

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS IN THE
CONTEXT OF A LARGE URBAN SCHOOL
DISTRICT: AN ANALYSIS OF MATH &
ELA TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES
IN TEACHING LATINA/O ELLs

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Latina/o English language learners are not achieving at the same levels as their White and English speaking peers. Research shows that 63% of ELLs, in large part Latina/o, are graduating high school, compared to an 82% overall rate. This study aimed to gather Math and ELA teacher perceptions around teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive strategies. The researcher sought to answer three questions: (1) How do secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs perceive their own capacity to serve linguistically diverse students in their classroom? (2) What are the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers say they currently use to

support Latina/o ELLs in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs?

(3) What are the gaps that Math and ELA teachers perceive that exist in District A with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs?

Based on a review of the literature on cultural responsiveness, the researcher distributed a web-based survey on the Qualtrics platform to 133 Math and ELA teachers at six District A high schools. The researcher used 18 statements from the Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale [CRTPS] to gauge teachers' perceptions on their ability to implement culturally responsive strategies. Teachers recorded their levels of agreement with their perceived abilities on each statement on a five point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Teachers were also invited to participate in a focus group to gather specific examples of culturally responsive practices being implemented. Analysis of the survey indicated that teachers perceive to have the capacity to implement culturally responsive practices. The focus group, however, illustrated a need for deeper understanding of culturally responsive practices and how/when/where to implement them. On this basis, the researcher recommends that District A implement a collection of self-assessment data from all teachers that teach Latina/o ELL students, a curriculum review across major content areas, and the development of a network improvement community that addresses Latina/o ELL needs. Further research is needed in order to determine the influence of culturally responsive practices on academic achievement.

**CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS IN THE CONTEXT OF A LARGE
URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT: *AN ANALYSIS OF MATH & ELA TEACHER
PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES IN TEACHING
LATINA/O ELLs***

by

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Foreword

There are many stories of Latina/o ELLs whose narratives have been stolen from them in the name of injustice and inequity. This dissertation gives a glimpse into these stories from the lens of Math and ELA teachers as they try and make connections with the Latina/o ELLs in their classrooms. Hopefully, this study will expand knowledge on culturally responsive practices that can enhance education for Latina/o students so that they too can taste success in ways that other communities have historically done.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to God, for instilling in me a sense of hope and purpose; to my loving partner Manuel who pushed me the most on days that I did not think I could make it; to my mother Zoila Esperanza, who taught me discipline and unconditional love and never gave up on me; to my sister Evelyn who watched my every footstep and cheered me on no matter what; to my nephew Elia Manuel, may you grow up to become an amazing young man filled with thrive, love and a desire to learn; to the first graduating cohorts at the Academy for Language and Technology (2011) and the International High School at Langley Park (2019), for teaching me how to be a leader in educational spaces and for helping me challenge the status quo; and to my dog Eiffel who slept next to me on days that I was writing, for keeping me company and giving me hugs and kisses when I thought I couldn't go any further.

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List of Abbreviations

ESOL.....English to Speakers of Other Languages

ELL.....English Language Learner

SIOP.....The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

CRTPS.....Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale

Section 1: Introduction

Problem statement. Years ago, I experienced firsthand what it was like to be an English Language Learner [ELL] in the United States. In my transition to the 5th grade I was able to pass an English assessment that deemed me ready for monolingual courses. It was the first time in my life in a setting outside of my home that I felt like an outsider. I was no longer in a classroom where I felt warm and welcomed. I was no longer in a space where there was a celebration of my native language. When it came time to apply to middle school, I often felt left out of conversations around specialized middle school programs in the Bronx even though I loved school. My teacher would walk around with applications, and she would often walk by me without a hint of stopping by my desk. Was it that my teacher did not understand my immigration story? Was it that she could not connect with me? Or was it that my culture was too different from her own? I once asked these questions for myself and am now on a quest to understand my story and those of other ELLs through a teacher's perspective.

The United States of America [USA] has always been a diverse country. When the first Europeans colonized the USA, American Indian tribes that spoke many different languages already inhabited the country. American Indians were confronted by a fusion of European cultures that represented English, Spanish, French, and Dutch colonizers in the mid-17th century (Shi & Tindall, 2016). In addition, the enslavement of African people traded from West Africa during these migration journeys propagated a more diverse early American nation. Though the

USA came about becoming a diverse nation through colonization, this happened under the premise that these colonized communities had to assimilate to Anglo Saxon Protestant norms. African slaves were not allowed to have an education and had to be self-taught mostly in secrecy (Williams, 2009). This lack of education divided communities and is, in part, the beginning of a variety of problems surrounding issues of diversity in education.

Latino immigration has also contributed to the diversification of schools in the USA. Latino immigrants began to migrate in larger numbers in the 1980's, at which point the population of Latino students in American schools was about 8% (NCES, 2015). During this time, Latinos were largely concentrated in New York, California, and Texas. Since then, Latinos have expanded on their geographic locations and are now largely concentrated in seven different states with an increase of Latino's moving to more southern states and in smaller pockets (Gándara, 2017). This immigration trajectory has changed how education is perceived and delivered in places where there were once no Latinos before in the USA.

Today, when you walk into any classroom in the USA, you find yourself in a space where many forms of diversity come together. Students differ in their ethnicity, culture, social class, and home language. Some students may have disabilities and others may be classified as gifted or talented. Students also differ in how they learn, their performance levels, and the rates at which they learn. Add to that a teacher's own background and a school's overall demographic composure, and you suddenly find yourself in a space where you cannot make any effective decisions without

thinking about diversity and how those choices might influence a subgroup of students.

According to Ibanez, Kuperminc, Jurkovic, and Perilla (2004), matters of diversity are especially important for Latina/o English language learner [ELL] students (both immigrant and those born in the USA) since schools are spaces where students learn to socialize, and the relationships that they build are key motivations to achievement. Despite receiving some of the same instruction and supports as their White non-Latina/o peers, Latina/o ELLs continue to have poor academic outcomes, they are not achieving at the same rates as other students, and many are not graduating from high school (Aud, Fox & KewalRamani, 2010). Given that the Latina/o ELL population is steadily increasing, this can have a significant impact on the American workforce and the economy (NCES, 2018). It is important to denote that not all Latina/o students are ELLs, and likewise, not all ELLs are Latina/o, as they are also referenced throughout this study.

Cultural diversification of schools in America has become even more pervasive with immigration trends that have helped to change school demographics in recent years. In 2016 the Pew Research Center showed that the USA's foreign born population has more than quadrupled since 1965 and is currently at 13.5% in 2016 (Connor, 2016). This shift is evident in elementary and secondary school enrollment, which has changed drastically from 2003 to 2013. According to the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], this trend will continue to shift, and the percentage of White and Black school-age children will continue to decrease while the Hispanic/Latino population continues to increase as a whole (Musu-Gillette,

Robinson, McFarland, KewalRamani, Zhang, & Wilkinson-Flicker, 2016). As of 2015, Spanish was the top language spoken at home for ELLs, representing 3.7 million ELL students and accounting for 77.1 percent of the overall ELL population and 7.6 percent of all public K–12 students (NCES, 2018). Though the increase in the Latino/Hispanic ELL population has steadily increased, this population of students continues to underperform in the context of the American education system, and many of these students drop out by the time they get to the ninth grade (Carger, 2007). Therefore, it is important to continue researching specific factors that might contribute to this phenomenon.

Another factor that creates the need to focus on cultural diversity in schools is based on America's achievement data of Latina/o ELL student populations. On the 2009 administration of the National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP], approximately one third of eight grade students earned at least a proficient score in math and reading. When delving deeper into the data of more culturally diverse students, the data shows a clear achievement gap between ELLs, Hispanic, and Black subgroups as compared to their White and Asian peers. More specifically, data for Latina/o ELLs showed a wide gap between White non-Hispanic/Latino and Hispanic/Latino ELLs for both reading and mathematics. In mathematics, there was a 53-point gap and a 54-point gap in reading (Hemphill, Vanneman & Rahman, 2011). Data captured by the American College Testing [ACT] group, which administers college-admissions tests, recently found that most high-school graduates are arriving at colleges unprepared for the academic challenges of higher education institutions (ACT, 2012). While there is no direct data for Latino/Hispanic ELLs, college

achievement gaps have been documented for the general Hispanic student population, which shows that Hispanics are earning lower grades than would have been predicted given high school outcomes as compared to non-Latino/Hispanic White students (Noble, 2003). Given the issues that arose as a consequence of migration in the early stages of American education and where the USA currently stands as a nation in terms of demographics and assessment data, it is evident that there needs to be some clear focus on diversity initiatives for teachers in school houses (Williams, 2009; NCES, 2015).

In order to meet the needs of all of the students that are now and will eventually become part of our education system, schools will need to place competent teachers that are able to attend to those diverse needs in classrooms. Being successful in today's classroom settings may require teachers to be competent in a number of areas in order to meet students where they are at in their learning process. It is not enough for teachers to simply be talented in their subject area, but they should also be able to connect with students from a social and cultural perspective given the wide range of needs that Latina/o ELL students have (Moore, 2014).

All students, especially those that are falling behind academically, deserve quality teaching that will prepare them well for the future. If, in fact, the demographics in the USA shift to a more diverse majority, there should be a focus on the schooling of diverse students as they are set up for success in schools and in careers beyond that. The focus of this dissertation is on why Latina/o ELLs are not achieving at the same levels as their peers even when receiving some of the same

instruction and supports as their White non-Latina/o peers within their respective learning spaces.

Evidence Supporting the Problem. While this problem exists locally in District A, there are other districts with similar demographics facing similar issues. As such, this problem persists beyond this district to other metropolitan districts nationwide. Many different causes have contributed to this problem. Literature, professional experiences, and examples from fellow school leaders have prompted the creation of a causal systems analysis. The fact that Latina/o ELLs are not achieving at the same rates as their White non-Latina/o peers comes as the result of varying factors: policies or lack thereof that hinder Latina/o ELL Progress, issues of acculturation for foreign-born Latina/o ELLs, school building culture amongst all of its stakeholders (Morgan, 2006; Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011; Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2013), and a lack of resources and funding (Gay, 1997; Ejdeymyr & Shores, 2017).

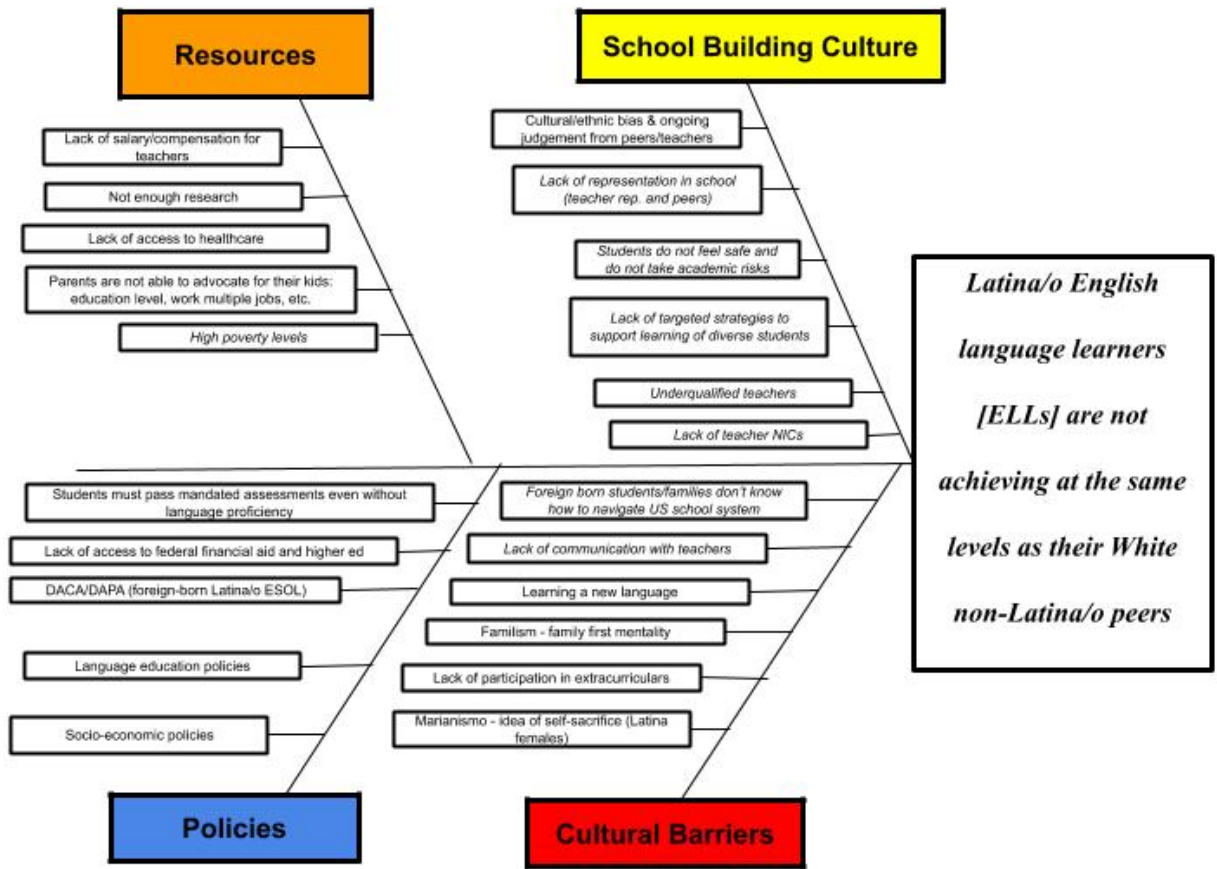


Figure 1: Causes for Latina/o ELL Lack of Achievement. 2018.

It is important to look at the national and local scope of the problem before looking at each of these areas and how they contribute to the problem of Latina/o ELLs not achieving at the same levels as their White non-Latina/o peers.

National scope of the problem. Before delving deeply into the data, it is important to note that ELLs are very diverse and come from varying backgrounds (Wright, 2010). While there is a belief that ELLs are mainly foreign-born students, this is actually not the case. In fact, only about 35% of ELLs are foreign-born students while the rest are born in the United States (Education Week, 2009). Many ELLs are able to develop English proficiency, especially if they enter the USA

education system in elementary school. Other ELLs find themselves in English as a second language programs almost permanently (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Umansky & Reardon, 2014). ELL students are also composed of both legal permanent residents and United States citizens, but there are also some undocumented students (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008). It is also important to note that while not all ELL students are Latino/Hispanic, they make up a majority of the ELL population at about 77% of the total population (NCES, 2018).

To give some context, it is important to understand the experience of the Hispanic/Latino community as a whole before delving into data specific to the Latina/o ELL community. Latino/Hispanic children nationwide are some of the poorest, with one-third living in poverty and about two-thirds living in low-income homes. In fact, Latino/Hispanic children are living in poverty at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group (Davila & Michaels, 2016). This has been an uprising trend, and there are no signs of it stopping. The figure below represents this data:

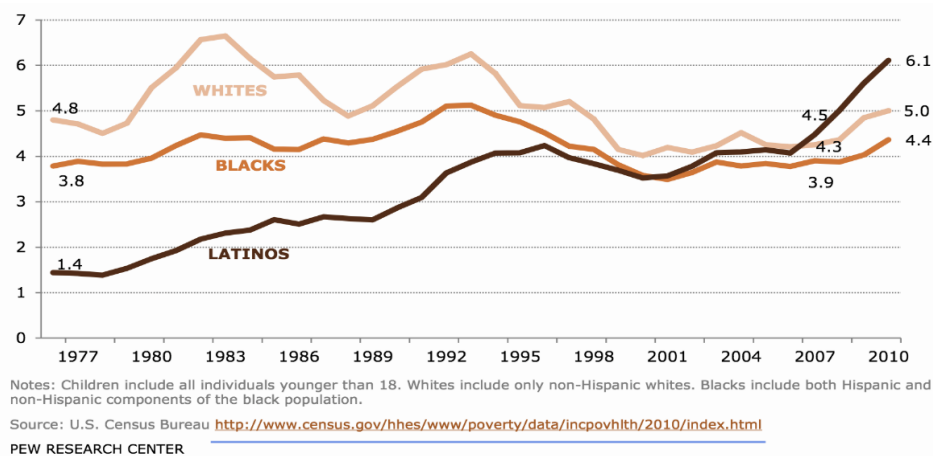


Figure 2: *Number of Children in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, 1976-2010.* Reprinted from “Childhood Poverty Among Hispanics Sets Record, Leads Nation,” by M.H. Lopez and G. Velasco, 2011, Pew Hispanic Center, p. 4. Copyright [2011] by Pew Research Center. Reprinted with permission.

This data set represents an important factor for education since other studies have linked poverty to educational attainment. According to DeNavas-Walt and Proctor from the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), 28% of people in poverty aged 25 and over had no high school diploma, and 35% had a high school diploma and no college degree. Conversely, only 14% of people living in poverty had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to 33% of the total population. If the general population of Latina/o students continues to be affected by these high poverty rates, this merits a national conversation around what needs to be done to support this population of students moving forward. This will be especially important for this research given the fact that most ELLs come from Hispanic/Latino backgrounds (NCES, 2018).

While poverty can be linked to educational attainment, actual educational data surrounding student performance is most alarming given literacy and numeracy trends. These trends suggest that there is a lack of significant growth in student performance in those areas as compared to other nations (Education GPS, 2015). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] places the USA last in math gains and second to last in literacy gains across a number of generations while compared to 25 other countries, as seen in Figure 3 below:

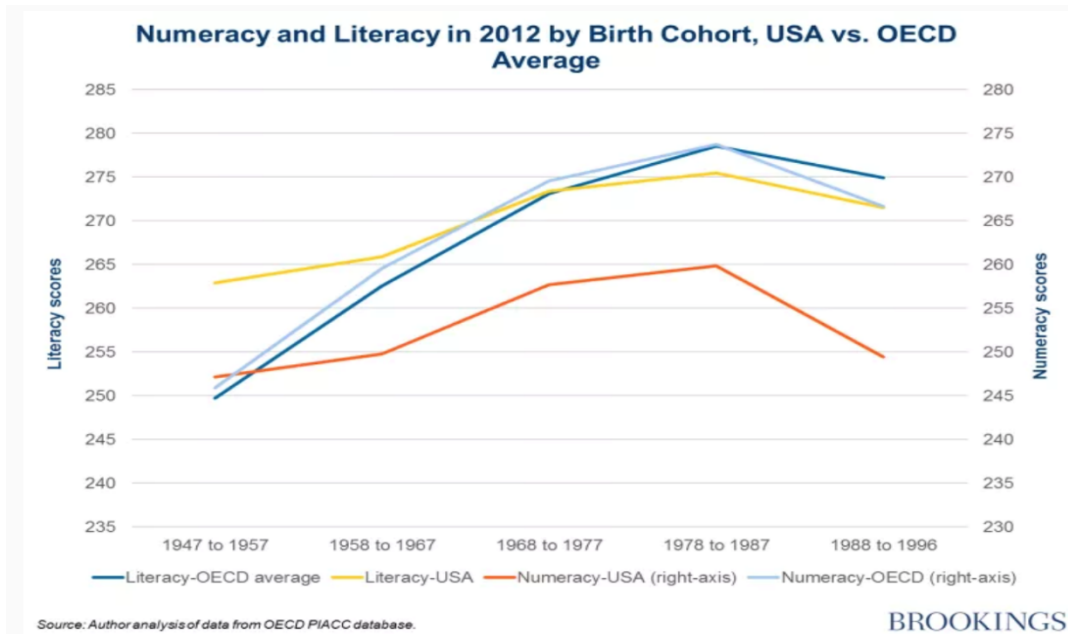


Figure 3: *Numeracy and Literacy in 2012 by Birth Cohort, USA vs. OECD Average.* Data retrieved from Education GPS, OECD, <http://gpseducation.oecd.org>. Reprinted with permission.

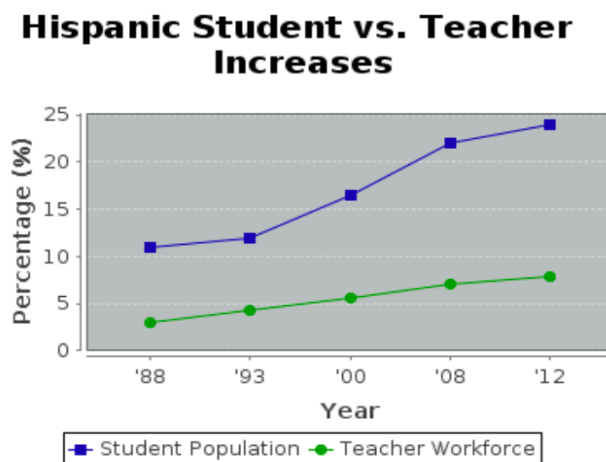
The average literacy and numeracy scores further decline when looking at foreign-born individuals that speak a foreign language at home. The USA average literacy score for foreign-born adults that speak a foreign language at home was a 231 compared to US born adults who speak English at home, who had an average literacy score of 275. The data is similar in numeracy, in which there is a 40-point difference between the two groups (Education GPS, 2015). These data trends are similar to NAEP data, which shows a stark difference between White non-Latina/o students and those from more culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly Latina/o ELLs (Hemphill, Vanneman & Rahman, 2011). Lower scores could be attributed to lower language levels and overall acculturation of the foreign-born Latina/o ELL student. Given this achievement gap, there is a need to continue to look at the reasons why

Latina/o ELL students continue to perform below their non-Latina/o White peers while simultaneously looking at possible solutions for these students.

At the national level, ELLs are limited in the types of courses that they are able to take in high school given their development of English proficiency. Several studies have found that ELLs have limited access to courses designated as Advanced Placement (AP) and honors (Callahan, 2005; Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2010; Harklau, 1994a, 1994b; Wang & Goldschmidt, 1999). This is especially important given that academic preparation in high school is a major predictor to college access and success (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2003). This is evident in the percentage of ELL students that are actually attending college: in 2006, only 19% of ELLs went directly into four-year institutions as compared to 45% of monolingual English-speaking students (Kanno & Cromley, 2015). This 19% encompasses all ELLs and does not allude to only Latina/o ELLs.

Access to college preparatory courses at the high school level only represents part of the problem at the national level for why Latina/o ELLs continue to lag behind in educational attainment as compared to their White non-Latina/o peers. There is not enough representation of Latina/o educators in the workforce across the United States. The latest schools and staffing survey administered in 2013 by the NCES highlighted that non-white students made up almost 50% of the public school-age population, while only 17% of the teaching personnel were teachers of color (NCES, 2013). These disparities seem to be most prominent in the Hispanic/ Latino community at the national level. While the Hispanic/ Latino population is one that is growing rapidly, the supply of Hispanic/ Latino teachers has not kept up with the

growing number of school-age Hispanic/Latino students. As evidenced in Figure 4 below, taken from the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics [WHIEEH] (2015), there has been an increase in Hispanic/ Latino teachers since 1988; however, the gap between the numbers of these teachers and number of Hispanic/Latino students is wider than that of any other racial/ethnic subgroup. According to NCES in 2013, only 7.8% of teachers in the United States identified as Hispanic/Latino while the school-age population of students who identify as such made up 24% of all students (King, McIntosh, & Bell-Elwanger, 2016).



Source: [National Center for Educational Statistics \(NCES\)](#), 1990, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2002b, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2011-12

Figure 4: *Hispanic Student vs. Teacher Increases*. Data retrieved from National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 1990, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2002b, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2011-2012. Reprinted with permission.

Even though there has been an increase in the Hispanic/Latino teacher workforce, national trends show a widened gap and a need to look closely at this data, since the lack of diverse educators in schools could be adversely affecting student outcomes at various levels. This is especially important as research indicates that when a teacher is able to integrate knowledge about the social, cultural, and language backgrounds of their students in instruction, the academic achievement of students can increase

(Banks et al., 2005). Having Hispanic/Latino teachers could directly benefit Latina/o ELL students given the possibility to have adults that are able to identify with them. Teachers increasingly need to respond more to student cultural needs in order to ensure that all students are meeting academic outcomes based on standards (Hammond, et al., 2005).

