic manipulatives. She returns to the group at 10:45. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 13, 2000)

Although I observed many examples of students working cooperatively in groups with ELLs, situations such as the one described above were also observed, where students worked only loosely monitored by a teacher or assistant, and where an ELL, unable to participate in the group activity because of a language barrier, engaged in other off-task activities, such as coloring, sorting through manipulatives, or putting his/her head on his/her desk. Students were also sometimes shut out of group activities by other students, such as the FEP students who did not want the new arrival, Trin, to have a role in their group presentation at the science fair, complaining, "She doesn't know how to say anything. All she knows is 'stop!' Don't let her talk" (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, January 19, 2000).

When a teacher or assistant actively monitored groups, this kind of dynamic was interrupted, as the field notes below from Ms. Hart's class illustrate:

Christina, a low proficiency girl, sits in her chair and sucks on her arm as her group works. A boy, Jose, who I later find out, is not in ESOL, but is a second language speaker, sits in his chair above his group members, who are working on the floor. Students in the groups continue to discuss the task, “What will Dang (the ESOL student who has just arrived and was not in the morning class) do?” Some students draw and color, while others argue over their roles. When Ms. Hart sees Victor, an ESOL student, sitting in his chair without joining the group, she encourages, “There should be enough jobs to go around. I don’t want to see Victor sitting over there.” He walks over to the group and begins to color in the drawings. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999)

When student peer translators were used, as the medium was a language other than English, written work was usually completed in that language as well. Even when students completed academic work in another language, teachers reflected openly on the difference between students’ English language proficiency and their knowledge of academic content. In addition to peer translation, another instructional strategy used by all five fifth grade teachers at White Springs was differentiated instruction.

Differentiated instruction and accommodations: Use of time and individualized attention.

All five fifth grade regular classroom teachers used some variety of differentiated instruction as a means of working with students in their classes who were at different levels both in terms of English proficiency and academic content knowledge. Teachers used differentiated instruction by allowing some students more time to complete assignments while the rest of the class began another assignment, or allowing students

who did not complete the assignment to finish it for homework. Some of these classroom accommodations, such as more time, were also offered to some students as accommodations on the MSPAP. Mrs. Siddiq and Mrs. Robins also frequently timed student's activities. Mrs. Siddiq explained that the reason that she had "timers," and "timed everything" is because she saw that ELLs could finish assessments and assignments if given extra time. "If I give my ESOL kids two hours, (they could finish) and I have seen that happen every single time" (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000).

The following vignette illustrates how Mrs. Siddiq permitted Tan, a Vietnamese girl who was not enrolled in ESOL, but was not fluent in English, to take extra time to complete a writing assignment, then worked with her individually to expand what she had written:

I walk over to Tan again to see how she is progressing. By 11:20, when most of the students have turned the worksheet in and are ready to begin the next activity, she is still struggling to find the answer to most of the questions. When I talk with her and try to help her, her fluency in speaking English is apparent, but her ability to read and comprehend is considerably slower. Mrs. Siddiq asks the instructional assistant to take students who have finished the worksheet to the bathroom.

At 11:25, Mrs. Siddiq instructs the class to begin the next activity, "procedural writing and peer conferencing." Students continue work on a writing activity they have already started, writing "procedures for making a graph on the computer." Some students seem slow getting started, so Mrs. Siddiq encourages them, "I'm

going to give you a clue: There are about twenty steps in that procedure. If you write a paragraph, it has to be a long one, not just five-six sentences.” Some students, including a Spanish-speaking girl who had written a long essay as her notes to the filmstrip on Indians, finish their writing and begin to peer conference. Tan has only completed page one of the worksheet. Other students have moved on to the writing activity. Students begin to ask each other what is for lunch. As students work individually on their writing, occasionally showing drafts to Mrs. Siddiq, she sits at the rectangular table and grades student work. I help the assistant collate worksheets and use pushpins to replace the pumpkins on the October calendar with turkeys for the November calendar...

At 12:00, Tan finally finishes the worksheet. Some students have been peer conferencing in-depth and diligently, while others have been struggling to complete their lists of procedures. At 12:05, some students are taken to the media center to print their writings. Mrs. Siddiq announces that it is the beginning of reading time...

At 12:12, Mrs. Siddiq takes a group of students to sit with her in a circle on the floor toward the back of the room, and reviews their *Beverly Cleary* worksheets with them. Tan is in the group, and Mrs. Siddiq tells her she will work with her on these “reading packets.” She sits next to Tan and asks her about her answers on the worksheet, “Why can’t mom cook? You need to explain that. Why can’t she cook? Tell me.” Tan gives an answer that I cannot hear very well. Mrs. Siddiq responds, “That is true, maybe she can’t cook, but why?” “How are you going to fix it? You need to let me know. Think why her ability to cook all of a

sudden...” Tan mentions that the mother is working. Mrs. Siddiq tells her, “She has to work...then you need to write that down. You said ‘has no money.’ Why doesn’t she have money?” Tan responds, “Mommy...” Mrs. Siddiq reiterates, “You need to write that down completely...complete sentences and explaining why they won’t have a mommy at home. You need to explain that. Otherwise I won’t know and you won’t get complete credit. You can use your book. Sit here and work with me.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, November 1, 1999)

During this class session, Mrs. Siddiq combined strategies of differentiated instruction, more time, and individualized attention in order to help Tan participate in classroom assignments. All teachers used this approach of individualized attention for the students with the lowest English proficiency in their classes. They told students to “work with me” and brought them to the front of the class, sat next to them, or asked them to come and sit next to them while they completed their assignments. They often used these individual tutoring sessions to work with students on specific elements of language. The vignette below illustrates how Mrs. Smith and the instructional assistant worked one-on-one with ELL students on their writing assignments, reading what they had written aloud using emphasis and questioning to point out errors, then asking students to self-correct:

At 11:15, Mrs. Smith brings reading assignments to the fluent English proficient students to work on. They are to complete a “reading timeline” worksheet on an Elian Gonzalez article in the student newspaper.

The teacher and instructional assistant work with ELLs, reading their sentences aloud, and with questions, encouraging them to self-correct. Four students work quietly at their desks, and one works with the instructional assistant. Two students work on the computers in the back of the room with the teacher, and one student works on *Time* for kids at her desk. Mrs. Smith works with students at the computer. Mrs. Smith is working with the fluent English proficient Vietnamese girl, Van on the computer in the back of the room, editing Van's paper:

Smith: "He want to *be*?"

Smith: "He *have* lived in Maryland for six years?" What should that say?"

Van: "Have"

Smith: "I'm asking you. *Has* he lived in Maryland for six years?" "Where should this sentence go? At the end?" (She explains the 'cut' and 'paste edit functions.) "Do we want, 'He has nine brothers' here?" "Is this all of the information about him? Do you want to make a new paragraph?"...

Smith: "He is born, or he was born?"

Van: "was born."

Smith: "K has siblings. How many?"

Van: "three."

Smith: "Their names and ages are...then we'll put a semicolon..."

Smith: "Kirk *live* with his mom?"

Van: "lives"

Smith: "Say 'his.' You keep saying 'Kirk's.'"

Smith: "*Enjoy* going?"

Van: “enjoys”

Smith: “Kirk has *planes* each summer?”

Van: “Oh, plans.”

Another student brings her paper to Mrs. Smith for her to look at. She looks briefly at her paper, then responds, “Don’t tell me this is one paragraph. Sit down and organize. Most students have three paragraphs.” The student asks, “Can this be a new paragraph where she started going to school?” Mrs. Smith replies, “The school she *have* gone to? Does that make sense? The school she *has* gone to.”

The instructional assistant works with students in detail on the *Time* magazine for kids reading assignment, reading the passages aloud, or asking students to, then discussing the comprehension questions, such as “Why do you think U.S. armed forces remained on the island?” ... (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 13, 2000)

Teachers frequently made use of the presence of an instructional assistant in their classrooms by dividing up to provide students with one-on-one attention or with focused attention in small groups. These student grouping strategies were often used during editing of student work. As this classroom vignette illustrates, both the teacher and instructional assistant engaged students in self-correction of grammar errors, asking students questions about what they had written, and encouraging them to self-correct. Encouraging students to look at their own written work inferentially, rather than to work from a teacher-corrected paper, is an error correction strategy encouraged as part of the proficiency-oriented method of language teaching. This strategy is one of several observed that is regarded as an example of effective instructional practice for ELLs.

Teachers also encouraged students to select texts or tasks appropriate to their level when possible, as Mrs. Day described when talking about a book review assignment:

“As far as book reports, they all have to do the same book report, but it’s all done on their ability level, so I wouldn’t expect someone who can’t read English very well to read as high a book as someone who could...Then, in reading for the most part, my ESOL children are pulled out for Language Arts...It’s a little bit tough, though I try it. If they are having trouble, they could switch. So I let them, um, choose their own books. In the beginning, I choose the books first, so I get a feel for them, and they get comfortable with it, and then, they choose their own books. They choose their own books that they read.” (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

As Mrs. Day described, she uses differentiated teaching in combination with purposeful heterogeneous grouping as a means of helping students to understand the assignments:

“I tried to do differentiated teaching when I um work with the students so lots of things are adjusted, but it’s not adjusted at their, to keep them below level. I expect them all to attain that high a level. I do groupings, not just with the ones that don’t speak English. I pair them up or have them pair themselves up um to work with someone, depending on what it is. In math, I have so many different ability levels, and, I would you know, pair them up. Be sure they understand, work with them and try to not give them the answers, you know. You listen to

that person. I can tell you the steps. Then you get feedback as to how they do it.

So I try to do that.” (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Again, grouping, this time, purposeful grouping of students who were at different levels, was used as a means of helping ELLs participate in class assignments. Like Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Day explained, and though her actions in class, illustrated, how she encouraged students to self-correct, or find answers themselves, rather than to directly correct them. This strategy facilitated students’ language development, and developed their critical thinking skills, which were emphasized on the MSPAP. Teachers’ efforts to develop students’ critical thinking skills demonstrated some of their underlying beliefs about language proficiency and academic content knowledge. Teachers understood that though students were still acquiring English, they possessed knowledge of the academic content areas being studied, and some level of critical thinking skills. Teachers’ beliefs about language and cognition, and about students’ progress, shaped the planning, decision-making, and execution of instruction.

Teachers’ Beliefs about Language and Cognition

None of the five fifth grade teachers who were informants in this study had participated in formal or recent training in second language acquisition. Despite this fact, they demonstrated common beliefs about the acquisition of language proficiency and academic content and about the stages of second language acquisition. These beliefs are in concert with current thinking in second language acquisition research. These beliefs culminated in teacher observations about English language learners’ progress in learning English throughout the school year.

Language proficiency and academic content knowledge.

During interviews and informal discussions during classroom observations, all teachers spoke about the difference between students' English language proficiency, and their underlying abilities in their subject areas. Teachers differentiated between students' linguistic knowledge and cognitive abilities, and linguistic knowledge and knowledge and skills in academic content areas. As Ms. Hart, who reflected, even though Jose spoke "...absolutely no English..." "...his math skills are just excellent..." (M. Hart, personal communication, December 13, 1999).

The following vignette from field notes illustrates how Mrs. Siddiq also distinguished between a student's language abilities and mathematical abilities, and explained how that affected the student's completion of assignments:

I walk over to a Vietnamese girl, Tan, in the front of the room who looks like she is having difficulty, and explain that she should write the two words in her notebook first. Mrs. Siddiq approaches me and explains more about the girl's ability, "If you ask her to do anything in numbers, to calculate it, she can do it. She can divide a six-digit number by a five-digit number. If you ask her a word problem, she doesn't write anything down." (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, November 1, 1999)

In this vignette, Mrs. Siddiq also made an important distinction between understanding the language used in mathematics, and being able to perform mathematical computation. Other teachers at White Springs reiterated this distinction with reference to instructions on the MSPAP. Many teachers stated during informal discussions that in their view, ELLs were unable to perform well on the MSPAP because they simply could

not understand the directions. Teachers stated that understanding the directions was important for both ELLs and non-ELLs. Recognizing the role of language in mathematics, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have sought to find ways to reduce the language load in mathematics through linguistic accommodations such as translated instructions, through specific training in the language of mathematics, or through use of simplified English in test items. Both the importance of teaching students to understand directions on assessments, and strategies for providing accommodations through changes to these directions will be discussed further in the chapters which follow.

Students with limited or no proficiency in English faced daily challenges as they tried to navigate the curriculum in the regular classroom while adjusting to the norms of American schools. Their teachers also faced daily challenges as they tried to develop and deliver lessons that were comprehensible to all students. Teachers' use of certain common instructional strategies, such as peer translation, helped to mitigate these challenges. Teachers at White Springs Elementary understood that for most students, the obstacle to their achievement in the regular classroom was not ability or knowledge of academic content, but knowledge of English, and that this obstacle could be overcome with time and effort. During the course of this study, I was able to observe how many students who were new arrivals to the U.S. and to the schools, over the course of the school year, made enormous progress in English language development. During interviews and informal conversations, teachers spoke at length about these students' progress, from having little or no knowledge of English to being able to participate actively in classroom activities in the regular classroom.

Teachers' intuitive understanding of students' language development.

Teachers' intuitive understanding of students' English language development often guided their practices in using strategies to work with ELLs. Although none of the teachers articulated this specifically during interviews, they all demonstrated an intuitive understanding of the value of using the native language to access content instruction, students' potential for English language mastery, and the differences between competence and performance, e.g., what students know and what students produce in the classroom (Canale, 1984; Swain, 1993). Their awareness of students' English language development also seemed to be a factor shaping teachers' decisions about the use of error correction. All teachers made extensive use of peer editing prior to final editing or grading by the teacher or instructional assistant, which is both a strategy used in the teaching of English as a second language writing and a strategy which gave students practice with the type of writing required to respond to performance-based assessments such as the MSPAP. Additionally, through observations of student writing in the classroom throughout the year, I learned that all of the teachers in the study emphasized comprehensibility, rather than spelling and grammar, on most student writing assignments. Fluency was encouraged before accuracy, unless the purpose of the assignment was specific to grammar or spelling, such as a grammar drill or spelling test. Mrs. Day explained how she approached the correction of spelling on ELLs' written work:

“What I did in the beginning was hard for them, okay, so, depending on what the assignment is, like with this, I don't care about spelling! I just want to know if you understand what I'm teaching you, if you're comprehending, do you know

what the Constitution is. You know, that is my purpose. So, I don't grade them on the spelling of this, because I know that you know English is a second language for them, and spelling is hard for them. So I don't grade them on the spelling of it. And if I totally cannot figure it out, then I will call them over, and I will say, 'What is that word?' and if they could tell me, I write it in. I write in whatever they say. Okay, so I just want to know that they know, that they see the word, they can read it for me. Okay, so they're not good at spelling. I don't care about that! (laughs) They just, you know, just some things I'm not going to sit and make a fuss over. I mean that's the skill that they'll eventually pick up, and there are millions of people who English is their first and only language and still can't spell, so (laughs)!" (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

In the vignette above, Mrs. Day explained how she used the domains of speaking, listening, and writing to support students' reading comprehension. If a student had difficulty reading a word, she would read it aloud to him/her, and write it herself if necessary. She emphasized students' comprehension of the academic content, rather than perfection in spelling or grammar. This approach was utilized by all of the fifth grade teachers at White Springs, but to different degrees, and it was also combined with explicit instruction of grammar or spelling on certain classroom assignments. This explicit instruction was not directly specifically at ELLs, but designed for and delivered to all students.

All teachers spoke about the importance of English language development for all students in their classroom, not just ELLs, and the value of working with all students in this area. Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Day, and Mrs. Smith spoke about their explicit instruction of

spelling and grammar and attention to language use as a means of facilitating students' English language development. Mrs. Hart reported that she taught students what "prefixes" and "suffixes" meant as a tool for developing students' vocabulary, and also used teaching suggestions from the class reading textbook on working with linguistically diverse students. All teachers demonstrated their use of multiple domains of language to help students comprehend the curriculum

Mrs. Siddiq also explained how she used simplified language and additional comprehensible input so that ELLs could access the curriculum:

"Since it's a language barrier, you have to make it a little easier for them to understand the concept, at least when they are beginning students...ability wise they are fine if you take the language barrier out, they are faster and it really helps them to learn." (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

She continued, explaining how she facilitated students' English language development by "starting with nouns and pronouns," and also adjusted her materials "a little to the level." Mrs. Siddiq noted that she recognized that there were "MSPAP type words," and that she tried to "use them on a daily basis, on the spelling test, word wall," and by having students read "easy books on those concepts" (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000). Explicit instruction of and classroom practice with "MSPAP type words" was observed in all classrooms, and reinforced through the use of "word walls," large bulletin boards with lists of vocabulary commonly used on the MSPAP, throughout the school. This instructional strategy will be further discussed in chapter five.

All of the teachers explained, during interviews and informal conversations, how they used a combination of strategies to help the ELLs in their classes comprehend

academic content and complete assignments. Mrs. Siddiq, for example, reported that she put the students in smaller groups, gave them extra help, and used manipulatives and videos so that they could use all of the senses and domains of language to try to understand the concepts being taught. Mrs. Hart also described her use of a collection of strategies to help ELLs access the curriculum, including, “hands on connecting them to stuff,” and trying to “connect to their world, and what they know,” such as the concept of “erosion” (M. Hart, personal communication, April 10, 2000). Ms. Hart also frequently permitted ELLs additional wait time, a strategy recommended in language teaching, when calling on them to answer a question. In addition to giving a student more time to answer a question, Ms. Hart would urge the other students in the class to “wait” with her and “give him a chance,” even if they knew the answer:

“Do we divide by the smallest number? If we use the biggest number first, fractions will be greater than one. I see numbers like that all the time. What should I do?” She writes on the board: .7291666. “How do I figure out the problem?” Eight students raise their hands high. “What do we call that?” Begins with an ‘r’?” Mrs. Hart calls on Jose, a quiet ESOL student. When he is silent, she urges the other students who are raising their hands, “Give him a chance...” After 10-20 more seconds, she calls on another student, who gives the answer, “Round.” “What does that ‘two’ become because of that ‘nine’? It is the same as 73%. What have we been trying to figure out? What did we put our heads on our desk for?” Mrs. Hart calls on a Vietnamese girl, Diep, who is also an ESOL student. She answers, “I don’t know.” Mrs. Hart tells the other students, “Wait, give her a chance. It is the million dollar question. We said she had a 50/50

chance, a 50 percent chance.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, December 13, 1999)

When Ms. Hart used this strategy of additional wait time, all students participated actively in classroom discussions. If an ELL gave an incorrect answer, she would listen to see if they would self-correct, then praise a student who did:

Ms. Hart asks them for more expressions of this fraction, “Give me another equivalent fraction for $\frac{1}{2}$.” Students offer their answers, all correct, except the last two. She lets these students self correct.

$\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{5}{10}$ $\frac{4}{8}$ $\frac{16}{8}$ no $\frac{8}{16}$

She asks Jose, to answer, and he at first answers incorrectly, $\frac{2}{1}$. Ms. Hart pauses, and says, “No...” As she calls on another student, Jose whispers, uh..two.” “Jose remembers!” she shouts, drawing her attention back to him.

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, February 14, 2000)

She later worked with Jose individually, and placed his desk at the front of the classroom, next to the blackboard. During other class sessions, Mrs. Hart assigned Jose to work with her individually on math problems on the blackboard, and paired him with bilingual Spanish-English students to practice oral book reports about explorers. Mrs. Robins also described how she used individualized instruction on English language development, with attention to multiple domains of language, combined with work with an instructional assistant in order to help an ELL in her class:

“I had one kid, who came in from Grenada around January last year, and I don’t even know what the main language is in Grenada, but her English as far as speaking was fine. I think that maybe English is the language they speak in

Grenada, but her reading ability was so low they put her in ESOL because she was from another country, and they worked with her on the basics, and when she was in my classroom we worked with her on the basics. Just, you know, grammar, understanding how sentences are made up, paragraphs are made up, my IA and I would just switch back and forth working with her. We found that that was the most successful technique when we worked with her. And we did a lot of, you know, writing out of our directions on the board when normally we would just speak them so that she could hear them and see them. And it really seemed to be helpful with this particular child because not only did she have difficulties with just spoken language and reading it, even though she was speaking English, um, she, I think maybe her ability level might have been not as high as, you know, the other kids...” (M. Robins, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

Mrs. Robins later explained how she was careful not to always place ESOL or lower level students with the instructional assistant, or in the same group, so that they would not feel that they were at lower academic levels than other students in the class, even if they were. She said that she pushed all of her students to excel, and shared that, in her view, the lower level students were working even harder than the higher-level students. She talked about the role of student motivation and self esteem in student performance, and student peer recognition of classroom performance:

“Yeah, because they, they’ll point out and say, ‘That one’s a smart one. He’s a smart one. He gets his work done.’ And there are a couple kids who, I mean they really stick out as being, you know *really* smart children, but when they get a paper back and they see that the smart one didn’t get the high grade that they got,

they're like, *whoa*, the smart one didn't get it so I did it wow, you know, maybe I'm doing it, and it makes a big difference, you know the kid who's in ESOL started out being with really low self esteem, and we couldn't really pinpoint exactly what it was, but working with him one on one, putting him in groups that weren't specifically low medium high really showed him that he can do the work, and he speaks out in class, he does little skits in class with some of his buddies. He's really working hard. He's come around. You know, I would, before, I could say, 'Would you like to run this errand for me? No, now, he, 'I'll do an errand for you.' He's real comfortable with himself.'" (M. Robins, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

According to Mrs. Robins, students' self esteem could be bolstered by individualized instruction, careful student grouping, and opportunities to practice academic language, such as through role-play. In her experience, ESOL students' increased self esteem could translate into increased classroom participation and improved study skills.

Students' progress: "...It's miraculous how much she's learned."

Mrs. Smith and I discussed the progress of ELL students in her class in-depth during an interview. Her remarks about one of the Vietnamese girls in her class, Trin, exemplify teachers' glowing commentary on the progress of ELL students in their classes, many of whom were new arrivals to the US and to the school.

Bentley-Memon: "How about that one girl, I can't remember her name."

Smith: "Sadya."

Bentley-Memon: "Oh, I've seen Sadya too. I was thinking about the, I think she's Vietnamese, and um, yeah, she's um--"

Smith: “*Oh my gosh.*”

Bentley-Memon: “I’ve seen her working with the other Vietnamese girl in your class-“

Smith: “She came here and did not speak a word of English, and I can’t think how long I’ve had her, but it’s probably only been a couple of months.”

Bentley-Memon: “Uh-huh.”

Smith: “I don’t know, it’s horrible to say, but I don’t even remember. It had to have been like January or February when she came.”

Bentley-Memon: “When she came.”

Smith: “Maybe, it might even have been-Yeah, I had to have had her since January or February. Um, maybe even December, I don’t know. *She has learned so much.* And thank goodness I had Van in here who spoke Vietnamese too, because if I didn’t, it would have been a real problem. It would have been a real challenge, how to communicate with her. When she came in, I tested her for math, and her math was really, she knew how to add, she knew how to divide, she knew how to multiply, she knew how to subtract. She knew her basic computation. She seemed very bright in that aspect. Um, and *slowly* she’d come up to me, and she, you know, after a couple weeks, she’d ask me, “Can I go to the bathroom?” You know, I mean, I could tell that she was starting to, and the couple times that we had writing assignments in here, that, for whatever reason, the ESOL students were not pulled out, they were in here, whatever, I’d have her write some things, and she would write, it wouldn’t make sense, but she would at least you know, she would, she knew how to write words in English, and I could

get the general gist of what she was trying to say, even though it didn't um, maybe, you know, maybe either she skipped a couple of words, or it just didn't make sense in general, but I knew what she was trying to say.

And now, I mean, she *plays* with the kids, she *speaks* to them, I wouldn't say she's anywhere totally on their level, I mean, she definitely has more to learn, but she's just, it's miraculous how much she's learned. And again, I don't know if that's because she *had* the ability in the beginning, or if she because she, you know, in ESOL, I mean I haven't really had a chance to sit down, I have spoken with Mr. Healy and Mrs. Hobbs during parent-teacher conferences. I spoke to them about her, and how you know, great they thought that she was doing, and but I haven't really seriously sat down with them and said, okay, where was she when began as far as reading is concerned, and the language. Where was she before when she began, and where she is now, but, um, just from what I've witnessed and observed, she's doing a great job."

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Trin's important transitions during the year, from having her peers translate for her, to producing some writing in English, then to socializing in English with her peers, are well described in this interview, and reflect transitions that many ELLs underwent during the school year. During this interview, I shared my own observations of Trin with Mrs. Smith. I told her how, when I observed Trin in her class in December of 1999, she was working with other students in a group on science projects, but had a difficult time following what the group was doing in terms of the content of the project. She participated in the group by drawing pictures to decorate the triptych board that the

project would be displayed on. When I observed Trin in May of 2000, I saw that she was reading a social studies text, and copying down vocabulary words that she didn't know into her notebook, then looking them up in the dictionary. These were words such as "quantity" and "honesty," words that Mrs. Smith said, "...regular fifth grade students probably have a hard time with." These words were the type of vocabulary words used in the MSPAP, and quantity was one of the concepts emphasized in the mathematics and social studies sections of the MSPAP. White Springs teachers used multiple combined instructional strategies to enable students to access academic content at the same time that they were developing their knowledge of English.

Teachers at White Springs understood the importance of academic language development to long-term success in mainstream classrooms. Teachers spoke of the importance of opportunities to hear, read, and use academic language to developing facility and fluency in academic English.

Discussion

Overall, one of the most notable findings of this study was that, despite their lack of specific training related to instructing with English language learners, all of the fifth grade teachers at White Springs employed specific strategies in order to enable these students to participate in classroom activities, and exhibited and expressed common beliefs about language and cognition. Teachers acknowledged their use of a combination of strategies in order to help these students participate in class and to facilitate their English language development. Teachers used the resources available to them, which in most cases, included their own instructional flexibility and choices, intuitive understandings about instruction, and the funds of knowledge of student peers, to create classrooms where all students participated in academic study, including preparation for

the MSPAP. When faced with the challenge of instructing diverse students, teachers relied upon their own pedagogical repertoires which they applied and adapted, in many instances, quite successfully, to the instruction of ELLs.

What is remarkable about this finding is that teachers used these common instructional strategies and exhibited common beliefs without any specific direction or endorsement from school leadership, and without any training specific to the instruction of ELLs. Furthermore, there was no evidence that peer conversations among teachers about effective strategies for teaching ELLs had occurred. On the contrary, regular fifth grade teachers expressed their lack of knowledge about the academic content being covered in the ESOL classrooms, and expressed only vague conclusions about the instructional strategies being used in these classrooms. It is important to note, however, that although teachers did not have detailed knowledge of what went on instructionally in the ESOL classrooms, they all expressed confidence in the ESOL teachers at White Springs, and indicated that, although the ESOL curriculum may not have completely paralleled the regular curriculum, the skills being taught in ESOL supported students' language development and achievement in the mainstream classroom.

It is possible that, as an outsider to the school and someone not familiar with its complete institutional history, there were peer conversations or influences on instructional strategies of which I was not aware. When asked during interviews what "kinds of training" or "professional experiences" that had helped to prepare them to teach ELLS, however, none of the five teachers referred specifically to any training or experiences they had received while teaching at White Springs Elementary School. Many of the common instructional strategies described above were used during

instruction related to preparation for the MSPAP. Instruction tailored specifically to the MSPAP, e.g., what Mintrop and other have termed, “performance-based pedagogy” (Mintrop, 2000; Mintrop, MacLellan, & Quintero, 2001), was observed throughout the duration of the study, in all grades and all classrooms, even those in which the MSPAP would not be administered.

Summary

This chapter provided primary data and analysis to address the first research question, if and how teachers adapted instruction for ELLs in response to the MSPP. Teachers did adapt instruction in response to the MSPP through the use of common strategies and the embodiment of common beliefs about language and cognition in their teaching. The chapter which follows includes further findings related to how teachers adapted instruction in response to the MSPP, and to the role of the MSPP as one of many factors which shaped instruction for ELLs.

Chapter VI: The MSPAP and Performance-Based Pedagogy

This chapter continues to address the question of if teachers adapted instruction for ELLs in response to the MSPP, and if so, how. This chapter also addresses the question of the role of the MSPP as one of the many factors that shaped instruction for English language learners. The voices and observable behaviors of informants, including teachers, students, and instructional staff, will be presented in order to address these questions. The previous chapter demonstrated how state policies were nested in and co-existed with classroom practice. This chapter will demonstrate how state policies influenced and were nested in classroom practice. Policy-practice intersections took shape through teachers' sustained and explicit instruction of skills and bodies of knowledge related to preparation for the MSPAP. Many of these skills and bodies of knowledge were also those taught in the regular fifth grade curriculum.

The premise behind standards-based educational reform is that what is tested gets taught (Madaus, 1989). This chapter demonstrates how this adage was realized at the classroom level, and how state policies influenced classroom practice. As one of the major methods of data collection used in this study was observation and participant observation at the classroom level, the majority of the findings in this chapter will be at this unit of analysis. However, one of the findings discussed in this chapter is that although the MSPP had a profound impact on what was taught and how it was taught in the classroom to both ELL and non-ELL students, the influence of the reform program at the school level was quite different.

The MSPP at the School Level and at the Classroom Level

At the school level, although the MSPP was part of administrator and teacher talk, and visible through written messages and displays, it was only one of a constellation of factors that was part of the school cultures, and, overall, was less emphasized than character development, school safety, and the multinational origins of students and their families. At the school levels, school leadership and teachers emphasized reading and literacy development, along with writing and mathematics skills, which helped to support instruction for the MSPAP, but which were also part of the regular primary curriculum.

At the classroom level, the influence of the MSPP on instruction was evident on nearly a daily basis. Explicit instruction related to the MSPAP in these “on-grade” classes (grades three and five) was observed in all classes visited throughout the study. Reference to the MSPAP in all grades, including “off grades,” those in which the assessments were not administered, was also observed in all classrooms visited throughout the year. The following interchange between a second and third grade teacher at White Springs illustrates how the MSPAP had become part of the third grade experience on which second grade students would receive orientation. On May 28, 1999, second grade students from Green Fields were visiting third grade classes at White Springs in order to receive a peer and teacher orientation of what to expect in third grade. Second grade students were given the opportunity to ask questions about third grade. Students did not ask about the MSPAP, but teachers wove the topic into the discussion:

Another student asks a question about third grade: “Are you going to be writing a lot of letters?” Mrs. Meyer responds, “Yes. You can write letters...(and take a)” big test at the end of the year” (where you “explain” what you did). The second

grade teacher prompts her students, “Have we been practicing some of that?”

“Yes.” “On our tests we’ve been explaining some of our answers.”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 28, 1999)

Teachers of “off-grade” classes who had experience in MSPAP preparation used instructional strategies which reinforced preparation for the MSPAP. This was the case with Mrs. Fleur, a second grade teacher at Green Fields. During a visit to Green Fields on April 14, 1999, and follow-up visits and conversations with Mrs. Fleur, she described how, although a second grade teacher, she has trained other teachers in MSPAP preparation, and written science lesson plans to help prepare students for the MSPAP. She explained that she tried to integrate MSPAP concepts and MSPAP like examples into her teaching, such as by teaching her second grade students MSPAP strategies, asking them to think, “Have you ever seen a question that looks like that before?” (M. Fleur, personal communication, April 14, 1999).

Preparation of second grade students, in particular, for their first experience with the MSPAP, was also supported by the Early Childhood Assessment Program (ECAP), through which the County brought together second grade teachers from seven different schools to develop a “CRT-like” test on developing mathematics knowledge and reading comprehension. These tests in mathematics and reading were administered to all second grade students at the beginning of May, and included a performance assessment.

The MSPP and the School Day

Throughout the school year, the MSPP shaped instruction and curriculum, yet was embedded in the larger frame of the school day and school activities. The role of the

MSPAP in the larger school day is shown in this vignette from field notes taken in Ms. Hart's class, where she is reviewing the daily schedule.

The afternoon includes, "lunch," and "1:30 – 2:00 whatever math we have time for," followed by "2:00 MSPAPs some sort of testing."

Students ask, "What's that?"

Ms. Hart replies, "I don't know. What could 'd' stand for?" She writes student suggestions on the board:

“doing
document
develop
disruption
deliverance
persuasive
personal
question.”

“Developing persuasive stupid questions?” The class laughs.

Ms. Hart continues, "I don't like to use this word, 'quiz,' because you go crazy.

Call it practice, you do much better." "Sequencing questions, let's check. It's for MSPAP. Let's check MSPAP words, persuade..." (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, February 22, 2000)

Ms. Hart's review is interrupted at 9:00 by the vice-principal, Mrs. Martinez, whose voice is heard over the intercom giving morning announcements. Her announcements, as

well as those of the “student announcers,” do not refer in any way to MSPAP, but to character building, and school rituals and activities:

She talks about what “caring can” do, and the importance of “caring and sharing.”

She mentions the “silver spoon” awards, and afternoon clubs. Student announcers, “SGA representatives,” follow, giving the pledge of allegiance, adding that “pizza” is for lunch, and talking about the importance of “caring and sharing.” “If you can’t find a good reason to do something, don’t do that,” one advises. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, February 22, 2000)

After the announcements, Ms. Hart switched focus to the expected visit from students and staff from the sixth grade. Visiting students would provide an orientation to fifth graders to help prepare them for entry into middle school.

In the fifth grade classrooms at White Springs Elementary, the MSPP had a direct impact on classroom instruction and the curriculum, as teachers explicitly taught MSPAP-related vocabulary and MSPAP-appropriate testing strategies, and referred directly to the MSPAP throughout instruction of all of the subject areas. All of the teachers, for example, referred at times throughout the school year to “MSPAP words.” At the school level, however, the MSPP was embedded in the larger frame of the daily school life of students, and was just one of the many factors shaping their education.

This conclusion was also supported by a content analysis of written documents collected at both White Springs and Green Fields from March 1999 through May 2000. The list in Appendix G shows the categories and themes contained in these documents. These documents were collected in the front office, staff lunch room, teachers’ classrooms, and at schoolwide activities and meetings. The majority of these documents

reflected school-level messages, rather than classroom level messages. Many of these documents reflected the multinational character of the schools and multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the students and their families. For example, documents included bilingual notices announcing citizenship classes, notices about community services available, such as English classes, and announcements of school activities, such as the international dinner and silent auction (e.g. Appendix E). None of these documents, which were systematically collected on every visit to the schools, referred directly to the MSPAP.

Several of the documents did include a schedule of professional development training sessions offered to teachers and paraprofessionals. The majority of these training sessions focused on improving instruction in reading/language arts, writing, and mathematics. These training sessions supported teachers' instruction of subject areas that could help improve students' MSPAP scores, but did not directly train teachers how to prepare students for the MSPAP. The most frequently cited skill that all teachers and school personnel indicated they felt was important to success on the MSPAP was practice following directions.

Role of the MSPP in Shaping Instruction

The role of the MSPP in shaping instruction for ELLs was evident in many of the skills taught by fifth grade teachers throughout the year. These skills helped students to prepare for the MSPAP, as they were representative of the test-taking skills and higher level thinking skills which students activated as they participated in the actual assessments. These skills were also skills that would normally be taught in the upper elementary curriculum, so were not unique to the MSPAP, but were strongly related to

preparation for the MSPAP. These test-taking skills and higher level thinking skills are described below.

Practice following directions.

When talking about what their students needed to succeed on the MSPAP, teachers and school personnel, including instructional assistants, frequently mentioned the need for practice with following directions. Many of the teachers in White Springs and Green Fields referred to the challenge of having students understand and follow directions on the MSPAP and other assessments. Teachers expressed the importance of this skill both throughout the school year, and with special emphasis, after the MSPAP was administered in May of 2000. They spoke of the importance of providing all students, and ELLs in particular, practice at comprehending and following directions on assessments. As Ms. Hart stated during an interview, “But mostly I just try to get them to think. Read the directions. That’s the most important thing for MSPAP. Everything is common sense” (M. Hart, personal communication, April 10, 2000). According to teachers at White Springs, following directions on the MSPAP was very important to success on the MSPAP. It was also one of the skills that teachers reported they would try to teach more explicitly the following year in order to better prepare students for the MSPAP. When asked how the MSPAP had influenced her teaching, Mrs. Day replied:

“I mean so, it’s, I can’t really say it was something I wouldn’t have done any differently. The only thing that I thought that I would do differently for next year was as far as where the children are all concerned that was part of testing, I mean, it helps towards testing, but is having more testing language following directions, and complete directions. They tend to, even if they have read the whole thing, to

dismiss part, and only do part, or not to read the whole thing, to read the first part and do that and not bother to read the rest of it. Um, so that was one thing that I saw during the testing that I would not have stressed it, but I just would have used activities to really bring it home.” (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Teachers reported that the skill of following directions was difficult for all students to master, and particularly challenging for students who were ELLs. Following directions was a major conversation topic in the teachers’ lunchroom after the MSPAP administration on May 17, 2000. Teachers talked about administration of the MSPAP, and how the “directions” were difficult for many students, who had “problems processing them.” According to the MSPAP administration procedures, teachers could not “explain directions,” and could only “repeat” them. Some students were permitted to use dictionaries as an accommodation (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 17, 2000). During the May 2000 administration of the MSPAP, only six students in the entire fifth grade were given exemptions from participating in the assessment, though nine participated with accommodations. In Ms. Hart’s class, of 21 students in the class, 19 were present on MSPAP testing days and participated in the assessment. No students received exemptions from participation.

Teachers would often interject the importance of following directions on the MSPAP while the class was engaged in non-MSPAP activities, such as reviewing the answers to a quiz or going over responses on a grammar and punctuation worksheet. As Ms. Hart advised the class in between workbook review exercises on “kinds of sentences” during reading/language arts, “Every test you take is practice at following

directions. MSPAP is practice following directions” (M. Hart, personal communication, February 22, 2000). Teachers gave students practice at following directions in hopes that they would then be able to follow directions more accurately when participating in the MSPAP. Teachers also integrated discussion of the assessments into their teaching on a daily basis, and use of the types of vocabulary used on the assessments.

“You have to make it an everyday thing.”

Ms. Hart described her approach to helping students to prepare for the MSPAP, that, “You have to make it an everyday thing” (M. Hart, personal communication, January 7, 2000). I learned of Ms. Hart’s approach during a talk with her in her class on January 7, 2000. Teachers often relayed their perspectives on the best way to prepare students for the MSPAP during these informal exchanges, in the form of remarks made to me while students were working in groups or completing classroom assignments. The instructional assistants also sometimes inquired about and commented on my research during these times. During reading/language arts block in Ms. Hart’s class on January 7, 2000, I chatted with her and the instructional assistant while students read in groups. During this peer reading activity, students from the third grade came to her class and paired up with her fifth grade students to read and discuss magazine articles from *Time* magazine for children. ESOL students “packed up” their books and left the room to attend ESOL class at the start of this activity. While students read, Ms. Hart and I walked around the room and listened to them, and chatted. During this exchange, she shared an experience she had when the MSPAP was offered in the third grade:

She tells me that when she taught third grade, they “flipped out” when they had the first “performance assessment.” She said “You have to make it like an

everyday thing.” The “best way” is to use “everyday language.” Last year it was “mandatory, and the sixth grade CRT scores increased.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, January 7, 2000)

Both teacher testimony and classroom observations demonstrated how fifth grade teachers believed in the importance of familiarizing students with the format, vocabulary, and cognitive approach of problem-solving required by the MSPAP. Teachers spoke about the importance of integrating the specialized vocabulary frequently found on the MSPAP into the everyday lexicon of their classrooms. Field notes from a visit to Mrs. Siddiq’s class on April 14 provide a window into the type of instruction teachers engaged in during the months preceding the MSPAP, in order to give students practice following directions and adhering to rules of MSPAP administration. As Mrs. Siddiq attested during an interview, “Basically, every activity I do is related to the MSPAP. (Every) Type of instruction, math, science, social studies” (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000). Mrs. Siddiq, called a “master teacher” by the instructional aide who worked with her, described how she had spent three years developing science materials to help students prepare for the MSPAP:

I ask Mrs. Siddiq if she designed this lesson herself, and she replies proudly, “Yes. I took all of the science kits from the County and adapted or created materials like these for MSPAP. I use them all year long.” [It took] “three years to do” [it takes] “one week to teach” [each unit]. She explains how she “introduces background information so they really understand concepts.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

During the science lesson described in the field notes below, Mrs. Siddiq led the students in making a table and graph, then writing about their work. Throughout the lesson, she used vocabulary words specific to the task, such as “scale” and “axis,” and coached students on checking their work and monitoring their progress as they completed the assignment.

When I enter her class she tells me that the class is working on, “making a table, then a graph” of “length of shadow,” and the “direction the shadow points and direction the sun came from.” She reminds the class, “Make sure you use the appropriate scale to make your graph. What are going to be the headings of your charts? Read the directions!” Mrs. Siddiq returns to overseeing the groups, and I join her, walking around the classroom and observing student work. One student is working alone quietly, has the data on her paper, and asks me where to put which parts on the graph. I ask Mrs. Siddiq, “Does it matter which they put on the x and y axis?” She replies, “That’s their ‘assessment’ (raising her fingers to show quotations). They have to figure this out for MSPAP.” She tells me that she won’t give them more directions because they “won’t get that on the MSPAP.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

Throughout the lesson, she punctuated her instructions to the students with reminders about rules for MSPAP administration:

“Are you finished with that activity?” she asks one student who has gotten up from her seat. “Consider that with the MSPAP, you have to finish the activity, not just wander off...” She looks at another student’s paper and asks, “Are you missing something?” She tells the entire class, “Make sure you have all essential

elements of your graphs.” She tells me, “I can tell them this during MSPAP, ‘Do you have the essential elements? Check your work,’ so I tell them all year long.”

...It is 10:58, and she tells the class, “If you have a real MSPAP test, this is how it works. You have an activity or experiment Monday through Thursday, and on Friday you write about it. That’s what you are doing now. You are kind of ending that activity with your writing.”

... A girl raises her hand and asks for “more time,” and Mrs. Siddiq replies, “Yes, I will give you more time, but during MSPAP, you won’t have that.”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

Mrs. Siddiq advised students to “check their work,” and referred students to the “time” they need to complete the exercise, two types of teacher instructions that reflect the testing setting of the MSPAP and other assessments. In addition to giving students experience with the language of assessment directions, and the vocabulary used in assessments, teachers helped students prepare for the MSPAP by giving them experiences with the group setting used in the performance assessments.

Purposeful student grouping.

All fifth grade teachers also used purposeful student grouping throughout the year as students completed classroom assignments. Purposeful grouping on class assignments helped students prepare for the performance-based group tasks that had to be completed in groups as part of the MSPAP. In Mrs. Day’s class, for example, there were three types of established groups: “peer editing groups,” “math groups,” and “reading groups” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 18, 1999). Teachers spoke about the importance of student grouping, and of how they deliberately grouped students during

mock MSPAP assessments to give them experience working cooperatively with their peers. Heterogeneous student grouping based on language and other factors was frequently observed. Student grouping in pairs or groups of three or four students was frequently observed during activities such as science fair projects, social studies projects, construction of structures, and other classroom activities. Another way that teachers helped students to prepare for the MSPAP was by giving them practice with timed activities and practice tests, which simulated a test-taking situation.