Why schools matter. Schools are important in helping to close the achievement gap and often are seen as a means by which students from lower socioeconomic areas can break the chain of poverty (Banks, 1993). Schoolhouses, if organized effectively, can create opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds by creating inclusive environments that consistently challenge all students. This makes teachers an equally important factor in ensuring that diverse students are successful in the classroom. Teachers should have high expectations of all of their students, no matter what their background, since students might attribute a teacher's belief of them as being true (Delpit, 1995). Socially, schools are places where students from all backgrounds learn about diversity and, consequently, where they learn to be functioning and contributing members of society. Schools in the USA have been designed as a vessel of prosperity, and it is important that diverse communities have access to high quality institutions with teachers that can help pave the way to academic success.

The reality is that students from more diverse backgrounds, including Latina/o ELLs, typically attend urban schools that are overcrowded and are less academically challenging than non-urban institutions (Gay, 1997; Miller-Lachman & Taylor, 1995; Short, 2000; Ready, Lee & Welner, 2004). Poor performance in diverse communities

can also be attributed to a lack of consistency in instruction, which may not be aligned with student cultural backgrounds. Schools with high proportions of diverse students are also likely to lack funding and resources to meet the high needs of diverse students (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Payne & Biddle, 1999; Horsford & Sampson, 2013). As schools become more diverse with the increase of ELLs, it is important that schools and teachers be prepared to be able to meet the needs of this diverse student population given the academic gaps that exist.

Quality teaching. Quality teaching matters, especially with more diverse student communities since they have continuously underperformed academically in comparison to their White counterparts. In a longitudinal study, education researcher Linda B. Hammond (2000) explores the connections between teacher quality and student achievement. Major findings of this study include the fact that there is a positive correlation between teacher quality (e.g. certification status and degree in the field that they will teach) and student outcomes. The findings remain positive even when controlling for student socioeconomic background. Consequently, new and uncertified teachers proves to have a negative effect on student achievement (Hammond, 2000). This certainly becomes a problem when most underqualified teachers are placed in schools with highly diverse populations (Peske & Haycock, 2006). In a study conducted by the Education Trust in 2002, there is a clear indication

of the misalignment of teacher quality in high-need schools as seen in the chart below:

More Classes in Higher Poverty, High Minority Secondary Schools are Taught by Out-of-Field Teachers*

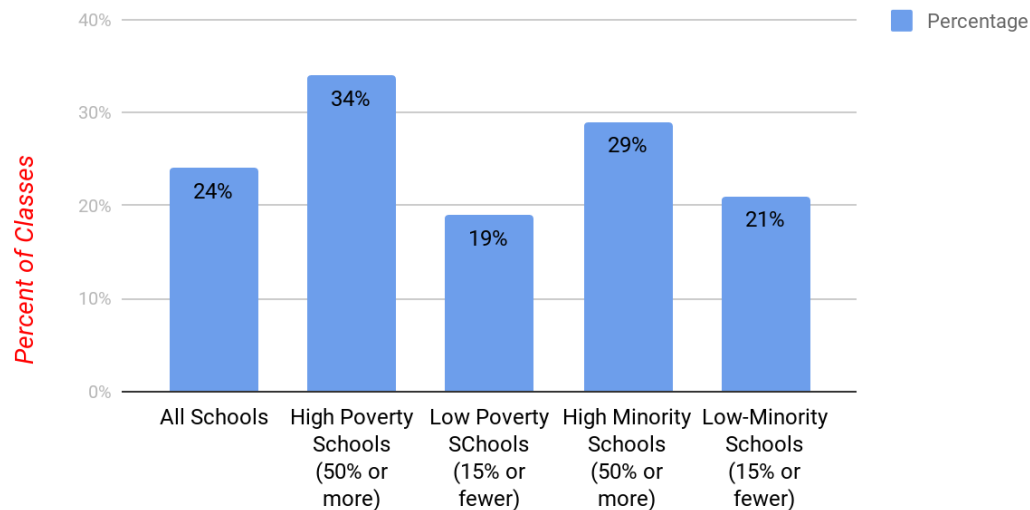


Figure 5: *More Classes in Higher Poverty, High Minority Secondary Schools are Taught by Out-of-Field Teachers.* Data retrieved from Reported in All Talk, No Action: Putting an End to Out of Field Teaching. Craig D. Jerald, The Education Trust. 2002

** Teachers lacking a college major or minor in the field. Data for secondary-level core academic classes.*

In another study conducted by The Education Trust (2010) using USA Department of Education data, researchers found that 14.3% of Maryland's core academic courses were taught by teachers with neither certification nor majors in the area being taught. With such a disproportionate number of unqualified teachers placed in the most diverse classrooms, there is a clear indication that the nation should work to develop more equitable practices in the distribution of qualified teachers across schools that are more diverse. This has further implications in urban schools that have large numbers of ELLs.

The importance of teacher quality continues to be a contentious topic in education. The Measures of Effective Teaching [MET] project, for example, looks closely at a variety of indicators for teacher quality that combined multiple measures and correlated to student academic outcomes (Mihaly, McCaffrey, Staiger & Lockwood, 2013). Effective teaching showed to have strong correlations to student achievement across all measures presented, including student performance on a variety of assessments. Similarly, a study using data from the UTD Texas Schools project highlights the importance of teacher effectiveness and its impact on student achievement in math and reading assessments. The study alludes to the fact that this is especially important in schools where minorities make up the majority of the student population, as this is where a lot of teacher turnover is most prevalent (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2005). Likewise, other research shows that while teacher effectiveness matters, the more highly effective teachers tend to go to schools that have higher achieving students (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006).

Local scope of the problem. Often, one of the many disadvantages that diverse students face in communities that are furthest from opportunity is that they attend schools that lack resources. Schools and institutions that lag in academics compared to other schools are also schools that are overcrowded (Gay, 1997). Often, resources are stretched thin because of that overcrowding. This is true in District A, wherein northern schools are over capacity due to the growing immigration patterns. In September 2017, the Department of Capital Programs of this district spoke at a community-wide meeting in which they projected overutilization of many northern area school buildings. Large institutions that serve Latina/o ELL students in larger

proportions in District A, like School A, School B, School C, and School D, have a projected utilization range of 117% to 153% by school year 2023/2024 (District A, 2017, p. 13). The increase in Latina/o ELLs and the ever-changing demographics of these schools make diversity a prevalent topic and presents the district with an opportunity to look at how it could best serve the students that attend the most diverse schools in the county. As Gay (1997) attests in her research, a lack of resources is connected to schools where students are also underperforming, and Latina/o ELL students are likely to be part of these communities. When looking at teachers as a resource, it is known that highly effective teachers are more than likely taking jobs in schools with high-achieving students, or they are leaving the profession for jobs that better compensate them for their daily work (Peske & Haycock, 2006; Shen, Mansberger, & Yang, 2004; Goldhaber, Gross & Player, 2011; Scafidi, Sjoquist & Stinebrickner, 2007). Much is still unknown about what is needed for ELL students to be successful, but more time and resources have to be dedicated to analyze which resources could possibly influence ELLs and their learning (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005).

In school year 2017-2018, District A served a majority Black student population (61.4%), with a rising Hispanic/ Latino demographic (29.6%). In recent years, there has been a growing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in District A, and they now account for 15.8% of the overall student population, with Latina/o ELLs making up over 90% of the ELL population at the high school level (District A, 2018). In 2018 only 45.93% of Latina/o Limited English Proficient [LEP] students graduated from schools in Maryland, and 51.78% graduated from schools in

District A, a stark difference from the over 80% overall graduation rate at the county and state level (MSDE, 2018). A majority of LEP students in District A reside in the northern section, making those schools the most diverse due to migration patterns. Of the 29 high schools in District A, there are seven that surpass the district's high school ELL average enrollment, two of which do not yet have a graduating class and five others that have record low graduation rates.

The median percentage of Hispanic/Latino students in District A high schools is 22.46%, and 15 schools are at or above that median percentage. Of these 15 schools, ten high schools have graduation data for Latina/o ELLs according to MSDE (2018). The high schools represented in this data set all have graduation gaps between the overall population and the Hispanic/Latino population ranging from 13.24% (High School B & F) percentage points to 44.38%% (High School A). There is a visual representation of this data in the graph below:

Graduation Rates - Selected High Schools in District A

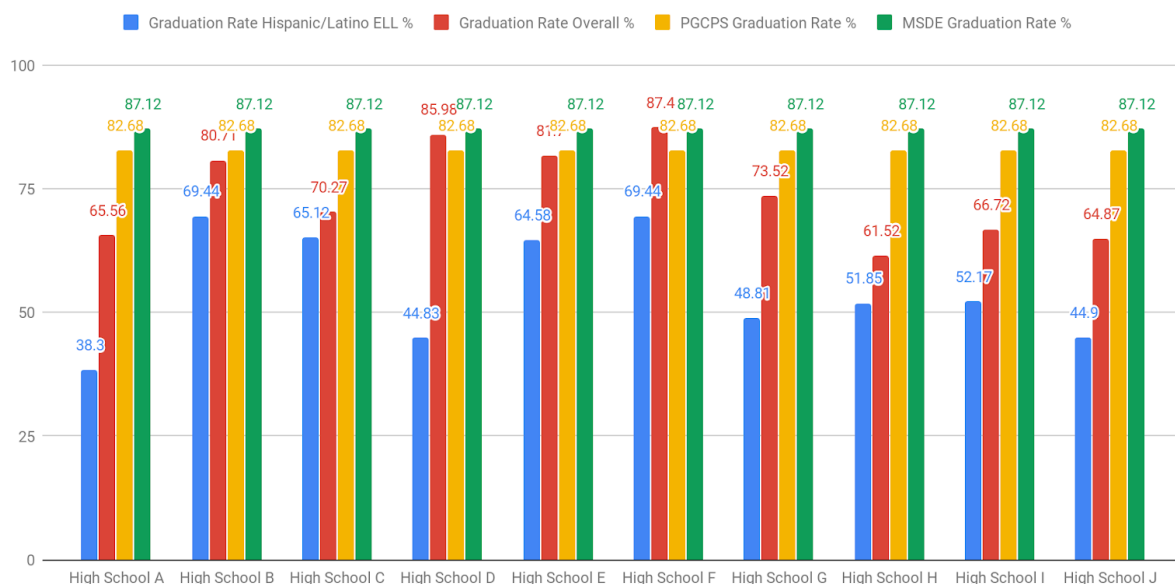


Figure 6: *Graduation Rate Comparisons (District A High Schools with Latina/o ELL Graduation Data)*. Data retrieved from MSDE, 2018.

This gap in graduation outcomes puts a clear focus on the need to figure out why Latina/o ELLs are not achieving at the same levels as some of their peers, even when receiving some of the same instruction and supports within their respective learning spaces.

Issues of diversity are very pertinent, especially in schools that have high percentages of Latina/o ELLs in District A. There was a brawl in December 2016 at one of the high schools that left three students injured and in the hospital. When asked about the incident, one Latino student responded that he sometimes felt intimidated at the school. This prompted the creation of a diverse student task force at the school (Broom, 2016). Issues of diversity are not only relevant to students since staff also experience issues with diversity. In 2014, a former District A teacher sued and won a

case against a principal who was determined to be racially discriminating against that teacher (Chasmar, 2014). At a different diverse high school in District A, an executive employee was accused of using derogatory terminology to explain the termination of the school's football team claiming that Latino students are not interested in that sport (Umana, 2018). School data reports from the district also put suspension rates at an alarming level in the most diverse high schools in the county. Close to one quarter of all suspensions in the 2015-2016 school year (September through May) in District A came from these five diverse schools (District A, 2016). While there is no direct correlation to connect this data to Latina/o ELLs, it does open itself to questions about who specifically was suspended and for what infractions. This data is not readily available.

As noted in the national scope of the problem, teacher diversity is also an issue at the local level. This is of utmost importance, given that Latina/o students in general are less likely to see teachers that represent their own ethnic/cultural background, which can adversely affect educational outcomes. In 2014, the Center for American Progress (CAP) noted that while 83% of teachers in Maryland were white, only 12% were black, 1% were Hispanic, and 3% considered themselves as other. On the other hand, the student population was 43% white, 36% black, 12% Hispanic, and 6% Asian (Boser, 2014). In the 2016-2017 school year, white candidates in a neighboring county accounted for 65.8% of qualified teacher applicants, of which 74.8% successfully entered the workforce in the district. For Black and Hispanic applicants, these percentages were only 11.3% and 6.2% of qualified applicants respectively, which accounted for 8.5% of Black and 6.2 % Hispanic teachers who

accepted teaching posts. Asian teachers represented 7.5% of qualified applicants and 6.7% of teachers who ultimately joined the district (Truong, 2018). Another surrounding district has also encountered this issue of teacher diversity, and those in charge have been trying to improve their efforts in finding qualified diverse teachers. During the 2016-2017 school year, 13.4% of new teachers hired were people of color, which was an increase from 6.8% in 2014, and while the student body only consisted of 65% White students, 94.1% of the teachers were White (Anderson, 2018).

Table 1

Percentage of White Versus Latino Teachers in Three of the Largest Districts in Maryland

County	% of White Staff	% of White Students	% of Latino Staff	% of Latino Students
District B	94.1%	64.64%	1%	6.78%
District C	61.5%	29.3%	11.3%	30.1%
District A	25.6%	4.2%	4%	29.6%

Note. Data for White versus Latino teachers in District B Annual report (2017), for District C annual report (2017), and for District A Facts and Figures (2017).

This persistent gap is no different from trends that exist at the national level, but it puts a clear emphasis on the need for more work to be done around diversifying the teacher workforce. It is important that diverse students at the local level, especially from Latino/Hispanic backgrounds, are able to see others like them in positions of power (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015).

Consequences of not addressing the problem. The USA is set to be the most diverse it has ever been in the coming years, and schools across the nation are not adequately preparing Latina/o ELLs to be competitive citizens of their communities. This group of students has been steadily growing, and if something is not done about the lack of adequate preparation and schooling, then the number of Latina/o ELL students that become dropouts will continue to increase, graduation rates will continue to decline, and college access will be less attainable. As stated in the scope of the problem, there are also societal issues that will continue to be exacerbated if school leaders and researchers do not examine this problem. According to the McKinsey and Company group (2009), if schools do not work to close the achievement gap, Latinas/os will continue to show poorer health habits, incarceration rates of Latinas/os will continue to increase at exponential rates, and the US economy will be in a continuous tumult of a recession-like cycle.

With the recent push from state and federal mandates via ESSA, there is a strong focus around Mathematics and English as core subjects that students must master before exiting high school. This is true in 12 states and Maryland is one such state. If Latina/o ELL students are not adequately prepared in their classes to meet college and career ready standards, then they will fail to meet the requirements of these examinations and consequently not be able to graduate from high school. Research shows that both ELLs and Hispanic/Latino students are amongst the subgroups that are far more likely denied a diploma for not passing a test (Hyslop, 2014; Papay, Murnane and Willet, 2010). Therefore, it is important that teachers are

adequately prepared so that Latina/o ELLs and others can graduate high school prepared to meet the challenges that they will face as adults.

Theory of Action. Achievement in the classroom is directly linked to teacher quality and preparation (Mihaly, et. al., 2013; Hammond, 2000; Lackzo-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006). The driver diagram below gives a small glimpse of some primary drivers that will expand District A’s ability to improve teacher capacity in working with Latina/o ELLs. These drivers are not all-encompassing and provide only a glimpse into possible factors that could lead to the most impactful change concepts in raising student achievement for Latina/o ELLs in District A.

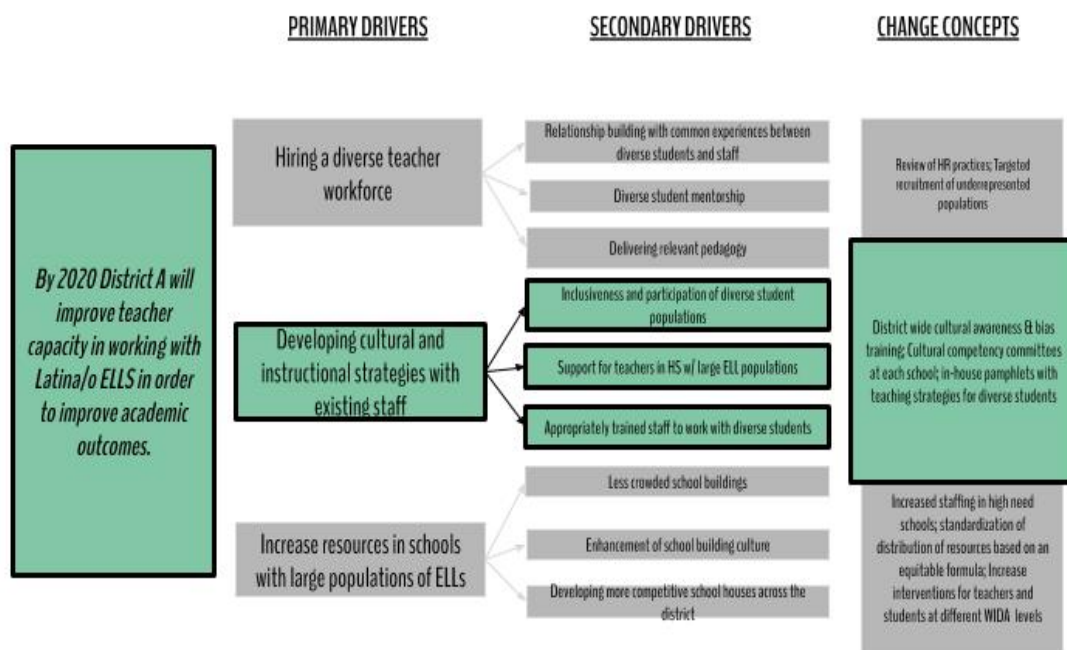


Figure 7: Driver Diagram.

Hiring a diverse teacher workforce. One of the drivers is focused around the hiring of a diverse teacher workforce. While 90% of the student population is Black or Hispanic/Latino, the county’s professional personnel does not reflect these

demographics, specifically within the Hispanic/ Latino workforce, which only represents 4.4% of all District A staff (District A, 2016). The current academic outcomes of Latina/o ELLs and the school settings in which they may find themselves allows for more deep thought about how diversity might play a role in how diverse students perform academically. After all, a teaching workforce that is representative of the racial, ethnic, and linguistic cultures of students and that is able to effectively incorporate this background and knowledge into everyday practice may benefit the academic outcomes of students of all backgrounds (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Teachers that represent the cultural and ethnic backgrounds that students come from are able to bring a unique perspective to schools given their experiences with issues surrounding diversity (Quirocho & Rios, 2000).

Unfortunately, as noted earlier, there is a lack of diversity in the teaching profession since individuals from diverse backgrounds are not entering the workforce. This shortage is especially noticeable in teachers of ELLs, who are not being produced and developed as quickly as teachers in other areas (Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Hammond and Sykes and other researchers argue that when teachers are recruited and placed in schools, they tend to be new and inexperienced teachers, which research has shown can have negative effects on student academic outcomes (Hammond, 2000; Lackzo-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Clotfelter, et. al. 2006). The lack of diversity in the teacher workforce creates disproportional student representation (Solomon, 1997), exacerbates the lack of role models for diverse students (Solomon, 1997; Zirkel, 2002), impacts the level of relationships that teachers are able to build with diverse students (Villegas & Lucas, 2004), affects how teachers design and

deliver relevant instruction to diverse students (Solomon), and has implications for student achievement in diverse communities (Meier, Wrinkle, & Polinard, 1999).

There are many cultural differences that teachers may not be able to address given their own background, which may affect how they develop instructional strategies for students and how they interpret certain student actions in the classroom (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). This is especially true when looking at the disparities nationwide on how students of color are disproportionately disciplined for some of the same actions performed by their White counterparts, which could be a result of negative stereotypes of students from different cultures (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010). Much of the research that exists suggests that learning occurs in a cultural context and it involves an “active construction of ideas.” Teachers are responsible for building connections between things that students are familiar with and new content and skills that they are learning, but if a teacher does not have experience with a specific culture, they might be inept in reaching some students in their classrooms (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). The activation of prior knowledge and experiences mixed with the new ideas that students are being exposed to allows them to engage in a cultural exchange experience that benefits both students and teachers (2010). Having that similar racial or ethnic background for students of color could expose students to content in a way that is familiar to them, and it can be just as effective for White students in exposing them to other cultures as seen in Cherng and Halpin’s study (2016). This rationale alone is a valid argument for increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of the teaching force.

In recent years, many alternative programs like Teach for America and New York City Teaching Fellows have worked to recruit teachers to work in highly diverse communities. Alternative pathways can create opportunities for more diverse teacher candidates to enter the workforce (Lau, Dandy & Hoffman, 2007). This was the case in the Armstrong Atlantic State University [AASU] teacher pathway program, which yielded high retention results amongst teachers of color. There are many structures that have to be in place in order for such a robust program to exist, as is evident in the research around the AASU teacher pathway program, two of which are financial incentives and mentoring (Lau, et. al.). As a change idea, District A could potentially invest in working directly with Hispanic-serving institutions to attract staff that are more diverse. If structured correctly, with the proper resources, it could prove to be a fruitful pathway in diversifying the teacher workforce.

Increasing resources in the most diverse schools. In looking at increasing resources, overcrowded school buildings may not be able to offer a welcoming environment for students and teachers. This can affect the overall climate of learning and, though minimal research exists, there is a correlation between school resource availability and the impact it can have on academic achievement (Earthman, 2002). Fernandez and Timpane (1995) brought about one of the change ideas around overcrowded schools, which would revolve around the implementation of a year-round calendar for schools and deepening connections with higher education and nonprofit organizations, amongst nine other recommendations. By collaborating with other organizations, schools could provide alternative opportunities for students and lessen the burden on the school building when necessary. Like in the development of

a plan for hiring diverse teachers, this would require meticulous planning and intentional collaboration in order to be successful.

Developing culturally responsive practices with staff. *Cultural responsiveness* in teaching has come as a result of the diversification of schools in the USA. Author Geneva Gay (2010) defines cultural responsiveness as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). This idea of creating culturally responsive classroom spaces has been adapted in the education field, but diverse ethnic groups in the public education school system continue to perform at lower rates than their Caucasian counterparts. As seen in the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2017) database, this is especially noticeable in graduation rates across the country, as more diverse subgroups continue to graduate at rates that are at least ten percentage points below their Caucasian counterparts. There is an exception within the Asian subgroup, as they continue to surpass their Caucasian counterparts. The data highlights the need to provide students with learning spaces that are more culturally relevant, but it depends on the teacher’s understanding and ability to establish instruction that is culturally relevant (Plata, 2009).

There is recent research that puts an emphasis on considerations for ELL teachers around developing effective teachers. A review of their research sheds light on, amongst many things, in-service training as potential policy areas that can have an impact on teacher effectiveness. It is important to consider how mainstream teachers who work with English language learners are preparing their students to achieve

academically (Samson & Collins, 2012). Major gaps exist across state lines in the required knowledge and skills regarding ELLs for all teachers. While there are states that require some specific coursework (Arizona, California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York) and others refer to the special needs of ELLs (17 states), other states (15) have no requirement whatsoever (Ballantyne, Sanderman & Levy, 2008). Much of the research that exists focuses very little on the role of systemic factors that contribute to the inadequate training of teachers and its association with low academic outcomes for ELLs. Research shows that a high-quality teacher could be of significant importance as it relates to student outcomes (Hammond, 2000).

Existing research suggests that if a teacher can embed social, cultural, and language components into a lesson that mirrors student backgrounds, then a student's academic outcomes can increase (Banks et al., 2005). With an increasing Latina/o ELL population, teachers should also focus on student cultural needs to ensure all students are meeting academic outcomes based on standards (Hammond, et al., 2005). Through work in network improvement communities, the district can create cycles of inquiry to ensure that schools that have similar populations can develop practices and strategies that will help all Latina/o ELLs. This change concept, coupled with supported accountability, can help to heighten awareness of successful practices for ELLs (Santos, Hammond & Cheuk, 2012).

Of the different drivers, working with teachers in District A to understand the implementation of culturally responsive practices to educate Latina/o ELLs seems like the most feasible of the three. For the purposes of this research, there will be a focus on Math and ELA teachers given the emphasis placed on numeracy and literacy

skills across the USA, the state of Maryland, and locally in District A. In summation, by expanding on the current knowledge of cultural responsiveness that teachers possess, teacher capacity can be improved to more effectively address the Latina/o ELL student population in order to help students achieve at higher standards.

Theory of action statement. Although there are many potential areas on which to focus, this research will delve deeper into culturally responsive practices since Latina/o ELLs are less likely to have less qualified teachers. Given the importance placed on mathematics and ELA at the high school level in Maryland, it is also important to hone in on academic areas that will have the most impact for this subgroup of students. To that point, the theory of action is as follows: *If District A builds their understanding of current Math and ELA teachers' culturally responsive practices, then they will better understand how to support teachers in creating environments of best practices to support Latina/o ELLs in the classroom.*

Prior Attempts to Address the Problem

A prior attempt to address the achievement gap within the ELL community is the reason behind the creation of a national network, the Internationals Network for Public Schools [INPS], which touches on a variety of the aforementioned topics. In 1985, the INPS consisted of just one high school in New York City, which opened through a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education [NYCDOE] and the City University of New York [CUNY] under the leadership of Eric Nadelstern. Since then, the INPS has been recognized by many national organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as a national model

for serving the ELL population. The network is now comprised of 28 different schools across New York, California, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Minnesota. A longitudinal study that looked at three of these international schools found that INPS schools in New York City have consistently higher four, five, six and seven-year graduation rates and lower dropout rates than New York City's overall current and former ELLs and English proficient students. They also found that of the different languages spoken at these international schools, graduation rates amongst Latina/o ELLs had 7-year graduation rates at almost 90% (Fine, Stoudt & Futch, 2005). This is evident in the figure below:

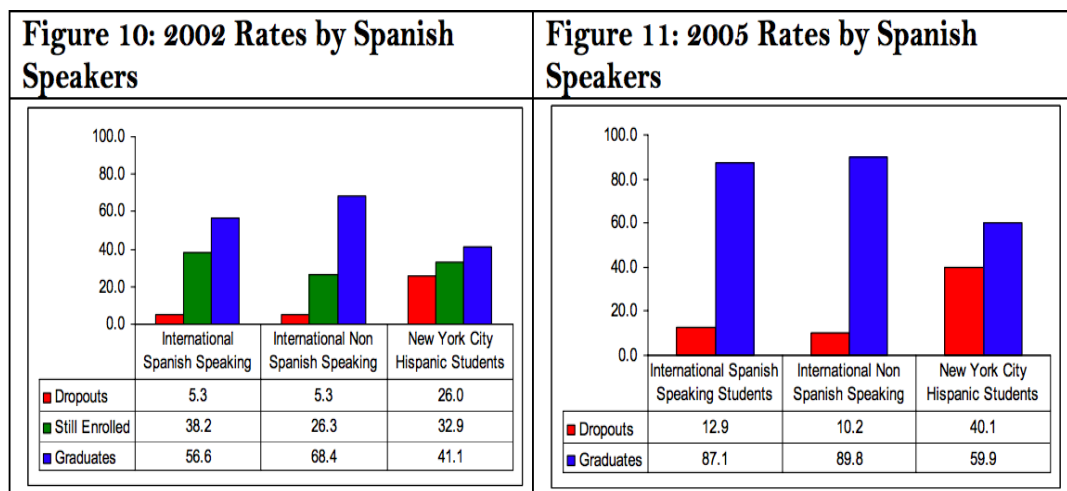


Figure 8: *Spanish-speaking ELL Graduation Rate at INPS schools*. Data retrieved from Fine, M., Stoudt, B., & Futch, V. (2005). The Internationals Network for public schools: A quantitative and qualitative cohort analysis of graduation and dropout rates. Teaching and learning in a transcultural academic environment.

District A inaugurated two INPS schools in 2015, and they are set to graduate their first class in May 2019. While graduation rates will not be available until after this date, the schools are set to graduate ELLs at higher rates than the district and the state of Maryland following in the footsteps of the INPS schools in New York City (Ricks, 2019).

Recognizing that there are achievement gaps in education and that culturally and linguistically diverse students are often on the negative end of this gap, the National Education Association sought out to create a toolkit that would help in closing the gap. The guide is meant to help teachers reflect, plan, and implement approaches that address issues surrounding culture, abilities, resilience, and effort [C.A.R.E.] (National Education Association, 2003). Part of their “culture, language, and economic differences” chapter begins with an educator check-in that consists of 13 items about teacher understanding of the students sitting in their classrooms and the approaches they take to crafting and implementing lessons. It is represented in the figure below (p. 2-4).

Directions: Review the list below. Place a check by each item to reflect your practice. Then indicate the three items you would like to explore in order to improve your practice.

Indicators	"I do this a lot"	"I do this a little"	"I haven't done this"	My priorities to explore
1. I know the cultural background of each of my students and use this knowledge as a resource for instructional activities.				
2. I know the culture of my classroom environment and behaviors and how it affects all of my students.				
3. I design lessons that require students to identify and describe another point of view, different factors, consequences, objectives, or priorities.				
4. I integrate literature and resources from my students' cultures into my lessons.				
5. I know the English language level of each of my students (e.g. Language assessments such as Bilingual Syntax Measure, LAS, Woodcock-Munoz, IPT, CELDT).				
6. I provide instruction that helps to increase the consciousness and valuing of differences and diversity through the study of historical, current, community, family, personal events, and literature.				
7. I consistently begin my lessons with what students already know from home, community, and school.				
8. I design my instructional activities in ways that are meaningful to students in terms of their local community norms and knowledge.				
9. I incorporate local norms and perspective into my classroom instruction on a daily basis by talking to students, parents, and community members, and reading relevant documents.				
10. I collaborate with students to design activities that build on community resources and knowledge.				
11. I provide opportunities for parents to participate in classroom instructional activities.				
12. I vary activities to address students' learning styles (e.g., multiple intelligences, differentiated instruction).				
13. I understand the differences between school academic language and my students' social language and I use scaffolding techniques to bridge between the two.				

Figure 9: *Educator Check-In on Culture "How am I doing?"* Data retrieved from National Education Association. (2003). CARE: Strategies for closing the achievement gaps. Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/mf_CAREbook0804.pdf

The tool can serve to measure a teacher's own assessment of what they are doing or not doing for their culturally and linguistically diverse students. While there is no research that verifies the validity and effect of these resources, they are promising in allowing for self-reflection with follow-up lessons to fortify areas in need of teacher growth.

At the school level, there are a number of institutions that have done significantly well in closing the achievement gap for ELLs. Carnegie researchers gathered evidence from six schools located in Boston and New York City based on their higher than average graduation rates and college-going outcomes for ELLs (Castellón, Cheuk, Greene, Mercado-Garcia, Santos, Skarin & Zerkel, 2015). Of particular interest is Manhattan Bridges High School located in New York City, which is open only to students who have lived in the US for three or fewer years and who speak Spanish as a native language at home. The school is touted for its graduation rates as well as student participation and pass rates on AP examinations. The school has received national recognition for closing the achievement gap amongst Latina/o ELLs. Some of the reasons listed as the causes of their success include the value placed on the home language with Spanish-dominant instruction in 9th and 10th grade classrooms, collaborative school culture, community partnerships, multi-layered individualized student support, socio-emotional supports, and the faculty and staff support to students (Castellón et. al, 2015).

Local attempts at solving the problem. With the implementation of ESSA, all states have been asked to rethink the current systems in place used to identify schools that are in need of remediation and how specifically they will help these schools improve. Equity is at the forefront of this new education law, which looks to ensure that all of America's schools are preparing students for colleges and careers through high academic standards. This is done through the lens of academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rate, progress in achieving English language proficiency, and school quality. In Maryland's proposed consolidated plan

at the high school level, the state has deemed the following framework as its basis for measuring school success:

ESSA Indicator	Look-For	Percentage
Academic Achievement	<i>Performance Composite for English/Language Arts and Math</i>	20%
Graduation Rate	<i>Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate Composite</i>	15%
English Language Proficiency	<i>Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency</i>	10%
Readiness for Postsecondary Success	<i>On-Track in 9th Grade</i>	10%
	<i>Credit for Completion of a Well-Rounded Curriculum</i>	10%
School Quality/ Student Success	<i>Chronic Absenteeism</i>	15%
	<i>Survey</i>	10%
	<i>Opportunities/Access to a Well-Rounded Curriculum</i>	10%

Figure 10: *Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan*. Maryland State Department of Education. (2018). *Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan*. Retrieved from: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/ESSA/ESSAMDSubmissionConsolidatedStatePlan011018.pdf>

The ESSA indicators have varied in meaning throughout the different schooling levels as proposed by MSDE. For the purposes of this research, the following are descriptors used under the high school section. Under the “academic achievement” component, Maryland has decided to look at PARCC ELA and PARCC Mathematics assessments at the high school level to measure student performance while giving equal weight to both content areas. This is especially relevant in this

research, with a focus on the performance of Latina/o ELLs and knowledge that separately they are part of two subgroups that are far more likely not receiving a high school diploma based on not passing a test (Hyslop, 2014; Papay, Murnane and Willet, 2010). The “on-track in 9th grade” measure looks for students in 9th grade who have earned credits in mathematics, ELA, science, social studies, and/or a world language. “Credit for completion of a well-rounded curriculum” refers to students going beyond what is required in specific assessments or experiences like AP, ACT, IB, and completion of a dual enrollment program amongst other options. Through the “progress toward English language proficiency” measure, the state is looking to assess EL student growth through the ACCESS 2.0 assessment using a proficiency level growth-to-target model. “Chronic absenteeism” will look at the percent of students who are chronically absent more than 20 days in order to minimize lost instructional time. In addition, a school climate survey is currently being developed at the state level that will include feedback from students, teachers, and parents. Lastly, “access to a well-rounded curriculum” at the high school level aims to examine the percentage of students completing specific college and career preparation programs like AP, IB, and participation in dual enrollment (MSDE, 2017).

In 2012, District A introduced the Framework for Teaching (FfT) which highlights a teacher’s ability to teach diverse learners through planning and execution of their lessons (District A, 2012). In April 2015, District A released administrative procedure 0102: Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices. In it, the county looks to outline specific actions that schools and central offices can take in order to promote and sustain culturally proficient schools and communities. The

administrative procedure requires instructional staff to differentiate instructional delivery based on their knowledge of the students that they are serving. This procedure also states that staff will be provided with opportunities to engage in cross-cultural conversations to help support culturally proficient practices at the systemic level (District A, 2015). In addition, District A has re-aligned certain coursework for ELLs, specifically catering to newcomer ELLs with little to no exposure to English. This was put in place to support ELLs in a fifth year of English language supports prior to entering credit-bearing English courses (Hanks-Sloan, 2016). While this practice has allowed ELLs additional time in transitioning into the English language, the course sequence does not allow students to apply to competitive four-year colleges, as they are not able to complete a full English course sequence.

In 2013, District A created the position of Diversity Officer. This person who would be charged with addressing the needs of the growing Hispanic/Latino population (Wiggins, 2013). Since 2014, District A has hired over 40 teachers from Spain through this partnership (District A Office of Communications, 2016). In 2016, PGCPs launched the Workforce Diversity Task Force tasked with the intent to develop a “systematic plan to attract, develop, and retain a high quality workforce that represents the cultural diversity of students and the community” (District A Office of Communications, 2016). As mentioned earlier, in 2015 two international high schools were opened in District A in the hope to start closing the achievement gap between ELLs and their peers. No outcomes data exists, as the schools are getting ready to graduate their first class (Ricks, 2019). Most recently, District A has started an ELL GED options program for older, under credited ELLs who wish to become

college and career ready (CAO, personal communication, 2018). No data exists on the success of this program since it is a new initiative. Unfortunately, local practices are still yielding the same results and graduation rates for Latina/o ELLs have been below a 50% rate since 2011 (MSDE, 2017).

Critical Analysis of the Research Literature. An impactful measure in having diverse schools, including those with ELLs, achieve at higher standards is that of a school's organizational culture design. It is important to note that there are no studies that currently exist that examine the organizational culture of schools and its impact on the academic achievement of Latina/o ELLs. As such, the following section of this literature review will focus on the impact of school culture and its impact on academic achievement of students in general.

Gareth Morgan has established the "organization as culture" metaphor, which argues that organizations, if planned for the people in it, should be a mere representation of these very individuals (Morgan, 2006). When workplaces are able to accommodate aspects of an individual's personal identity in the workplace, they allow themselves to more effectively formulate their own culture. However, negotiations of identity can be single-sided and unfair depending on how constituents make their decisions. When referring to organizational culture from the perspective of schools, it can be seen as the context of teachers' working conditions and students' learning environments. There are especially strong associations between measures of school safety and average student achievement that suggests that students cannot focus on academics when there is a certain fear for their physical well-being (Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011). When considering the achievement of Latina/o ELLs

coupled with a lack of training for teachers of ELLs, it is possible that a school will not be reaching its students given the absence of a school culture that may not be able to identify with the variety of cultural and ethnic identities of the students it serves. Teachers and other staff members create bias environments that lead students to failure (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2013). Lastly, research also shows that school leaders lack the cultural competence to lead diverse schools, and more has to be done to prepare leaders to successfully lead these schools (Hernandez & Kose, 2012).

A student's sense of belonging in schools could have potential negative and positive impacts based on the preparation of teachers in developing cultural competence through culturally responsive strategies (Will, 2017; Gay, 2010). Teachers are less likely to reach their students if they are not able to understand a student's ethnic identity and cultural socialization. Author Geneva Gay argues that a teacher's inability to recognize these very things could lead to a dismissal of these identities and the imposing of his or her own, which could be detrimental in how students gain a sense of belonging (Gay, 2010). In addition, educators who find themselves looking at students from a deficit perspective create a sense that they are curing or correcting problems that students may possess instead of educating them in the first place. Instead, there should be a focus on the development of self-efficacy in students so that they can endure any issues that come their way (Ormrod, 1995). In 2011, the Consortium on Chicago School Research conducted a study that measured school safety with students from grades 6-12 (Steinberg et. al., 2011). Through this survey, researchers collected qualitative data over a span of two years and focused on three case studies of schools that participated in the survey. Amongst many findings,

they identify a strong correlation between high-quality student/teacher relationships and positive peer interactions in schools. The authors argue that school structure plays a major role in the development of these relationships and that whether students come from communities furthest from opportunity does not matter, as long as those relationships exist. While the data looks closely at how relationships can hinder or enhance school safety, it is limited to its geographical location.

In 2017 the Education Week Research Center asked 528 teachers how they help students address some of the barriers to belonging in schools with the question, “How much do you think the following factors contribute to students’ sense of belonging in the classroom?” with answers on a scale that ranged from “none” to “very much.” One of the statements that seemed relevant to this study revolved around curriculum and pedagogy that highlights the contribution of different cultures, to which 72% of teachers responded “quite a bit” or “very much.” The other revolved around a teacher’s ability to address student concerns based on being judged negatively by their identity, to which 94% of teachers responded “quite a bit” or “very much” (Will, 2017). In essence, creating school cultures where all students feel a sense of belonging, be it through the relationships they build with teachers or the curriculum they engage with, is an important consideration to make as organizational school cultures are built to address the needs of the students and the families that individual schools serve.

Schools vary in the type of culture they provide for students, as they are developed academically and socio emotionally. A study was conducted in 2002 that looked at the impact school culture has on the effectiveness of secondary schools that

have disadvantaged students (Gaziel, 1997). The researcher looked at 20 secondary schools in highly diverse towns in Israel, some of which are comparable to public schools in the United States. It is important to note that the determination of disadvantaged student is based on a father's origin (Asia-Africa vs. Europe-America), father's education, and the quantity of people living in the household (Gaziel, 1997). Through a series of 36 items, there was an emphasis on some key areas: academic emphasis, continuous improvement, teamwork, customer demands, and student participation. The findings allude to academic emphasis as the best predictor for effectiveness in schools. This set apart the average schools from the higher-performing schools. One of the findings that stood out had to do with teacher perception at the average schools that "teachers believed that it was impossible to improve students' achievements before creating an orderly atmosphere" (Gaziel, 1997, p. 316). It is important to note that this study did not take place in the context of the United States. It is also relevant to note that the way that culture is approached in the US looks very different in terms of the makeup of the diverse populations. The study lacks focus on Latina/o ELL students, which is the body of students that are of interest for this study.

Teacher capacity and preparation. Teacher capacity and preparation has been shown to adversely affect student achievement (Hammond, 2000; Lackzo-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Clotfelter, et. al., 2006). This certainly becomes a problem when most underqualified teachers are placed in schools with highly diverse populations (Peske & Haycock, 2006). Researchers have observed that teachers of ELLs are lacking preparation to support the academic achievement of linguistically diverse

students (Brisk, Barnhardt, Herrera & Ronchon, 2002; Goldenberg, 2013). Teachers of ELLs often lack the knowledge necessary to understand the dynamics of language in the communities that students are coming from and districts often are inconsistent in the way they develop teacher's competence to teach this population (Garcia, Arias, Murri & Serna, 2010). If teachers are not adequately prepared to go into more diverse schools, it is likely that Latina/o ELLs will continue to fail to meet high standards.

Teacher capacity encompasses many different areas of teacher expertise in order to serve a variety of students. Earlier works discuss teacher capacity primarily through the lens of a teacher being able to manage a classroom, implement teaching techniques, and work with students (Medley, 1977). Shen, Mansberger, and Yang (2004) look closely at the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] (2004) legislation put in place in order to serve the most underserved populations of students. NCLB mandates included the need for schools to be equipped with "highly qualified teachers." These authors examine different accounts of "highly qualified teachers" through three lenses (Paige & Gibbons, 2004, p. 15). These include 1) general academic ability, 2) the impact of teacher preparation programs, and 3) relationship between student test scores and teacher certification. The Shen et. al. (2004) study, like others, highlights a historical perspective of the connection between less qualified teachers and their placement in schools with large numbers of students in poverty. Secondly, it also sheds light on the importance of teacher qualifications and the rates at which they are placed in schools with large numbers of students in poverty. However, this article draws from multiple sources in order to detail the areas of need. This research might be limited, as it focuses on students in poverty, but has no direct correlation to race or

culture and how these variables might impact student achievement. In thinking through what an effective teacher may look like and the skills he or she should possess, there is a need to continue to look at the qualifications of those that are being put in front of the most diverse student populations (Reynolds, 2007).

Research was conducted to evaluate the success of the INPS model and to answer questions surrounding student learning and teacher development at these schools (Kessler, Wentworth & Darling-Hammond, 2018). Through a series of focus groups and interviews, researchers found that professional development played a key role in the way INPS schools build capacity of their staff to serve ELLs. It is the professional learning and teaming structures that offer an opportunity for all faculty and staff at INPS schools to model one of their key tenets of “one learning model for all” (Kessler et. al, 2018). The idea behind this is that “all learners—faculty and students—experiencing the same learning model maximizes their ability to support each other” (p. 5). They believe that what works for students should also work for adults in developing strategies for learning. This is best modeled in one of the statements below:

Every member of our school community experiences the same learning model, maximizing an environment of mutual academic support. Thus, all members of our school community work in diverse, collaborative groups on hands-on projects; put another way, the model for adult learning and student learning mirror each other.

(Internationals Network for Public Schools, 2017, as cited in Kessler et. al, 2018, p. 28)

Another key structure is the teaming concept that allows for the scheduling of students to specific groups of teachers. This means that the same set of teachers are able to discuss socio-emotional and academic issues that take place throughout the school year. At traditional high schools, students are scheduled into classes based on what they need as opposed to this cohorted model. It would take changing many mindsets at the traditional schools to be able to do programming in this way. This research is promising, as it relates directly to ELLs in a context where Latina/o students make-up large numbers of the student population. In addition, it supports the idea that if professional development is done correctly and is tailored to the community of students in a school, then outcomes like graduation rates and test scores will be higher than average. The study has its limitations in that it only looks at three INPS schools, and a wider selection of schools in the network would have made this more reliable. It is also important to see whether any of the schools in the network have not been successful through its graduation or testing outcomes and the causes of that.

Clotfelter, et. al. (2006) conducted a cross-sectional research on teacher credentials and various characteristics using some of the fifth-grade teacher and student data in North Carolina. This was a statewide study across 117 school districts with varying populations of students. The evidence in the study shows that teachers that have more well-rounded credentials are more likely to teach in schools with already higher-performing students. They also shed light on the fact that while there is not much attention being put into matching highly qualified teachers in schools of need, there's much less attention being placed to this matching within schools. They

are able to put administrative data into context and show how districts could potentially match students to teachers through quantitative data based on needs and teacher credentials. They note that the two credentials that mostly linked to student achievement were a teacher's experience and students' test scores, putting an emphasis on teacher competency and the importance of why credentials matter for student achievement. While this data is promising, this research lacks information from more diverse populations, specifically the Latina/o ELL population which will be the focus subgroup of this study. A focus on other subgroups would guarantee the reliability and applicability of the data in order to inform best practices in a variety of socio-economically diverse communities.

From a teacher capacity standpoint, Lackzo-Kerr and Berliner (2002) draw a comparison between certified teachers and teachers that become certified through alternative routes in Arizona and the effects on student achievement. The research focuses on a subset of schools with high volumes of Teach for America [TFA] teachers in low-income urban districts as well as rural ones. They find that students of TFA teachers did not statistically perform any better than students placed with other under-certified teachers. They also found that students with certified teachers outperformed students with under-certified teachers using data from the SAT 9 to establish this finding. One of the most relevant findings was the fact that students in classrooms with under-certified teachers made about 20% less growth per year than students with certified teachers. The study acknowledges the importance and need for having certified teachers in schools and gives some background on why it matters for us to know how and why certain teachers are being put in front of the most vulnerable

and diverse student populations. While the researchers shed light on the importance of having certified teachers and demerits alternative teaching certification programs, there is only a small sample size (159 certified teachers; 108 non-certified teachers; 26 provisionally certified teachers). Of those, only 34 were identified as TFA teachers, which is too small of a sample size to make any statistical data inferences. The study also lacks in types of non-certified teachers, as there is a wide variety of initiatives taking place across the country. As small a scale as it is, this study puts an emphasis on the need for teachers to be competent in teaching diverse students, but it does not make any particular references to Latina/o ELLs.

Intercultural sensitivity development. As demonstrated earlier, the low number of Latina/o teachers is problematic, and therefore there needs to be a focus on training and developing the existing teacher staff around culturally responsive practices. By decontextualizing teaching and allowing for learning to be rooted in the ethnicities, cultures, and experiences of students, teachers can maximize a student's opportunity to achieve success (Young, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). McAllister and Irvine (2000) examined three process-oriented models that have been used to describe and measure the development of both racial identity and cross-cultural competence. The three models encompass Helms's (1990) model of racial identity development, Banks's (2006) Typology of Ethnicity, and Bennett's (2011) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The authors argue that these process-oriented models help teachers to develop their behaviors, attitudes, and interactions with students of color. They also allow teachers to create structures to design and sequence effective

pedagogical interventions for students. Additionally, they argue that these models help with the creation of course and program interventions.

Bennett's (2011) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity is most prominent for this research, as students and teachers interact with each other in the classroom setting in the hope that students will achieve academically. Bennett's approach sees intercultural understanding as an individual process and believes that people develop based on their capacity to recognize and accept cultural differences. Bennett places individuals in six categories that range from ethnocentric practices (denial, defense, and minimization) to ranges of ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). Using this model, Strekalova-Hughes (2017) set out to measure intercultural sensitivity of teachers working with refugee students in a public urban school district. This was done through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study with 281 elementary school teachers. Findings included the fact that teachers working with refugee students did not have higher levels of intercultural sensitivity, but teachers of ELLs were more interculturally sensitive than general education teachers (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). If this is the case, the study implies that refugee students are more likely to experience a teacher that lacks intercultural sensitivity. This behavior then warrants the idea that the lack of intercultural sensitivity will lead to less culturally responsive classrooms, where refugee students feel less safe to take academic risks. These findings are problematic given that, and as stated by Gay (2013), "whether positive, negative, or ambivalent, beliefs and attitudes always precede and shape behaviors" (p. 48). This type of research should be expanded into high school settings with large populations of ELLs as it will allow further

investigation into teachers' beliefs and attitudes around their diverse students, as is the case with Latina/o ELLs. Ultimately, the level of awareness, the behaviors and attitudes, the knowledge and skills acquired from understanding teachers' self-perception of their level of intercultural sensitivity, and the need for diversity training could potentially hold the keys to creating more schools where Latina/o ELL students feel safe, welcomed, and able to comfortably take academic risks.