Timed activities and other test-taking preparations.

All teachers integrated test-taking preparation into their instruction in some ways throughout the entire year. Teachers frequently instructed students on test-taking strategies, including emphasizing the importance of following instructions, timing activities, and requiring students to arrive at answers independently, using tools such as word walls as needed. Throughout the year, teachers would also refer to specific topics to be tested or to particular MSPAP test items, as this excerpt from field notes from an observation in Mrs. Robin's class illustrates:

At 9:00, Mrs. Robin tells the class that they will be working in two groups, one with her, and one with the instructional assistant. They will “multiply and add decimals,” “add and multiply with decimals,” and “talk and review.” “That was on the assessments that you took, and we’ll probably see them again at MSPAP and CRT time.”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, November 11, 1999)

During interviews, all fifth grade teachers indicated their awareness of the types of test items and/or types of skills required on the MSPAP. The teachers relayed this

information to students throughout the year, interwoven in instruction and teacher talk, and then, as the spring administration approached, emphasized this information even more directly. All of the teachers spoke about how they integrated preparation for the MSPAP into their teaching throughout the year. Mrs. Smith explained how she adapted her instruction to the MSPAP by using practice assessments, explicit instruction of vocabulary, a word wall, and constant verbal reminders to students throughout the year:

“As far as instructional strategies, um, since this is my second year, I’m starting to really look at the test, and the kind of things that the test is asking, um, you also always get feedback and knowledge from your more veteran teachers who have been a long, been around for a while, and have given it every year, and even though every year the MSPAP is different, generally they take, tend to stick with some basic things that they give every year. Um, and I think that it’s important to do that so that when you’re planning your instruction for next year, that you prepare your kids, and that you have an idea of what to um, give them. I mean, as a school, like, you know, we do our word walls, and that’s a definite MSPAP thing. Vocabulary is very important, *very* important in all the subjects. Um, just, I guess, just when I give them different activities I try to um as often as possible think about the MSPAP and the kind of activities the MSPAP does, and I try to you know, “Okay guys, MSPAP is in the spring, this is how it’s going to be, this, this, you know, I let the kids know so that they, you know, MSPAP doesn’t just jump up on them in the spring and oh, you know, they know about it from the very beginning. They know that they’re trying to work towards it, and we’re trying to do things to help them do the best they can on it from a very early start,

like, September, um. Other than that, I can't really..." (Mrs. Smith, personal communication, May 24, 2000)

This excerpt from an interview with Mrs. Smith is representative of the types of information teachers shared with me regarding how they prepared students for the MSPAP throughout the year. Teachers' reflections were also supported by classroom observations. Word walls, for example, which contained many vocabulary words used on the MSPAP, were prevalent in every classroom throughout the year and were frequently updated.

All of the fifth grade regular classroom teachers addressed the challenge of needing to prepare students for the MSPAP, without teaching "to" the test itself. Mrs. Smith spoke about how "drill and practice" helped students prepare for the assessment, but indicated that she was cautious to overuse this approach to teaching topics and strategies important for the MSPAP. Mrs. Hart distinguished directly between teaching "for" the MSPAP and teaching "to" the MSPAP. In the excerpt from field notes below, Ms. Hart explains how she used explicit instruction of vocabulary and classroom practice with test items similar to the MSPAP to help students prepare for the MSPAP:

Ms. Hart says that she came to Kenhowe County from Marion County, which "teaches to the MSPAP." She states, "I believe there should be a balance," and that teachers should "teach *for* the MSPAP." She explains that this class is a "very low" level. She points to the board, and says that she tries to embed vocabulary and concepts from the MSPAP in her teaching, such as "patterns," but cautions that teachers shouldn't "do it too early," as students "will get tired of it." In December or January, she will use a "MSPAP book" with students, where there

is a “word, picture, and definition.” She explains that she teaches students prefixes and suffixes, such as “assessment: test to find out what you know, “ and “pre-assessment.” A Vietnamese girl comes to her with a word she is unsure of, “predict.” Ms. Hart. exclaims, “That’s one of my MSPAP words! Point it out, Diep” (to girl). She explains to Diep that predicting is like “making an educated guess.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999)

All teachers observed at White Springs and Green Fields engaged in both planned and spontaneous teaching of MSPAP strategies, topics, and vocabulary. All of the fifth grade regular classroom teachers at White Springs also collaborated annually to administer practice MSPAP assessments.

Fifth grade teachers began planning these mock assessments in January or February, and administered them in March or April. Teachers designed these mock assessments to simulate the test setting of the MSPAP. Two or three assessments were given, and students were required to work in groups, just as they were for the MSPAP. Teachers randomly assigned students to groups, in order to simulate the random groupings provided by the County prior to the actual assessment, then required the groups to switch classes, so that students were no longer in a class with their regular classroom teacher, just as was the practice during the MSPAP. Teachers then gave timed activities, which students completed either individually, with a partner, or in small groups, just as was required on the MSPAP. During these mock assessments, students were required to follow the same rules that they followed during an actual test administration, such as not asking teachers questions about the content of the test, and completing activities within a time limit.

Although fifth grade teachers emphasized the MSPAP during instruction more than the criterion-referenced tests (CRT), they referred to their commonalities. As Mrs. Smith explained during an interview,

“...CRTS are also incorporated with MSPAP because, even though they are different tests, they are alike in many ways. And the CRT stuff, I, yeah, again, at least once a week I’ll try to give them something that’s like the CRT.”

(M. Smith, personal communication, May 24, 2000)

Mrs. Smith reported that she incorporated an activity to help her class prepare for the MSPAP and for the CRT at least once a week throughout the entire school year, and that preparation for the MSPAP reinforced preparation for the CRT. The CRTs, required by the County, were administered in the month prior to the MSPAP. Scores on the CRTs were not part of the formula used to calculate school, district, or state-level accountability, however, and did not have consequences attached, unlike performance on the MSPAP.

Fifth grade teachers at White Springs Elementary School adapted their instruction in order to help prepare students for the format and administration of the MSPAP. They also adapted their instruction in order to help prepare students for the cognitive demands of the MSPAP, including an emphasis on problem-solving, critical thinking, and reading and writing. During the remainder of this chapter, I will describe how teachers prepared students for these demands of the MSPAP.

Rewards and incentives for MSPAP participation.

A discussion of the mock assessments leads naturally into a description of one of the important motivators for MSPAP participation presented by teachers to students: a

system of awards and incentives. It was during the months leading up to the administration of the MSPAP that the system of rewards and incentives for participation in the assessment were presented to students, also noted by Mintrop (2000) in his study of schools in Maryland. On March 30, 2000, I learned of how Ms. Hart and Mrs. Smith worked together to motivate their classes by providing a pizza and ice cream party after testing had been completed. The class received a poster card cutout of a slice of pizza and ice cream cone for each day that the entire class attended the test administration. Exemptions based on limited English proficiency or disability status did not count against the class's attendance goal. On the last day of the MSPAP, the classes had a party and watched a movie. These incentives helped to motivate students to participate and perform their best on the assessments, which were administered for three hours per day, five days in a row, in the last month of the school year, following administration of criterion-referenced assessments (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, March 30, 2003).

The incentives aspect of MSPAP preparation and students' internalization of these rewards was also understood by parents. Parents shared their views with me on how their students were preparing for the MSPAP during a Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) meeting in May 2000. During our informal conversation while we stuffed envelopes to help prepare for the Silent Auction, the school's major fundraiser, parents reported how children realized the importance of their participation in the assessments. They reported their children saying they should go to school and take the tests, even if they were sick, and how one student understood how it was "important(ce)" to "not be(ing) absent," or "The whole school will get a zero" (M. Bentley Memon, personal communication, May

4, 2000). Although this student's perception was not completely accurate, it is important, because it shows how even students and parents understood the significance of the MSPP.

The sections above describe the test-taking skills taught by teachers. The sections which follow will include a discussion of one of the higher level thinking skills taught which helped to prepare students for the MSPAP, practice with problem-solving.

Practice with problem-solving.

Two of the fifth grade teachers, Ms. Hart and Mrs. Siddiq, spoke in-depth and directly about adaptations they had made to the curriculum in order to integrate more practice with the types of exercises required by the MSPAP into daily classroom activities. These types of adaptations were observed in all five fifth grade teachers' classes. These practice exercises helped to prepare students for performance-based assessment tasks by requiring students to respond to performance-based items, work collaboratively in groups using the teacher as facilitator, and to inductively develop answers to complex problems. These exercises also provided students with experience in following the types of directions required on the MSPAP. In the excerpt below, Ms. Hart explained to the class how it would complete a problem-solving exercise for science, using a hands-on approach and experimentation to decide which materials to use to build a bridge. Students worked as "part of a team of engineers" (M. Hart, personal communication, September 13, 1999) to discuss the problem, then had to respond to a writing prompt and draw and label a diagram:

At 10:10, Ms. Hart announces that it is time for "science" and that students will do "problem-solving." She tells them that they must build a bridge over the

water, and decide which materials to use. She holds up a clear plastic container with water in it and puts different things (a block, a cork, other objects) inside to show students how they sink or float. She tells students they will build a “floating bridge,” and they volunteer different kinds of material it could be made of, “cork,” “helium,” “other materials.” She explains that their bridge must be “proportioned,” which is “when the weight is evenly distributed around,” then hands out a worksheet for the assignment, explaining the task from the directions, “You are part of a team of engineers and must build a bridge over the water. List the problems you will face...” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999)

Ms. Hart then proceeded to review the worksheet, reading the directions aloud. As she read, I observed the responses of the LEP students in the class to the assignment. Two of the students with low levels of English proficiency sat with their papers blank, as she read out the first instruction, and the rest of the class began to follow the directions on the worksheet: “1) Suppose you are a member of a team of engineers hired to build a bridge across a river. List four problems you will have to solve in order to construct a safe and useful bridge” (M. Hart, personal communication, September 13, 1999). Noting some students’ consternation, Ms. Hart then told the class that this is “intended as a pre-assessment,” and that if “we are helping you” “we won’t know what you know.” She paused to help some of the LEP students in the class, then continued reading from the worksheet:

One student asks another in Spanish what to do. Another asks, “Why are there blanks?” Ms. Hart takes the student aside and helps him, then says, “Beautiful!

Flip over to number three.” “The only one who is not finished is Jose. He is finishing now...”

2)”Choose ONE of the problems you identified from question 1. Explain it as completely as possible. Include why it is a problem, and several ways you might try to solve it.”

3)”Draw a bridge across the picture below. You will use labels to clarify your picture if you wish.”

Ms. Hart emphasizes the importance of the tasks they are working on, “When you take that test in the spring, we will be expected to label every picture we make, every single one, you will label if you use: brick, metal, wire, Styrofoam, cork, toilet paper.” “Whatever it is, you need to,” (teacher pauses and students chorus back), “label!”

4)”Now explain in words, just what features about your bridge address each of the problems you listed in question 1.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999)

As Ms. Hart completed reading the fourth instruction on the worksheet, I walked around the room to see how students were progressing on this pre-assessment. I observed that several of the ESOL students, including a girl, Claudia, had written almost nothing on their papers, while other students were writing sentences and labeling parts of a picture. The pre-assessment activity ended at 11:00, when Ms. Hart announced, “Okay, switch to your language arts brains...” During these types of activities, teachers would often refer directly to the part of the exercise that was helping students to prepare for the MSPAP, and that students would have to execute on the MSPAP, in this case, labeling. As the

excerpt from field notes illustrates, students in the class demonstrated a range of success in understanding and following the directions, and in completing this type of activity. Students used the strategy of asking a peer who spoke their language for clarification.

Fifth grade teachers used a variety of means to give students firsthand experience with the stages of problem solving. Teachers walked their students through entire pre-assessment activities that gave students experience with problem-solving, assigned individual exercises that required problem-solving, and reminded students of problem-solving strategies through multiple written messages on bulletin boards and other prominent places in classrooms. Students were also required to practice problem-solving activities in multiple subject area journals. Mrs. Smith, for example, instructed students that they must complete at least three problem-solving cards per week in their “math journals.” Some of the problems on the cards included,

“How many more three-digit numbers are there than two digit numbers?

95 437”

“How many times does the minute hand of a clock go around in 24 hours?”

“There are five squares here. How many squares are in this figure?”

“In how many ways can you have 45 cents with five coins?”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999)

Problem-solving steps and strategies were evident in written messages in all fifth grade classrooms throughout the year. Common written messages that reinforced problem-solving strategies and critical thinking processes were observed in all fifth grade classrooms. For example, a laminated fluorescent pink star was affixed to the corner of every student desk in all of the fifth grade classrooms at White Springs with the words,

“State the problem, Think about solutions, Agree on a plan, React responsibly , See if it works” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, September 13, 1999). The same types of messages reinforcing problem-solving were found in posters, on bulletin boards, and on student assignments throughout the school year. One uniform set of problem-solving steps was not espoused, but instead, several variations on the same theme of following a set of steps to plan, engage in, and evaluate assignments and situations were referred to.

One of the commonly used ways that teachers instructed students to solve problems was through the use of diagrams, charts, and other means of depicting information. All teachers provided explicit instruction on the creation and interpretation of diagrams, charts, and other means of organizing information. Explicit instruction was supported by visual displays, such as posters, illustrating how to create and interpret diagrams and charts. The following vignette from an observation in Mrs. Smith’s class illustrates how she teacher used a Venn diagram (see Figure 1) to depict information on comparative characteristics of the library and playground. The content of this lesson, on structures and materials, was also related to both the fifth grade curriculum and the MSPAP.

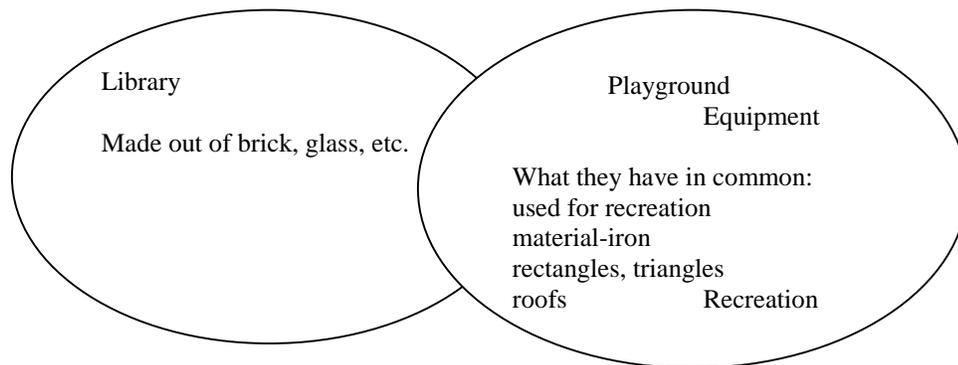


Figure 1. “Venn Diagram of Neighborhood Structures”

Mrs. Smith asks the class, “Who can tell me what we did on Friday?” One student raises her hand and answers, “We were comparing the library and the playground.” Mrs. Smith nods and continues, “Now we’re gonna’ do a more difficult one, talk about their differences. Let’s do the library first. Who can tell me something the library has, and the playground doesn’t?” One boy raises his hand, “Two or three levels.” Mrs. Smith replies, “That’s actually something they have in common, more than one level.” Students’ notes about the two structures are on size, shape, and materials.

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 11, 1999)

This lesson provided students with excellent preparation for the type of skills required on the MSPAP. First, students were required to engage in critical thinking steps such as brainstorming, categorizing, then comparing information. They also used the organizing tool of a Venn diagram to show the processes that they followed. Second, students engaged in these mental exercises in written form and through discussion.

Finally, students used vocabulary and concepts found in the MSPAP, including “structures,” and “materials.”

This type of instruction, where the teacher engaged students in activities that helped them prepare for the MSPAP throughout the entire lesson, was observed in fifth grade classrooms throughout the year. Another way that teachers helped students prepare for the MSPAP was through written messages posted in and around classrooms that served as visual reminders of skills and strategies important to success on the MSPAP. In Mrs. Smith’s class, for example, a large poster over the front chalkboard on a red bulletin board with cursive letters and pictures depicted another version of “problem-solving strategies:” “Problem-solving strategies Pick a pattern Draw a picture Act it out Make an organized list Work backwards Make it simpler Make a table Guess and check” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, January 19, 2000). All of these strategies were applicable to the MSPAP and other performance assessments or assessments requiring critical thinking. Fifth grade teachers trained students to use such strategies throughout the year on pre-assessments and other assignments, and reinforced these strategies through multiple written messages.

This finding on teachers’ use of problem-solving strategies converged with Lane, Parke, and Stone’s (1998) findings in their study of teachers’ use of skills and strategies emphasized on the MSPAP. Lane, Parke, and Stone asked teachers to submit lesson plans, which they subsequently analyzed for skills and strategies emphasized on the MSPAP. I conducted classroom observations throughout the year to record daily classroom activities, in particular, those relevant to ELLs and to MSPAP preparation. Both studies yielded related findings, however. Lane, Parke, and Stone found that

teachers' assessment and instructional activities reflected the Maryland Learning Outcomes, and had some of the same characteristics as the MSPAP tasks (p. 14). The researchers also noted respondents' self-report on their use of problem solving strategies, a skill that I also observed being taught explicitly in fifth grade classrooms:

However, the majority of teachers indicated that the emphasis on problem-solving and reasoning and mathematical explanations and justifications increased a “moderate” or “great” extent. It appears that teachers have placed a much greater emphasis on students' problem-solving, reasoning, and use of explanations since the inception of MSPAP. (p. 53)

During my own classroom observations, I found that performance-based pedagogy, instruction in problem-solving and critical thinking, and other skills and instructional approaches which supported the MSPAP were present throughout the year in all fifth grade classrooms at White Springs Elementary. As the classroom vignettes above demonstrate, the MSPAP was prevalent in teacher talk to students, teachers, and parents. It was also very prevalent in written messages. Teachers used written messages to introduce and reinforce the test-taking and higher level thinking skills that helped their students to prepare for the MSPAP.

Written messages.

In every fifth grade classroom, and every hallway bulletin board outside of every fifth grade classroom, throughout the year, written messages related to preparation for the MSPAP were evident. These took many forms, from displays of student work on concepts and vocabulary used in the MSPAP, such as “natural capital human resources,” to updated word walls, writing rubrics, reading stances, and guides to understanding

different types of charts and graphs. These written messages were present throughout the school year, and increased in number during the months prior to MSPAP administration. The vignette below illustrates how written messages related to skills and vocabulary targeted in the MSPAP were incorporated into hallway bulletin boards and classroom displays:

On the bulletin board outside of Ms. Hart's class there is a display with "natural capital human resources" shown in a collage of newspaper pictures created by the class. The bulletin board next to it shows student "autobiographies."

It is 9:10, and as I sit down at my customary place in the back of the room, I notice some of the new displays around the class. There are papers with examples of "graphs," "line graphs," "bar graphs", "pictographs," "pie graphs," "Venn diagrams," and "geometric shapes" posted. I also see copies of the *Baltimore Sun* class newspapers.

From 9:10-10:00 a.m., students read in their math books and do math problems in pairs. They are working on interpreting frequency line plots and pictographs. Next, there is a multiplication timed quiz.

(M. Bentley Memon, personal communication, March 13, 2000)

As this classroom vignette illustrates, written materials were posted for students to aide them as they completed assignments. In Ms. Hart's class, students could refer to bulletin board displays of frequency line plots and pictographs as they worked on interpreting them at their desks in pairs. Another type of written messages used in all classrooms was word walls, listings of categories of vocabulary, which teachers encouraged students to refer to as they completed assignments.

Word walls were used in every classroom, and updated throughout the year. As Mrs. Smith mentioned in an interview, word walls were “a MSPAP thing.” The following “word tree” was a new addition to the wall in Ms. Hart’s class as of March 30, in the weeks leading up to the MSPAP:

persuade	locate
method	transfer
accurate	establish
infer	experiment
identify	distance
observation	give an example
support	strategy
briefly	hypothesis
conclude	transfer
assumptions	design
optional...	

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, March 30, 2000)

Written messages relevant to MSPAP preparation, such as rubrics and instructions on writing conventions and processes, were present throughout the year, but juxtaposed with messages about behavior, reading, and curriculum units, as this excerpt from an observation in Mrs. Robin’s class illustrates:

Bulletin boards, student mailboxes, and blue cartons line the walls. The cartons have “classroom reading” books in them on “Native Americans,” “mystery” or “fantasy.” Blue and white book boxes have books with labels on the boxes for “realistic fiction” and “yellow dot classroom library.” The boards show “Native American Regions,” “Jeopardy Books,” “CUPS” (a purple soda can with “capitalization,” “usage,” “punctuation,” and “spelling” written out), and other topics. Many of the same posters that I have seen in other classrooms throughout the school are displayed, such as the one which says, “I will move and behave

appropriately throughout the building...” Each student’s desk has a star in a fluorescent color on the corner with the familiar phrases written on them: “STARS State the problem...” A sign on the teacher’s desk written in purple and pink construction paper says “DEAR Drop Everything And Read.” Above the blackboard in the front of the room are cursive letters, signs showing “hundreds tens ones tenths hundredths thousandths,” along with “MSPAP Rubrics.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, November 11, 1999)

Written messages also included information on rhetorical organization, such as pre-writing outlines and a formula for answering open-ended questions. During an observation in Ms. Hart’s class on April 27, 2000, CRT testing day, I observed numerous new displays and posters that provided written messages to help students to answer questions on the MSPAP. These same displays were found in other fifth grade classrooms, and all teachers in the fifth grade led their classes in activities reflected in these displays, such as writing a letter to a friend. One of the writing genres explicitly taught to help prepare students for the MSPAP was the format for writing a “friendly letter,” which is shown below:

Above two computers on the wall next to the windows is a poster for an activity that Mrs. Smith’s class was also working on, “Outline (Prewriting) Letter to a Friend.”