Teacher preparation for culturally responsive classrooms. Inclusive classrooms in schools that have ELLs refer to the idea that ELLs are included in the general classroom setting so that they have equitable access to classroom resources, curricula, and services (Coady et al., 2008; Freeman, 2004; Handscombe, 1989). Inclusive classrooms focus directly on the students and their immediate needs, and therefore they are better approaches for seeing student growth (Freeman, 2004). Daniel and Hueramo (2015) discuss a research-based study that encompasses various methods for effectively including ELLs in the learning process in a Mathematics classroom. This research is conducted in a 7th grade classroom with students from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including Nepal, India, Pakistan, Malaysia and an overwhelming majority from Mexico. The researcher noted the following qualities in this model Mathematics classroom for ELLs under curriculum and instruction:

1. Clear expectations for students with predictable routines
2. Maintained rigor throughout a lesson
3. A tiered approach that involves language, literacy, and content strategies, including visible language and content objectives

4. Meaningful group roles
5. Assessment variety and choice and
6. The use of native language in appropriate spaces to enhance group work with an English output.

In addition, the researcher also noted some other traits that support learning in the classroom for ELs: 1) an acknowledgement of students' fund of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 1992) and 2) a personal investment and willingness to learn about the different cultures represented in the classroom. The research is limited in that there is no actual data provided that confirms the veracity of the data showing improvement in Math test scores. This is also limited in that it is an example stemming from a Mathematics classroom, though these practices are replicable across any subject area.

After a decree in The Florida Department of Education mandated that ELLs be included in the general classroom setting, Platt, Harper and Mendoza (2003) studied the perceptions of this inclusion. The study included 29 ELL administrators with knowledge of policy and program implementation in their respective schools. Results showed that administrators who saw the program as being successful were in school communities that saw ELL instruction as a shared responsibility. Through this approach, members of these varied communities saw and understood the need for alternative teaching methods and learning strategies that would enhance the classroom experience for both ELLs and their native English-speaking student peers. Most importantly, members of the communities that saw inclusion as a positive factor also saw their ELL students as assets in the classroom. On the other hand, in schools

where administrators did not react as positively to inclusion, there was a perception that there was not enough support or commitment to ELL learning. This was based off of a perceived lack of resources, time, and preparation to lead this initiative.

Overall, the study suggests that the success of inclusion of ELLs in general classrooms depends on attitudes and pedagogical commitments that educators make on a day-to-day basis that inform their teaching practices (Platt et. al, 2003).

In the construction of the Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale [CRTPS] Hsiao (2015) engaged in an exploratory study with preservice teachers in education programs. The 188 participants in the study were from two different universities and were composed of students in the elementary education, special education, early childhood education, and early childhood education special education programs. Each of the statements used in the CRTPS were referred to as competencies that measure a teacher's perceived notion of culturally responsive practices that they are able to demonstrate. These were rated on a six point Likert scale ranging from 'unprepared' to 'fully prepared.' The tool was validated through a number of measures and of the 32 original statements, only 18 remained on the scale as being reliable. Statements were divided into three general themes: a) curriculum and instruction, b) relationship and expectation establishment, and c) group belonging formation. Under curriculum and instruction, the tool looks to measure a teacher's preparedness to lead a culturally responsive classroom, which alludes to Gay's (2002) concept of a culturally responsive classroom in establishing cultural measures throughout all aspects of teaching in diverse classrooms. This theme encompasses curriculum and instruction as well as assessment design. In this study, this area also

had the highest prediction variance to measure teacher cultural responsiveness in the classroom. The statements on relationship and expectation establishment were more closely related to a teacher's ability to communicate with families and their involvement in their child's education as a means to embed cultural understanding of the families to engage students in learning. This is in direct alignment with Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) and their establishment of funds of knowledge, which highlights the importance of understanding the complexities of a student's life outside of school. Group belonging formation alludes to the development of trusting relationships with culturally diverse students through the creation of safe spaces. Some of the limitations to this study include the fact that this was not tested in the context of teachers being in the classroom and that it was limited to only two universities. There is a strong promise to continue to test the validity of the survey in the context of teachers already in the classroom.

Proposed Investigation. There is much work to be done to address issues around the education of Latina/o ELLs. There is research that shows the need for schools and districts to build knowledge around culturally responsive teacher practices in the classroom in order to close the achievement gap (Coady et al., 2008; Freeman, 2004; Handscombe, 1989; Young, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). Hsiao (2015) developed the CRTPS that gauges teacher perceptions of their own capacity to support linguistically diverse students. Once engaged in culturally responsive practices, teachers are able to design and sequence effective pedagogical interventions that engage all students in the classroom. Given the increasing numbers of Latina/o ELLs in the county, the low academic outcomes of these students, and the

lack of diversity in school staff, there is a need in District A to understand how current Math and ELA teachers in the identified schools perceive their levels of comfort with regards to culturally responsive practices.

There is a great opportunity to learn more about the knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive practices that teachers in District A employ in the classroom. Much is unknown about how teachers in District A perceive their own practice around cultural responsiveness and how they navigate their own identities in the midst of this integration of students from different cultures. Understanding what culturally responsive practices are being implemented in District A will be especially relevant in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs as the district takes on issues that could necessitate more cultural awareness and understanding from staff in order to improve school environments for all students.

Using both a survey and a focus group, this study examines Math and ELA teachers' methods in a number of secondary schools with high enrollments of Latina/o ELLs. Overall, this research can become a blueprint for future cultural responsiveness initiatives that will inevitably be needed given the rise in Latina/o ELLs in District A at the high school level to support initiatives related to culturally responsive practices.

Section 2: Study Design

Purpose Statement. The previous section of this dissertation highlights the importance of teacher preparation, especially in the context of working with special populations like Latina/o ELLs. Moreover, evidence from the literature indicates that increasing academic achievement in diverse student populations is dependent on a teacher's sensitivity and ability to develop and implement instruction that is culturally relevant (Plata, 2009). Therefore, it is important to properly train and build the capacity of teachers so that they are able to reach all students and create inclusive environments that lead to positive outcomes (Hammond, 2000; Lackzo-Kerr & Berliner, 2002; Clotfelter, et. al., 2006; Brisk, Barnhardt, Herrera & Ronchon, 2002; Goldenberg, 2013; Coady et al., 2008; Freeman, 2004; Handscombe, 1989).

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore secondary Math and ELA teacher perceptions of their capacity to instruct linguistically diverse Latina/o students in District A. The study used both a web-based survey and a focus group to obtain information from a subset of Math and ELA teachers in District A high schools with large enrollments of Latina/o students. The survey was administered first, and the focus group further explored the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A report using to support Latina/o ELLs in their classrooms. The focus on Math and ELA teacher practices was determined to be perhaps the most critical factor in terms of improving academic outcomes, such as graduation. Given the emphasis placed on Math and ELA instruction as gatekeepers for students via testing and credit requirements both in the state and nationwide, as well as in District A, it was of the

utmost importance to explore these teachers' culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

As stated in Section I, and for the purpose of this study, Gay's (2010) definition of a culturally responsive teacher who uses culturally responsive pedagogical practices is, "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31).

Research Questions

Each of the research questions presented below encompasses a different facet of this study:

1. *How do secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs perceive their own capacity to serve linguistically diverse students in their classrooms? (Phase 1 - Survey)*
2. *What are the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers say they currently use to support Latina/o ELLs in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs? (Phase 2 - Focus Group)*
3. *What are the gaps that Math and ELA teachers perceive to exist in District A with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs? (Phase 1 - Survey & Phase 2 - Focus Group)*

Research Setting and Participants

Given current outcomes for Latina/o ELLs in District A, this research was focused on select high schools with recorded graduation rates for Latina/o ELLs as identified in the previous subsection. Participants consisted of only Math and ELA teachers at these schools and expanded to those that have taught Latina/o ELLs in grades 9-12 in the past five years. As stated in previous sections, the focus was on ELA and Math teachers since these teachers are directly linked to classes that have graduation requirements via credit accumulation and testing. Across the six schools surveyed, there were 133 Math and ELA teachers. Therefore, the Qualtrics survey was made available to all 133 Math and ELA teachers at these sites. Participants were required to be 18 or older during this phase of the process.

School selection. This study was conducted within six high schools in District A and with all high school Math and ELA teachers at selected schools. Schools were selected based on the graduation data for Hispanic/Latino ELLs provided by the Maryland Department State of Education. Thirteen of the 30 high schools in District A had graduation data for Hispanic/Latino ELLs. These 13 schools had a median Hispanic/Latino ELL graduation rate of 51.85% for the 2018 school year. Five schools were at or below the median graduation rate, and these schools were selected for the study. Additionally, one of the 13 schools had a graduation rate of over 80% for Hispanic/Latino ELLs and was included in the research due to its success with graduating Hispanic/Latino ELLs. The researcher saw this as an opportunity to gain insight into what practices at this school led to this success. Additionally, despite not having any graduation data, the researcher also included one of the INPS schools in

District A given its focus on ELL students and primarily Hispanic/Latino student population. In sum, seven schools were identified for participation. The researcher first obtained the contact information for principals of each of the six schools as well as the names of the department heads for Math and ELA. Then, the researcher emailed principals of each of the selected schools to introduce the study and explain its purpose and rationale for surveying Math and ELA teachers. The email indicated that the researcher was conducting the study as part of the fulfillment of a Doctorate of Education and included approval from District A's Research and Accountability Office. The researcher emailed all seven principals and six responded with their signed consent form to allow the researcher to conduct his study in their schools. One principal did not respond to multiple emails, thus leaving the researcher with six participating schools in the study.

Recruiting Teachers. To recruit teachers, the researcher's initial email to principals also contained the names of the Math and ELA teacher department heads from information that was collected from each school's website (See Appendix D). The email (Appendix H) requested that the principal verify this information and requested that they provide an e-introduction via email to each of the two department heads. Once confirmed, the researcher then reached out to the Math and ELA teams at each school, introducing the study and asking for their help to complete the survey. The researcher included an explanation on the purpose of the study, a link to the

study, and a school code. The school code allowed all participating schools and its participants to remain anonymous.

Instruments and Procedures

To respond to the research questions, the researcher employed a two-phase research strategy using a sequential mixed-methods approach. This methodology was driven by the research questions. The researcher approached the study as a sequential study since quantitative data was first collected in phase one using a web-based survey on the Qualtrics platform that was used to determine teachers' reported practices. Responses from the survey informed the direction of the focus group conversation in phase two. The qualitative data and its analysis helped to explain some of the quantitative results in phase one by exploring participants' views on their capacity to serve Latina/o ELLs with more depth (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006).

Phase one: survey. Phase one involved an anonymous online teacher survey using the Qualtrics platform. Once teachers received the email and clicked on the link, they were taken to the Qualtrics survey and, when opened, they first saw a page that explained the purpose of the study, a brief description of the questions, and notes stating that the survey was both anonymous and voluntary. If teachers agreed to participate, they were taken to the first two questions, which determined their eligibility to take the survey. This included the selection of one of the school codes listed and whether participants have taught Latina/o ELLs in the past five years.

The survey consisted of three categories of questions. The first two were qualifying questions that pertained to teachers' place of work and whether they have had Latina/o ELL students in their classroom in the past five years. The second

category consisted of eight demographic questions regarding teachers' experiences and questions pertaining to their own identity in the classroom, including ethnicity and race via guided definitions established by the Office of Management and Budget (Wallman, Evinger & Schechter, 2000). The third category of questions asked teachers to respond to 18 statements regarding their own capacity to support culturally diverse students. The statements were taken from the Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale [CRTPS] (Hsiao, 2015). Teachers recorded their level of agreement with perceived ability of each statement on a five point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' The selected survey questionnaire method allowed for a collection of a broader number of Math and ELA teachers' responses distributed across the six identified schools. The research, which was adapted from the CRTPS, used closed question style formats throughout the entire questionnaire to allow for higher response rates given the ease to respond to these types of questions (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003). All participants who completed the survey were asked if they were willing to participate in a focus group that would help the researcher document anecdotal evidence of culturally responsive practices used to support Latina/o ELLs in their classroom as identified in the survey. If participants agreed, they were taken to a separate page that was not linked to the survey responses and were asked to submit their name, school, email, and cell phone number.

The survey window was open for two weeks. During week two of the Qualtrics survey, the researcher sent personalized emails (Appendix I) to all teachers reminding them to fill out the survey. After that, the researcher looked at the data in

the Qualtrics system to see how many individuals at each of the school sites had participated in the survey. A follow-up email was sent to teachers at each of the participating schools after a week to ensure as many teachers as possible completed the Qualtrics survey. As a final push, the researcher sent Math and ELA teams personalized data on where they stood as a school in submitting the survey via an email (See Appendix J). This final email served as a motivation to help the researcher reach the desired number of participants per school. The researcher sent five reminder emails. All teachers took the Qualtrics survey in English via computer or phone and on their own time within the two-week window. Some department teams allocated time within their respective department meetings to completing the survey as a team.

Phase 2: focus group. Once the survey window closed, the researcher communicated via email with all participants who had indicated willingness to participate in a focus group. The email restated the purpose of the study and of the focus group, why the overall focus was on Math and ELA teachers, that the study was being completed as part of partial fulfillment of the dissertation program, and acknowledged approval from District A (See Appendix F). The email also contained the dates, times, and locations of each of the three focus groups and asked that participants sign up for one of the three days by replying to the email. Once a participant decided on a date, the researcher sent a follow-up email confirming the date and time for each of the participants. The researcher reached out via email to participants that provided their information using the linked survey (See Appendix F). This email was resent two times to garner as much participation as possible. Ultimately, only five teachers responded to the email. Once the five teachers agreed

on a date, the researcher emailed all five participants to agree on a final time convenient for everyone. Then, the researcher sent out a reminder email the day of the focus group reminding participants of the time and location of the focus group (See Appendix K). Only one focus group was held since there were not enough participants for multiple groups.

The single focus group was conducted at a high school in District A after school hours and lasted for approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Prior to starting the focus group, participants were provided a light snack and beverages as appreciation for their participation in this phase of the study. The researcher used a digital voice recorder to document the conversation that took place in the focus group. The voice recording was used to transcribe the conversation for analysis. At the beginning of the focus group, each participant was given a focus group identity that they used every time they spoke in order to maintain the anonymity of the process.

The focus group consisted of an opening question, introductory questions, and transition questions as specified in the approved teacher focus group protocol to provide some ease for participants (See Appendix C). The group was then asked to answer questions related to four of the statements in the CRTPS that most closely aligned with expectations in building culturally responsive classrooms for Latina/o ELLs. The four statements selected were as follow: *1) I am able to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians; 2) I am able to find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks; 3) I am able to design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed*

during instruction; and 4) I am able to infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom. These four areas are consistent with Gay's (2010) belief that culturally responsive teachers are less likely to reach their students if they are not able to understand a student's ethnic identity and cultural socialization. Leading a class based on a lack of understanding, she argues, can lead to a dismissal of these identities and the imposing of their own, which could be detrimental in how students gain a sense of belonging.

The focus group ended with three open-ended questions in order to obtain more information from teachers on what they believe they need to help them improve their pedagogy through culturally responsive practices:

1. *What specifically do you think will help you improve your practice in any of these areas that we discussed (language and content integration, communicating with your Latina/o ELL students and their families, designing assessments that support culturally responsive pedagogical practices and the infusing of curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom)?*
2. *Are there any specific professional development experiences that you believe have helped to prepare you to meet the needs of your Latina/o ELLs?*
3. *What other experiences do you believe might help you in developing more culturally responsive practices to support the Latina/o ELLs in your classroom?*

The researcher transcribed the focus group discussion following the focus group session.

Data Analysis

Data was collected from each of the phases of the study: a) a survey consisting of 28 items adapted using the CRTPS, and b) a focus group that helped to provide anecdotal evidence of culturally responsive practices that teachers have implemented in their current school setting.

Analysis of survey responses. Once the survey closed, the researcher used descriptive statistics available through the Qualtrics platform to analyze the responses. The researcher computed frequencies for responses by item. The first step in the analysis of the survey data was to determine how each teacher responded to each of the statements. The researcher used the different functions of the Qualtrics system in order to create graphs and tables. On the second round of data analysis, the researcher focused solely on how teachers responded to the first research question: *“How do secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs perceive their own capacity to serve linguistically diverse students in their classroom?”* Using the Qualtrics system, the researcher looked at the general data and breakdown of teacher practices surrounding culturally responsive practices in the classroom at each of the participating schools. In analyzing the data by school site, the researcher was able to determine if there were

any inherent differences in culturally responsive practices that teachers have at each of the sites based on the Qualtrics responses.

The third round of analysis of the data allowed the researcher to look at teacher responses from a thematic standpoint using the CRTPS tool which delineates the themes as: *a) curriculum and instruction* (questions 1-8), *b) relationships and expectations* (questions 9-14), and *c) group belonging formation* (questions 15-18). As reported in Section I, curriculum and instruction relates to a teacher's perceived ability to employ culturally responsive techniques within curriculum, instruction, and assessment design. The statements on relationship and expectation establishment relate to a teacher's ability to communicate with families in order to embed cultural understanding of the families to engage students in learning. Lastly, group belonging formation revolves around the development of trusting relationships with culturally diverse students through the creation of safe spaces for students to learn.

Focus group analysis. To further understand responses from the survey, the researcher conducted a focus group. The focus group gathered a random sample of teachers to participate in a focus group that focused on four of the teacher practice statements from the survey. This is in alignment with research question two: "*What are the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs say they currently use to support Latina/o ELLs?*" The anecdotal data helped to shed light into the way that teachers responded in the survey administration and to see if practices were aligned with how the general group of teachers responded. As noted earlier, the discussion was recorded using a digital tape recorder and then transcribed by the

researcher. The transcriptions were copied into a Microsoft Word document and then analyzed. The researcher first took each of the responses from the focus group using the transcribed data file and integrated them into a Microsoft Excel file and then linked any statements that gave specific anecdotal evidence to each of the culturally responsive teacher statements. This data set helped to link teacher pedagogy surrounding culturally responsive practices in the classroom and helped to devise possible next steps and recommendations in relation to these experiences. The analysis of this data also helped to identify any common threads around the identified themes that surfaced as a result of the integration of the survey data and focus group.

Finally, the researcher revisited the transcribed statements from the ‘follow up’ section of the focus group to identify the gaps that currently exist in building teacher capacity with culturally responsive practices based on teacher responses in that section. This was also an opportunity for the researcher to analyze possible next steps for the district based on teacher feedback. At this point, the researcher also identified any new themes based on this same section of the focus group. This phase of data analysis was most closely aligned with research question three: *What are the gaps that exist with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs in District A?*

IRB

An expedited IRB (See Appendices M and N for IRB approval) was completed as part of this research given the identifiable nature of teacher subjects for this research as part of the survey and focus group activity.

Human Subject Review and Confidentiality. To protect District A and the University of Maryland, the researcher adhered to the following procedures to ensure that no identifiable subject data was used throughout the entire research process:

- All participants that received the survey received an email that described the survey and its nature.
- The researcher asked that all participants complete consent forms as part of the Qualtrics survey and before the actual focus group.
- Teacher names were not used in order to maintain confidentiality.
- Final documents only report results in aggregate forms.
- Participants of the study were told that they can receive a copy of the results upon request after the study has been deemed completed.
- The researcher retained data from the surveys electronically on an encrypted flash drive on a password-protected computer and did not share any individual teacher information with anyone. All data will be erased after five years.

Summary

The researcher selected the methods used in this study in order to obtain information from Math and ELA teachers in District A about their culturally responsive classroom practices as they relate to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs. This section provided details regarding how the study was conducted. The next section will discuss the results of this study.

Section 3: Results and Conclusions

The previous sections of this dissertation laid the foundation for and expanded our understanding on why Latina/o ELLs are not achieving at the same levels when compared to their White non-Latina/o peers. Of the different causes examined for this problem statement, the researcher determined that better understanding of teachers' perceived capacity and preparation could identify areas where greater focus on teaching and teachers could enhance the educational experience of Latina/o ELLs in District A and lead to higher achievement. This section includes the findings from the mixed-methods study: Math and ELA teacher surveys and focus groups. This section is organized into three major parts: Results, conclusions, and impact for District A. The results provide the findings from both the survey and focus group. Both quantitative and qualitative data are presented and aligned with each research question. Results are followed by conclusions formed by the researcher based on the data gathered and ends with limitations of the study. The final section presents potential impacts and recommendations for District A.

Results

Teacher survey results. The researcher distributed the online Qualtrics survey to 133 Math and ELA teachers at six District A high schools: 28 at School A, 14 at School B, 31 at School C, 8 at School E, 19 at School F and 33 at School G. The Principal at School D opted out of the study. Of the 133 surveys, four were returned because the email accounts were not valid (two from School C and two from School F). Ninety-six surveys were returned: 13 at School A, 11 at School B, 21 at School C,

1 at School D, 5 at School E, 15 at School F, 25 at School G; and 5 stated that they no longer work at any of the schools listed. The survey for the respondent who selected “School D” and the five respondents that indicated that they did not teach at any of the study schools were not used. Eleven other surveys were not completed (2 at School A, 5 at School C, 1 at School F and 3 at School G) and, therefore, were eliminated from the data set. This resulted in 79 usable surveys, an overall 62.20% return rate. Table 2 represents the survey response rate by school:

Table 2

Survey Response Rate by School

School	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Usable Surveys	Percentage Returned
School A	28	13	11	39%
School B	14	11	11	79%
School C	31	21	16	52%
School D	0	1	0	0%
School E	8	5	5	63%
School F	19	15	14	74%
School G	33	25	22	67%
I do not teach at any of these schools	0	5	0	0%
	N = 133	N = 96	N = 79	62.2%

Among the 79 respondents, 3 (4%) identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 15 (19%) as Asian, 38 (48%) as Black or African American, and 23 (29%) identified as White. Seven (9%) respondents identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 72 (91%) responded as not having any Hispanic or Latino background, while 100% of

the teachers responded that they had taught at least five Latina/o ELLs in the last two years. To the survey question, “Do you speak a language other than English fluently?” 47 (59%) respondents stated that they do not speak a language other than English fluently, and 32 (41%) responded that they are fluent in another language.

The researcher also wanted to understand the distribution of teachers by years of experience teaching in general and in their present school. The researcher also tallied the data by race. Responses are highlighted in Tables 3 and 4 below:

Table 3

Respondent Years of Teaching Experience

# of Years	Total #	% of Respondents
1-3 Years	6	8%
4-6 Years	10	13%
7-10 Years	6	8%
More than 10 Years	57	72%
N = 79		

Table 4

Respondent Years of Teaching Experience by Race

School	Total	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-10 Years	More than 10 Years
American Indian/ Alaska Native	3	1(33.33%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	2(66.67%)
Asian	15	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	15(100%)
Black or African American	38	2(5.26%)	6(15.79%)	3(7.89%)	27(71.05%)
White	23	3(13.04%)	4(17.39%)	3(13.04%)	13(56.52%)

Total	79	N =36	N = 26	N = 11	N = 6
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While 72% of survey respondents have been teaching for more than ten years, a majority of these teachers have been teaching at their current school setting for six years or less, and 37% have been at their school for one to three years. See Table 5 below:

Table 5

Respondent Years of Teaching Experience at Their Current School

# of Years	Total #	% of Respondents
1-3 Years	29	37%
4-6 Years	26	33%
7-10 Years	8	10%
More than 10 Years	16	20%
N = 79		

Table 6 presents the responses to the question: “*What percentage of your students are Latina/o ELLs or re-designated ELLs?*” This is a teacher’s estimated enrollment of Latina/o ELLs in each of their classrooms. Most teachers (76%) reported having fewer than 80% of Latina/o ELLs. Schools A and E could be considered outliers, as most of their teachers stated that they have between 80% and 100% of Latina/o ELLs in their classes. This data is presented in the table below:

Table 6

Teacher Self-Reported Percentage of Latina/o ELLs in their Classroom

School	Less than 20%	20-79%	80-100%	I am not certain	Total
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School A	1	4	6	0	11
School B	3	7	1	0	11
School C	10	4	1	1	16
School E	0	0	5	0	5
School F	9	3	1	1	14
School G	6	13	2	1	22
	N = 29	N = 31	N = 16	N = 3	N = 79

The first part of the Qualtrics survey ended with a question that asked teachers to indicate their level of comfort teaching Latina/o ELLs. Table 7 present those results. The overwhelming majority feel “extremely comfortable” teaching Latina/o ELLs in their classroom. In three of the six schools (B, F, and G) 17 (22%) individuals reported being “neither comfortable nor uncomfortable” or “slightly uncomfortable” teaching Latina/o ELLs in their classroom. No Math or ELA teachers reported feeling “extremely uncomfortable” teaching Latina/o ELLs. The analysis included examining responses by teacher reported race/ethnicity.