- I. Introduce myself
 - A. What is my name?
 - B. How old am I?
 - C. What classroom am I in?

- D. What is my favorite subject?
 - E. What is my favorite food?
 - F. About my family:
 - 1. How many brothers and sisters do I have?
 - 2. What pets do I have?
 - 3. Where is my family from?
 - 4. Where does my family live now?
- II. What about you?
- A. How old are you?
 - B. What classroom are you in?
 - C. What is your favorite subject?
 - D. What is your favorite food?
 - E. About your family:
 - 1. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
 - 2. What pets do you have?
 - 3. Where is your family from?
 - 4. Where does your family live now?"

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 27, 2000)

Students in all fifth grade classes practiced writing “friendly letters,” a genre that was used in MSPAP items . Displays of written messages increased in number in all classrooms in the weeks preceding the MSPAP administration. On the actual test administration day, many of these displays would need to be covered up, but the titles remained visible as visual reminders to students on some of the important points that they

needed to refer to or consider when writing answers on performance-based tasks. In addition to displays instructing students how to organize their writing to fit a specific genre, Ms. Hart had posted numerous other displays for students:

In the back corner of the room, I also see teacher made posters on, “The Scientific Method,” “Making Bar Graphs,” “Making Line Graphs,” “Transitional Words,” and “Language Usage.” There is a blue poster with question marks with “THE FORMULA (for answering open-ended questions):”

“1. General statement

*restates the question.

*answers yes or no when appropriate.

*gives your opinion when needed.

*should not contain the word because.

2. Text support

*use at least three examples from the reading to support your general statement.

(*the evidence, *the details)

*use transitional words.

3. Analysis

*restate the general statement.”

I also notice some other signs and posters being used for the CRTs and the MSPAP, including a fluorescent pink sign taped over the television screen, “Restate the question! (Complete Sentences)...I also notice black and white

posters with icons used in testing, such as one showing a pencil and hand, with the text,

“During this task, you will be required to respond to activities by writing.

Wherever you see this picture, it is important to make sure that what you have written:

-is organized and complete.

-responds to the audience’s needs.

-uses language purposefully.”

Another sign shows a letter and two hands, with the text,

“During this task, you will be required to respond to activities by writing.

Whenever you see this picture, it is important to make sure that what you have written is *clear* and *complete* and that you have used correct *spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.*” {red teacher-made boxes around italicized words, blue boxes around bold italicized words}

The blue binder on the shelf next to the dictionaries is used for drafts of student papers, and shows the writing process, “Writers’ Workshops: Going Through the Writing Process:

Prewriting Draft

Conferencing Editing

Final Draft Sign in book.”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, April 27, 2000)

This collection of classroom displays and written messages reinforced different aspects of MSPAP preparation that were taught explicitly by all fifth grade regular classroom

teachers throughout the year: activating test-taking strategies, applying stages of the writing process, writing in different rhetorical styles and genres, and creating and interpreting figures such as bar graphs and line plots. All of these skills and areas of knowledge reinforced through written messages helped students prepare for the MSPAP, and also supported students' mastery of the regular fifth grade curriculum.

One of my key findings regarding how the MSPP shaped instruction was that teachers' instruction reflected the emphasis and skills required by the MSPAP, by reinforcing skills and areas of knowledge that would have already been taught, though with additional emphasis and the use of focused strategies. For example, regardless of the MSPAP, fifth grade teachers would have taught students the writing process, but extensive use of rubrics, writing stages, and genres and styles could be attributed to the influence of the MSPAP on instruction.

Connection Between MSPAP Preparation and the Regular Fifth Grade Curriculum

These written curricular materials and accompanying instructional activities point to the important connection that existed between MSPAP preparation and the regular fifth grade curriculum. Although performance-based pedagogy and explicit instruction of MSPAP-related materials and vocabulary were frequently observed, a large proportion of this instruction could also be viewed as supporting the regular fifth grade curriculum. For example, although the ability to interpret graphs and charts was a critical skill for the MSPAP, it was also part of the fifth grade curriculum.

During an interview, Mrs. Robins, a teacher in her second year at White Springs, reflected on how she prepared students for the MSPAP, and on the overlap between the regular fifth grade curriculum and MSPAP preparation:

“Um, this year is completely different. You learn from your mistakes and you learn from your first year. You change things every year, but, this year I find that, probably at least eighty percent of what I do is part of their curriculum and it’s part of the MSPAP just because, you know, from seeing the MSPAP last year, and seeing what the CRT looks for, I’ve learned more strategies and more terms that the kids need to be familiar with and can incorporate it within the class. I don’t say ‘guess,’ I say ‘predict’ or you know, just different language that I’m using with the kids so that they’re comfortable with it and my word wall is different this year.

You know, the things that the kids are learning in math, you know, I don’t specifically, try not to teach to them exactly what we’re going to use for a MSPAP practice if we have a MSPAP practice test, you know, I don’t try to teach them that thing the day before, I try to prepare them in plenty of time so that that way I feel like I *definitely wasn’t* teaching to the test this year. Last year, because it was my first year, and I didn’t have the resources, there were times when I knew specifically that you know I’m really teaching to the test, but this year, I feel like, for the most part, there are those days when you’re like, okay, MSPAP, let’s just not even think about it.

But, I mean anytime, anytime, whether it’s just walking down the hallway, how you interact with people, you know, anything, I’ll say, you know what? This is something you need to be familiar with. And, they generally know that we might do that again, whether it’s MSPAP or not. I try to set up my um tests, my quizzes, any activity possible I try to set up in the same format or in a format that is similar

so that, and when I answer questions I try not to give them any type of help on it if possible because I'm not going to solve problems for them next year and middle school teachers aren't going to, and this is the way MSPAP is set up, so get them used to it. Otherwise, MSPAP is going to be a frustrating week..."

(M. Robins, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

Mrs. Robins explained how she tried to ingrain MSPAP-related vocabulary into her instruction and teacher talk. She also explained how she learned, through experience, to integrate MSPAP preparation into her lesson plans throughout the year, so that she would not be "teaching to the test." When assessing students, Mrs. Robins tried to simulate the setting and format of the MSPAP by controlling the types of items and rules for administration and student response on classroom-based assessments

The intersection between the fifth grade curriculum and the teaching of advanced academic vocabulary and specific reading and interpretation skills that helped to prepare students for the MSPAP was also supported by textbooks used in fifth grade classrooms throughout the year. The fifth grade social studies textbook, *The United States Past to Present*, contains exercises using reading and interpretation skills such as, "Reviewing map and globe skills," "using a scale," "using directions," "using a grid," "latitude and longitude"(McAuley & Wilson, 1987). Each chapter also has a section entitled "study help," that includes sections on developing the following skills, relevant to both the regular fifth grade curriculum and MSPAP preparation:

- “reading for main ideas
- seeing what is alike and different
- reading a graph
- reading a timeline
- comparing maps
- reading tables

reading for reasons
putting things in order
following routes
reading a diagram
making an outline
reading for facts
using scale
using latitude and longitude
reading maps for history
reading a time zone map
comparing graphs
following circle routes.” (p. 1)

Teachers supported students’ preparation for the MSPAP through the regular fifth grade curriculum and use of fifth grade textbooks, along with their general everyday instruction. Although all fifth grade regular classroom teachers spoke about how they had adapted their instruction to help students’ prepare for the MSPAP, several of them also emphasized that they tried to focus their instruction on the teaching of skills that would be appropriate for any fifth grade student to learn, independent of the MSPAP. When asked how her teaching had been shaped by the MSPAP, Mrs. Day emphasized that she taught students basic skills throughout the year that helped them to perform well on the MSPAP, but that she would have taught these skills regardless of the MSPAP:

Day: “So, um, I wasn’t as familiar with it as were the other teachers, and what was expected of it, um. One thing that we did do is practice testing. Another part of it was the children’s, what the children were graded on was the ability to write complete sentences, punctuation,...all those count, so we worked a lot on that throughout the year...”

Bentley-Memon: “Throughout the year...”

Day: “Which I really would have done anyway...(laughs)

Bentley-Memon: “Good idea to learn how to write complete sentences, right?”

(Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Ms. Day explained how she did not believe in teaching to a test, and could not predict all of the test items on the MSPAP, so instead focused on the teaching of skills:

Mrs. Day: “How has this affected...? Um, frankly, I don’t believe in teaching to a test, so, to be honest with you, I’m not gonna sit here and say, like I said before, my whole teaching wasn’t on thinking about MSPAP. You know, I taught basic things that they need to learn, period. And, but these things will carry over, or should...”

(interruption from Mrs. Siddiq, who comes into the room to talk about switching groups. Mrs. Day tells her she will bring her students later because she is doing an interview now.)

Bentley-Memon: “So you don’t believe in teaching to the test, that you teach them skills that they need to learn, period.”

Mrs. Day: “And, in looking at their tests, um, what I saw is like, I’m (glad) I taught them that skill, because you don’t know the test beforehand, and you don’t want to. To me, it defeats the purpose. What I teach them a skill, restate the question in your answer, then that’s all carried over.”

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

One skill important to the fifth grade curriculum, emphasized by the principal at White Springs, and also important to performance on the MSPAP, was the ability to use conventions of writing correctly, and to be able to write using different styles and genres of writing.

The writing process.

One of the most frequently observed types of instruction supporting the MSPAP was instruction on stages of the writing process. Throughout the year, teachers taught, reinforced, and led students in practice with writing processes of brainstorming and generating ideas with a peer, creating a first draft, peer editing, teacher editing, and preparing a final draft on a computer. Stages were summarized by Mrs. Day and other teachers in their discussions with students: “edit, “revise,” “peer review,” “conference” (M. Day, personal communication, October 18, 1999). Activities such as the annual Young Author’s Conference, where students wrote and created their own original books, also supported the teaching of the writing process. Teachers in all fifth grade classrooms used writing prompts to direct writing, timed writings, and writing rubrics. Writing prompts were used in all of the subject areas, and also to help students prepare for schoolwide activities, such as career day. The following prompt was used during Mrs. Day’s class as an exercise to help students prepare for career day:

Career Day Writing Prompt:

Choose a career that you think you would like to have. Write about that career and the kind of work you will do. Be sure to include what kind of training you will need for this career, how this career will contribute to the community in which you live, and how White Springs has helped you prepare for this career.

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, March 21, 2000)

Both prompts and rubrics were also used on the MSPAP. Prompts were used to begin writing, and rubrics were used to evaluate writing. All fifth grade teachers required

students to engage in stages of the writing process throughout the year, from planning for writing, to executing and editing writing.

Instruction on the writing process also took place across the curriculum, so that students learned to write about science, social studies, reading/language arts, and mathematics. Through the annual science fair, students practiced writing related to scientific experiments, including writing questions and describing procedures. Students used writing during mathematics by writing in mathematics journals and by responding to word problems in class assignments, homework, and the MSPAP pre-assessment. The use of writing across the subject areas was important because it supported the skills required to respond to performance-based assessments, where students sometimes worked in pairs or groups to solve problems, and wrote answers describing the steps they followed or why they made certain decisions. Instruction in the writing process also supported the development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills, as students learned to build upon their ideas and develop them into complex thoughts and rhetorical arguments.

Another aspect of the MSPAP addressed during instruction on writing was instruction in the use of various writing genres, such as the “friendly letter,” and “expository writing.” During an October 18, 1999 visit to Mrs. Day’s class, a sample friendly letter written to the principal, with “parts of a friendly letter,” including a “heading,” “greeting,” “closing,” and other parts of a letter identified was displayed, along with posters showing cursive writing, reading rubrics, and other topics. The “friendly letter” was a genre practiced by all fifth grade classes at White Springs. The MSPAP writing rubrics of “Writing for Personal Expression, Writing to Inform, Writing

to Persuade, and Writing for Language Usage,” were also visible in all fifth grade classrooms.

The following excerpt from field notes from an observation in Mrs. Day’s class provide an example of how teachers instructed purposes for writing. During this class session, Mrs. Day taught students about different purposes for writing and about writing genres, then compared their examples to the County curriculum:

...Mrs. Day is leading the ten students, and one who just arrived, through a lesson on “purposes for writing.” She asks the students about different kinds of writing, and puts their ideas on the overhead, adding some of her own. The list includes:

“letters	maps
paragraphs	newspapers
story	tal tales
poems	magazines
riddles/jokes”	

Mrs. Day explains the task to the class, “I’m gonna’ give you a couple of different categories, and what I want you to do is fit them (the examples) into categories.”

She projects, “writing to inform” on the screen, and asks, “What in the world does writing to inform mean?” One student raises her hand, then answers, “Inform.”

Mrs. Day replies, “Would be what?” The student offers, “Giving us information about something.”

Two more students enter the room at 11:55. Mrs. Day tells the class, “Raise your hand and tell me something from your list that would fit under writing to inform.”

She gives an example: “Autobiography: a piece of writing that gives us

information about a person.” A student raises his hand and makes a suggestion, “fiction and non-fiction.” Mrs. Day explains how this example might fit into “writing to inform.” Another student raises her hand and says, “contract.” Ms. Day nods her head, then continues, “The next one is a big one; writing to express thoughts and feelings.” She asks students to give examples, and they suggest, “poems” and “letters.” Mrs. Day reminds them that there are “two types of letters—one we studied and one we didn’t—friendly and business.” She then coaxes the class, “What are those things you do every day?” Several students chorus, “journals!”

Mrs. Day shows the next example on the screen, “writing to perform a task,” saying that “writing to inform and “express feelings have a lot (of examples) in them.” “Writing to perform a task, what do you think that means?” she asks. One student volunteers, “Something you need to perform, do something.” Students generate examples, “recipes,” “signs,” “directions,” “maps.” Mrs. Day suggests another example, “When your parents go to the grocery store, they make a _____.” Two students raise their hands to reply, “list.”

“Okay, the last one is writing to persuade.” One student guesses the meaning (inaudible). Mrs. Day responds, “How did you know that? What does ‘per’ mean? You should have learned it in third and fourth grade.” A student raises his hand and says, “To try to get someone to do something?” Mrs. Day asks the class, “What’s something on TV that persuades you to buy something?” Several students reply in chorus, “Commercial!” Mrs. Day reminds them that there is “another word,” and draws the first two letters on the board, “A d

_____.” The class guesses the rest of the letters. Mrs. Day announces the next part of the assignment, “Now, what I want you to do is, on another piece of paper, make a list (of all kinds of writing) for ten minutes, then make one big list together.” Students work alone, then in groups, and Mrs. Day, the aide, and I walk around the class to look at lists. Some groups make long lists with many examples, while others copy some examples from the board, and have a difficult time coming up with original answers.

After students have made their own lists, Mrs. Day is ready for them to compare their lists to the materials from the County. At 12:25, she explains, “What I’m gonna’ show you is the official list. What does MCPS stand for?” One student answers, “MSPAP?” Mrs. Day shakes her head and explains “Kenhowe County Public Schools.” Mrs. Day continues, “Take a minute to read, and we’re gonna’ be doing a lot of different things this year.” Mrs. Day puts the examples from the County on the overhead:

“MCPS Purposes for Writing

Writing to Inform

newspaper articles	calendars	notecards
business letters	news broadcast	science investigation
feature articles	radio plays	brochures
biographical	reviews	pamphlets
magazine articles	announcements	videos
character sketches	speeches	

Writing to Express Thoughts and Feelings

friendly letters	poems
journals	story poems
response logs	invitations
personal narratives	myths
learning logs	
plays	
response journals”	

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 11, 1999)

Again, though knowledge of how to plan, execute, review, and revise writing supported students’ skills required to respond to performance-based assessment tasks, such as those on the MSPAP, learning to write well is something that all students study as part of the fifth grade curriculum. The frequency of writing-related instruction, along with the teaching of writing integrated in the instruction of content in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, supported preparation for the MSPAP. Another major subject area and skill taught at White Springs that supported preparation for the MSPAP was reading for a purpose.

Reading for a purpose.

All fifth grade teachers at White Springs provided reading instruction and practice both during language arts block and across the subject areas of science, mathematics, and social studies. The principal, Mrs. Joy, emphasized integrated teaching across the curriculum during staff development meetings, and through required professional development activities for instructional staff. One such activity was the reading of the book, *Mosaic of Thought* (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997), which emphasized the

development of critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Teachers were observed throughout the year engaging in processes explained in the book, such as having students make connections between the text and their worlds. Teachers also used adages from the book during class, such as when Ms. Hart encouraged her students, referencing *Mosaic of Thought*, “Don’t memorize anything you don’t understand” (M. Hart, personal communication, September 13, 1999).

Fifth grade teachers provided explicit instruction in reading for a purpose throughout the year, including teaching students to read to comprehend, and to read to search for information. Instruction of reading comprehension strategies was observed in all fifth grade classes throughout the year. Many of these strategies helped students prepare for the MSPAP, such as those depicted in the reading posters seen in Mrs. Day’s classroom on October 18, 1999. The reading posters included,

“Right There: The answer is in the story and easy to find,” “Think and search: The answer is in the story but the answer requires information from more than one sentence or paragraph,” and “On my Own: The answer won’t be told in words in the story. You must find that answer in your head.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 18, 1999)

Students were required to apply critical thinking while reading in order to find answers to questions, solve problems, or get information. Fifth grade teachers’ instruction in reading comprehension often emphasized the inductive reasoning skills required on the MSPAP, where students had to think independently to arrive at conclusions, using clues from text.

In addition to instruction in reading comprehension, fifth grade teachers provided instruction in various purposes for reading. Posters showing MSPAP reading rubrics

including “Reading to Perform a Task, Reading for Literary Experience, and Reading to be Informed” were also displayed in all fifth grade classrooms throughout the year.

These rubrics complemented the “purposes for writing” and writing rubrics that were also referred to and embedded in instruction throughout the year.

Discussion

The instruction of reading is a required component of any fifth grade curriculum in U.S. schools, and the instruction of reading for a purpose and reading comprehension was also a required component of the fifth grade reading/language arts curriculum during the time of the study. Fifth grade teachers’ instruction in these areas, like their instruction in writing processes, supported student performance on the MSPAP, while also helping to develop students’ overall skills in reading. Teachers’ instruction related to MSPAP preparation took place throughout the school year, and reinforced the regular elementary curriculum in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.

At the classroom level, the MSPAP shaped instruction on nearly a daily basis, and was pervasive through written messages posted in and around classrooms. MSPAP-related preparation activities were observed during the majority of the classroom observations, in every fifth grade classroom, throughout the year. Teachers described and, through their teaching, demonstrated how they adapted their instruction in response to the MSPAP. During some class sessions, they were the focus of the entire lesson in several subject areas. During other class sessions, the teacher referred to the MSPAP in the context of delivering instruction, issuing reminders to the class such as, “You’ll see this on the MSPAP.”

The influence of the MSPAP pervaded, and, at certain times during the year, dominated instructional activities through teachers’ use of practice assessments and timed

activities. The role of the MSPAP in shaping instruction was evident through teachers' use of purposeful student groupings and use of rubrics and performance-based tasks on regular classroom assignments. All fifth grade teachers at White Springs teachers emphasized the importance of teaching students to follow directions, and of giving timed activities and practice assessments. Fifth grade teachers taught MSPAP vocabulary and concepts were directly and indirectly through word walls, problem-solving exercises, and classroom messages, such as poster displays.

Finally, teachers also frequently engaged in performance-based pedagogy, what some might call "teaching to" or "teaching for" the test. Performance-based pedagogy was used by teachers in both of the elementary grades in which the MSPAP was administered, third and fifth grades, as noted during observations of third grade classes at White Springs conducted during the spring of 1999, and during observations of fifth grade classes from 1999-2000. Both fifth and third grade teachers led students in explicit practice for the MSPAP, made frequent references to test items and formats used on the MSPAP, such as graphs and letters, provided students with practice with problem-solving tasks, and used MSPAP-related vocabulary during instruction.

Summary

This chapter provided primary data and analysis which showed that teachers did adapt instruction for ELLs in response to the MSPP by explicitly teaching test-taking skills and higher level thinking skills. It provided data and analysis which showed that the MSPP shaped instruction, and was nested in instruction, as preparation for the MSPAP supported the regular fifth grade curriculum. Thus far, the influence of the

MSPP on instruction has been addressed. The chapter which follows will address other factors which shaped instruction at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools.

Chapter VII: Multiple Factors Shaping Instruction

During this study, teachers reported their perceptions of which factors shaped instruction for ELLs at White Springs. They were also asked to consider the role of the MSPP relative to other factors shaping children's education. This chapter will show how state policies co-existed with numerous other factors which shaped the education of English language learners, from factors which the student brought with him or her to the classroom, including linguistic, and social capital, to those outside of the classroom, including school and district structures and regulations. In this chapter, I will discuss other factors that shaped instruction at White Springs Elementary School that were described to me by teachers and raised through observations and document analysis.

Student Backgrounds: Home Setting

All of the teachers and administrators who participated in the study indicated the importance of the home setting to students' academic success and performance on the MSPAP. Teachers and administrators spoke at length about the importance of the home setting in terms of linguistic, educational, time, and other resources available to the family. This finding held true across teachers interviewed formally through semi-structured interviews, as well as across teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals with whom I held informal conversations. Teachers spoke about the completion of homework assignments as an important opportunity to practice and develop academic language. They discussed how parents' linguistic and educational backgrounds often influenced their readiness or ability to help their children with their homework. Teachers spoke frequently about the role of parents in helping students to complete homework assignments, and how they had to consider resources within the home, including parents'

linguistic and educational backgrounds, as well as time resources, when planning homework assignment.