The mean Math/ELA teachers’ self-reported comfort teaching Latina/o ELLs is also reported by race in table 8. While over 85% of American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian and White teachers self-reported to be ‘extremely comfortable’ or ‘slightly comfortable,’ only about 65% of respondents in the African American subgroup reported the same.

Table 7

Mean Reported Comfort Level Teaching Latina/o ELLs by School

School	Total	1*	2	3	4	5	Mean(SD)
School A	11	7(63.64%)	3(27.27%)	1(9.09%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1.45(.66)
School B	11	6(54.55%)	2(18.18%)	1(9.09%)	2(18.18%)	0(0%)	1.91(1.16)
School C	16	8(50%)	4(25%)	4(25%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1.91(1.16)
School E	5	3(60%)	2(40%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1.4(.49)
School F	14	3(21.43%)	5(35.71%)	4(28.57%)	2(14.29%)	0(0%)	2.36(.97)
School G	22	9(40.91%)	10(45.45%)	1(4.55%)	2(9.09%)	0(0%)	1.92(.89)
Total	79	36(45.57%)	26(32.91%)	11(13.92%)	6(7.6%)	0(0%)	1.84(.93)

1= Extremely comfortable; 2=Slightly comfortable, 3=Neither comfortable or uncomfortable; 4= Slightly comfortable, 5= Extremely uncomfortable

Table 8

Mean Reported Comfort Level Teaching Latina/o ELLs by Race/Ethnicity of Teacher

School	Total	Extremely comfortable	Slightly comfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Slightly uncomfortable	Extremely uncomfortable	Mean (SD)
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	1(33.33%)	2(66.67%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1.67(.47)
Asian	15	7(46.67%)	7(46.67%)	0(0%)	1(6.66%)	0(0%)	1.67(.79)
Black or African American	38	18(47.37%)	7(18.42%)	9(23.68%)	4(10.53%)	0(0%)	1.97(1.06)
White	23	10(43.48%)	10(43.48%)	2(8.7%)	1(4.34%)	0(0%)	1.74(.79)
Total	79	N = 36	N = 26	N = 11	N = 6	N = 0	1.84(.93)

Of the 17 teachers that reported to be “neither comfortable nor uncomfortable” or “slightly uncomfortable,” 12 (71%) reported teaching for more than ten years. Only five of the 17 teachers, or 29%, have been at their current school for over ten years.

The second part of the survey contained items from the CRTPS. These items asked teachers to respond to the extent to which they use specific instructional strategies in their teaching. Prior to the CRTPS items, teachers were asked to respond to the question: “Do you believe you have been appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELLs in your classroom?” Table 8 presents the responses. Across the 79 respondents, 32 (41%) teachers indicated that they had “probably not” or “definitely not” been trained to teach the Latina/o ELLs in their classroom while 47 (59%) responded that they definitely or probably had received appropriate training to teach Latina/o ELLs. At three of the schools (B, F, and G), at least 50% responded that they have “probably not” or “definitely not” been properly trained to teach Latina/o ELLs. Twenty-one (55%) Black teachers, 9 (39%) White teachers, 1 (33%) American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1 (6.67%) Asian teacher responded that they have “probably not” or “definitely not” been appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELLs. The data on teacher beliefs is presented in Tables 9 (by school) and 10 (by race) below.

Table 9

Math and ELA Teacher Beliefs on Appropriate Training to Teach Latina/o ELLs by School

School	Total	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably Not	Definitely Not	Mean
School A	11	5(45%)	4(36%)	1(9%)	1(9%)	1.82(.94)
School B	11	2(18%)	3(27%)	5(45%)	1(9%)	2.45(.89)
School C	16	6(38%)	5(31%)	4(25%)	1(6%)	2.0(.94)
School E	5	2(40%)	2(40%)	1(20%)	0(0%)	1.8(.75)
School F	14	3(21%)	4(29%)	3(21%)	4(29%)	2.57(1.12)
School G	22	3(14%)	8(36%)	8(36%)	3(14%)	2.5(.89)
Total	79	21(26.6%)	26(32.91%)	22(27.85%)	10(12.66%)	2.19(.92)

Table 10

Math and ELA Teacher Beliefs on Appropriate Training to Teach Latina/o ELLs by

Race

Race	Total	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Probably Not	Definitely Not	Mean(SD)
American Indian/Alaska Native	3	1(33.33%)	1(33.33%)	1(33.33%)	0(0%)	2(.82)
Asian	15	4(26.67%)	10(66.67%)	0(0%)	1(6.67%)	1.87(.72)
Black or African American	38	7(18.42%)	10(26.32%)	14(36.84%)	7(18.42%)	2.55(.99)
White	23	9(39.13%)	5(21.74%)	7 (30.43%)	2(8.7%)	2.09(1.02)
Total	79	21(26.6%)	26(32.91%)	22(27.85%)	10(12.66%)	2.19(.92)

In the following sections, the survey results for items on the CRTPS survey are presented. These items are listed in Figure 11 below. As noted in Section II, the items on the CRTPS are divided into three themes: 1) curriculum and instruction, 2) relationship and expectation establishment, and 3) group belonging formation. Teachers were asked to respond to each item in terms of their perceived capacity to carry out these culturally responsive practices on a regular basis. The results from the analyses address Research Question 1: *How do secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs perceive their own capacity to serve linguistically diverse students in their classrooms?*

	1. Curriculum and Instruction
	I am able to:
1.1	...find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks.
1.2	...review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weaknesses, and relevance to students' interests and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary.
1.3	...develop a repertoire of instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students to serve as a scaffold for learning.
1.4	...infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom.
1.5	...utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning.
1.6	...assess culturally diverse students' readiness, intellectual and academic strengths and weaknesses, and development needs.
1.7	...use a variety of assessment techniques, such as self-assessment, portfolios, and so on, to evaluate students' performance in favor of cultural diversity.
1.8	...design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction.
	2. Relationship and Expectation Establishment
	I am able to:

2.1	...know how to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians.
2.2	...structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents.
2.3	...foster meaningful and supportive relationships with parents and families, and actively involve them in their students' learning.
2.4	...use non-traditional discourse styles with culturally diverse students in an attempt to communicate in culturally responsive ways.
2.5	...establish expectations for appropriate classroom behavior in considering students' cultural backgrounds to maintain a conducive learning environment.
2.6	...communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.
3. Group Belonging Formation	
	I am able to:
3.1	...create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students.
3.2	...create a community of learners by encouraging students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation.
3.3	...develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students.
3.4	...provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture.

Figure 11: *The culturally responsive teacher preparedness scale*. Data retrieved from Hsiao, Y-J. (2015). The culturally responsive teacher preparedness scale: An exploratory study. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 8, 241-250.

Table 11 presents the means and SD for each of the three themes: 1) curriculum and instruction, 2) relationship and expectation establishment, and 3) group belonging formation. As reported in Sections I and II, curriculum and instruction speaks to a teacher's perceived ability to employ culturally responsive techniques within curriculum and instruction and assessment design. The statements on relationship and expectation establishment revolves around a teacher's perceived ability to communicate with families to engage students in learning. Lastly, group belonging formation alludes to a teacher's perceived ability to develop trusting relationships with culturally diverse students. Overall, teachers indicated that they perceive that

they were somewhat less prepared to implement strategies in the area of curriculum and instruction ($M=3.57$, $SD=1.07$) than the other two areas of establishing relationships ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.99$) and group belonging formation ($M=4.57$, $SD=.73$).

Table 11

Overall Mean and SD by CRTPS Theme

CRTPS Area	Mean(SD)
1. Curriculum and Instruction	$M = 3.57(1.07)$
2. Relationship and Expectation Establishment	$M = 4.01(.99)$
3. Group Belonging Formation	$M = 4.57(.73)$

Curriculum and instruction. Respondents generally responded positively to engaging in culturally responsive practices related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment design. Of the eight statements, there were three that both Math and ELA teachers perceived themselves to be less capable of doing: (1.2) *review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weaknesses, and relevance to students' interest and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary* ($M=3.86$), (1.4) *infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom* ($M=3.75$), and (1.8) *design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction* ($M=3.84$). Statements 1.4 and 1.8 had the lowest overall mean scores for all eight items. The highest mean score was for (1.1) *find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks* ($M=4.09$) and (1.5) *utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject*

matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning (M=4.09). The data from section I of the CRTPS is captured in Table 12 below:

Table 12

Aggregate Responses by Statement Section I on the CRTPS

Statement	Total	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean(SD)
1.1 find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks.	79	30(38%)	38(48%)	3(4%)	4(5%)	4(5%)	4.09(1.03)
1.2 review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weakness, and relevance to students' interest and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary	79	23(29%)	39(49%)	4(5%)	9(11%)	4(5%)	3.86(1.11)

1.3 develop a repertoire of instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students to serve as a scaffold for learning	79	25(32%)	36(46%)	8(10%)	5(6%)	5(6%)	3.9(1.11)
1.4 infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom	79	19(24%)	38(48%)	10(13%)	7(9%)	5(6%)	3.75(1.11)
1.5 utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning.	79	30(38%)	37(47%)	3(4%)	7(9%)	2(3%)	4.09(1.0)
1.6 assess culturally diverse students' readiness, intellectual and academic strengths and	79	21(27%)	43(54%)	7(9%)	4(5%)	4(5%)	3.92(1.0)

weaknesses, and development needs.							
1.7 use a variety of assessment techniques, such as self- assessment, portfolios, and so on, to evaluate students’ performance in favor of cultural diversity.	79	29(37%)	34(43%)	4(5%)	8(10%)	4(5%)	3.96(1.13)
1.8 design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction.	79	21(27%)	40(51%)	5(6%)	10(13%)	3(4%)	3.84(1.07)

Relationship and expectation establishment. This section of the survey explored a teacher’s self-perceived ability to communicate with families to engage students in learning. As shown in Table 13, teacher responses on this survey revealed that most Math and ELA teachers perceive that they are able to foster meaningful relationships with families to actively involve them in their children’s learning, as most participants responded “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” (M=4.1). This was also true for teacher reported capability to (2.5) *establish expectations for appropriate*

classroom behavior in considering students' cultural backgrounds to maintain a conducive learning environment (M=4.18) as well as (2.6) communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students (M=4.3). On the other hand, statements (2.2) structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents (M=3.89), (2.3) use non-traditional discourse styles with culturally diverse students in order to communicate in culturally responsive ways (M = 3.78), and (2.4) use non-traditional discourse styles with culturally diverse students in an attempt to communicate in culturally responsive ways (M = 3.78) had the lower overall means.

Table 13

Math and ELA Teacher Responses on Relationship and Expectation Establishment

Statement	Total	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean(SD)
2.1 know how to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians.	79	29(37%)	40(51%)	1(1%)	7(9%)	2(3%)	4.1(.98)
2.2 structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents.	79	22(28%)	38(48%)	9(11%)	8(10%)	2(3%)	3.89(1.01)
2.3 foster meaningful and	79	21(27%)	35(44%)	10(13%)	11(14%)	2(3%)	3.78(1.06)

supportive relationships with parents and families, and actively involve them in their students' learning.

2.4 use nontraditional discourse styles with culturally diverse students in an attempt to communicate in culturally responsive ways.

79	22(28%)	33(42%)	12(15%)	9(11%)	3(4%)	3.78(1.09)
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2.5 establish expectations for appropriate classroom behavior in considering students' cultural backgrounds to maintain a conducive learning environment.

79	33(42%)	35(44%)	6(8%)	2(3%)	3(4%)	4.18(.95)
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2.6 communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.

79	37(47%)	34(43%)	4(5%)	3(4%)	1(1%)	4.3(.83)
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Group belonging formation. Items related to group belonging formation are presented in Table 14. Results indicate that most Math and ELA teachers “*somewhat agree*” and “*strongly agree*” to statements 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4. These statements largely revolved around classroom culture, classroom environment, and including all students in the process of learning. These statements are: I am able to (3.1) *create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students* (M=4.66), (3.2) *create a community of learners by encouraging students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation* (M=4.48), (3.3) *develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students* (M=4.63), and (3.4) *provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture* (M=4.49).

Table 14

Math and ELA Teacher Responses on Group Belong Formation

Statement	Total	Strongly Agree	Somewh at Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Some what Disagree	Strongl y Disagree	Mean(SD)
3.1 create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students.	79	58(73%)	18(23%)	1(1%)	1(1%)	1(1%)	4.66(.69)
3.2 create a community of learners by encouraging	79	46(58%)	28(35%)	3(4%)	1(1%)	1(1%)	4.48(.74)

students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation								
3.3 develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students	79	57(72%)	18(23%)	2(3%)	1(1%)	1(1%)	4.63(.71)	
3.4 provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture.	79	49(62%)	24(30%)	3(4%)	2(3%)	1(1%)	4.49(.79)	

Summary of research question #1. Overall, the data from the Qualtrics survey tells us that Math and ELA teachers in District A perceive themselves to be implementing culturally responsive practices effectively in their classrooms. Teachers presumably are creating safe environments for students and their families that allow Latina/o ELLs to feel welcomed in their classroom. One of the data points that stood out from the survey revolved around teacher mobility, which suggests that while most teachers in this study have been in the industry for over ten years, many of them have been at their current school for less than six years. This is an important analysis given the complexity of building teacher capacity to serve students in specific school settings. The researcher completed an analysis of the CRTPS data around teacher

perceptions of capacity by years of experience and race, but he ultimately chose not to report on this given the size of the research participant pool, as it would have raised confidentiality concerns.

Focus group results. The focus group was intended to address research question 2: *What are the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers say they currently use to support Latina/o ELLs in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs?* And research question 3: *What are the gaps that Math and ELA teachers perceive that exist in District A with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs?* It is important to note that only one of the three planned focus groups took place due to lack of responses and that all of the participants of the one focus group were math teachers.

According to responses from the survey, most Math and ELA teachers in District A report that they perceive themselves to have the capacity to implement culturally responsive practices in the classroom that relate to 1) curriculum and instruction, 2) relationship and expectation establishment, and 3) group belonging formation. The statements from the CRTPS on the survey guided the focus group discussion and addressed 17 questions (see Appendix C). Below are the findings from the focus group.

Walking in, one could feel the nerves in the room, as most teachers did not know each other. I could also sense my own nerves as I did not know what to expect. The two Internationals teachers seemed most at ease and ready to deliver and also gave me a sense of comfortability given my minimal work with them in the past. I

was unassuming and ready to take my administrator hat off and to provide a safe space for the teacher participants. I turned on the digital recording device and reminded everyone what the purpose of the study was. There were chuckles in the room when all teachers were given their new, temporary, identity that they would assume for the next 90 minutes of the focus group conversation. Jose, Kate, Jane and Maria, four math teachers from District A ranging from one to 10 plus years in their teaching careers and working with Latina/o ELLs in their respective schools.

To ease the tension, I began by asking about the number of Latina/o ELL students in their school and how they got this information. One teacher showed pride in knowing her data and stated “we have 386 students of which the last time I heard we are [...] 89% Latino/a students.” Her response indicated to me that she was probably engaged in other roles at her school, which made her privy to this data. As a contrast, two other teachers in the group gave more general data and were not as precise as the first teacher. Jose explained:

So we currently have 280 students in our school out of about 1000 altogether. Most of our students come from El Salvador and Guatemala and we have a few students from Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria so it is a pretty diverse group that we have.

Kate, like the other teachers, did not indicate where she got the information but brought about yet another level of awareness by describing the ESOL population in very general terms:

My school also has a large ESOL population [...] I know that there’s a lot of them because I teach a bunch of them and so the majority of our students are

also from El Salvador but we also have Guatemala, we have Mexico. We have a decent amount of students from various countries in Africa [...] and then we also have a few people from various countries in the Middle East.

Teachers were then asked to think about how they perceive their Latina/o ELL students experience school on a daily basis. There was a deep silence, but finally Kate responded to the question:

I think they experience it like kind of moving past them really fast [...] and I only say that because the majority of my ESOL students that I have are in Algebra and Lab which is a course with no ESOL supports and it's me and I struggle a little bit. And so despite the fact that I try my best to help out my kiddos a bunch in that class I have a student who is illiterate in his native language and I only have so many skills, so much time, and so many headaches that I can possibly go through and so I have not been able to help them as much as I would really like to. [...] I hate this, but I know this and this is something that I want to try to fix.

There was a nod of agreement in the room and then Jane added "I believe that our students value relationships. So sometimes, most often times, they come to school because of the relationships that they have with staff members and peers." Jose ended by reiterating on the historical marginalization of Latina/o ELLs in District A school spaces, but added a glimpse of hope for the population when he said "they were marginalized and they were left out and we saw that in their behaviors and it's been evolving with extracurricular activities." This last statement re-emphasized the

purpose of this research in the hope to create more inclusive environments for these students.

Communicating with families. There are many layers to cultural responsiveness and often times the conversation also includes parents or guardians and how teachers connect with them in the hope of building on their students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez 1992). All teachers talked about how difficult it is to communicate with parents. Jane talked about how sometimes there's no one to communicate with because

There have been a couple of students that have been put into the foster care system and trying to figure out who has kinship rights and who is a legal guardian has allowed some students to fall through the cracks.

Kate then alluded to the difficulty in communicating with families when there is misinformation listed for students in the student information system used in District A, parent communication portal, Schoolmax.

A lot of the student numbers in Schoolmax are wrong. A lot of the addresses come back return to sender so even if they are not all the way in that situation, it still can be hard to get a hold [of parents] and this is not just for our ELL students but for all students.

Maria then added to that by bringing up the fact that sometimes parents are available during hours when the translation service provided by the district, Language Links, is not available.

The difficulty from communication is that these parents are working long hours so they are not available during the time that you are at school so then if you need language link you have to figure out if language link is going to be open so that I can contact parents after school hours.

Lastly, Jose reversed the conversation and talked about why families may not be able to communicate with the school instead of the other way around, almost seeming to take off his responsibility.

I have experienced a lot of issues with communicating with parents more so than communicating with students who are there because parents sometimes have that fear of school especially because they don't speak English very well.

These responses, while not surprising, offer a contrast to what the Qualtrics survey said of Math and ELA teachers being able to establish relationships with families. The focus group shed light on many of the barriers and difficulties that come with trying to build relationships with Latina/o ELL families and reasons why this might be true.

When teachers are able to communicate with Latina/o ELL families there were additional barriers that they talked about. Jane and Kate alluded to the difficulty of having information translated by other people and how these conversations do not always go as planned:

Jane: I've noticed that sometimes when I have allowed certain staff members to translate things to parents they leave out things to kind of cover for the child.

Kate: Kids are usually translating for their parents and I understand enough where I'm sitting here and I'm just like don't make me get my Google translate out.

Teachers also noted that they feel that they've communicated well with Latina/o ELL families when they see kids manifesting positive behaviors. Communicating with parents often makes a difference in classroom behaviors as Maria pointed out,

I feel like when I've communicated well with the parent I will definitely see action towards either improvement or consistency or and even the student's ability to communicate with me, they feel a lot more comfortable so that's how I know that the communication has worked for me.

Jane then added "I know when I see accountability from the student's part where they're not upset or angry that the school called or that I called. They've taken accountability for their own actions so that's the beginning of change." To which Maria then illustrates a conversation that could happen when she feels she's communicated well with a family "when the student come and apologize to you like 'I'm sorry, I'll do better' and you say 'I just want the best for you' so that works well." Jane and Maria's comments made me wonder about how much of this is teacher versus student accountability in building safe and inclusive classroom spaces and how AP 0102 in District A needs to build more clarity on expectations for culturally responsive practices.

Teachers talked about a number of tools that allow them to communicate effectively with parents in the Latina/o ELL community. Blackboard was mentioned as a way to communicate with families in a positive way:

Blackboard connect where you can translate it into Spanish and other languages, I've used it for other languages also. So that's a good way because you can send a text message and make a phone call and so usually I do both because I figure one way or the other. (Maria).

While Kate was not as confident about sending what would sound like automated messages to families when saying "I also do enjoy using Blackboard although my only issue with them is that I personally will never answer an automatic phone call." Kate then also talked about her use of Google Translate:

I like you know do my Google translate and I have my thing and then I have a student translate it for me and I just say 'you, can you just check my grammar' and they give me corrections and then I have another person check in another class and they're like 'this is right, but this isn't my Spanish, whoever wrote this was in Mexico and I'm from El Salvador.'

Supporting language acquisition in the content areas. The conversation then turned to instruction, the area in the Qualtrics survey in which teachers self-reported to be less capable of implementing culturally responsive practices. Teachers began by talking about the supports strategies that they provide to help their students with language acquisition. Three of the teachers addressed this point. One teacher shared a frustration around there not being enough time to be able to help Latina/o ELL students in the classroom, especially when they are not literate in their first language:

I can't make clones of myself yet, that's my biggest issue so far because when I sit with my ESOL students we can get stuff done. I can sit on their desk and we can work and we can move back and forth because like I said especially

and I focus on my illiterate kid because he is the kid that I am trying to help the most. So, when I sit there and I spell every single letter for him and we really try to sound out words like we got this he is in a class of 26 and I can't do that all day. (Kate)

Teachers who taught at the international schools in District A mentioned some differences in instructional structures such as how students are grouped collaborate at different language levels that proved to be positive.

At our school we use a lot of collaboration and heterogeneous grouping for language. One of the things that I found out that the higher English proficiency students don't always don't want to support and help the lower ones so they feel like it's an extra job for them and they just want to do their work. (Jane).

Maria then added to the fact that sometimes other Latina/o students who once struggled to learn the English language are not as supportive to their peers because they had to struggle when they arrived to the country.

I would concur with both of my colleagues in saying that a lot of times the kids do not want [to help] and actually have said it to me over the years because I've been there the whole time. They would say that they had to struggle through learning their English and that people need to take the initiative because they think that once students receive help like that it made it too easy for them to not learn the English language.

There was a notable difference between the international school teacher responses given that they work in an environment where all students are or have once had the

ELL designation. It was eye-opening to hear teachers talk about other students not wanting to support their peers while the other teacher talked about the lack of support she has to work with her ELLs in spaces where ELLs are the minority.

To follow up, teachers were asked to discuss specific instructional strategies that they use to support comprehension of classroom tasks through language. Kate mentioned some of the few things she probably learned in the school of education she attended to support diverse learners:

For me it's mostly modeling and diagrams so usually, especially it works nicely in Math. I can model a question and then go through it and then also put a lot of diagrams on their papers. [...] I will sit with my ESOL and model one more just with them with them poking me with questions and then they'll be ok and I can move on.

Jose also referred to modeling as a strategy, but his reference was more vague and not directly related to instruction:

Here's an example, this is a bottle of water and I will ask a kid 'how do you say this in Spanish?' and then they will tell me and we will go from there so then in the future we will go 'this bottle of water is agua'

Jane then jumped in and spoke about a protocol that they implemented at her school which exemplified how they gradually released students using this approach:

So what we did is that we started using a student teaching protocol and we basically broke it down into four steps where first you show your work and you ask 'are there any questions?' then the third step would be can you explain your steps and then ask are there any questions? And what we were

trying to do is model to the students how to support other students. The second thing we were doing was to increase language production. So they would have to get up and once they did their work come up to the board and actually show and explain and with the use of the sentence stems and it's working.

Maria chimed in and talked about the use of sentence stems to support newcomers and students less capable of producing in the English language:

I've had a lot of success with using sentence stems especially with the students who aren't as proficient with English and its helped because you don't have that deer in the headlights look 'what in the world is she asking me?'

Jane then reiterated how difficult it was to set up the structure that they did, but that it ultimately helped with small group instruction:

It took a couple of months, to get the students to be ready to be independent at a station and to use their anchor charts or whatever resources that I had but that was the best example when I was able to do small group instruction.

The international school teachers were consistently able to point to specific culturally responsive strategies to support learning while the two teachers from the other represented schools responded by providing more general strategies that may sometimes be helpful in the classroom.

The conversation moved on to consider the benefits of supporting language acquisition as content teachers. Kate started the conversation by explaining "the more ways we support it, then the better they do and the less we have to do and then the

more they do.” She seemed to be returning to describing the growth and autonomy of students that was spoken of earlier in the previous question. Another teacher went on to talk about the benefits from a planning and collaboration standpoint,

I think that the support comes from the repetition and having a process they have to get used to it. They kind of take that on and [...] I know that speaker 2 is going to require me to do this when I come to class. (Jane)

Maria then reiterated this point and expanded on it by elaborating on the explanation that they give to kids.