Help with homework.

White Springs teachers provided numerous examples of the positive impact that family involvement in their children's education could have, such as when a parent helped a child do homework, even if the assistance was provided in another language. Teachers also provided numerous examples of situations where a perceived lack of family involvement, due to parents' lack of resources, including time and transportation or knowledge of English, had an impact on teachers' lesson planning. When parents were not literate in their native languages, had limited proficiency in English, and/or had only completed limited formal schooling in their home countries, it was difficult for them to help students with homework. In many families, the school-aged children had the best knowledge of English in the family, even though their level of English was low enough for them to be classified as limited English proficient by school staff. Mrs. Siddiq explained how parents' limited English proficiency was a barrier to children receiving homework help:

“Some of these kids have no help at home because their parents don't speak English.” She mentioned that parents themselves “...might not have a car, or know how to get directions.” “Maybe parents aren't educated enough. Most kids work as translators for parents.”

(M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

All teachers expressed their awareness of students' home settings and the connection between the home setting and education. They also talked about how their knowledge of

students' home settings led them to make deliberate decisions when planning and delivering instruction, such as when designing homework assignments. When asked which factors she thought shaped curriculum and instruction for ELLs at White Springs, Mrs. Smith pointed to the role of family involvement and the home environment:

“...Okay, like I said earlier, many of those students don't have anyone at home to support them. For example, like when we give book reports. When we give reports, and they need to go to the library, many of them don't have transportation to the library. So I think that, that definitely figures in on instruction, because then I have to come up with a um, assignment where I know that they're going to be able to have access to books. Whether that's taking books from the library *here* and bringing them in here to the classroom, or whether it's me myself going out to different random libraries, public libraries, and bringing them in here, you know, whatever it is. Um, when they get homework assignments, a lot of times they don't have parents to help them with them...”

(M. Smith, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

She continued to explain how she took students' home environment and resources into account when planning assignments and delivering instruction, by using the strategy of student grouping:

“Again, when I'm doing something with giving them an assignment, and when I have the ESOL students, a lot of times I will try to do things where they're working with another person so that they can at least have that support, um, as far as if they don't understand something, ...” (M. Smith, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

In the classroom, teachers developed instructional settings where ELLs could utilize the knowledge of peers, including their linguistic and academic knowledge, to help them complete assignments. This was one way that teachers attempted to compensate for students' lack of linguistic capital.

Linguistic capital, and social and economic capital.

For students at White Springs and Green Fields Schools, students' and their families' levels of linguistic capital was directly related to their social and economic capital. According to White Springs teachers, students that did not have opportunities to practice academic English at home, due to their parents' lack of knowledge of English, or lack of time to spend with them studying English, were at a disadvantage. As Mrs. Siddiq explained,

“Parental involvement has a big effect. Some of these kids have no help at home because their parents don't speak English. I'm not sure whether it is socioeconomic, but it may be, because some of these activities, these kids don't have experience of. (They don't have) exposure to these things. I personally think that test is culturally biased. It does have an effect...” (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

In addition to not having been exposed to some of the activities or types of places referenced in performance-based tasks, many of the ELL students at White Springs lived in a setting that inhibited their preparation for the assessments in particular, and schooling in general. Many of these students did not attend kindergarten. Many White Springs students also had parents who had two jobs, so may have been at home with a babysitter watching television for their early years before entering elementary school. These

realities of students' everyday home lives have an influence on their academic success (Schulte, 2002). Teachers reported that parents' inability to speak English well, or students' overexposure to television resulted in only limited exposure to academic language in the home. As Ms. Hart explained,

“If parents don't speak the language at home, they have limited resources. It makes a difference in achievement on the MSPAP. They don't have the language resource.” For example, the word, “gigantic.” School situation, they go home, and watch TV, probably have mastery, but...”

(M. Hart, personal communication, April 10, 2000)

Ms. Hart's observation about the importance of students' “language resource” to their performance on the MSPAP and to their overall academic success is validated by research in second language acquisition. In his seminal theoretical work on the difference between BICS (basic intercultural communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), Jim Cummins' (1981) emphasized the length of time required to attain CALP, as opposed to BICS, and the absolute importance of CALP to ELL students' long-term success in American classrooms. White Springs teachers' observations about the type of language students are exposed to outside of school demonstrate their understanding about different types of language which must be acquired to be truly fluent in a language. Their observations about students' limited exposure to academic language outside of school supports Cummins' emphasis on the importance of mastery of cognitive academic language to academic success. In order to fully participate and succeed in subject area lessons where the language of instruction is English, students need to be able to read and comprehend complex texts, write using

appropriate rhetorical conventions of English, and use advanced subject specific vocabulary in both written and oral forms.

This study presents teachers' views of students' home backgrounds, but it is important to note that these views were filtered through teachers' own experiences and ideas about education. Teachers' and school administrators' views of effective parent involvement were also culturally bound. For example, in many countries, teachers are regarded with a high level of respect and deference, and it would be inappropriate for parents to make suggestions about how to improve a school, whereas this is part of the role of the Parent Teacher Association in U.S. schools. The five teachers who participated in this study, as well as school leadership and other instructional staff, expressed their willingness to understand students' home settings, and seemed genuinely interested in students' cultural backgrounds. It is difficult to assess parents' perspectives of the extent of the home-school disconnect between the home and schools in this study, however, as the group of study informants did not include parents. Other research may have included parents' perspectives, but the focus of this study was on teachers' perspectives and observable behaviors.

Although teachers spoke about the different ways that they compensated for students' lack of resources in the home, they also spoke about the funds of knowledge that were present in the home. They recognized that, even if a parent did not know English or had a limited educational background, he or she could still support a child's education in valuable ways.

Learning at home.

Teachers attested that parents could provide valuable support to children in the home that furthered their academic success, even if they lacked financial or social capital resources themselves. An example of the type of valuable support that parents could provide was when a parent was also actively engaged in learning at home, and combined that learning with helping a child or co-learning. Mrs. Day described what she saw as the importance of academic support that Henry received at home from his mother in explaining her understanding of the enormous progress that Henry, a student who arrived with little knowledge of English in her class, had made,

“He studied with his mom, so his mom gave him the Spanish word for it, so when it came now to doing it in English, he knew what it looks like, okay, but he only could say it in Spanish. So okay I had him say it to me, and I know a little Spanish. I can understand it and read it better than I can speak it, so I have them, it was funny, this is what he did. He studied with mom, so he studied with the English, but he only knew the Spanish answer, and right away, he gave me all the answers, and I said, but I haven’t read these to you yet! But he said, but I know what it is, because when I studied with mom, I picked out the key words.

‘President’, so I know that it’s the Executive Branch, ‘two houses,’ so I know it’s the Legislative, and he told me this, verbally, in English!” (M. Day, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

She described how Henry and his mother were learning English together, and how his mother helped him complete his assignment for Mrs. Day’s class by teaching him how to pick out the key words in Spanish, then translating them to English. Mrs. Day

attested that the support that he received at home made a “*huge*” difference.” The role of parents’ in children’s education was stressed by many of the teachers and staff at White Springs and Green Fields, including the ESOL teachers and principal.

The ESOL program at the schools was designed to help students learn English. Students who were identified as speaking a language other than English, and assessed and found to be limited English proficient, were placed in the ESOL programs at White Springs and Green Fields. Due to the primarily pull-out approach used in this program, participating students received reading/language arts instruction which was different from that received by their native speaking peers. According to teachers, the timing of students’ placement in ESOL programs in terms of their enrollment in school was critical to students’ academic success. Accurate identification and placement of students in programs that meet their needs, whether it be ESOL, special education, gifted, or other programs, is critical to students’ academic success. The connections between these programs and the mainstream classroom in terms of placement, scheduling, and curriculum are important to the overall flow of the school day and to insuring that students receive consistent instruction. By being in ESOL, ELL students were part of a specific track and a specific cohort of students within the school. The logistics of ESOL students’ exit and reentry into the mainstream classroom during reading/language arts block also had an impact on the daily instruction that they received.

School and District Structures and Regulations

The section which follows includes a description of the school and district structures and regulations which shaped ELLs’ education. These structures and regulations were manifested in ESOL program structures, mandated curriculum, and demographic realities of ELLs’ enrollment in school.

Being in ESOL: Placement, scheduling, and the ESOL curriculum.

White Springs teachers spoke about the importance of accurately identifying and placing students in ESOL. Three of the fifth grade teachers shared anecdotes or comments about students who were ELLs, but had not been identified and placed correctly at some time during their schooling. Mrs. Smith described an ELL, Sadya, who was not identified for English language support services at the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Smith observed that Sadya had difficulty participating in class, that she “...wasn’t getting basic basic things,” and “...had a real problem with her behavior.” She then spoke with the guidance counselor, and learned that Sadya had been enrolled in ESOL in third grade, but was not enrolled in ESOL in fourth grade, due to misidentification after a change in teachers. After learning about her academic history and then placing her back in ESOL classes, Mrs. Smith reported an enormous change in her behavior and academic performance. She attributed the change to the small group work and individualized attention that students received in ESOL. (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 27, 2000)

Teachers also spoke about the challenge posed by the ESOL students’ schedule using a pull-out method of ESL instruction. Their comments were supported by my observations. ESOL students were sometimes lost during transitions when they returned from their ESOL class to their regular class, sitting at their desks off-task while the rest of the students in the regular class finished whatever activity they had been working on. Students also sometimes missed important instruction due to their attendance in ESOL or participation in elective courses. As Ms. Hart explained, “...Instrumental music is two and a half hours per week.” “Some of the lowest students” take it. It is “difficult if they

are ESOL” because they “miss grammar” (M. Hart, personal communication, January 7, 2000).

ESOL students’ schedules were further disrupted by MSPAP practice assessments, CRTs, and the actual MSPAP themselves. Mrs. Robins described how the MSPAP influenced instruction through the time required for testing:

“I’m, I’m not really sure. I mean, one thing about the testing is that it takes a lot of time away from the kids and their classroom time with the ESOL teachers. If the fourth grade teachers, or the team, is taking MSPAP, or not MSPAP, but like the CRT, or even actually, third grade, they do take MSPAP. If they’re taking MSPAP, then that means that if it runs during the time that my kids are supposed to be in ESOL, they don’t get ESOL, so they’re back in the regular classroom instruction. And when they do, I give them the same work that the other kids are getting. And if feel like it’s too much for them, then I alter it or put them in a group so they can do group work, but, you know that goes on for like six weeks, because you’ve got MSPAP, you’ve got CRT, then you’ve got make up dates, and those all take away from ESOL, because maybe they’ve got the ESOL teacher being an accommodator, or maybe they’ve got the ESOL teacher with all the kids who aren’t taking these tests in a room, because they have them, they don’t take my kid. And that happens with the third graders when the fifth graders are testing, so they miss a lot of ESOL time. Our ninth, ninth quarter, fourth quarter nine weeks is just almost non-existent for these kids with ESOL. So they’ve been getting regular instruction.” (M. Robins, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

As Mrs. Robins explained, assessments and practice assessments interrupted all students' instruction, but posed a particular problem for ESOL students, due to the pull-out nature of the ESOL program at White Springs. Mrs. Robins and other teachers at White Springs also spoke about the ESOL curriculum, and how it supported students' instruction for the MSPAP, though it varied from the regular fifth grade curriculum:

Bentley-Memon: "Relative to these other factors that you mentioned, like language spoken at home, reading, you know, being able to read at home, parent involvement, do you think the MSPAP has influence on curriculum and instruction for LEP students, or do you think these other factors have a big influence also?"

Mrs. Robins: "I'm not really sure. I don't know how much MSPAP is affecting these guys as far as their learning because I know that a lot of times, what the ESOL kids are doing, um, maybe it doesn't necessarily follow the curriculum step by step, but they're learning stuff in there that the kids aren't learning in my class. They're learning how to write newspaper articles constantly, they're learning how to interview, they're learning how to do a poll, they're learning how to graph out the results of a poll, and I think that that experience there is going to help them in some way for MSPAP, just because it's teaching them how to problem solve, and it's teaching them to work independently as well because if you go in the ESOL room, there's a bulletin board that says where everybody is in their article, what step they're in. And I'm fairly sure that's an independent activity, it's up to them to get this work done, and if they're working with a partner, there is a chance for them to work with somebody else, whether they like them or not, and they have to

reach the same goal.” (M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

Another frequent comment made by fifth grade teachers was that they were unsure of exactly what was being covered instructionally in ESOL. The physical distance of the ESOL classes, which were conducted in trailers outside the building, as well as the pull-out nature of the program, separated the ESOL teachers and students instructionally from the other fifth grade teachers. All of the fifth grade teachers spoke positively about the work being done in ESOL by ESOL teachers, though none seemed to be sure of exactly how the ESOL curriculum related to their own daily instruction in regular classrooms.

This connection between what was taught in the ESOL classrooms and what was taught in the regular classrooms could have been an area of study unto itself. Although I did conduct observations in ESOL classes, the decision was made to focus my observations on the regular fifth grade classrooms at White Springs, in order to better understand the content area instruction received by ELLs, both limited English proficient and formerly English proficient, during the majority of their day in school. In addition to the academic curriculum, all teachers and staff at White Springs emphasized the importance of character education and good social skills and manners. The importance of following directions and exhibiting good manners and social skills was emphasized by school leadership more than any other topic at weekly schoolwide meetings, and on a daily basis, through intercom announcements and written messages in classrooms and throughout the schools. These topics were also taught through a curriculum program called “Second Step,” which was required by the County.

Character education and growing up.

In addition to academics, another area of the fifth grade curriculum that was emphasized daily at both White Springs and Green Fields was character education and the development of good social skills. Character education, good manners, and discipline were reinforced by the principal and staff during schoolwide meetings and during morning announcements, and in the classroom through written messages and classroom activities. Classroom activities using “Second Step,” a curriculum required in the fifth grade as part of the guidance counselor’s program, were observed during nearly every full day class session observed. Materials for the program included large photographs of children engaged in different situations that were reviewed and discussed by the class. Teacher-led discussions about emotions, behavior, and character education followed the presentation of these photos. The following excerpt from an observation of Mrs. Day’s class on October 11, 1999, illustrates how these materials were used in the classroom:

At 12:47, it is time for the next part of the lesson, “Second Step.” Mrs. Day begins, “Today we will tell about how our feelings can change.” She holds up a black and white mini-poster, reading from the text on the back, “Angela came to school (for the first time)...There were many new words...” Mrs. Day asks, “How do you think she felt before she got to the school before she knew anyone? How do you think she feels now? How do you know this is Angela? She has her homework and is sharing it? What tells you she feels happy and exciting now?” Several students raise their hands to give the answers, or to tell when they first came to school. Mrs. Day continues, “Angela has a different feeling about the

school now. Angela feels... Angela does not feel..." students give answers, "shy," "scared," "sad," "nervous,"

"What are some times when you felt sad or scared, but afterwards you felt happy and excited?" Students give some examples, "first day of school," "joining a new soccer team," "when I first came to White Springs," "my friend, when he came, he couldn't speak a lot of English in second grade." Mrs. Day summarizes their discussion, "Today we learned that our feelings can change."

(M. Bentley-Memon, personal communication, October 11, 1999)

Teacher report and observation showed that students enjoyed the program. Unlike instruction in the core subject areas such as reading/language arts and mathematics, however, instruction using this program did not relate directly to MSPAP preparation, but to the larger school goals of developing children's behavior, manners, and discipline, an important part of school culture at White Springs and Green Fields. From the principal's, vice-principal's, and teachers' perspectives, students' ability to abide by norms of good behavior and manners was very important to their long term success in school.

New arrivals.

Overall, teachers at White Springs and Green Fields exhibited good intentions and sustained efforts to help English language learners participate in their classes. These efforts were tested by the challenges posed by new arrival students, particularly those who entered teachers' classes in the middle of the year as new arrivals to the United States, and had very low levels of proficiency in English. Not surprisingly, teachers expressed dismay and frustration about not being able to meet the needs of these students in the regular classroom. All of the five fifth grade regular classroom teachers at White

Springs reflected on the challenge of teaching ELL students with low levels of English proficiency, many of whom had recently arrived in the school, district, or United States. All of the five fifth grade teachers highlighted the presence of new arrivals in their classrooms, using phrases like “he just got here” and “oh my god...absolutely no English,” and used peer translation and other instructional strategies to teach these students. Most of the students who were new arrivals in the fall of 1999 had made enormous progress in their English language development by the spring of 2000, which I noted in my observations of their work in class, and which was noted by teachers during interviews and informal conversations.

The dynamic of new arrivals was compounded by the type of instructional program offered for ELLs at White Springs, a pull-out English as a Second Language program, where students attended English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for three times per week for 90 minutes per session. This programming meant that all ELLs, including new arrivals and LEP students, spent the majority of their day in the regular classroom, taught by teachers without specific training on how to teach them, and studying alongside peers who were formerly English proficient or native speakers of English.

Peer dynamics and new arrivals.

When a student has recently arrived in the United States, and has little knowledge of English, the other students in his/her classroom are cognizant of his/her language abilities, and respond to his/her lack of English proficiency in both positive and negative ways. During this study, I observed two basic and sometimes simultaneous patterns of peer response to newly arrived ELLs: integration and assistance, and ostracization. In

addition to trying to adapt their own instruction to serve these students, the teachers of new arrivals had the additional challenge of monitoring and directing these peer group dynamics. Sometimes, teachers observed and corrected negative behavior of non-new arrival students towards those who were new arrivals, or praised positive behaviors, such as when a student would voluntarily serve as a peer translator for a new arrival. At other times, negative behaviors went unchecked, and the newly arrived child had to confront both the challenge of not knowing the language of instruction of the classroom, and the challenge of being ridiculed or ignored by peers. Peer dynamics are a part of every classroom setting, regardless of the presence of ELL students, and any teacher must be sensitive to and monitor them. The challenge of monitoring and responding to peer dynamics was compounded when another difference across students, native language, was present.

Discussion

At the school level, the MSPP was only one of a constellation of factors shaping school life. At the classroom level, however, the MSPP shaped instruction in a manner that was visible on nearly a daily basis, though the reform program co-existed with many other factors shaping children's education. There were other factors in addition to the MSPP that had a profound influence on teachers' instruction, including students' home settings and their access to linguistic, social, and cultural capital, their placement in ESOL, the length of time that they had been enrolled in U.S. schools, and their level of English language proficiency. For many students at White Springs and Green Fields, length of time in U.S. schools and level of English language proficiency were correlated. Those students who were new arrivals to the U.S. also, in most cases, had low levels of

English proficiency. Teachers at White Springs and Green Fields adapted their instruction in response to their students' skills and backgrounds.

Summary

The MSPP shaped instruction in visible ways at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools, but the role of the MSPP in shaping instruction was mediated by other factors. Teachers considered students' home settings when planning and executing instruction, as well as mandated school curriculum units, such as those on character development, which were taught on a daily basis. Finally, the realities of which students were in a classroom and when they would receive which type of instruction shaped the daily flow of classroom instruction. In the forthcoming final chapter, I will discuss a conceptualization of the relationship between state policies and classroom practice which takes into account the multiple ways that state policies shape instruction.

Chapter VIII: Conclusions

In this study I found that teachers adapted their instruction in response to the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP) in observable and common ways. I found that state policies influenced, were nested in, and co-existed with classroom practice. State policies, at times, influenced classroom practice, as fifth grade teachers engaged in instruction throughout the school year designed to enhance students' performance on assessments administered at the end of the school year. Regulatory pressures from the federal level morphed into state education reform initiatives, which were then reflected in teachers' daily teaching. Teachers adapted their teaching to incorporate instruction which would help students to prepare for the MSPAP, but their craft knowledge interfaced with these efforts to change instruction, resulting in a unique "hybridization" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 136) of reforms. State policies were, at other times, nested in classroom practice, as the academic content and skills useful for preparing students for the MSPAP overlapped with the areas normally taught in the fifth grade curriculum. At other times, State policies co-existed with classroom practices, as just one of many factors shaping teachers' planning, decision-making, and execution of instruction, including traditions of teaching.

In this final chapter, I will further discuss this conceptualization of the relationship between state policies and classroom practice. I will then provide an overview of the major findings which emerged from the data, and interpretations of these findings. I will offer several recommendations for future research and for state practices based on these findings. I will discuss student outcomes on the MSPAP. Finally, I will consider a view to the future, taking into considerations very recent policy changes at the federal and state levels which have the potential to shape education for ELLs, and to

shape how ELLs' progress in English language proficiency and academic performance is measured.

State Policies and Classroom Practice

This study showed how a straight line, from state action to school response to teacher response, did not exist. Instead, reforms were filtered through multiple contexts which comprised the complex landscape of schooling. In order for standards-based assessments to produce the results that their crafters seek, e.g., to shape instruction at the classroom level, standards-based reforms must compete with these multiple inter-related factors which shape the planning for, decisions made during, and execution of instruction. The interaction of state reforms with the multiple student, teacher, and school background factors that shape what gets taught and how is complex, and can be time-based and situationally dependent.