The good thing about it was that speaker 1 we plan together and so in planning together I would ask speaker 1 ‘what are you going to do tomorrow?’ or ‘what are you going to do Thursday?’ Then speaker 1 would plan something and typically will share it with me and then I would piggyback off of speaker 1 and students would see that consistency. [...] Then the students could see and we could explain to them we are trying to build your language skills and we are trying to make sure that you can justify your work, explain your work and that sort of thing to the student and they developed an understanding.

Kate then stated that borrowing some ideas from a neighboring Math teacher may not always work for all students, “despite me trying to steal ideas it’s working with some kids but it doesn’t work with others.” Jane then offered a different perspective when saying that “the best benefit has been trust and relationship building because with speaker 2 students and my students we can’t get our students to do anything until there is either a relationship or they trust us.” Maria, once again, candidly offered her

perspective and that she tells students “we’re family and I say laughing is not acceptable, teasing is not acceptable. We’re all at different levels so you should hear me try to speak Spanish fluently it’s not happening right now.” She puts herself in the situation as she explains to students to build trusting relationships, but to offer students a safe space to make mistakes and speak in English. Jose then added that although he tries to do different things, like play Latino music, it doesn’t always work the way he expected.

We all try to have a safe environment for our kids, but it’s a constant challenge when you have such a multidimensional multicultural classroom who totally oppose it. For example, one of the things I do is play music so even though I’ll play some Spanish music, Latino music and then African American kids they object it but they want to hear their rap so I try to incorporate all types of music in my classroom so that the kids feel that they’re part of the classroom.

The responses in this section, again, showed the notable difference between the international school teachers and the other two teachers in the room. They talked about their work together and having that as an advantage in working with the same students in two separate courses. While this may be the case for them, we were quickly reminded that this type of teacher collaboration does not take place in every school setting possibly affecting how they see themselves and the support they are able to provide with language acquisition.

Culturally responsive assessments. The third concept presented to focus group teachers focused on teachers being able to design assessments to complement the

culturally responsive strategies being implemented in the classroom. To answer the question how do you know when you have developed an assessment that complements the culturally responsive strategies you have used during instruction? Kate started us off by acknowledging that she does not design culturally responsive assessments. Jane talked about culturally responsive assessments needing to bring a worldly perspective:

I would say when you're able to give some type of project-based assessment that incorporates literacy skills and also some kind of social change or it's taking action because that makes it more culturally relevant for the student, even if it's not their own culture learning about another culture. Either some type of problem in the world.

Given the flow of answers I then went back and reiterated that it was totally understandable if they did not have a response, or if they simply did not integrate culturally responsive assessments. Jose explained:

Once again, I don't do very well with that. Sometimes I would change the name to a Hispanic name but beyond that I don't do much in terms of an assessment because the assessment we give is already kind of in a certain format so it's a little different for me to stretch towards this culturally responsive way. I can give a scenario, but apart from that we don't do much about it.

Jose responded that the assessments that come their way from District A are already in a certain format that teachers are not able to change. Maria talked about how she

differentiated and scaffolded assessments in her classroom in order to reach certain students with no literacy in English:

I'm kind of thinking back to not this school year but last school year I had a student that came in the school year before that that we had to teach her how to write the numbers and so my assessment for her was much different from the assessment for the other students because I had to do pictures for her and let her point to the correct answer, but she was successful with it. She is now taking Geometry and will be in Quantitative modeling next year and the English has improved tenfold. Her English is very good. As a matter of fact we had two seniors or students like that and one of them just graduated and we literally had to get the kindergarten Math book and I used to sit in class with them and they had to learn how to count money because they didn't know if there was a word problem what they were saying in the word problem so we had to start them from the beginning.

Maria then went on to tell a captivating story of a student she had who did not even know his birthday:

I had one student who fled his country. He saw his parents get killed and was here under a guardianship. Did not know his birthday, I swear he just graduated and he's got to be 25. His birthday was July 1st and he was assigned a birthday. I remember we were doing an activity the first day of school which was suggested by our math department in which we had to do a basically it was a stats problem and the kids had to put a dot underneath the month of their birthday. And for me, I became an actress the first year I was

really good at acting because I had to get him to get up with that dot. He didn't understand any English and he had to get up with the dot and put it under the month of his birthday.

It was a reminder of the assumptions we make as educators around what kids know and don't when they walk through our doors. Jane continued on to say that she has to, "be very conscientious about what might trigger my students so I have to think what could trigger some kind of traumatic response out of them so I wouldn't want to cause any trauma." Though the question was around being able to implement culturally responsive assessments, the piece on socio-emotional awareness is an important one to acknowledge as assessments that are not culturally responsive may trigger things in students that we may not even know. Here, teachers from the international school gave responses that highlighted their attunement and understanding of socio-emotional issues that could trigger Latina/o ELL students based on the materials presented to them. It was also clear that teachers from the other two schools were more aligned with district testing measures and less attuned to the socio-emotional needs of the Latina/o ELLs in their classrooms.

As a follow-up question, I asked participants whether they believed that the district-created assessments were aligned to meet the needs of their ELL students. In what became a recurring pattern, Kate was the first to respond,

I don't know how to say that right because if you mean are they aligned for them to pass the answer is mostly no because they don't know English yet so how are they going to pass the test? [...] I have a few students that probably

barely learned what 1 plus 1 was [...]so how can they support them in that sense? but also how could anybody support them?

Jane then spoke about District A priorities in maintaining rigor and stated, “I would say no, because I believe that they are more concerned with keeping the rigor and it’s very difficult to keep the rigor and also kind of provide certain accommodations on those kinds of tests.” Kate then chimed back in and speaking about needing the district to more carefully select the questions that students are tested on:

The test just also needs to be more leveled because I was looking through my Geometry final and there were no type I questions anywhere. And are you telling me that it’s not a good thing to have the occasional vocabulary questions? We can build up the kid’s confidence going into the type III questions because now I don’t want to give you an entire test of all type III questions that will kill your brain.

Jane then added on the complexity of these examinations and how even using District A tools is difficult to assess what kids know:

Even when we use UNIFY if you go and you try to do any kind of analysis, it doesn’t tell you standard deviation on the teacher side, it doesn’t tell you difficulty index, it doesn’t tell you anything. So I had an assignment for myself and I actually took one of the tests and I did it and I found out that you know some of the questions were very difficult and then a lot of the questions were very low so I’m like how could you really gauge the concept?

She then added that the more difficult questions “were highly difficult [and] it was very bias in terms of the language. So I said if they would have taken parts out and

then the student would have maybe understood it. But the language on there was bias.” Maria then explained how she saw some of this bias come alive on assessments:

We had a lesson in our curriculum in which they mentioned ski slope. How many students from Central America or Mexico know what a ski slope is? So I had to first explain what a ski slope was. I had to demonstrate what a slope was, it was about slope but they started out with a ski slope.

Maria then continued to talk about how she believes that assessments like PARCC should be more aligned to a students’ WIDA level:

If you are required to take these tests I don’t understand why the tests are not leveled according to the WIDA scores. So, if you have 100 kids in school and they all have to take the PARCC test and you have 20 kids that are level 1 WIDA beginning and then you have a certain number that are emerging, a certain number that are bridging, a certain number that have exited, and you have tests written according to that, including our benchmarks, including our quarterly tests.

All of the teachers in the focus group agreed that the way assessments are presented to students does not always align with the needs of the Latina/o ELL population.

Culturally responsive thematic units and lessons. As part of the last statement from the CRTPS, teachers were asked to talk about how they infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of the students represented in the classroom, especially for Latina/o ELLs. Kate acknowledged that this is something she may do, but not directly influencing her curriculum:

I didn't. I infuse it in things that aren't my curriculum. I infuse it when I talk to them and when I build a relationship with them, but it is nowhere in my curriculum. It was never mentioned, not even thought of, not even a hint of it, it was gone.

On the other hand, Jane brought a fresh perspective to the table in talking about current planning for the upcoming summer program:

We are developing some new mastery projects for summer school and we decided to use Global competencies so that we know already that it is culturally responsive so the project is basically broken up into themes and each theme focuses on one of the four domains of global competencies.

Maria then talked about giving all teachers the opportunity to create their own thematic units as teachers in the International schools have done.

I would say that we need to be allowed the ability to use our curriculum to create our thematic units for the ELL students. So, I think that's an advantage that we're able to do so we're not like sticking strictly to the curriculum that the district gives. We use it and we use a lot of it, but it's adapted to our students.

Jose then brought about the harsh reality for some teachers that make tough choices in how they make decisions on what and how the curriculum is presented to students:

Unfortunately, since EL students are the minority in my class, I tend to focus more on the African American kids and changing the curriculum to be culturally aware or responsive to these kids I don't always do so it's always gone like that because of that.

As author Geneva Gay (2010) argues in her research, not infusing the curriculum with the perspective of the different cultures in the classroom could hinder this teacher's ability to build relationships with his Latina/o ELL students in addition to possibly creating an environment in which Latina/o ELL students may not necessarily feel welcomed.

Teachers also talked about why they might not be able to infuse the curriculum with a student's culture. Jose who had been the least talkative throughout the entire focus group was the first to speak and said that he might not be able to infuse the curriculum with a student's culture,

because I'm trying to get the curriculum done, pacing guide, whatever because I am trying to get everything done. I do it, but I know I am not doing nearly enough because I am trying to get students to the point where they understand the PARCC tests and the PARCC questions and divulging or going away is not always the easiest thing to do.

Jane talked about her own experience with her mom and siblings:

My mom always told me that as a mother she sometimes has to put her resources into the one that she knows is going to produce. So, hearing speaker 4's comment you know I understand why you are thinking of the majority and you are trying to get the majority to be successful.

Kate then acknowledged her own lack of capacity given that she is new to teaching when saying "they're so much harder to do and I'm a first-year teacher and I don't have time for anything." Kate then offered a different perspective on the lack of exemplars and materials to be able to implement in her own classroom:

And so, doing this, while it'd be awesome, I don't think that there's a lot of materials out there for me to copy, paste and modify and then to be fair though I know that I have my own cultural biases when I say this. I don't think that my materials are culturally responsive to literally anybody. [...] I do it for nobody because mostly because it's not readily available, at least readily to my knowledge available to me.

And while Kate is able to acknowledge that she has biases, this alone will not help her implement more culturally responsive practices. In fact, Gladson-Billing (2019) is worried that teachers simply saying that they have some kind of bias "becomes an excuse." As far as not having the resources available as a first-year teacher, this is aligned with the research on the lack of resources that exist in schools that are attended by many Latina/o ELL students.

As a follow-up, teachers discussed how District A could support their development in being able to infuse more of their students' culture in the curriculum and units. Maria adamantly responded, "I think that it would be great if while curriculum is being developed that we have a good ESOL team of educators that also know math really well and they can help develop curriculum for ESOL." Jane acknowledged the lack of professional development availability:

I believe the Math department in the county does a really good job with providing systemic PD, however there's not too many presenters for ELLs. So, I present when it's time for systemic PD, but that's just me and it's not too many other people.

Jose then opened up conversation about a training he had attended during the school year: “I had the opportunity to attend an ELL workshop this year. It was offered by the Math department. It opened my eyes because there was a speaker speaking Russian and I didn’t have a clue what was going on.” And while Jose did not name it, Maria eagerly responded first to acknowledge that this is where they had met and to also advocate for all teachers of ELLs to go through an experience like the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol [SIOP], a research-based model that has been proven effective in meeting academic needs of ELLs in the USA (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2012).

I think that all ELL teachers, even if you don’t have a large population, needs to go through the SIOP training, the SIOP model. They catered it towards Math, but there’s SIOP for other parts [subject areas] and there are tons. Even if we did a book study on their tons of resources from SIOP to do different things and I wish I had my book with me and I don’t, but that was like the best and it was more than one day. They did it once every other month, four times so basically it went through the entire school year. So, it was once every other month, it was all day and I think I took enough notes to write a descent paper.

And while Maria jokingly spoke to being able to write a paper based on all of the notes she took, it was a testament to the learning that took place in that experience that she was then able to apply to her classroom.

In the least, these final responses allowed me to see the Math teachers’ willingness and openness to work with other teachers to help improve curriculum to meet the needs of Latina/o ELL students. Additionally, the conversation brought

about a training opportunity like SIOP as a mandated component for all teachers, even when there isn't a large population of ESOL students.

Research question #2 summary analysis. Three major themes emerged from the focus group: the importance and challenges of creating an inclusive environment, the importance of curriculum design and provided resources to create culturally responsive spaces and the need to formally collaborate with other staff members in order to engage in culturally responsive practices. Each of these themes are discussed below.

The importance and challenges of creating an inclusive environment. One teacher talked about changing the name on an assessment to a more “Latino/Hispanic” name, another teacher spoke about talking to students about Latino food and connecting with them in that way. Yet, all teachers alluded to the difficulty of integrating any additional culturally responsive practices because there are so many state and district-based curricular mandates that need to be met in order to get students to where they need to be. For example, one teacher talked about the need to focus on the majority of kids, which often does not include Latina/o ELLs.

It's a little off topic, but my mom has always told me that as a mother sometimes she has to put her resources into the one [child] that she knows is going to produce. So ... I understand why [teachers] are thinking of the majority and ... are trying to get the majority to be successful. (Jane)

Another example of how teachers attempted to be more culturally responsive that was mentioned by several participants was that they sometimes play Latino/Hispanic music in their classroom to try and create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure

classroom environment, which is directly connected to statement 3.1 of the CRTPS. This was explained as a way to maneuver building relationships with Latina/o ELL students in their classrooms. However, the participants noted that the Black students in the classroom often object to the Latino music that is played.

We all try to have a safe environment for our kids, but it's a constant challenge when you have such a multidimensional multicultural classroom who totally oppose it. For example, one of the things I do is play music so even though I'll play some Spanish/Latino music [...] African American kids they object it but they want to hear their rap so I try to incorporate all types of music in my classroom so that the kids feel that they're part of the classroom.

It becomes more risk free. (Jose)

All participants in the focus group shared the sentiment that even with trying to engage with culturally responsive strategies this can sometimes be difficult because they have kids that are coming from many different cultural backgrounds.

The importance of curriculum design and provided resources to create culturally responsive spaces. Another theme that surfaced as a result of the focus group was the need for lessons and thematic units to be more heavily scaffolded in order to reach Latina/o ELL students. A first-year math teacher talked about needing the District to provide teachers with more of this information and to provide teachers with the resources necessary to make classrooms more culturally responsive. When asked “*in what ways do you all think the district can help improve your practice in infusing more of your students' culture in your curriculum and units?*” The first-year teacher responded, “give them to me [curriculum resources], somebody's made them

before so just give them to me.” This response can be two-fold. First, as a teacher in her first year she is still developing strategies that work for her in her classroom. Secondly, this refers back to the district and the lack of resources being provided to teachers within the curriculum, which is developed and provided by District A staff. She goes on to state the following:

I don’t think that there’s a lot of materials out there for me to copy, paste and modify and then to be fair though I know that I have my own cultural biases when I say this. I don’t think that my materials are culturally responsive to literally anybody [...] but I don’t go about trying to make them culturally responsive to anybody because I even end up missing out on world problems and real experiences because a lot of times as a first-year teacher, I’m focused on the numbers [PARCC pass rates]. I do it for nobody because mostly it is not readily available [...] to me. (Kate)

Another teacher recalled an experience as a curriculum developer in designing the Applications in Algebra class specifically designed for ESOL students with interrupted education. The class in itself builds off foundational Math knowledge needed for students to be successful in Algebra I. One of the teachers noted the gap that was created in the curriculum given that the ESOL and Math teachers did not work together to develop the curriculum. They all worked on their sections independently, which created a larger gap in needed knowledge for ESOL students to be successful in the Applications in Algebra course.

I actually had the opportunity a few years ago before I even got to the school and I was at my old school to actually work with the ESOL team for three

days and I was writing the end of the applications in algebra book. So I only saw the true algebra stuff. I didn't see the beginning. Like I said, I only had three days and I wrote the last two chapters which was true algebra. I wish that I had seen the whole thing because I would have said no only because it's too broad and that book starts with writing the words one, two and three and ramps all the way up to in the end dealing with functions and it's only five chapters, which makes absolutely no sense to me. I think somebody just needs to sit down and take the time and that hasn't been done. I don't think its been considered or it may have been considered but I don't think so. (Maria)

While District A has thought about the inclusion of its ELLs through the development of curriculum, teachers in the focus group perceive that it has not been given the attention that it needs. Furthermore, there is more scaffolding needed within the curriculum developed for ESOL students in order to help them achieve at higher levels.

The need to formally collaborate with other staff members in order to engage in culturally responsive practices. There was a resounding want and need in the room for there to be more collaboration with colleagues in reaching Latina/o ELL students. This was especially true when considering ESOL teacher participation in the development of curriculum in content area courses, where teachers in the focus group feel there is a lack of instructional strategies to reach Latina/o ELL students. This is best exemplified with a statement from one of the teachers: "I think that it would be great if while curriculum is being developed that we have a good ESOL team of educators that also know math really well and they can help develop curriculum for

ESOL.” Two teachers in the room, representing the same school (School E), acknowledged that they get to work together in creating student-facing materials for students.

I would say that speaker 1 and speaker 2 have an advantage because we take our curriculum and kind of rewrite it to support our ELLs where they probably, speaker 3 and 4, don’t have that advantage. So, I would say that we need to be allowed the ability to use our curriculum to create our thematic units for the ELL students. So, I think that’s an advantage that we’re able to do so we’re not like sticking strictly to the curriculum that the district gives.

We use it and we use a lot of it, but it’s adapted to our students. (Maria)

This is meaningful when looking at survey data results given that this school is composed entirely of ELLs, mostly Latina/o, and it is where teachers are more likely to feel more comfortable to teach Latina/o ELL students ($M = 1.4$, $SD = .49$) as compared to the other schools in the study.

Teachers in the focus group also spoke about the need for more collaboration outside of their school buildings in order to share best practices and to understand how all content teachers are supporting Latina/o ELL students. This is best reflected in the following statement:

I would say more instructional accountability in terms of walkthroughs, very focused walkthroughs with some of the SIOP components so that I can see my growth and I can see where I am and so that I can seek out support to support me. (Jane)

Math teachers in the focus group alluded to the District being more involved and holding teachers more accountable in implementing strategies that will help Latina/o ELL students be more successful in their classrooms. In collaborating at the district level, teachers feel that the district will better be able to support teachers in implementing culturally responsive practices, but also will allow teachers to understand what they need to improve their teaching practices for reaching Latina/o ELL students. The specific teacher quoted above made mention of the SIOP model as a framework for these walkthroughs to create common ground across schools in understanding specific teacher and school needs. This collaboration, teachers believe, will enhance their experience in working with Latina/o ELLs.

Summary of research *question# 3* analysis. The information addressing research question #3, *“what are the gaps that Math and ELA teachers perceive that exist in District A with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs?”* included both survey responses and focus group comments. The responses in the Qualtrics survey indicated that 41% of teachers believe they have “probably not” or “definitely not” been appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELLs. There was also a difference in response based on the school that each teacher represented. For example, Math and ELA teachers at schools B, F and G were more likely to respond negatively to indicating whether they believe they have been properly trained to teach Latina/o ELLs (see table 6).

To further explore research question #3, focus group participants were asked *what specifically do you think will help you improve your practice in any of these*

areas that we discussed (language and content integration, communicating with your Latina/o ELL students and their families, designing assessments that support culturally responsive pedagogical practices and the infusing of curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom)?

By this point, teachers in the focus group were eager to share. Maria was the first to share that she believes the way to help teachers with their practice is “just more training overall for me would be great with working with the ELL population of students.” Jane was quick to challenge the notion of simply just doing more professional development:

I would say not professional development. I would say more instructional accountability in terms of walkthroughs, very focused walkthroughs with some of the SIOP components so that I can see my growth and I can see where I am and so that I can seek out support to support me. (Jane)

Maria then chimed back in and stated “also feedback. Instead of just walking through and never hearing anything there should be feedback so we can grow and develop.”

Kate insisted on being able to observe her colleagues:

I also want to go observe people who are doing this really well because I love observing other teachers and I never ever get to do it and it’s so much fun and so I got to do it once because my school had a G3 grant.

Jose also spoke about collaborating with colleagues, but specifically between ESOL and content teachers: “a greater collaboration between ESOL and regular education teachers because it’ll go a long way towards us understanding the culture shock that students go through when they come in to our building.”

I also wanted to understand what professional development experiences have helped to prepare Math and ELA teachers in District A to meet the needs of Latina/o ELLs. Jose was the first to respond, “Maria has eloquently referred to the SIOP program training she detailed it and that has been an eye-opening experience for me.” Kate, our first-year teacher, had the most ease in answering this question, “I haven’t been to any yet, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t any out there.” Jane then went on to state that more training is needed with the overage ELL population:

I would say more training toward [...] teaching students who are older. For example, I teach Algebra I and many of my students are not traditionally aged students and trying to do things that are not too kiddie and a little bit older. In the beginning of the school year I had students who were 13 to 17 in one class. Even some of my strategies, I’ve had to change them. (Jane)

Maria, who has experienced professional development from the Internationals Network, also wanted to shed light on their work:

I think some of the PDs from the Internationals have been OK, but they have not been extensive enough. So you got a little bit of this and a little bit of that and a little bit of that but it wasn't enough to develop me professionally. And then you got into the trenches and it was “oh, ok” well they kind of said we should do this, but actually we can’t do that, we need to do this. And also I think it needs to be PD in the sense that it’s continuing PD.

Jane acknowledged her own work with the Math department in District A in saying “me providing professional development has helped me because I have to walk what I talk.” Maria ended this part of the questioning by saying “I also want to add that it has

to be meaningful.” In my own experience, this is one of the biggest fears that teachers have in going to a PD that does not provide them with anything that they are able to apply in their classroom.

I ended with an open-ended question extending the question around what other experiences might help teachers develop more culturally responsive practices to support the Latina/o ELLs in their classroom. Jane, who had originally seemed anti professional development went on to say “providing professional development. Also, traveling.” Kate talked about bringing the student experience into a space like the one we were in: “I feel like also having a focus group like this, but of ESOL students will be awesome because I mean until you hear it from them I don't know what actually works.” Maria spoke about her own experience in being able to go to schools outside of District A

An experience that I had was when I visited the schools in New York and I loved the idea and I keep pushing for it and it won't happen is that I feel that kids need to have a language portfolio where they present every school year at the end of the school year to their peers and their teachers and the administrators. Because I don't think the kids are encouraged enough to develop their English language skills because there's no accountability.

(Maria)

I am not certain whether Jose was hungry or did not understand the question, but his response brought about laughter in the room as we ended our chat, “food is my thing. Going to some of the Latino restaurants and getting some arroz con pollo [chicken with rice] and come back and talk to kids about that.”

Focus group themes. Given the focus group conversations, there were three overall areas that teachers believe will help improve their practice with Latina/o ELLs: more training and professional development, developing activities for Latina/o ESOL students to enhance their academic experience and more opportunities to see culturally responsive practices for ESOL students in their own schools and at other schools within and outside of District A.

Training and professional development as a method to improve instructional practice for Latina/o ELLs. All Participants in the focus group expressed the opinion that building teacher capacity can occur through professional development and training that supports specific content areas. For example, all but one of the teachers in the focus group took part in a district sponsored SIOP training during the 2018-2019 school year that they perceived to be one of the best professional development experiences that they had received in District A.

That [SIOP PD] was the best PD I've been to in probably five to six years. I think that all ELL teachers, even if you don't have a large population, needs to go through the SIOP training, the SIOP model. They catered it towards Math, but there's SIOP for other parts and there are tons. Even if we did a book study on their tons of resources from SIOP to do different things and I wish I had my book with me and I don't, but that was like the best and it was more than one day. They did it once every other month right four times so basically it went through the entire school year. So, it was once every other month, it was all day and I think I took enough notes to write a decent paper. (Maria)

Teachers that participated in the SIOP professional development experience also expressed the opinion that these exercises need to be experiential and less theory-based so that teachers can easily develop and transfer specific skills into the classroom.

If I watched somebody doing this well because theory [...] I hate theory.

Theory doesn't work, practice works and so watching somebody implement theory in a way that actually works in the setting that I'm working in would be lovely. I think it is one of the only ways to be able to actually work it in my opinion. (Kate)

The teachers who spoke about training and development, as a means to help close the gaps that teachers perceive exist in District A, alluded to these opportunities being done in a very specific way and which center around practice rather than theory. While teachers in the focus group advocated for this type of training, much is still unknown about the effects of diversity training and its direct correlation to student achievement.

Developing activities for Latina/o ESOL students that will enhance their academic experience. As part of the conversation around the existing gaps in District A, all teachers mentioned integrating Latina/o ESOL students in activities to help improve the experience that these students have in the classroom. One teacher talked about engaging Latina/o ELL students at different schools in District A in a focus group of sorts to gather knowledge on what is working and what is not.

I feel like also having a focus group like this, but of ESOL students will be awesome because [...] until you hear it from them I don't know what actually

works. They know if they're learning because they're really excited when they learn something [...] So just talking to them because they're the ones that we have to teach and maybe not even ones that are still in school because they might just joke around. (Kate)

Another teacher added to this and talked about integrating some of these opportunities within the classroom to enhance the level of accountability for Latina/o ELL students based on an experience she had at an international school in New York City.

An experience that I had was when I visited the schools in New York and I loved the idea and I keep pushing for it and it won't happen is that I feel that kids need to have a language portfolio where they present every school year at the end of the school year to their peers and their teachers and administrators. Because I don't think the kids are encouraged enough to develop their English language skills because there's no accountability. I don't feel there's accountability for it [...] The accountability is taking place in the classroom but once it leaves our immediate classroom and if everybody is not on the same page, it's not happening. (Maria)

These student-centered approaches are an emerging trend in education focused on positive youth development. Under this approach, activities are structured around the interests and needs of students and has proven to be effective in school settings (Chiles, 2018).

All teachers talked about the intentionality that it takes to support Latina/o ELL students and the amount of work that needs to go into supporting students

through classroom activities. One teacher talked about using sentence stems to approach her Latina/o ELLs and to get them understanding material:

I've had a lot of success with using sentence stems especially with the students who aren't as proficient with English and its helped because you don't have that deer in the headlights look "what in the world is she asking me?" you have the 'oh, ok I've got the beginning' and I have found with the previous question that students are a little bit more willing to help each other when there are sentence stems cause then they can say it in Spanish [...] and then they can go back into the English and translate. (Maria)

Another spoke about using graphic organizers to help Latina/o ELLs gather necessary information for learning. She states, "for me it's mostly modeling and diagrams so usually, especially it works nicely in Math, I can model a question and then go through it and then also put a lot of diagrams on their papers." All of these different activity alterations offer Latina/o opportunities to engage with materials given the language accessibility provided by teachers.

More opportunities to see culturally responsive practices for ESOL students in their own schools and at other schools within and outside of District A. In addition, most participants expressed the desire for more meaningful and focused collaboration between ESOL and general education teachers through collaborative planning and intervisitation opportunities.

I love observing other teachers and I never ever get to do it and it's so much fun and I got to do it once because my school had a G3 grant and so [...] I got a sub code as a brand-new teacher and I got to go observe the ESOL teacher

who teaches a lot of my ESOL kids Algebra I as I teach them Lab which was super awesome because I got to see some of the things she did. (Kate)

To that, Jose added that “a greater collaboration between ESOL and regular Ed teachers [...] will go a long way towards us understanding the culture shock that students go through when they come in to our building.” In this case, the collaboration that teachers referred to was directly connected to the understanding that ESOL teachers might be able to implement strategies that are more culturally responsive and that seeing ESOL teachers in action could help to improve their own practice. This is aligned to what teachers mentioned under the professional development and training needs in making these more experiential rather than theoretical for teachers to improve practice from a culturally responsive perspective.

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, two of the teachers at the focus group work at the same school. They talked about what collaboration looks like in their building and how this has supported the process of Latina/o ELL students learning math in their classrooms.

The good thing about it was that we plan together and so in planning together I would ask her what are you going to do tomorrow? or what are you going to do Thursday? Then, she would plan something and typically will share it with me and then I would piggyback off of her and students would see that consistency, which I think was good for them because we were speaking the same language [...] as far as what we were trying to do in class with our processes. (Maria)

These two teachers explained collaboration from the sense of planning together in order to build consistency in the processes that students see across classrooms. They believe that this practice alone has improved the experiences that students have when going from one math classroom to the other. On the other hand, while the two other teachers respectfully agreed to their needing to be more intentionality in collaboration of different forms between teachers, they acknowledged that this does not truly exist in their buildings.

The school where I'm at [...] we don't do that. We have problems. I go to maybe one or two of the Algebra [teachers] and to be fair all of the ESOL students that I work [with] just come from one of the Algebra teachers so I try to take her ideas and apply them but then also now I'm not being consistent to my other students who still also benefit from consistency just not the same with ELL students. So, despite me trying to steal ideas it's working with some kids but it doesn't work with others. (Kate)

Given this point, it is important to acknowledge that all schools function differently and what might work at one school could very well not function at another. As shown in the research for INPS, cohorting students in ways that allow them to be scheduled for specific groups of teachers has some benefits, especially in context where Latina/o ELLs make up a large amount of the student population (Kessler et. al, 2018).

Conclusions

The researcher engaged in this research study to look at culturally responsive practices from the viewpoint of the following three research questions:

1. How do secondary Math and ELA teachers in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs perceive their own capacity to serve linguistically diverse students in their classroom? (*Phase 1 - Survey*)
2. What are the culturally responsive pedagogical practices that secondary Math and ELA teachers say they currently use to support Latina/o ELLs in District A schools with large populations of Latina/o ELLs? (*Phase 2 - Focus Group*)
3. What are the gaps that Math and ELA teachers perceive that exist in District A with building teacher capacity in culturally responsive practices in schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs? (*Phase 1 - Survey & Phase 2 - Focus Group*)

Research Question #1. Teachers are responsible for creating the environment in which kids learn which can be positive or negative depending on the particular focus a teacher places on the differences that kids bring to the table. As mentioned in the research, if teachers and other staff members are not careful, they can create bias environments that could lead students to failure (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2013). Building a sense of belonging for all students, including Latina/o ELLs, depends on how teachers integrate culturally responsive strategies in the classroom (Will, 2017; Gay, 2010). A teacher can find difficulty in helping students feel a sense of belonging if they are not able to understand a student's sociocultural background. In District A, this teacher responsibility is captured in AP0102 and in the district's adapted version of the framework for teaching, which is used for classroom observations and to guide lesson planning for teachers. Both encapsulate measures by which all teachers should

be integrating culturally diverse practices through the knowledge of the students in their classrooms.

In large part, Math and ELA teachers in District A perceive that they have engaged in culturally responsive practices to meet the needs of Latina/o ELLs as shown in the Qualtrics survey responses. Teachers report to have strong abilities in the group belonging formation capacity ($M = 4.57$) and expectation establishment ($M = 4.01$), but the culturally responsive practices under curriculum and instruction ($M = 3.57$) necessitate further exploration. They perceive that areas related to the integration of cultural elements into the curriculum and assessments are the least easy for them to implement with 28% of Math and ELA teachers stating that they “Neither agree nor disagree,” “somewhat disagree” and “strongly disagree” to being able to do this (See table 8). One of the reasons for this was discussed in the focus group, which revealed that there are many different district and state mandates that teachers need to attend to so that they can meet the needs of all students (See Appendix H). The way that the curriculum is set up gives teachers very little time to engage in a review of the curriculum that will allow them to be more culturally responsive. Teachers in the focus group reported having to stick to a pacing guide and not being able to deter from that calendar given all of the testing mandates.

I’m trying to get the curriculum done, pacing guide, whatever because I am trying to get everything done. I do it, but I know I am not doing nearly enough because I am trying to get students to the point where they understand the PARCC tests and the PARCC questions and divulging or going away is not always the easiest thing to do. (Jose)

District A should pay closer attention to the importance and focus that is being given to assessments, which does not allow teachers to make meaningful connections with their linguistically diverse students who might require more than just content support. As stated in the research, a teacher's ability to integrate social, cultural and language components into a lesson that pays particular attention to student backgrounds can help increase student academic outcomes (Banks et al., 2005).

In trying to explain the significance of why teachers scored themselves lowest under curriculum and instruction ($M = 3.57$), especially statements 1.4, 1.6 and 1.8, this might be a reflection of a teacher's constant need to follow a curriculum guided by end of year assessments that determine a student's ability to graduate. There is much emphasis placed in Math and English classrooms as it relates to college and career readiness standards, is included in measures for school quality and is a gateway for students and graduation. This is significant, especially when looking at assessments, given that Latina/o and ELLs will far more likely not receive a high school diploma based on not passing an assessment (Hyslop, 2014; Papay, Murnane and Willet, 2010). Ultimately, there is much pressure, especially for Math and ELA teachers as they help Latina/o ELLs navigate the education system and this is no different in District A.

As seen in the Daniel and Hueramo (2015) model mathematics classroom, teachers do not have to compromise rigor in order to integrate successful culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Teachers need to pay close attention to their lesson delivery and whether they are helping students feel welcomed in their classes. In doing so, they will gain the respect and trust from their students who may often

feel like outsiders. And while teachers perceive that they are able to implement culturally responsive practices in District A, the focus group shed light on the gaps that exist in the understanding of culturally responsive practices. It seems that a closer look at AP0102 is needed to discern what accountability practices should be put in place to ensure that culturally responsive practices are implemented with fidelity.

Research Question #2. Math and ELA teachers perceive to be implementing multiple culturally responsive practices in their classroom to support Latina/o ELLs. Some of these include using Hispanic/Latino names in assessments, engaging in vocabulary development practices, playing music from students' cultural background and engaging in conversations with students around food. Math teachers in the focus group discussed that while they try and integrate Latina/o ELL students in the classroom by playing music that this does not come without its challenges and that these cultural practices are not always accepted by their Black students. Some Math teachers mentioned creating a variety of activities to help Latina/o ELL students accomplish tasks through scaffolding and differentiation of District A created curriculum and assessments. Teachers from School E spoke extensively about having some flexibility with their curriculum and heavily differentiating and scaffolding for students from all language levels as determined by WIDA consortium. Of all of the practices mentioned by teachers in the focus group, this last practice of modifying curriculum to meet the needs of their Latina/o ELLs seemed to be the most promising

in engaging Latina/o ELLs and one that is most supported by the research (Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson & Spatzer, 2012).

Other culturally responsive practices that Math and ELA teachers stated that they engage with in their classroom include speaking Spanish with students. They might have one student use their native language to translate to others in Spanish, or they might try using their own basic Spanish skills to try to connect with students. The use of native language has been widely debated across our nation and to this day, many education practitioners will offer pros and cons to the promotion of native language literacy in the classroom (Tucker, 2017). This practice has to be built into the culture in a school building where teachers all agree upon their use of native language in the classroom and has to align with a school's vision for ELL language acquisition. In the model classroom provided, there is a celebration of the use of native language as long as student output was in the English language. It gave students a sense of belonging, acceptance and respect from the teacher's part. The difference between the model researched-based classrooms and what's taking place in District A classrooms with Latina/o ELLs is that the use of native language in District A was spoken mostly through a social lens while the model classroom used native language as a tool to move the learning process forward. This is exemplified in the statement below:

Here's an example, this is a bottle of water and I will ask a kid 'how do you say this in Spanish?' and then they will tell me and we will go from there so then in the future we will go 'this bottle of water is agua' (Jose)

As part of the survey, in statement 3.1 of the CRTPS, 96% of teachers “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” to being able to *create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment*. Given the responses from the focus group, it is clear that trying to create this environment does not come without its challenges.

We all try to have a safe environment for our kids, but it’s a constant challenge when you have such a multidimensional multicultural classroom who totally oppose it. For example, one of the things I do is play music so even though I’ll play some Spanish music, Latino music and then African American kids they object it but they want to hear their rap so I try to incorporate all types of music in my classroom so that the kids feel that they’re part of the classroom. (Jose)

In this case, teachers are trying to employ a culturally responsive strategy to try to empathize with Latina/o ELLs and to try and build on the experiences of these students in order to provide them with help necessary to be successful in the classroom (Berliner & Materson, 2015). Conversations led the researcher to believe that teachers need to develop more strategies that would allow them to further the conversation around why the music is being played as well as trying to make connections between cultures to help build empathy amongst the Black students. In doing so, all students in the classroom would help to create a classroom environment that is welcoming to students from all different cultural backgrounds. The researcher acknowledges that doing so will take teachers away from their pacing calendars in addressing more culturally relevant issues. As noted earlier, there should not have to

be a compromise between one or the other and Math and ELA teachers in District A should find ways to blend the two together.

As stated in the research, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) believe in the establishment of funds of knowledge so that a teacher can build on their understanding of a student through the engagement of external partners, like parents, in order to understand a student's identity and how to best support them in the classroom. There is extensive research on parental engagement and how it is positively linked to student performance in school via assessments and grades (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). While conversations around the inclusion of parents and other family members was seen as something positive by teachers and something that they perceive they are able to do based on responses on the Qualtrics survey, there were a number of barriers presented in the focus group. Teachers cited several barriers: a parent's work schedule, a teacher's inability to speak the language that parents speak and even the inability to connect to families from a cultural perspective amongst other things. This was also true when trying to use technological assistance like Schoolmax and Blackboard. They all acknowledged a number of tools that they are able to use to try to communicate with families when language becomes a barrier for communicating, namely Blackboard.

Blackboard connect where you can translate it into Spanish and other languages, I've used it for other languages also. So that's a good way because you can send a text message and make a phone call and so usually I do both because I figure one way or the other. (Maria)

Kate also share her opinion, “I also do enjoy using Blackboard although my only issue with them is that I personally will never answer an automatic phone call.”

Research Question #3. Teachers also had the opportunity to discuss what gaps they perceive exist to help build the capacity of teachers in culturally responsive practices and several themes surfaced. For one, teachers believe that most of the professional development that exists does not sufficiently prepare them to be culturally responsive. 41% of teachers in the Qualtrics survey stated that they have “probably not” or “definitely not” been trained well enough to teach the Latina/o ELLs in their classroom and three of the six schools had at least 50% of Math and ELA teachers responding “probably not” or “definitely not” to being properly trained. Some teachers also alluded to there not being many opportunities for professional development because there are not enough staff professionally trained to lead these initiatives.

Additionally, two of the teachers talked about the promise of bringing in experts like the Internationals Network for Public Schools to lead some of the professional development work. Teachers also cautioned that if this were something the district were to pursue that it would have to be a continuous professional development cycle like the SIOP training that was mentioned in the previous section. As with the SIOP experience mentioned in the focus group, diversity training initiatives are not a stand-alone one time only professional development activity, but rather should be done over time and completed in tandem with other opportunities for growth (Bezrukova et al, 2016; Flores, Claeys, Gist, Clark, & Villareal, 2015). This is

especially important as focus group participants look for ways to integrate older students in their classrooms.

I would say more training toward [...] teaching students who are older. For example, I teach Algebra I and many of my students are not traditionally aged students and trying to do things that are not too kiddie and a little bit older. In the beginning of the school year I had students who were 13 to 17 in one class. Even some of my strategies, I've had to change them. (Jane)

This is significant given that all teachers in the focus group agreed that the current professional development and training opportunities for the integration of ELL instructional practices in District A are scarce and not well developed. One teacher stated, “because I go to a bunch of the [District A] pd’s, we don’t always like them. I frequently hate them.” Another teacher agreed and went on to say “[...] there’s not too many presenters for ELLs so I present when it’s time for systemic PD, but that’s just me and it’s not too many other people.” This is a nationwide problem given the lack of training at the high school level for the teaching of ELLs and the varied expectations of teachers of ELLs across the USA (Ballantyne, Sanderman & Levy, 2008).

Teachers in the focus group also discussed collaboration between ESOL and content teachers within their school buildings as an attempt to bridge the academic and cultural gaps that exists for Latina/o ELL students and also collaborating across larger networks of schools and districts that are having success with Latina/o ELL students. Collaborative practices amongst teachers have been researched and show that the way in which teachers collaborate could impact student performance

(Goddard, Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, 2007). There are now many schools in District A charged with the education of Latina/o ELLs and could benefit from a strategic community that supports each other in understanding teaching practices that may or may not work for this group of students. At the school level in District A, leaders should pay particular attention to how time is scheduled for teachers of Latina/o ELLs and making sure that Math and ELA teachers have the appropriate supports to successfully integrate teaching practices that are known to help Latina/o ELLs succeed in the classroom.

District A has policies in place that can help with the implementation of culturally responsive practices in District A. Additionally, teachers at the international schools seem to be well-versed on what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. More observations and use of these teachers to lead professional development is recommended in order to expand the knowledgebase on culturally responsive practices across District A that can extend beyond Math and ELA teachers. SIOP training was mentioned throughout the focus group conversation as a viable professional development experience that three of the four teachers in the focus group attended as a well-liked opportunity. Mandating this training for all teachers should be a consideration to address the integration of instructional best practices that best serve the Latina/o and other ELL populations.

In short, after analyzing the data from the Qualtrics survey, it is evident that Math and ELA teachers in District A perceive that they are able to implement culturally responsive practices in the classroom. Further conversations in the focus group revealed that while teachers may perceive that they are able to implement

culturally responsive practices, these strategies might be at the surface level. These conversations also affirmed that while there is a willingness to implement culturally responsive practices, teachers do not know how to fully integrate them into their curriculum given the numerous mandates that they have to meet.

Limitations of the Study. Given the overall size of District A, this data is not representative of all schools that have large populations of Latina/o ELLs. The schools were selected based on the median graduation rate for Latina/o ELLs in all high schools. There are an additional five high schools in District A that have a significant amount of Latina/o ELLs in their buildings distributed across different geographical locations in the District.

While the researcher did not know most of the teachers completing the survey and/or focus groups, the researcher's role as an administrator in District A may have helped in garnering teacher responses given his relationship with other Principals in the district. In one school, the researcher may have partaken in some of the job interviews for those teachers given the researcher's affiliation with that school.

The timing of the study could also be seen as a limitation as the survey and focus group took place within the last few weeks of District A's academic school year. Many follow-up emails were sent in order to get enough responses for the survey and participation in the focus group. There were many alternate dates formulated for the focus groups based on the lack of availability for staff given their current school responsibilities. Ultimately, of the three planned focus groups only one took place and it was only representative of Math teachers. No ELA teachers

ultimately ended up participating despite the fact that many submitted their names to participate in the focus group.

There are also limitations in this study given the self-reported nature of the Qualtrics survey and the focus groups. There were instances in which teachers could have exaggerated or had selective memory in determining which culturally responsive practices they have implemented in their classrooms. Thus, verification of honest responses was not possible.

Despite these limitations, the data collected from the survey and the focus group provide data on areas that Math and ELA teachers in the district believe they do well and areas that they do not feel they do as well in with developing culturally responsive practices. By understanding these practices, District A school leaders can begin the conversation to close gaps that there may exist surrounding Latina/o ELL integration into the classroom environments that Latina/o ELL students exist in.

Follow-up studies are necessary to gauge further information around the culturally responsive practices that are actually being explored in District A classrooms currently; particularly, researching how Latina/o ELLs actually experience these culturally responsive practices and whether these work for them. Hopefully, future research will be able to connect culturally responsive practices and whether the implementation of said practices influence the academic achievement of students. There is also the missing perspective of the principal in this study since the principal has a lot of influence in how culture is built within the school premises. Finally, there should be a study that specifically focuses on the professional development that staff are currently receiving and whether teachers are effectively

employing the culturally responsive practices that they explore through these learning experiences.

Implications for School District A

These change ideas are suggestions based on responses of Math and ELA teachers on the Qualtrics survey and a focus group that was attended by only Math teachers. More input is needed from teachers in other content areas and could be further expanded to include other major content areas like science and social studies. The role of administrators at the district and school level should also be explored in how inclusive spaces are created for District A Latina/o ELLs. Given these and other limitations mentioned in the previous section, these may be the most important recommendations for District A.

My own experience to how Latina/o ELL students experience schooling on a daily basis along with evidence from this study and research cited in this report may suggest that District A should be working towards ensuring that culturally relevant practices are being implemented by all teachers in the district. The increase in the Latina/o ELL population and the lack of achievement represented in the data give us a clear picture on the need to create more inclusive classrooms where any student in District A is welcomed by teachers equipped with the knowledge necessary to help them succeed. Daniel and Hueramo (2015) take us on a journey of a model Mathematics classroom in which ELLs are effectively included in the learning process and which produces positive outcomes for Latina/o ELL students. The conditions for this type of environment include having clear expectations with predictable routines for students, balanced rigor, an amalgamation of language,

content and literacy strategies, the development of meaningful group roles, choice in assessment and the valuing of native language to support learning. Moreover, teachers charged with leading diverse classrooms in District A should be able to acknowledge a students' fund of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 1992) and be personally invested and willing to learn about the different cultures in their classrooms (Daniel & Mokhtari, 2015).

In order to discuss the impact that this research has on District A, it is important to revisit the theory of action: *If District A builds their understanding of current Math and ELA teacher's culturally responsive practices, then they will better understand how to support teachers in creating environments of best practices to support Latina/o ELLs in the classroom.* Based on this theory of action combined with what we now know about teacher perceptions of culturally responsive practices in District A, three recommendations surfaced. First, a development of a self-assessment as a requirement in schools that serve large populations of Latina/o ELLs. Second, a thorough curriculum review across the major content areas for culturally responsive practice recommendations. Lastly, the development of a network improvement community that addresses Latina/o ELL needs and addresses a need identified in AP 0102 in District A.

Develop and implement a self-assessment required of teachers in schools with large populations of Latina/o Ells. The data from the Qualtrics survey provided us with some insight on teacher's beliefs in their capacity to implement culturally responsive strategies, but the focus group told a story of teachers at various levels of capacity to implement said strategies. Namely, it seems that teachers need

more information on what culturally responsive practices are so that they do not assume that just because they speak Spanish to a student or play Latino/Hispanic music that it constitutes being culturally responsive. For instance, Jose who stated “one of the things I do is play music so even though I’ll play some Spanish/Latino music.” He also gave an example of how he uses language with Latina/o ELLs:

Here’s an example, this is a bottle of water and I will ask a kid ‘how do you say this in Spanish?’ and then they will tell me and we will go from there so then in the future we will go ‘this bottle of water is agua’

In order to address the knowledge gap that exist with implementing culturally responsive practices in District A, there should first be some time dedicated to schools self-assessing where they are as culturally responsive institutions. These self-assessments will allow teachers and other school staff to examine their assumptions and biases as it relates to the education of Latina/o ELLs. This is an important first step in bringing self-awareness and creating a collective school identity that can further inform how to best move forward in supporting Latina/o ELLs in District A classrooms. In doing so, District A schools will be creating a cultural diversity knowledge base which is one of Gay’s (2002) first proposed components of culturally responsive teaching. Various self-assessment tools already exist, including Hsiao’s (2015) CRTPS tool and the “Educator Check-in on Culture” in figure 9, which can help with the collection of said data.

In gathering information of where each individual is at in understanding their own capacity to reach the Latina/o ELL students in their classroom, allows for a better understanding of a student’s ethnic identity and cultural socialization. In doing

so, author Geneva Gay argues that a teacher is less likely to dismiss student identities and imposing of their own, which could hinder a student gaining a sense of belonging in that classroom (Gay, 2010). Teachers would potentially move away from thinking of Latina/o ELL students from a deficit perspective and start to educate them based on the cultivated funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

Understanding of self is important to begin with the process of cultural responsiveness given that one must first acknowledge their own biases and privileges to be able to empathize with others that may come from a variety of backgrounds different from their own. If the preparation of teachers in developing culturally responsive strategies affects a student's sense of belonging in schools, then there is a need in District A to build this understanding in order to support Latina/o ELL success (Will, 2017; Gay, 2010).

Conduct curriculum review across the major content areas for culturally responsive practice recommendations. Given this research, we now understand that there are certain pressures that teachers feel are coming from District A, particularly around needing to make sure students pass state assessments, as evidenced in the focus group.