This study captures a moment in time in Maryland, at the peak of the implementation of an established standards-based assessment system, which occurred just prior to its dismantling and replacement by another system. States across the nation are undergoing similar transformations as they develop and put in place new assessments in more grades that will include more students. In this study, the use of multiple methods of observation, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis were used to investigate if and if so, how the MSPP shaped instruction for ELLs. The voices of teachers, students, and school personnel, their observed behaviors and actions, and the written messages of school materials, combined together, provided a picture of the ways that at a standards-based assessment program shaped instruction, as well as the limits and extent of its influence. Below I will describe the over-arching conclusions which

emerged from study data and findings, beginning with a view of schools as complex and multi-dimensional.

Schools as “natural systems.”

The understanding of the two schools gained from this research supported the view of schools as “natural systems” with inter-related parts and complex relationships (Goodlad, Klein, & Tye, 1979). State policies were filtered through, bounced against, and pushed under many background factors before they reached the classroom level. Multiple worlds shaped instruction. These included the large worlds of regulatory pressures, including federal, state, county, and school policies and structures. These worlds also included the lenses through which these policies and structures were filtered. These lenses included the school principal’s vision for the schools, teachers’ experiences and traditions of teaching and craft knowledge, students’ peer interactions in their classrooms, and their linguistic, capital, and economic capital. These multiple factors, of which the MSPP was a prominent player, shaped planning, decision-making, and execution of instruction. This conclusion was supported by my observations of classrooms and conversations with teachers in all grades, though grade data collection was focused on fifth grade.

The role of the MSPP at the classroom level.

Not only did fifth grade teachers at White Springs and Green Fields use common instructional strategies to teach English language learners, but teachers of other grades in which the MSPAP was administered, as well as teachers of grades in which the MSPAP was not administered, adapted their instruction in response to the MSPP. I learned that teachers in all “on grade” classrooms, e.g., grades where the MSPAP was administered,

adapted instruction in response to the MSPP. My observations of third grade classes and conversations with third grade teachers at Green Fields Elementary supported this conclusion. I also learned that teachers in “off grade” classrooms, e.g., grades where the MSPAP was not administered, such as second grade, adapted instruction in response to the MSPP. In this way, the MSPP could be viewed as shaping instruction at the classroom level throughout the entire schools.

Regular fifth grade teachers in the study used common instructional strategies to teach ELLs without any direction or training from the school or district leadership. The fact that these teachers had not received any specific direction or training on how to teach ELLs, despite the high enrollment of these students at White Springs, is notable. This absence of specific attention to instruction for ELLs could be attributed to the delegation of instructional responsibility for these students to the English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers, or to the school climate created when regulatory pressures to meet federal and state accountability requirements overlay local initiatives. Training related to literacy development for ELLs and for all students was offered for the lower elementary classroom teachers at Green Fields Elementary School in 1999, but similar training was not offered to upper elementary classroom teachers. At White Springs, professional development for instructional staff focused on development of reading and writing skills for all students. This professional development, such as the school-wide requirement to read and incorporate tenets from *Mosaic of Thought* into instruction, was applicable to instruction of ELLs, but was not specifically directed at these students. This situation could be interpreted as the principal’s need to allocate instructional resources, including teachers, across many different populations of students requiring special

services at the school, including ELLs, students with disabilities, and low-performing students, and as the resultant lack of attention to ELLs specific learning needs.

One way of categorizing teachers' responses to ELLs in their classrooms is as use of common instructional strategies. Another way of viewing these responses is as "punting" (B. Stuart, personal communication, September 27, 2004). In the absence of knowledge about or specific policies on how to teach these students, and with the need to balance the demands of teaching ELLs with teaching all students, teachers did what came naturally to them, then moved on to continue with delivery of instruction. Teachers' responses to ELLs in their classes formed a de facto policy for teaching these students. In some cases, it was effective, and in others, it was not. Given the physical parameters of the classroom, the structure of the school day, and the expectations of the required curriculum, along with their own personal histories and traditions of teaching, there are limitations to how teachers will teach ELLs in their classrooms, especially when they represent only some of the students in their classrooms. This section has included a discussion of how the MSPP shaped instruction at the classroom level. Below I will consider the role of the MSPP at the school level.

The role of the MSPP at the school level.

Although the MSPP permeated instruction at the classroom level, it was relegated to the sidelines at the school level, as one of the multiple competing factors shaping daily school life. The MSPP shaped instruction at the classroom level, but it was only one of a constellation of factors that shaped education at the school level, along with a principal-driven emphasis on reading and writing instruction, a diverse student population from families that were adjusting to life in the United States, and other factors. The role of the

MSPAP in shaping instruction was mediated by the filter of the regular fifth grade curriculum. Preparation for the MSPAP was observed in all classrooms throughout the year, but the subject areas taught and many of the skills taught were also part of the fifth grade curriculum and Maryland Curriculum Frameworks. Overall, instruction related to MSPAP preparation reinforced the same skills normally taught in the primary curriculum, such as reading for a purpose and executing stages of the writing process.

The manifestation of the MSPP's influence at the classroom level, rather than at the school level is, to some degree, not surprising, since the MSPP was designed to bring about instructional changes. On the other hands, for schools identified by the state as being in need of improvement, the MSPP could be seen as shaping the school climate, school improvement plans, and professional development. Although, during the time of this study, White Springs and Green Fields were both identified by the state as low-performing schools, this fact, and the MSPP, which was used to measure states' progress, did not define or dominate the schools.

The role of the principal.

The principal at both schools, Mrs. Joy, must be given a great deal of credit for sustaining a focused school environment where students' safety and overall development, including personal, character, social, and cognitive development, was the primary focus. My observations about the role that Mrs. Joy played in leading the schools are supported by the work of Glatthorn (1997) and others who have written on the role of the principal in creating schools' cultures and climates. Mrs. Joy, the principal of both schools in the study, was an instructional leader with many demonstrated years of success as a principal, as evidenced by the County's permitting her to simultaneously serve as

principal of two schools. Her leadership style was evident through activities that she led which were unique to the schools and that shaped the school cultures, such as schoolwide meetings. Mrs. Joy's response to both schools' academic performance results was to focus on growth, rather than targets, and to maintain a sustained focus on the teaching of reading and writing throughout the entire schools, balanced with the provision of additional services as needed, such as tutoring and homework club, to support students' academic growth. The principal and school leadership referred to the MSPP only in the larger context of school events, and emphasized reading and writing instruction at faculty meetings, and character education at schoolwide meetings. Mrs. Joy mediated and controlled the influence of the MSPP at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary Schools. Teachers also mediated the influence of the MSPP through their use of beliefs about language and cognition, which became part of their knowledge of the craft of teaching.

The role of teachers' "tacit knowledge."

Despite their lack of specific training to teach this specific population, White Springs teachers expressed and exhibited beliefs about language and cognition which shaped the instruction of their students in positive ways. White Springs teachers exhibited an intuitive understanding of students' language development. This understanding and these beliefs can be viewed as a part of teachers' craft knowledge (B. Finkelstein, personal communication, July, 2004), or interpreted as a version of what Polanyi calls "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1967; Herschbach, 1995), the culmination of professional knowledge and experience which becomes craft knowledge. Teachers differentiated between students' language proficiency and underlying cognitive abilities and academic

content knowledge. They understood that a child's English language proficiency could be the barrier to his/her performance in an academic content area. They understood that a child might have natural abilities and training in mathematics that will not be apparent until that child learns English. Fifth grade teachers understood that once that child had learned English, he/she could achieve at the same level as or at an even higher level than his/her native English speaking peers.

Fifth grade teachers also understood that students' social language and academic language may develop in different stages (Cummins, 1981; Butler & Bailey, March 2003). They understood that allowing a student to complete an assignment in his/her native language would enable that student to grasp the meaning of the content being taught, until the child had mastered a sufficient level of English to complete the assignment in English. They understood that the native language could be used as a conduit to understanding, and that at times, it was beneficial to make use of that language during class activities. Fifth grade teachers understood that use of the native language in the classroom could facilitate a child's acquisition of content, and that it was not necessary to insist that he/she use English at all times. Insistence on the use of English during one hundred percent of time in class could result in a period of linguistic isolation until a child mastered sufficient English to participate in class activities, for example. Teachers' beliefs and understanding about language and cognition were formed during their daily experiences of teaching ELLs in their classrooms.

Through their activation of craft knowledge, teachers become mediators and interpreters of state policies and programs. Teachers reasoned their own approaches to instruction, which sometimes reflected goals of the MSPP or of the fifth grade

curriculum, and at other times, did not. Through their instructional decisions, teachers intentionally or unintentionally supported, accepted, or ignored the role of the MSPP in children's education.

Classroom practice and educational outcomes.

A discussion of policy and practice intersections leads naturally to a discussion of educational outcomes, as that is the measure by which the success of policy is often determined. One of the most difficult challenges confronting education researchers is untangling the connection between educational inputs and the output of student achievement. If research could point clearly to which factors, internal and external to the school, are statistically significantly linked to student achievement across student groups and educational settings, then the formula for student academic achievement would be clear. Recognizing the teacher as the conduit for learning, and as the connection between the student and the curriculum, many researchers have attempted to determine which characteristics of teachers have a measurable influence, positive or negative, on their instruction. Did teachers adapt instruction in response to the MSPP? According to this study, yes. Did these adaptations in instruction result in improvements on school performance on the MSPAP? According to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), yes. MSDE produced numerous studies and documents which attested to improved school performance on the MSPP from 1993 to 2002. Despite these overall improvements statewide, however, many schools, including White Springs and Green Fields, fell far below the state average even during the final years that the MSPP was in place.

State Transition from the MSPP to the MSA

This study has shown that teachers did adapt instruction in response to the MSPP and MSPAP. Some of the instructional strategies frequently employed by teachers, such as use of purposeful student grouping, can be connected directly to the administration of the MSPAP itself. Other strategies, such as teaching problem-solving and following directions, helped students to prepare for the MSPAP, but could also help students to prepare for other assessments, such as the MSA. Whether teachers' adaptation of instruction in response to the MSPAP will be replaced by adaptation of instruction in response to the MSA, or whether some of the instructional adaptations developed in response to the MSPAP will be tweaked to support preparation for the MSA, can only be determined through future research at the school and classroom levels. It will be several years before the Maryland State Department of Education or others are able to conduct this type of research or inquiry as the cycle of new standards and assessments is phased in, and as teachers become more familiar with them.

A View of the Present

District context.

Since the time that this study was conducted, a number of changes have taken place at the district level which could shape instruction for English language learners in the district and in the schools within the district. The district Superintendent, Max Bullin, was new to Kenhowe County Public Schools at the start of the study. Over the last several years, he has introduced numerous new initiatives to improve achievement of low-performing schools in the County. One of these initiatives is a phase-in plan for full-day kindergarten that will be in effect for all students by 2007. Bullin's decision to try to improve school achievement through improvements in early childhood education is

supported by research conducted in Kenhowe County and replicated in studies across the United States. These studies have shown that children who have either not attended high quality preschool programs or received comparable education in their homes fall far behind their peers once they enter elementary school, and, for the most part, never catch up academically. These programs can give students a jump start in mastering academic content, and, for those who are English language learners, in learning English.

Another initiative developed to improve education for students in the early grades is the Reading Initiative. This early literacy program was introduced in grades kindergarten through two in Kenhowe County Public on a phase-in basis, beginning in the 1998-1999 school year. The Initiative provided for reduced class size, increased time for reading instruction, and staff development in balanced literacy (Bridges–Cline, October 2000). The Reading Initiative was complemented with new programs in teacher training, increased concentration on the instruction of reading and math, the use of multiple assessments, and improvements to curricula. Recent analysis of students' scores on the 2004 Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills showed that scores in schools with these County interventions have increased significantly since 2000 in all subject areas, including reading, language, language mechanics, math, and math computation. Improvements were also shown by students who were designated as limited English proficient (Perlstein, 2004). The majority of limited English proficient students in the nation, in Maryland, and in Kenhowe Public Schools, are enrolled in grade kindergarten through three. Programs developed to help these students to learn English and master academic content, beginning at an early age, help students to exit language instructional educational programs by the upper elementary grades, when academic demands grow.

According to analyses presented by the Kenhowe County Public Schools, these program improvements in the early grades have had a positive impact on instruction. The impact of these improvements will need to be continually studied in order to determine their effectiveness, as the student population in many schools in Kenhowe County, including White Springs and Green Fields, remains diverse, and as student achievement, though improving, lags behind that of many other schools in the County.

Student demographics and test performance.

Since the time that this study was conducted, the presence and characteristics of the ELL student population at White Springs and Green Fields Elementary School has not changed dramatically. Information for White Springs will be presented below, as it includes the grades in which state achievement assessments are administered, grades three through five. The racial and ethnic diversity of the school has been maintained, and the proportion of some groups, including Hispanic students, has increased. In 1999, 172 students at White Springs were Hispanic, making up 41% of the school population, and in 2004, 186 students were Hispanic, making up 58% of the school population. The enrollment of limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, and students receiving free and reduced price lunch has also not changed over these five years.

In terms of achievement, White Springs met state Adequate Yearly Progress Targets on the MSA for the 2003-2004 school year for all student subgroups. In the 2002-2003 school year, the school met targets for all student subgroups, except for limited English proficient students in reading/language arts (MSDE, 2004). Although White Springs was not identified as in need of improvement in 2004, school performance lagged behind district performance. In 2004, for example, 39.6 percent of all fifth grade

students Countywide scored at the proficient level on state achievement assessments in reading, while only 15.4 percent of fifth grade students at White Springs scored at this level. In mathematics, 23.5 percent of fifth grade students Countywide scored at the proficient level on state achievement assessments in 2004, while only 10.6 percent of students at White Springs scored at this level (MSDE, 2004). Although it is useful to review school performance on the MSPAP and MSA and to review teachers' adaptations of instruction, a causal relationship between the two was not established in this study. Instead, the purpose of this study was to arrive at an in-depth understanding of how a state assessment program shaped instruction for English language learners, and the role of the program alongside other factors shaping education for these students. This study did generate substantial data on how state policies influenced, were nested in, and co-existed with classroom practice. These findings converged with a recent national (2004) survey conducted on teachers' self-reports of their preparedness to teach diverse students.

Study Findings and a National Survey of Teachers

This study looked at one of the challenges faced by teachers at White Springs and Green Fields, namely, how to adapt instruction to a diverse student population. This challenge is faced, to some degree, by most teachers in American schools. A national survey of teachers conducted by the Public Education Network (2004) showed that English language learners are one of the groups of students that teachers feel least prepared to teach. In this study, teachers' challenges in instructing new arrival students, ELLs who had recently arrived in the school and in the United States, were evident in some way on every day that I conducted research at White Springs or Green Fields. From a practical perspective, the challenge is obvious: How can a teacher deliver the

same instruction to all students, when some of the students are completely unfamiliar with their school surroundings, and do not speak the language of instruction?

At Green Fields and White Springs Elementary Schools, regular classroom teachers relied upon their own instructional repertoires-their craft knowledge-to plan and deliver instruction for English language learners. This finding converged with findings from a recently published survey of new teachers conducted by the Public Education Network (PEN, 2004). The PEN survey replicated other surveys conducted by the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, and the U.S. Department of Education regarding teacher perceptions of their own preparedness to teach. In all of these surveys, one of the five areas that new teachers reported they felt least prepared for was to address the learning needs of ELLs (PEN, 2004, p. 9). According to the PEN survey of more than 200 new teachers teaching in four different locations across the United States, teachers reported that, in the absence of appropriate training or experience, they developed their own strategies for teaching diverse students in their classrooms:

Most teachers said they learned about teaching diverse student populations on the job. Some familiarized themselves with the backgrounds of their students by doing research on specific cultures or reading about teaching in diverse settings. Once they felt they had an understanding of their students' backgrounds, interests, needs, and aptitudes, they then tried to figure out how to differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students. They relied mainly on trial and error, and received little structured assistance to achieve this goal.

(PEN, 2004, p. 14)

Findings from this survey of more than 200 new teachers converged with findings in this study, an in-depth study of instruction delivered by five teachers, four of whom were new to the profession. The authors of the PEN survey also made recommendations for teacher preparation programs, school systems, and other teachers. I will conclude this narrative with my own recommendations below.

Recommendations

Based on study findings, I will make recommendations for further research, professional development, and assessment development and implementation.

Recommendations for research on English language learners.

This study has shown the value of conducting classroom-level research in order to investigate how teachers adapted instruction for a particular group of students in response to state reform programs. This type of research is required in order to understand if reform programs have their desired effect, and if assessments which are part of these programs have consequential validity. During data collection, I developed an understanding of some of the considerations important to take into account when conducting this type of research or related research.

First, instructional practices may vary greatly across schools, so research in multiple schools is advisable to make generalizable and definitive conclusions about how reforms shape instruction. One of the sub-questions that I was interested in looking at, which was one of the interview questions, was whether teachers adapted instruction in response to the MSPP differently for ELLs than they did for other students. In this study, teachers reported that they did not adapt instruction when preparing students for the MSPAP for English language learners differently from other native-English speaking students. This conclusion was supported by classroom observations and document

analysis. This finding contrasted with the finding from an earlier study conducted in neighboring Marion County, where I observed systematic student grouping patterns that appeared to be based on students' projected performance on the MSPAP. During this earlier study, I observed the placement of native English speaking and fluent English proficient students with a teacher who was more experienced in administering the MSPAP, and the placement of limited English proficient students and low-achieving students with a teacher who was a long-term substitute and not experienced in administering the MSPAP (M. Bentley-Memon, unpublished paper).

This pattern was not duplicated at White Springs. Instead, I found that fifth grade teachers delivered the same instruction to all students in their classes, which included limited English proficient students, formerly English proficient students, and native English speaking students. The receiving end of the instruction varied, however, due to students' proficiency in English. Students with limited proficiency in English did not have the same level of comprehension of and access to the curriculum and instruction used to prepare for the assessments, and comprehension of and access to the assessments themselves, due to their low level of English language proficiency. Students' level of English proficiency was one of the lenses through which instruction was processed. Furthermore, students participating in ESOL classes were not physically present during the language arts block taught by the regular classroom teacher, so could not benefit from this instruction, though they did receive ESOL instruction. The background training and experiences that teachers brought to the classroom was one of the lenses through which instruction was delivered.

Second, I learned that the ELL student population at the school level can be viewed on a continuum based on level of English language proficiency, and that research on how teachers adapt instruction for ELLs should include all students on this continuum. Along this continuum were new arrival students with little knowledge of English on one end, and formerly ELL students, who had exited ESOL classes, on the other end. The student population at White Springs and Green Fields was composed of ELL, non-ELL, and many formerly ELL students, all of whom spent the majority of their day in a classroom together, along with students who were native speakers of English. ELL and non-ELL students at White Springs and Green Fields could not be simply classified into two distinct groups. When teachers adapted instruction for ELLs, they often used the same instructional strategies for all ELLs, regardless of whether or not they were currently enrolled in ESOL classes. This inclusive way of thinking about students' knowledge of English and knowledge of academic subjects is contemporaneous to discussions in the second language acquisition research community.

In contrast to Jim Cummins's earlier (1981) model of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), recent research by Bailey, Gottlieb, and others suggests that the acquisition of social language and academic language are not consecutive, but may be simultaneous, so that even students at low levels of English proficiency may be simultaneously acquiring social language and academic language. Cummins has recently acknowledged the work of Butler and Bailey (March 2003), Gottlieb (2003), and others, and has revised his original thinking to be more in concert with this work. The development of state English language proficiency standards that are linked to state academic achievement standards

supports this view of language acquisition, as such standards are designed to enable students to make cognitive connections to academic content at all levels of the English language acquisition process. According to this thinking, then, if ELL students are placed on a continuum according to their knowledge of English, students at all places on the continuum may be acquiring academic English.

Recommendations for professional development.

My second set of recommendations in the area of professional development concerns training for regular classroom teachers on teaching English language learners. All new and continuing teachers should receive meaningful and hands-on training on teaching English language learners. This training will become particularly important as the number of ELLs in Maryland and in U.S. schools increases over time, an anticipated demographic trend. This training should be based on teachers' first hand teaching experiences, and be delivered from a ground-up, rather than a top-down perspective. This recommendation supports Tyack and Cuban's (1995) vision of "teacher-centered reform" (p. 139). As this study has shown, teachers are already using their own strengths and instructional instincts to teach the English language learners in their classes. Many of the strategies they use are similar to the ones recommended by experts in English as a second language pedagogy, and, if further developed or reinforced, have the potential to greatly improve instruction for ELLs in the regular classroom.

This training should be built on teachers' real life classroom interactions with students, and on teachers' natural responses to these students, and strategies developed to teach them. These strategies can be further refined and developed, and then framed within discussions about language acquisition, which tap into teachers' underlying beliefs

about language acquisition and student diversity. This training should be incorporated into teacher education courses, and into training offered to in-service teachers. Training delivered in this manner will validate and strengthen teachers' craft knowledge, and help them to further refine the use of instructional strategies which can be used with English language learners, with diverse students, and with all students. English as a second language pedagogy, which emphasizes students' language development, and the use of strategies such as differentiated instruction, wait time, a variety of grouping strategies, introduction of topics through advanced organizers, and the recycling of and practice with advanced vocabulary, as well as other strategies, is useful for all teachers, and can benefit all students. English as a second language pedagogy is simply good pedagogy.

Recommendations for assessment development and administration.

My third set of recommendations concerns the development and implementation of assessments. As States develop new assessments and augment existing ones, they must seriously consider the cultural and linguistic bias of achievement assessments. States must do so in order for these assessments to produce data from which valid inferences about English language learners' knowledge of academic content areas can be made.

Students' lack of linguistic or cultural capital puts them at a disadvantage when they participate in assessments designed using test items based on mainstream American culture. During this study, White Springs teachers spoke frequently and openly about the "cultural bias" of the MSPAP, criticizing its validity for ELL and low-income children who may not have been able to respond to test questions because of their limited exposure to some of the context embedded in these questions. Several teachers at White

Springs highlighted limited English proficient students' lack of access to the MSPAP due to bias in the test items themselves. According to these teachers, some of the MSPAP test items contained background information, such as references to a golf game or the zoo, which were outside of students' cultural context and life experiences. As Mrs. Siddiq replied, when asked during an interview if she prepared LEP students and non-LEP students differently for the MSPAP,

“No. It's different because, if they don't have enough language, they don't have access to reference material or background knowledge. I can give you an example from three-four years ago. There was a question about golf. How would they know that? The other thing is, all those MSPAP directions are ½ to 1/3 (or four?) pages long. I have to reread them myself. If you are pretty average language wise and ability wise, you are okay.” (M. Siddiq, personal communication, April 14, 2000)

Mrs. Siddiq's and other teachers' conclusions about some of the MSPAP test items are reflected in technical discussions that occur within the measurement community which designs and analyzes assessments. As the teachers understood, and as scholars in the measurement community have written, when a test item contains information external to the content of the construct tested, then this information invalidates the inferences from the test items because the item no longer measures knowledge of the construct, but instead measures knowledge of something else, such as knowledge of U.S. culture. For example, a test item that asks students to project scores on a golf game may not be a measure of mathematics knowledge if a student is not familiar with golf and how it is played, e.g., that each player takes an individual turn, that the goal is to get the ball into a

hole, etc., but may be a measure of students' familiarity with U.S. culture and sports.
(Kopriva, 2000, 2001)

This is the same complaint that has been levied against standardized assessments for years, i.e., that they are biased against disadvantaged students or linguistically and culturally diverse students because of information contained in the test items that is irrelevant to the construct tested, and outside of students' background experiences. When evaluating the validity of assessments for different student populations, statistical procedures such as differential item functioning can be applied in order to determine if items function differently when administered to students with different backgrounds, such as African American students, for example. Another solution to this problem of having assessments with items that are not valid for all students is universal design, which means designing assessments from the outset with all diverse student populations in mind. Although they did not use the same technical terms used by psychometricians, teachers at White Springs, such as Mrs. Robins, understood and spoke about some of the challenges in designing and administering assessments for a diverse student population. When asked whether she thought if students were LEP affected their performance on the MSPAP, Mrs. Robins replied,

“I mean, I can speak from a math standpoint because I teach them math. Um, I think it does affect it, because you have ESOL students who have a hard time with the language, and understanding, and it's not even just the language, I mean, it's not even just, like, you know, understanding English, it's understanding sentence structures, and past participles, and slang, I mean there's so many things involved in it, and I think that MSPAP doesn't take that into consideration. But, I mean, I

don't know how you can make a test where you do incorporate every student's needs. I don't know." (M. Robins, personal communication, May 26, 2000)

It is difficult and costly to "make a test where you do incorporate every student's needs," but measurement experts and state education planners can bring tests closer to that goal by taking diverse student groups into consideration during every stage of the assessment development process, from item development to full administration of assessments. The need to do so will become greater as the U.S. student population becomes further diversified and as testing requirements are broadened under federal and state mandates.

Epilogue: A View of the Future

The number of dramatic changes to the Maryland state assessment system in the years since this study was conducted requires us to look at the past, the present, and the future. This is a small study at a moment in time which refracts and reifies changes at the state and national level. This study is important because of what happened later in terms of the state changing assessments and the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. Maryland, like other states, is involved in a continual process of improvement of its educational system. The Maryland State Department of Education outlined recommendations for improving education in the state in the report from the State Visionary Panel for Better Schools. The state is also in the process of developing and implementing a voluntary model statewide curriculum, and improvements in instruction, teacher preparation, and accountability. (MSDE, March 22, 2002)

The changes in Maryland are being echoed nationwide, as states develop and put in place new standards, assessments, and accountability targets to meet federal timelines. Teachers in Maryland and across the nation are talking about how state assessment

programs shape their teaching. Conversations about the influence of state standards and assessment programs on teaching and on student achievement are taking place on the front pages of city newspapers, in popular media such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, at professional conferences, and across dining room tables.

Recent federal policy changes in response to state pressures point to the timeliness of the issue of how to teach English language learners within systems of standards-based reforms. New flexibility for inclusion of ELLs in state assessment and accountability systems was announced by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Rod Paige on February 19, 2004. These flexibilities permit states to exempt these students from reading/language arts and mathematics assessments during their first year of enrollment in U.S. schools, and to expand state definitions of the LEP category to include students who were formerly limited English proficient for up to two years after their transition from language instruction educational programs to the mainstream (regular) classroom. States are also permitted to exclude LEP students' scores in reading/language arts and mathematics from accountability calculations for Adequate Yearly Progress during these students' first year of enrollment in U.S. schools. These flexibilities were developed by the Department in response to challenges expressed by schools and districts with large numbers of ELLs in meeting state achievement targets developed under No Child Left Behind. One of the intended outcomes of the new flexibilities is to ease pressure on states, districts, and schools by reducing the number of schools identified for improvement due to low performance of ELLs on state achievement assessments. (USDE, February 19, 2004) These flexibilities are effective beginning in the 2003-2004 school year, and the majority of states plan to exercise them. Maryland is one of the

states that have elected to exercise these flexibilities, which will be used under the new state achievement assessment, the Maryland State Assessment (MSA). The introduction of these new flexibilities shows how the conversation about the challenges of including English language learners in standards-based assessments is taking place at the federal level, based on input from educational stakeholders at the state and local levels.

Since the time that this study was conducted, states have also made tremendous progress in meeting other federal requirements which impact English language learners, including use of reasonable and appropriate accommodations and disaggregated reporting. Over the last five years, states across the nation have widened their use of accommodations for limited English proficient students on state achievement assessments. All states now have some type of accommodation available to LEP students participating in state achievement assessments. More states are now in the process of developing new alternate assessments for LEP students that will serve as alternates to state achievement assessments. Disaggregated reporting has also been institutionalized, and is regarded as one of the important ways in which states can measure their progress in closing achievement gaps between low-performing and high-performing students.

The effect of these federal and state policies remains as yet unknown. In a standards-based education system, alignment between standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction is required to maximize student success. The connections of the new Maryland School Assessment to the curriculum may be forged even more closely in future years as the new Maryland Voluntary Curriculum is developed and implemented. These connections complete the circle which a standards-based assessment system is intended to create, that is seamless and integrated, and benefits all students.

Appendix A

List of Study Participants, by Pseudonym

Research Sites: White Springs Elementary School, Green Fields Elementary School

Fifth Grade Teachers:

Mrs. Hart
Mrs. Smith
Mrs. Robins
Mrs. Siddiq
Mrs. Day

Second Grade Teachers:

Ms. Bora
Mrs. Fleur

Third Grade Teachers:

Ms. Meyer
Mrs. Sant

Staff:

Mrs. Joy (principal)
Mrs. Martinez (vice-principal)
Mr. Healy (ESOL teacher)
Mrs. Hobbs (ESOL teacher)
Mrs. Partridge (school librarian)
Mrs. Khan (instructional assistant)
Mrs. Garcia (school secretary)
Mrs. Torres (school secretary)
Mrs. Evans (fourth grade teacher)

Students:

Juan	Henry	Maurice
Jose	Dahlia	Julie
Trin	Manuel	Sherry
Dang	S. Lopez	Mauricio
Van	Christina	
Sadya	Minh	
Claudia	Victor	
Rabia	Tan	
Diep	Marie	
S. Lopez	Melanie	

Appendix B

Letters to Fifth Grade Teachers Requesting Interview

Millie Bentley-Memon
Department of Education Policy,
Planning, & Administration
University of Maryland College Park

February 14, 2000

Dear Ms. Hart:

Hello! I am contacting all of the fifth grade teachers at White Springs Elementary in order to set up a brief interview as part of my research study. I have greatly enjoyed visiting fifth grade classes, and look forward to continuing to do so through June.

These short interviews are an important part of my research methodology, as they will give me the opportunity to hear first-hand practitioners' perspectives on limited English proficient (LEP) students and the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP). Specifically, I am studying how curriculum and instruction are adapted for fifth grade LEP students in response to the MSPP and MSPAP. In addition to my classroom observations and interviews, I will also be reviewing curriculum, and talking with parents, students, and school staff.

I would like to hold these interviews at a time and place that is convenient for you during the month of February, either before, after, or during school. I would be very grateful if you would return the attached form to me. If you would like, I would be pleased to invite you to lunch to thank you for your time. The interview will take 20-30 minutes, and will follow a semi-structured format, where I will ask questions, then continue with follow up questions based on your answers. I will either take notes or tape record the interview, based on your preference. I will give a copy of the completed transcript to you for your review. The pool of questions is attached, along with a form for you to complete and return to me either by mail, e-mail, or in person.

After the interview, I would also like to look over curricular materials that you are currently working with, including any materials you have used to help students prepare for the MSPAP. Throughout the study, your name, the name of your school and all participants, including staff, teachers, and students, will be kept confidential.

I hope that this study will enable me to identify high-quality and achievement-oriented school policies and classroom practices that can improve school achievement of English language learners. As always, I am very appreciative of your cooperation in this endeavor. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Millie Bentley-Memon

Cc: Mrs. Joy Mrs. Martinez

FORM for Interview for Millie Bentley-Memon's study

Please return by mail, e-mail, or in person to me by Tuesday, February 22, 2000.
THANK YOU!

_____ Yes, I am available for an interview.

_____ Yes, I would like to be invited for lunch as well.

Please select preferred dates & times, & I will contact you to confirm your choice, and to answer any questions you might have:

_____ Monday, February 28, 2000

_____ Thursday, March 2, 2000

_____ Monday, March 13, 2000

_____ Tuesday, March 14, 2000.

_____ before school (please specify time) _____ during lunch (please specify time)

_____ after school (please specify time)

Appendix C

Questions for Fifth Grade Teachers at White Springs

1. Please tell me about your own teaching background.
2. How many English language learners do you have in your class, what are their backgrounds, and how are they progressing?
3. What is your own personal philosophy and approach to the education of English Language Learners (ELLs)?
4. What kinds of training, if any, have you received related to the education of ELLs? What, if any, professional experiences have you had that have helped you teach ELLs?
5. What materials and instructional strategies do you use to prepare students for the MSPP and MSPAP? How often do you spend time preparing students for the MSPAP? For how long?
6. Have you adjusted your lesson plan, student grouping arrangements, or other aspects of your teaching to help prepare ELL and non-ELL students for the MSPAP and MSPP? If so, how?
7. In your view, how have the MSPAP and MSPP affected teaching and learning for ELLs at White Springs in the areas of:
 - instructional goals & objectives
 - instructional schedule
 - curriculum
 - lesson planning & implementation (instruction)
 - student grouping
 - student-teacher interaction
 - student evaluation and assessment?
8. In your view, have the MSPAP and MSPP affected curriculum and instruction for ELLs and non-ELLs differently? If so, how?
9. What other factors (such as social, demographic, teacher training, or other) or school wide, Countywide, or Statewide programs affect curriculum and instruction for ELLs at White Springs? In your view, how does the impact of the MSPAP/MSPP compare to the impact of these other factors or programs?
10. Have you seen changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for ELLs since the introduction of the MSPAP/MSPP? If so, what changes/phenomena have you observed? Please list any positive or negative changes.

Appendix D

Sample Field Notes

Field Notes: Ms. Hart's Fifth Grade Class at White Springs Elementary
Monday, December 13, 1999

8:40 a.m.: I knock on the door to Ms. Hart's class, and she says hello and welcomes me in. I turn left and sit at a round table to the side of the classroom. Students are coming into the room and hanging up their coats and backpacks on hooks on the wall behind me. Some take papers and notebooks out of their bags and place them on their desks. Ms. Hart begins to walk around the room and asks the students to display their homework from the weekend. As she polls the group, she sees that many did not do their homework, and that some left it in their backpacks. She talks to the class about responsibility for being ready for school and doing homework, emphasizing that only half of the 20 students have completed their assignments and have them ready to show to her. One additional student, Marie, has an excuse for not attending class.

Mrs. Hart asks her class whose responsibility it is to do homework and be prepared, and they answer, "mine." The instructional assistant comes in and sits next to me at the table, and, seeing Mrs. M's somber expression, asks what happened. I explain to her that many students did not do their homework. The announcements begin over the intercom, led by the Vice-Principal, and, as is customary, continued by "two very special students" (each time different students). After the announcements, Ms. Hart tells the students that *she* is prepared for class, and spent time developing a special lesson for them.

9:05 a.m.: Ms. Hart's tone softens and she writes words on the board, underlining them and leaving a space for columns: "fractions, decimals, percents." She announces that the math lesson will be about "every day uses" for math. She begins by asking the students, "Can you think of uses every day when you might use fractions?"

One student offers, "Gas (pause)...say you want to fill up." Ms. Hart nods affirmatively and asks the class, "If you had five dollars, can you fill it up?" Some students offer the word, "tank," and she continues with another example, "This happens to me all the time. I have one piece of gum, and I have to divide it between my niece and nephew." Juan suggests, "One half." Melanie gives another example, "If you only have 15 minutes to walk to the bus stop..." Ms. Hart tells her, "No, that's another example (pause)...time." She gives the class an example she is familiar with, when your mother says, "You better get you butt down here in 30 minutes!" She asks the class how that can be a fraction. Juan offers, "One half." She continues to ask the class to consider, "How many parts in an hour? How many 15 minutes in an hour?" She goes back to her example, "My mother loves to say, 'You have three-fourths of a minute to get down here.'" She asks the class, "What do they say the most when they're talking time? Thirty minutes or half an hour?" Several students volunteer, "half an hour."

Ms. Hart continues to suggest answers to students, or ask them for every day uses of each of the mathematical terms. She writes their answers under the appropriate column

heading. She asks them, “As we learned yesterday in Language Arts, which is bigger, ‘more’ or ‘most’?” Students respond, “Most.”

Ms. Hart asks how many students like baseball, and many raise their hands. She asks them, “What is that big screen?” “If he is up for bat four times, and he hits the ball two times, what is his batting average? Two students answer, “.50.”

At 9:30, the school secretary comes on the PA system and asks teachers to dismiss those who are going on the music concert field trip. Ms. Hart gives two students permission to leave, but reminds them that they will be responsible for their work when they return. She continues to elicit more examples of “everyday uses” from students, “How many have sat next to mom and dad in the front seat? Did you every look over at mom or dad’s side? What do you see there?” Maurice answers, “the radio.” Ms. Hart responds enthusiastically, “Very good! I didn’t think of that! (repeats two times).” She then gives the example she had in mind, “The odometer,” and explains that it shows the number of miles traveled. Miriam raises her hand, Mrs. Hart calls on her, and she reports, “My mom has 1,000 miles on our car.” Mrs. Hart explains to the class that this is a low number for mileage.

Ms. Hart then moves on to percentage, “Let’s think about percentage. Juan, give me one for percent.” Juan replies, “When you eat something, there is a label...” Four students raise their hands, and Ms. Hart also thinks of an answer, “I just thought of one, then it went away!” (Students giggle.) She then continues, “Did you ever have a fever?” “What is your body temperature naturally?” “98.6”

“How do we figure out a grade? Do we count how many we got wrong?” “What is 36/40?” “What does that mean? She goes over to the side of the room next to the computers, and gets a box of student calculators, then hands one out to each student. “If you only get ten right out of twenty, what is that?” A student raises his hand, and Mrs. Hart calls on him, “Fifty.” Ms. Hart explains, “.5 is the same as 50%. Let’s do a hard one. 35/48. Give me a number on a test.” Many students raise their hands. “Melanie says she thinks 35 is a ‘C’ Count on your fingers. How many did you get? I ran out of fingers.” Ms. Hart calls Sherry to the front of the class, and uses her fingers to count too. “If you think it is a ‘B,’ raise your hand over high. Put your hand up if you think it is an ‘A,’ a ‘B,’ a ‘C’...” She tells student to put their heads on their desks and vote secretly. “Who didn’t vote?” No students admit to not voting.

“Do we divide by the smallest number? If we use the biggest number first, fractions will be greater than one. I see numbers like that all the time. What should I do?” She writes on the board: .7291666. “How do I figure out the problem?” Eight students raise their hands high. “What do we call that?” Begins with an ‘r’?” Mrs. Hart calls on Mauricio, a quiet ESOL student. When he is silent, she urges the other students who are raising their hands, “Give him a chance...” After 10-20 more seconds, she calls on another student, who gives the answer, “Round.” “What does that ‘two’ become because of that ‘nine’? It is the same as 73%. What have we been trying to figure out? What did we put our heads on our desk for?” Ms. Hart calls on a Vietnamese girl, Minh, who is also an ESOL

student. She answers, “I don’t know.” Ms. Hart tells the other students, “Wait, give her a chance. It is the million-dollar question. We said she had a 50/50 chance, a 50 percent chance.”

Another student gives a suggestion, “50% off, sales.” Ms. Hart smiles, “Some of these are great, and they are not even in the book!” She continues with another example, “69 cent French fries, what else do you have to figure out?” Juan raises his hand, “Tax...five percent.” Ms. Hart asks the class, “What is five percent of a dollar?” Many students answer correctly. “We’re going from a percent to a decimal. Two steps forward, how many steps back?” One student raises her hand and asks, “In colonial time?” Ms. Hart nods, saying, “What tax didn’t they want to pay?” One student responds, “for tea?” Ms. Hart explains, “They paid taxes to someone who is far away. Your parents pay taxes on a car, on a house. Hold up your calculators, look at your desk...That’s you tax dollars at work!” Another student inquires, “What is social security?” Ms. Hart explains, then asks the class, “Who came to school this morning on a road? Who do you think pays for the courthouse?” Who pays a judge’s salary?” She asks what would happen if someone who was being tried paid the salary of the judge. “Do you think that would be fair? That’s why we have tax dollars, to make sure things are equal, impartial.” She then points at a girl wearing glasses, “What about Julie’s prescription?”

Mrs. Martinez, the Vice-Principal, walks into the room, and comments on the clay pots drying in rows on the round table. Ms. Hart tells her proudly that the students voted to give up recess to do that activity.

Ms. Hart continues with her explanation on vision, “Near-sightedness and far sightedness. They use a number. Ms. Hart’s prescription is .5 and .5. I have 20/100. For every 500 feet you see, I can only see five.” She brings a student to the front of the room to demonstrate how far she can and cannot see. Another student raises her hand and asks, “That’s why my sister wears them?” “Ms. Hart, if you have glasses, do you need them for your whole life?” Mrs. Hart says that you will, unless you get, “laser eye surgery,” which “many insurance companies” will not cover. She summarizes, “So, we have all these everyday uses...What do we call it when we find an easy way to do something?” “A test?” “How many letters does it have?” “We’ll play the hangman letter game.”

Ms. Hart draws a diagram of a stick figure and writes the letter ‘t’ with four spaces next to it. All students in the class participate eagerly in the guessing until they find the word, “trick.” “Think about it, if there are no more vowels, what can it be? What goes with a ‘c’? We use tricks to help us out. When was the trick to remembering fractions?” “The smaller number is the bigger one.” (By this point in the lesson, the following examples have been written on the board.)

<i>Fractions</i>	<i>Decimals</i>	<i>Percents</i>
cooking	60 minutes	1
measuring	45 minutes	$\frac{3}{4}$

amounts
gas
splitting
time

30 minutes
15 minutes
money
batting average
radio station
thermometer

nutrition
grade
chance

Ms. Hart wraps up the lesson, “Tomorrow, we’re going to take some every day uses. Does everything in math connect somehow? You can figure out a fraction from a decimal? A decimal from a percentage? For homework, come up yourself, in your house, in the car, if you go to the grocery store with your mother, give me three examples of each.”

10:00 Two students return from another math class.

“Give me three examples of each, in complete sentences.” One student asks, “Can we do more?” Ms. Hart replies, “Sure, if you have that kind of time. Do other homework first, then go back.” One student raises her hand, “I don’t understand.” Ms. Hart reviews with her, “Do you understand decimals?...Are decimals, fractions, or percentages less than one? Less than a whole? If I have 150%, is that greater than one?” Fractions...If the top number is greater than the bottom number, is that greater than one?” (She writes the following examples on the board to demonstrate her point.)

$$\begin{array}{l} 40/20 \qquad 20/20 = 1 \\ 20/20 + 20/20 = 40/40 = 1 \end{array}$$

“You’re supposed to know this from fourth grade,” she reminds students.

10:05: Ms. Hart tells students to join their groups for social studies. They will work in groups of four to create different parts of a totem pole. They work on this activity until 10:55.

While they work, Ms. Hart comes over to chat with me. She remembers that the focus of my study is on LEP students, and tells me more about her class. In a class of 21, 5 students are in ESOL, and all except two were either born outside of the US or have parents who were. She points out one student who was identified for special education and ESOL, but “does everything in my classroom,” is mainstreamed. She encourages me to “pay attention” to one girl who came to the US from Jamaica two years ago and began studying at White Springs then. When she entered in the third grade, it was the first time she had been to school. She is “making great progress.”

Ms. Hart explains more about her approach to working with LEP students in her classroom, that she focuses on “spelling, grammar, and language,” teaching them what “prefixes” and “suffixes” mean so students can recognize them and understand words. Ms. Hart tells me about the curriculum she is using, some of which was adapted from her previous work in another county. She explains that Kenhowe County has several

different books, while the other county had curriculum wrapped around a “theme-based” approach. A challenge to using different books is that teachers don’t know what students did in previous years. She said that she teaches this class “like I (she) taught third grade.” She explains that a number of her students who came to the U.S. from another country are one year older, but may be less mature than American students as they may have been “more sheltered.” She talks about her belief that a reading/writing program could help LEP students. She says that in a future year, she “wants to teach third grade to test my (her) theory” about the knowledge and skills required in the early years that lead to selection for “sixth grade magnet schools.” Ms. Hart says that some students in her class work better in groups than others, and that one thing she learned was that those who work well in groups tend to remember who was in their group from class to class. (I walk around the room and watch groups of students work. I notice many language errors in oral language and spelling errors in the outlines students are writing, but all seem to be participating in the group activity.)

As Ms. Hart sits at her desk and shows me the math series that she is using, groups of students come over to show her draft outlines of their totem pole stories. (Ms. Hart is using: Investigations in Number, Data, and Space, a complete K-5 mathematics curriculum, as well as a Quick Review Workbook Math in My World.) She shows me the sets of handouts she has created for students from the Literacy Activity Book Invitations to Literacy. She shows me how the series has sections called, “Tips for the Linguistically Diverse Classroom.” She reads what students have written aloud, to see if they hear the errors, such as where they wrote “they” instead of “the.” Juan approaches her and asks, “Is there a ‘gh’ in daughter?” She gives the answer that she gives to all students who have spelling questions, telling him to “look in the dictionary.” She also tells students to “sound it out.”

At 11:05, it is time for the next part of class, but only seven students are remaining as the others have left for the field trip or other pull-out classes. Ms. Hart decides to have the student divide into classrooms to work on the table of contents and bibliographies for their research papers. She explains, “We’re gonna’ go to the library today and work on research reports.” She asks the students to line up, then we walk down the hallway with them, and she asks different teachers if one or two can use their computers in the back of the classrooms. She comments to me that this is how they work since they don’t have a computer lab at the school. Ms. Hart takes three students to work with her back in her classroom. I look over the math textbooks, and help students edit their work as needed. Ms. Hart helps students edit their work and work on the computer, then goes to check on the progress of the students in other classrooms.

11:20 One of the school secretaries announces over the PA system that there will be indoor recess.

11:25 The instructional aide returns to the classroom, and Ms. Hart asks her to go to another class to work with a student to “be sure he is working off of his papers, not making it up along the way.”

Students return to Ms. Hart’s class as they complete their assignments, then sit at their desks and proofread their word processed reports on states, some of which are several pages long. Ms. M tells them about a contest that she would like to enter some of their reports in.

At 12:30, most students have returned to class, and Ms. Hart reviews their work on research papers with them, and refers them to the research paper guide that they have copies of, which shows parts of a research paper. She tells students to line up for lunch, squeezing a drop of hand soap into their palms as they join the line. The soap is green and fragrant. I tell them that it smells good, and she says that it is anti-bacterial hand wash.

Information from class posters (See September notes for description of classroom):

“During this task, you will be required to respond to activities by writing. Whenever you see this picture, it is important to make sure that what you have written is clear and complete, and that you have used correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.”

“Reading Stances:

Global Understanding: Constructing a sense of the work as a whole; initial impression of a text What’s it about?

Developing Interpretation: Using prior knowledge and text ideas to extend understanding

What does it mean?

Personal Reflection: Using text ideas to reflect on life What does it mean for me?

Put the me in meaning

Critical Analysis: Examining and judging meaning How does the author create meaning?”

Ms. Hart and I leave for lunch at a local deli. When we return to the class at 12:20, students are being supervised for indoor recess. They are either sitting in groups playing card games on the carpet, or at their desks, reading, or with their heads down.

1:35 p.m. Ms. Hart signals the end of recess: “Okay guys, we have to do Second Step before you leave!” The class responds, “Yeah!” She gives her thanks to Mrs. Evans, the recess supervisor, saying to the class. “During recess detention, thank you to those who treated Mrs. Evans with respect. If you treated her with disrespect, I hope you will remember that next time.” Ms. Hart sits on a desk in the front of the room and holds up a black and white photograph that is poster size. Students turn their heads eagerly to see the picture, which shows two girls sitting on a bench talking, and one person walking by. She says, “No sooner did we do this one, but almost all of you chose to forget this one

after you did it.” She refers the students to a classroom incident, “Did you ever know why Nadia was crying? A student offers, “Because someone was being disrespectful.” Ms. Hart nods, saying, “Everybody cares about what someone thinks.” She tells how a student said to her in school that morning, “Your hair’s not ready for school today,” and that she immediately tried to find a barrette, feeling “uncomfortable” and “self-conscious.”

Students begin to relate their own school experiences with a boy who is a bully, “Today we were sitting here and Mary was flattening her chips bag because she likes to eat them that way, and Mike was making fun of her...” Ms. Hart replies, “We all know Mike. So is saying something to Mike going to change something? We’ve ignored him, told on him, talked to him. The only thing we can do as a class is to ignore his behavior and not copy it. The reason he is doing this is because he wants attention.”

She extends the lesson into another realm, “If someone does something to me, who can I tell?” Students make suggestions, “a police officer,” “someone in the government.” Ms. Hart continues, “You can’t change the attitudes of all the people in the world, but I can change the attitudes of twenty-two people in this room.” She asks the class if they remember the poem they read, called, “Usually if People are Mean, There’s a Reason.” She explains that the poem, “It was all about how, if someone treats you badly, you have to take the time to understand why....Maybe a child is abused...Have you ever met someone who is never ever sad?”

Students raise their hands to tell their stories. One says she misses her “mom in India.” Ms. Hart says that another student’s “mom is in Jamaica.” She adds, “Somebody left their sister in Vietnam, and I bet you miss her.” Another student says that she left her mother and sister in her country, but her step-sister and brother are here. Another says she has one step-sister and that her brother has a different father. Ms. Hart explains that “If you and your brother had the same mother, but a different father, that would be a half brother or half sister.” Another student asks, “What is a god sister?” Another offers, “When they baptize you?” Ms. Hart replies, “Right.” Another asks, “Is my sister half if we have different god parents?” Ms. Hart replies, “No.” Another asks, “Could it be an aunt?” Ms. Hart replies, “Yes, it is often an aunt or an uncle.”

Another student raises her hand and talks about her family, “When my dad was seven, his parents died, and he was adopted. Do you get to meet your parents if you are adopted?” The students ask many questions related to this topic, and Ms. Hart answers them. They ask, “How do they find each other?” and “If your mom dies, and your father is there, do you have to get adopted?” In answer to “How do they find each other?” Ms. Hart explains, “birth certificate, MVA, private investigator...” Another student raises her hand, then says, “My sister passed away. In El Salvador, you can’t have twins.” Ms. Hart explains that you probably can have twins there, but it is more difficult because “They don’t have the same doctors and hospitals.” A boy asks “How do you take Siamese twins out?” Ms. Hart says that is a good question, then begins to explain by asking, “Did someone’s mommy have a C-section?” She tells students they can learn

more about this topic in health or sex education classes, or “You can always ask you parents or grandparents.”

2:05 Ms. Hart announces that it is time for Library. She holds up the black and white photograph again, and says, “This is so important. Let’s see what table is sitting properly.”

Students walk down the hall to the library/media center, then sit at brown wooden round tables in groups. Ms. Hart divides some of the boys up across the tables. The librarian, Mrs. Partridge, begins by reading the names of students who have library books that are due or overdue.

2:15 Mrs. Partridge explains the lesson she has planned for the class, “Today we’re going to become cartographers. Today we’re going to learn about perspective. There are seven items on your map you need to get an ‘A’: a compass ‘rose,’ a legend/key with five symbols—You can decide what the symbols represent; a title; you can choose the place, imaginary or real, Pokemon town, Christine d’ Averillland.” She goes to an overhead projector at the front of the room, and shows a map of an imaginary place that she has drawn as an example. A student offers, “Those things to tell where it is. Numbers and letters.” Mrs. Partridge responds, “Coordinates. You can do them just on two sides because it is a small map.” A student asks, “If you are making your own map for your bedroom, do you need that (index)?” Mrs. Partridge says that you do, but reminds students to consider “Scale.” “If it were your bedroom, I don’t think that it would be a scale of miles....You need five things. The last two things are not on this map:

- 1)Title
- 2)Compass
- 3)Coordinates
- 4)Key (5 symbols minimum)
- 5)Scale
- 6)Name and Date
- 7)Index

“The index is the last item, but we’re going to put it on the flip side. If you put all seven (things) on your map, you automatically get an ‘A’.”

2:25 Mrs. Partridge calls for student volunteers, “I need someone to help pass out rulers...”

2:40 Mrs. Partridge tells the students to finish their work for the day and put materials in three piles: papers, pencil, and markers,” and announces that it is time for book exchange

She then announces that it is time for “book exchange,” reminding students that “I know Ms. Hart wants you to always have a book to read. Once you have checked out your

book, you may go on the computers in the patron's catalogue or World Book Encyclopedia.”

Students look for books until 2:55, when Ms. Hart comes to walk them back to the classroom. They end the day by reviewing the homework assignment, to generate examples of every day math and to have research reports ready. Students do “reflections” about their day in journals as they wait for buses. Ms. Hart encourages them to tell her about their day, and why it was good or bad. At 3:05, the bell rings, and students come to say goodbye to Ms. Hart before leaving.

Information about fifth grade LEP students:

Ms. Hart & Mrs. Smith: Most ESOL students, lowest level

Ms. Hart: 5 ESOL, 3 “special /resource”, 2 in special reading, 2 in special math (can't be ESOL, must score high on ISM)

Mrs. Siddiq: 2 ESOL, mid

Mrs. Day: ESOL student came later, mid

Mrs. Robins: G & T, no ESOL

Appendix E

Sample School Level Document

(Some information recorded as XXX to preserve confidentiality.)

Citizenship Classes

Six Classes on Saturdays

February 20, 1999 – March 27, 1999

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Taught by XXXXXX

American Association of University Women

In Partnership with Linkages-to-Learning

at the

XXXXX Church

XXXXX

XXXX

Topics

U.S. Geography

Exploration and Settlement of U.S.

The Constitution

U.S. History

State and Local Government

No Cost Classes

Bring a bag lunch

To register, call XXXX at XXXX

Appendix F

Teacher Permission Forms

TEACHER AND STAFF CONSENT FORM

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The anonymity of participants and the school will be maintained before, during, and after the research activity.

Project Title: “Instructional Reform and School Diversity: A Case Study of the Impact of Reform on the Teaching of Students with Limited Proficiency in English”

Principal Investigator: Millicent Bentley-Memon, University of Maryland, College Park

Purpose of Research and Procedures:

The purpose of this research is to reveal 1) how an elementary school with a large proportion of LEP students adapts curriculum and instruction in response to the MSPP, and 2) the role of this reform program as part of the constellation of factors that shapes curriculum and instruction for elementary LEP students.

A case study strategy of inquiry will be used along with methods of content analysis, interviews, participant observation and observation, and focus groups in order to reveal the impact of the MSPP on LEP students.

Students will participate indirectly in the study when the principal investigator, with teacher consent, observes their classes. All observations will take place within the natural settings of the school and classroom. A select group of 6-8 students will participate in focus groups on a volunteer basis, two-three times during the school year, for 20 minutes each. Student participation will be unrelated to academic progress or evaluation. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym upon their agreement to participate in the study.

Confidentiality:

All information collected in the study is confidential, and my name will not be identified at any time. I understand that I am free to ask questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Respondents are not required to answer any questions that they believe are an infringement upon their privacy or that they do not care to answer for any other reason.

The purpose of the collection or release of the data:

To complete the requirements of the doctoral dissertation at the University of Maryland, College Park.

To identify high-quality and achievement oriented school policies and classroom practices which can improve school achievement of students with limited English.

Agreed: Signature

Date:

Appendix G

Review of School Level Written Documents: Categories and Themes

Documents address school-level, rather than classroom level topics.

Documents were collected in the teachers' lunch room and front office throughout the school day, and in the cafeteria during staff or PTA meetings.

Many reflect the multinational and multilinguistic origins of the students.

None reflect the MSPAP directly.

Most pertain to community services, such as citizenship classes or camps, or to whole-school activities, such as the Silent Auction.

Of the professional development trainings listed, none pertain specifically to the MSPAP or to teaching ELLs. All trainings are relevant to teaching the core academic subjects. These trainings could support MSPAP preparation.

Major activity mentioned in documents is MSPAP practice assessments.

Appendix H

Preliminary Categories from Data Analysis

Student backgrounds

Home country
Language background & proficiency
Family history
History of immigration
Travel to home country while in US
SES of family
Language used in the home
Motivation and attitude towards school

Performance-based pedagogy

Explicit instruction of MSPAP-related vocabulary
Student use of dictionaries
Predicting, guessing from context, and other skills
Practice assessments
Problem-solving activities
Incentives for test participation
Emphasis on directions used in testing
Emphasis on writing process and reading stances

Writing

Stages of the writing process
Writing genres
Writing for science
Student grouping for writing
Instruction of grammar
Emphasis on spelling
Teacher Instruction

Teacher instruction to entire class

Role of instructional assistant
Teacher review of material
Teacher application of material to students' lives
Teacher directions on assignments

Teacher use of specific strategies for ELLs

Simplification of assignments
Peer translation
Teacher approval of student effort

Student response/production/participation

Student interaction
Participation of new arrival vs. fluent English proficient (FEP) students

MSPAP in the larger role of the school

Classroom rituals

Class transitions as some students go to special classes (ESOL, reading, special ed)

School rituals

Emphasis on character education

School wide assemblies

Assessment

Class quizzes

Student exemption from and accommodations for MSPAP

CRTs

Teacher instructions on test directions

Test security

Bulletin Board messages on testing

Teacher perception of students' perceptions of assessments

Teacher background

School and teacher communications with parents.

Appendix I

Research Questions, Sources of Data, Major Findings: Draft I

O I D

<p>1. How did fifth grade teacher adapt instruction in response to the MSPAP for students who were ELLs?</p> <p>Teachers used a variety of common instructional strategies to teach ELLs. (These strategies were often used during performance-based pedagogy.)</p> <p>Student peer translators Peer group dynamics Teachers understanding of the difference between language proficiency and academic content knowledge New arrivals Students' progress Differentiated Instruction and accommodations: use of time and individualized attention Teachers' intuitive understanding of students' language development Family involvement</p>			
<p>2. What was the role of the MSPP in the constellation of factors shaping instruction for ELLs?</p> <p>MSPAP had an impact on classroom instruction for ELL and non-ELL students, but was only one of many factors at the school level. Influence on instruction, yet embedded in larger frame of school day. At the classroom level, the MSPAP influenced instruction on a daily basis.</p> <p>Practice following directions Purposeful student grouping Timed activities and other test-taking preparations Practice with problem-solving Written messages related to preparation for the MSPAP Connection between MSPAP preparation and the regular fifth grade curriculum The writing process Reading for a purpose</p>			
<p>3. Internal and external factors</p> <p>Teachers did not instruct ELLS and non-ELLs differently MSPAP reinforced skills taught in primary curriculum Character education ESOL students' schedules and the ESOL curriculum Influence of home setting Test bias New arrivals Peer dynamics and new arrivals</p>			

Appendix J

Research Questions, Sources of Data, Major Findings: Draft II

Table 1: Summary of Major Findings with Data Sources

Research Question, Major Findings	Sources of Data:	O	I	D
1. Question: How did fifth grade teacher adapt instruction in response to the MSPAP for students who were ELLs?				
Finding: Teachers used common instructional strategies to teach English language learners, including student peer translators and differentiated instruction.		X	X	
Finding: Teachers possessed understandings about language development and cognition which shaped their teaching.		X	X	
Teachers understood the difference between language proficiency and academic content knowledge		X	X	
2. Question: What was the role of the MSPP in the constellation of factors shaping instruction for ELLs?				
Finding: The MSPAP had an impact on classroom instruction for ELL and non-ELL students, but was only one of many factors influencing students' education at the school level.		X	X	X
At the classroom level, the MSPAP influenced instruction on a daily basis.		X	X	
Teachers used these strategies which helped prepare students for the MSPAP: practice following directions, purposeful student grouping, timed activities and other test-taking preparations, practice with problem-solving, and the use of written messages related to MSPAP preparation.		X	X	

Research Question, Major Findings	Sources of Data:	O	I	D
There was a strong connection between MSPAP Preparation and the regular fifth grade curriculum, as evidenced by instruction on the writing process and reading for a purpose.		X	X	X
There were multiple influences on instruction, and on students' education, including the influence of the home setting, placement, scheduling, and curriculum of the ESOL curriculum, and the dynamics and challenges posed by new arrivals		X	X	X
Note. O = observation, I = interview, D = document				

Appendix K

Code Notes

7/22/01

Notes on Method

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

Open general coding by paragraph and “chunks” of events within each set of field notes and interviews, and artifacts, asking What is the major idea as it relates to LEP students and the MSPAP?

Concepts to categories (classification of concepts with properties and dimensions) to code notes.

Axial coding: puts data together with connections between categories and subcategories.

What do these field notes tell me about how teachers adapt curriculum for LEP students in response to the MSPAP? (Goodlad’s conceptualization of curriculum: goals & objectives, content (material), instructional technique, assessment)

How much is MSPAP influenced, & how much is fifth grade curriculum? How does the former drive the latter over time?

Study is on how mainstream teachers work with LEP & FEP students in their classrooms, not a study of what happens in the ESOL class.

Appendix L

Concepts from Field Notes

5/17/00

test security
high stakes
role of testing in school events
preparation for MSPAP in the early grades
MSPAP skills/competencies
Student writing—production
Writing “genres”
Student immigration backgrounds
Third and fifth grade exemption patterns
Incentives for test participation
Student travel to their home countries
Teacher reports on student difficulty with testing
Character education
MSPAP terms, vocabulary
Personal narratives, student writing production

Possible categories?

Classroom rituals
School rituals
MSPAP role in the larger school

5/4/00

PTA
Parent involvement
Parent report on student perception of MSPAP
Incentives for test participation
Student preparation for MSPAP
CRTs
MSPAP skills, vocabulary
Writing
Problem-solving strategies
Testing directions
Student writing
Checking work
Writing conventions
Reading stances
Preparation for field trips using technology
Student participation, exemption
Role of instructional assistant
Student perceptions of and analysis of CRT

Student motivation
Language production
Use of accommodations
Multiple factors impacting student test performance
ESOL schedule
Student translation
Teacher strategies for LEP students
Vocabulary comprehension
Teacher simplification
Teacher explanation of difficult material
ESOL transition
Fifth grade curriculum
Teacher review
Teacher application of material to modern time
Student background knowledge
Teacher activation of student background knowledge
Student comprehension and response
Teacher explanation
Teacher reference to student background experience
Visual interpretation—teacher explanation
Everyday experiences of children
Student knowledge
Students' transitions
Teacher explanation and relation to outer world
New vocabulary
Student application to modern times
Teacher experience
Student questions
Expanding student knowledge

4/14/00

School rituals
School schedule
Student grouping
Skills, performance-based tasks
Teacher directions
Student directions
Teacher adaptation of assessment across curriculum
Performance-based tasks
Vocabulary instructions
Following directions
Skills: prediction, etc.
Math vocabulary
Student-teacher direction
School schedule

Teacher subject area interest and experience
Curriculum
Student teacher direction
Assessment directions
Teacher directions
Skills
IA
Transitions
Teacher approval
Instructions
Writing-science
Vocabulary
Performance-based pedagogy
Practice assessment
Assessment writing
Transitions
Grouping
Class rituals
School rituals
Across curriculum
Writing
Student production
Teacher review
Assessment
Class rituals
Writing
Student grouping for writing
Science writing
Transition
Student production—writing
Fifth grade curriculum
Vocabulary
Writing process
Bulletin board instructional topics and messages
Transitions
Reading
Spelling
Grammar
Reading
Watching film
Student choice, activity
Communications with parents
Transitions
Student progress

_4/13/00

student backgrounds
class work activities
vocabulary
IA
New arrivals
FEP
Student interaction
New arrival response to class
Teacher response to student written work
Writing
Stages of writing
Genres, biographies
Teacher strategies for FEP, LEP
Instructional strategies on bulletin boards
CRT
MSPAP vocabulary and concepts
Writing
Vocabulary
Strategies for ESL students
Transitions
ESOL separation
Context, etymology, strategies
Strategies
Rituals

FEP students out of ESOL, but still needing support
Along with new arrivals, different categories, needs, strategies, levels of participation
Classroom rituals
School vs. White Springs rituals—What is unique?
Instructional strategies for FEP students
Instructional messages on bulletin board
Student grouping
Activities and assignments for whole class on MSPAP vs. for fifth grade curriculum
Instructional strategies, using dictionary, predicting, learning from context
Teacher activity
Student activity
Student activity in groups and interaction
MSPAP role in larger school

4/27/00

CRT, other assessments

Accommodations

Explicit teacher instruction on test directions

Test-taking and using other tests as practice

Bulletin board messages

Writing genres

Appendix M

Notes on field notes process:
(May 30, 2001)

Look in classrooms for new materials, and materials that relate to MSPAP testing or preparation.

Writing style in present tense

Report on my actions when involved with class or teacher. Generally, sit in back or side of room, walk around and look at student work during group or individual work.

Try to record verbatim participant speech. When done, indicated with “”. Other notes are paraphrased.

Focus on teachers, on particular students.

Attendance in classes, school activities, schoolwide meetings, including teacher meetings, PTA meetings, community fair, international dinner, etc.

Lunch with teachers, recess with students sometimes.

Walk around school recording bulletin board materials other announcements, etc.

Presented self as UMD doctoral student and former ESOL teacher.

Focus on fifth grade after conversation with principal. Focus on mainstream teachers.

Study of LEP and FEP students.

Most days, spent the entire day at the school.

Cooperation from all, but less from ESOL teachers.

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