While I think it's good to modify most assessments those kids are still taking PARCC with the babies and they're still taking the county-based assessments so in spite of the fact that it makes a lot of sense to modify the assessments if they're doing different things we're going to place them in front of PARCC eventually. They have to have seen a PARCC problem before and so I'd be

more worried about me feeling the need to over modify and not challenge them is what I'm thinking my concern is. (Kate)

This is a legitimate concern that teachers are confronted with on a daily basis, but they should not have to decide whether to be culturally responsive or teach to a test. Some of the teachers in this research assumed that implementing more culturally responsive practices means less rigor, which is not the case. With such a focus on getting students to pass statewide assessments, it does not allow teachers to integrate culturally responsive practices, as they would like. Hammond's "Ready for Rigor Framework" is built on the idea of four areas that must be molded together in order for students to become agents of their own learning through active engagement. These areas include awareness, learning partnerships, information processing capacity, and learning communities and environments (Berg, 2018). While there is a real need to improve achievement outcomes for Latina/o ELLs it should not be at the cost of losing all cultural relevance in the classroom. They should be able to see themselves in the curriculum and to participate freely in classroom assignments.

Teachers in the focus group also spoke about District A needing to pay attention to concepts and ideas that Latina/o ELLs might not be familiar with. One teacher, for example, brought up a district assessment that integrated the term "ski slope" into an assessment without taking into consideration the level of exposure that some of our Latina/o ELL students have had with certain terms (See Appendix H). If all students, including Latina/o ELLs, are not able to see themselves represented in the curriculum and district/state assessments, students are less likely to be engaged in the classroom and be empowered to shape their own future (Kanu, 2006). The NYU

Metro Center has developed a comprehensive culturally responsive scorecard that District A can use to complete a review of district curriculum centered on representation, social justice orientation and teachers' materials (Bryan-Gooden, Hester & Peoples, 2019).

Representation

Statements		Very Satisfied (+2)	Satisfied (+1)	Unclear (-1)	Not Satisfied (-2)	Average Score (if you are working with a team)
Diversity of Characters	1. The curriculum features visually diverse characters, and the characters of color do not all look alike.					
	2. There are references to different ethnic and cultural traditions, languages, religions, names and clothing.					
	3. Diverse ethnicities and nationalities are portrayed – not all Asian families are Chinese, not all Latinx families are Mexican, etc.					
	4. Diverse family structures (ie. single parents, adopted or foster children, same-sex parents, other relatives living with the family, etc.) are represented.					
	5. Differently-abled characters or characters with disabilities are represented.					
	6. Characters of color are main characters and not just sidekicks.					
	7. If there is conflict in the storyline, the characters of color are not mostly considered the problem.					

Social Justice Orientation

Statements		Very Satisfied (+2)	Satisfied (+1)	Unclear (-1)	Not Satisfied (-2)	Average Score (if you are working with a team)
Decolonization/Power and Privilege	14. Curriculum highlights non-dominant populations and their strengths and assets, so that students of diverse race, class, gender, ability, and sexual orientation can relate and participate fully.					
	15. The curriculum communicates an asset-based perspective by representing people of diverse races, classes, genders, abilities and sexual orientations through their strengths, talents and knowledge rather than their perceived flaws or deficiencies.					
	16. The curriculum does not communicate negativity or hostility toward people of marginalized backgrounds through verbal or nonverbal insults, slights or snubs.					
	17. Curriculum and instructional activities promote or provoke critical questions about the societal status quo. They present alternative points of view as equally worth considering.					

Teachers' Materials

Statements	Very Satisfied (+2)	Satisfied (+1)	Unclear (-1)	Not Satisfied (-2)	Average Score (if you are working with a team)
22. The authors of the teachers' materials are people of diverse identities (race/ethnicity, gender, other identities if possible).					
23. Guidance is provided on being aware of one's biases and the gaps between one's own culture and students' cultures.					
24. Diverse student identities are seen as assets and strengths that can advance individual and group learning, rather than seen as challenges or difficulties to be overcome.					
25. Guidance is provided on making real-life connections between academic content and the local neighborhood, culture, environment and resources.					
26. Guidance is provided on giving students opportunities to contribute their prior knowledge and experience with a topic, not just respond to the text and information presented in class.					

Figure 112: Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard. Reprinted from Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, by NYU Metro Center, February 11 2019, retrieved from <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/atn293/ejroc/CRE-Rubric-2018-190211.pdf> Copyright 2019 by NYU Metro Center.

Once this process is completed, District A should consider adding specific suggested opportunities for embedding culturally responsive practices into curriculum guides that successfully integrates the Latina/o student experience, where needed. In being more conscientious with these practices, District A will help in the creation of more inclusive classrooms for Latina/o ELLs. We understand from the literature that having inclusive classrooms is important given that there are strong associations between measures of school safety and student achievement, which suggests that students cannot focus on academics when there is a certain fear for their well-being (Steinberg, Allensworth, & Johnson, 2011). In other words, representation matters so that students are able to fully participate in the classroom.

I do not recall ever reading a book by a Latina/o author growing up while attending American schools, but wonder how that would have shaped my classmates

and I differently in understanding a variety of cultural perspectives and, more importantly, being able to see myself in the experiences portrayed by such an author. District A leadership has an opportunity to do things differently and change the narrative for the thousands of Latina/o ELL students that attend District A schools.

Develop and implement a network improvement community that addresses Latina/o Ell needs. One of the suggested improvements mentioned in the focus group by teachers revolved around the need for more collaboration between teachers to address the learning needs of Latina/o ELLs. One teacher best voiced this opinion when saying that more collaboration between ESOL and content teachers should take place in District A because “it’ll go a long way towards us understanding the culture shock that students go through when they come in to our building.”

A Network Improvement Community [NIC] should be established that addresses the needs of the Latina/o ELL population from a culturally responsive perspective. A NIC, in the education system, refers to building capacity of school professionals through a series of foci focused on iteration of educational spaces based on an existing need (Dolle, Gomez, Russell, & Bryk, 2013). The NIC would be a good way to study the issues, ideas and suggestions that outlined in the driver diagram presented earlier in this study, but that this limited study was not able to address in its entirety. This collaboration would include the development of classroom activities and sharing of overall best practices to support Latina/o ELLs in the classroom. ESOL teachers can sometimes be better prepared to include instructional strategies in learning experiences for ELLs that content teachers may have not been privy to in their higher education journeys. Additionally, there should

be an intentional effort to bring content and ESOL teachers from across the different schools in District A that serve Latina/o ELLs to engage in sharing of best practices. This NIC could address some of the problems of practice that currently exist in District A through a science improvement framework. Through this framework, District A teachers could tackle small improvement efforts that could have major impacts in the education of Latina/o ELLs in District A.

District A should consider putting together inter-visitation experiences through this NIC with a lens on culturally responsive practices to capture how learning differs across the different District A schools that have a significant amount of Latina/o ELL students. By gathering such information, District A will be able to make more informed decisions around what works well for Latina/o ELLs. In addition, there will be more understanding of what changes need to be made to make sure that Latina/o ELL students receive a worthwhile education and so that teachers are better prepared to meet the needs of Latina/o ELL students at any school they are placed in. In the focus group, a teacher brought up the idea of including Latina/o ELLs in these conversations to check in with them on what culturally responsive strategies are working for them and which of those need to be discarded.

This approach would help to improve monitoring of AP0102, which was put in place to serve this purpose. There should be an improved effort of monitoring the application of this administrative procedure and tools needed to measure growth of individual schools and teachers that serve linguistically diverse students, including Latina/o ELLs. While the differentiation and scaffolding of lessons that the administrative procedure calls for is included in classroom observation measures,

every administrator is walking into classrooms from a different vantage point and evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation in varying ways based on their own perspective. In that sense, this NIC should be composed of members at all levels so that there are no missed learning opportunities. This is important given that the data from the Qualtrics survey which shows that while many teachers have been teaching for many years, there is a lot of mobility. Creating a NIC would eliminate the constant need to develop teachers when they transfer between schools in District A and there would be a shared understanding on how to educate Latina/o ELLs in District A.

In my own upbringing, there was a lack of teachers who understood me and what I had to offer in educational spaces. This taught me to motivate and empower myself to change a narrative that is so pervasive in American society. We can no longer have students that experience education “moving past them really fast” as one of the teachers in the focus group stated. We must continue to design schools where diversity is seen as a positive addition because all students deserve the right to be properly educated and prepared for colleges and careers of their choice. Latina/o ELLs need to be included in the Latino diaspora and given the opportunity to share their stories. In this way, practitioners can better understand the needs of this population and be better prepared to help them experience success in academic settings across all classrooms in the United States of America.

Appendix A

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices in the Instruction of ELLs A Survey of Teachers

Default Question Block

Please select which school you currently work at. (Please note that this data will only be view-able to the researcher and each high school will be coded with a different name within the research)

- ☐ School A
- ☐ School B
- ☐ School C
- ☐ School D
- ☐ School E
- ☐ School F
- ☐ School G
- ☐ I do not teach at any of these schools

During the past two years have you had five or more Latina/o ELLs in your classrooms?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Demographics

What is your race?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- ☐ Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- ☐ Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as "Haitian" or "Negro" can be used in addition to "Black or African American".
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- ☐ White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, "Spanish origin", can be used in addition to "Hispanic or Latino".
- ☐ Not Hispanic or Latino

Do you speak a language other than English fluently?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many years of teaching experience do you have, including this school year?

- ☐ More than 10 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 1-3 years

How many of these teaching years have been at your current school?

- ☐ More than 10 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 1-3 years

What percentage of your students are Latina/o ELLs or re-designated ELLs?

- ☐ 80-100%
- ☐ 20-79%
- ☐ Less than 20%
- ☐ I am not certain, but I know I have ELLs

How comfortable are you in teaching Latina/o ELLs in your classroom?

- ☐ Extremely comfortable
- ☐ Slightly comfortable

- ☐ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- ☐ Slightly uncomfortable
- ☐ Extremely uncomfortable

Do you believe you have been appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELLs in your classroom?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not

CRTPS - Curriculum and Instruction

Directions: The following is a list of competencies of culturally responsive teaching. There are three areas: curriculum and instruction, relationship and expectation establishment, and group belonging formation. Please rate each competency by marking the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with these competencies. The options range between “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Each statement will start with **"I am able to..."**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.1 find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.2 review and assess curricula and instructional materials to determine their multicultural strengths and weakness, and relevance to students' interest and instructional needs, and revise them if necessary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.3 develop a repertoire of instructional examples that are culturally familiar to students to serve as a scaffold for learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.4 infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.5 utilize a variety of instructional methods to match students' learning preferences in learning the subject matter, and maintaining their attention and interest in learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.6 assess culturally diverse students' readiness, intellectual and academic strengths and weaknesses, and development needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.7 use a variety of assessment techniques, such as self-assessment, portfolios, and so on, to evaluate students' performance in favor of cultural diversity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.8 design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CRTPS - Relationship and Expectation Establishment

Directions: The following is a list of competencies of culturally responsive teaching. There are three areas: curriculum and instruction, relationship and expectation establishment, and group belonging formation. Please rate

each competency by marking the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with these competencies. The options range between “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Each statement will start with “I am able to...”

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
2.1 know how to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.2 structure classroom-based meetings that are comfortable for parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.3 foster meaningful and supportive relationships with parents and families, and actively involve them in their students' learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.4 use non-traditional discourse styles with culturally diverse students in an attempt to communicate in culturally responsive ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.5 establish expectations for appropriate classroom behavior in considering students' cultural backgrounds to maintain a conducive learning environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.6 communicate expectations of success to culturally diverse students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CRTPS - Group Belonging Formation

Directions: The following is a list of competencies of culturally responsive teaching. There are three areas: curriculum and instruction, relationship and expectation establishment, and group belonging formation. Please rate each competency by marking the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with these competencies. The

options range between “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Each statement will start with **"I am able to..."**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
3.1 create a warm, supporting, safe, and secure classroom environment for culturally diverse students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 create a community of learners by encouraging students to focus on collective work, responsibility, and cooperation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 develop and maintain positive, meaningful, caring, and trusting relationships with students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 provide students with knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Appendix B

District A Teacher Focus Group Interest Survey



Interest Question

Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up focus group opportunity to discuss culturally responsive teacher practices?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Demographic Data

What is your first and last name?

What is your email address?

What is the best number to reach you at?

Appendix C

District A Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Introductory Remarks (5 minutes)

- Welcome and thank participants for coming
- Review purpose of discussion: talk about culturally responsive practices being implemented in their classrooms
- Introduce self and note-taker/Scribe
- Give assurances of confidentiality and anonymity of responses
- Remind participants that every time they speak they should identify themselves as the participant letter assigned and school letter for easier review of data
- Encourage free-flowing conversation among participants (expand, disagree, etc.)
- Convey researcher's desire to hear perspective of each individual present

Opening Question (5 minutes)

- As some of us may not know each other, please give your name, subject you teach and perhaps tell us what prompted you to accept our invitation to this focus group.

Introductory Question (5 minutes):

- Are there many Latina/o ELLs in your school? How do you know?
 - [prompt] – If you've been at your school site more than a year or two, how would you describe your school climate as experienced by Latina/o ELLs?

Transition Question (5 minutes):

- How diverse are the students in your classes?
 - [prompt] – Can you talk about what countries your Latina/o ELL students are coming from? And how do you know?

Core Questions (40 minutes)

Let's turn now to the survey statements and your experience in the classroom with implementing culturally responsive teaching practices that could possibly enhance the learning experience of your Latina/o ELL students. I will read a statement and then ask specific questions to different members of the group based on how you responded in the survey.

- **Statement:** *I am able to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians.*

- Are there reasons why you might not be able to communicate with your culturally diverse students and their families? Particularly Latina/o ELLs?
 - How do you know when you have communicated well with students and their parents?
 - What are the tools that help you communicate with parents of culturally diverse students? Particularly Latina/o ELL families?
- **Statement:** *I am able to find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks.*
 - Is there a particular reason why you might not be able to support the language acquisition of your Latina/o ELLs?
 - Are there any specific examples of how you might incorporate language supports in classroom tasks? can you further elaborate on this?
 - What are the benefits you see in incorporating more ways to support language acquisition practices in your classroom?
- **Statement:** *I am able to design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction.*
 - How do you know when you have developed an assessment that complements the culturally responsive strategies you have used during instruction?
 - Please explain why you might not be able to design assessments that respond to culturally responsive pedagogical strategies.
 - Do you believe that the district created assessments are aligned to meet the needs of your ELL students in your subject area?
- **Statement:** *I am able to infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom.*
 - Can you give a big picture example of how you have infused curriculum and thematic units with the culture of your Latina/o ELLs?
 - What contributes to why you are not able to infuse the curriculum and units with a students culture represented?
 - In what ways do you think the district can help improve your practice in infusing more of your students' culture in your curriculum and unit development?

Follow-up Question (30 minutes)

In this final commenting period I would like you to think about one of the demographic questions that was asked around being appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELL students in your classroom.

- What specifically do you think will help you improve your practice in any of these areas that we discussed (language and content integration, communicating with your Latina/o ELL students and their families, designing assessments that support culturally responsive pedagogical practices and the

infusing of curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom?

- Are there any specific professional development experiences that you believe have helped to prepare you to meet the needs of your Latina/o ELLs?
 - What other experiences do you believe might help you in developing more culturally responsive practices to support the Latina/o ELLs in your classroom?
-

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate today. We'll be combining your responses and aggregating all of the data to help make recommendations to the district about what we now understand around teacher perceptions in implementing culturally responsive practices in school that are highly diverse in the county and needs that exist in preparing teachers to work with our diverse learners.

If you have any questions about your participation in these focus groups, or any additional comments or concerns you would like to convey, you can contact me via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Appendix D

Email to Principals Inviting Teachers at their Respective Schools to the Study

Insert Date

Dear Principal:

I would like to ask for your help with a current research study that will help me meet the partial requirements for my Doctorate in Education (EdD). For my dissertation research I am investigating culturally responsive teacher classroom practices in the district as it relates to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs in high schools with large numbers of Latina/o ELLs. As you know and have experienced, there has been an increase in ELLs in the district, especially at the high school level. Many of these students are students whose families identify as Latina/o. In order to better understand the current practices that teachers are employing in the classroom to reach this subgroup of students, I would like the participation of the Math and ELA teachers who work directly with ELLs in your building spanning from 9th to 12th grade. This first phase of the study includes a self-perception survey on these culturally responsive practices.

With your permission, I would like to start by sending an online survey to your lead Math and ELA teachers to coordinate with them on the distribution of the survey. Then I will work directly with lead teachers to identify Math and ELA teachers that work with ELL students in your building. A copy of the survey is attached. The survey is anonymous: responses cannot be linked to individual teachers. Additionally, each school site and the district will be kept confidential and will not be identified by name in the written research. If you would like a final copy of my study, I will be more than happy to provide you with one. I have obtained permission to conduct this study through Dr. Carole Keane at the District A Testing, Research and Evaluation office.

I would like to send the survey to your teachers throughout the month of May at your earliest convenience. I know that as the end of the school year approaches, time is spread very thin with major responsibilities. I have tried to make the survey as brief as possible. The average time needed for teachers to complete the survey is between 20 to 30 minutes depending on how they respond. I hope you will consider allowing your teachers to participate in this study.

The results of the study may help inform the district on the current challenges of working with an increased population of ELLs as well as inform the district on needs for further development of training for culturally responsive practices. If you would like more information please contact me via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix E

Email to Teachers at Each of the Identified High Schools (Survey Participation)

Insert Date

Dear High School Teacher:

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project looking at teacher classroom practices in the district as it relates to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs. This dissertation study, "**Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in teaching Latina/o High School ELLs**" is designed to explore practices of Math and ELA teachers that instruct ELLs as it relates to culturally responsive practices.

This is a multifaceted study that will include a survey with as many Math and ELA teachers as possible and a focus group, with a select number of teachers who choose to participate from each of the participating high schools. I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing this Qualtrics Survey. The survey will only take approximately 20 to 30 minutes and can be completed at school, or at home. The survey is anonymous, and individual respondents will not be coded in any way.

At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another link that will ask if you would be willing to participate in the second phase of this study, a focus group, which is meant to provide more anecdotal data on culturally responsive practices currently in place in your classroom. If so, you will be asked to provide identifying information which will only be used to invite you to the second phase of the study. Survey results may be presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate in the study.

The results of the study may help inform the district on the current challenges of working with an increased population of ELLs as well as help inform needs for further development of training practices around culturally responsive teaching practices. Please keep this email for your records, and feel free to contact me with questions or comments via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix F

Email Inviting Teachers to Phase Two (Focus Group)

Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for participating in the initial survey for dissertation study, "**Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: *An Analysis of Teacher Perception in Preparing Latina/o High School ELLs.***" You have provided insightful information into culturally responsive classroom practices that you currently employ in your classroom in order to enhance teaching and learning for Latina/o ELL students in your classroom.

This next phase of the study will focus on elaborating on the practice statements from the survey with specific anecdotal examples of these practices in your classroom. The focus group phase of the study will take around one hour and thirty minutes to complete. I will only need 6 participants per date listed below so the first 18 that respond to a specific time slot will participate in the study.

If interested, this phase of the study will take place at [REDACTED] as it is a central location. All dates listed below will take place from **5:30 PM to 7 PM**.

May 29th

May 30th

June 3rd

As a thank you for your participation, you will be provided with light snacks and beverages throughout the duration of the focus group. Please let me know if you are still interested in participating in this phase of the study by replying "yes" to this email with your selected date.

I will send a confirmation email and will send you the consent form once we have confirmed.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix G

Email Reminder for Teachers

Insert Date

Dear High School Teacher:

A week ago I sent an email inviting you to partake in a research project looking at teacher classroom practices in the district as it relates to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs. This dissertation study, "**Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in teaching Latina/o High School ELLs**" is designed to explore practices of Math and ELA teachers that instruct ELLs as it relates to culturally responsive practices.

This is a multifaceted study that will include a survey with as many Math and ELA teachers as possible and a focus group, with a select number of teachers who choose to participate from each of the participating high schools. I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing this Qualtrics Survey. The survey will only take approximately 20 to 30 minutes and can be completed at school, or at home. The survey is anonymous, and individual respondents will not be coded in any way.

At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another link that will ask if you would be willing to participate in the second phase of this study, a focus group, which is meant to provide more anecdotal data on culturally responsive practices currently in place in your classroom. If so, you will be asked to provide identifying information which will only be used to invite you to the second phase of the study. Survey results may be presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate in the study.

The results of the study may help inform the district on the current challenges of working with an increased population of ELLs as well as help inform needs for further development of training practices around culturally responsive teaching practices. Please keep this email for your records, and feel free to contact me with questions or comments via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix H

Email Reminder for Teacher Teams at Participating Schools

Good Morning **Roosevelt HS Math** Team:

First off, I want to say thank you to the rockstar Math team at **Roosevelt**! A special thank you to those that have completed my survey. I am one step closer to defending my dissertation because of these individuals. If you no longer teach at this school, I am eternally sorry for the massive amount of emails.

If you have not done so, please try and complete my survey which speaks to culturally responsive practices being implemented in our district. On average, it has been taking between **4 and 6 minutes** to complete. It is quick and easy and will help move our district forward so that we can continue being **#GCPSProud**.

Survey Link: [Click Here](#)

School Name you should select: "School C" **Roosevelt**

Dear **Roosevelt** High School Teacher:

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project looking at teacher classroom practices in the district as it relates to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs. This dissertation study, "Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: *An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in teaching Latina/o High School ELLs*" is designed to explore practices of Math and ELA teachers that instruct ELLs as it relates to culturally responsive practices.

This is a multifaceted study that will include a survey with as many Math and ELA teachers as possible and a focus group, with a select number of teachers who choose to participate from each of the participating high schools. I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing this Qualtrics Survey. The survey will only take approximately 15 minutes and can be completed at school, or at home. The survey is anonymous, and individual respondents will not be coded in any way. If you choose to complete the survey, this is the [link](#). Teachers at your school completing the survey should select **"School C." Please complete ASAP.**

Survey results may be presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate in the study. The results of the study may help inform the district on the current challenges of working with an increased population of ELLs as well as help inform needs for further development of training practices around culturally responsive teaching practices. **A special thank you to all those that completed already!**

Additional Information

At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another link that will ask if you would be willing to participate in the second phase of this study, a focus group, which is meant to provide more anecdotal data on culturally responsive practices currently in place in your classroom. If so, you will be asked to provide identifying information which will only be used to invite you to the second phase of the study.

Please keep this email for your records, and feel free to contact me with questions or comments via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix I

Personalized Invitation Emails to Teachers to Complete the Survey

Dear **Andrew**:

My name is Carlos Beato and I am the principal at **the International HS at Langley Park**. I am reaching out because I am in the process of finishing my dissertation and need some help with data collection. In short, I am studying culturally responsive practices being employed in our district and specifically looking at it from the lens of Math and ELA teachers who teach ELLs. If you would be so kind as to help me out, I would greatly appreciate it. You can complete it via phone or computer.

Survey Link: [Click Here](#)

School Name you should select: "School C"

I have included more information on my research below and I have attached a copy of the consent form (which you will agree to when you start the survey), district approval for my research and a copy of the survey so you know which questions will be asked.

Thanks a million, I will be forever indebted to you as I accomplish this goal!

5/9/19

Dear **[REDACTED]** Teacher:

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project looking at teacher classroom practices in the district as it relates to the preparation of Latina/o ELLs. This dissertation study, "**Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in teaching Latina/o High School ELLs**" is designed to explore practices of **Math and ELA teachers** that instruct ELLs as it relates to culturally responsive practices.

This is a multifaceted study that will include a survey with as many Math and ELA teachers as possible and a focus group, with a select number of teachers who choose to participate from each of the participating high schools. I would like to ask you to participate in this study by completing this Qualtrics Survey. The survey will only take approximately 15 minutes and can be completed at school, or at home. The survey is anonymous, and individual respondents will not be coded in any way. If you choose to complete the survey, this is the [link](#). Teachers at your school completing the survey should select **"School C." Please complete by Monday, May 13th if willing to participate.**

Survey results may be presented at professional conferences or published in professional journals. Completion of this survey indicates your consent to participate in the study.

The results of the study may help inform the district on the current challenges of working with an increased population of ELLs as well as help inform needs for further development of training practices around culturally responsive teaching practices.

A special thank you to all those that completed already!

Additional Information

At the end of the survey you will be redirected to another link that will ask if you would be willing to participate in the second phase of this study, a focus group, which is meant to provide more anecdotal data on culturally responsive practices currently in place in your classroom. If so, you will be asked to provide identifying information which will only be used to invite you to the second phase of the study.

Please keep this email for your records, and feel free to contact me with questions or comments via email at cbeato17@terpmail.umd.edu.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix J

Second Email to Teacher Teams to Complete the Survey

Good Morning **Central HS** Team:

I wanted to provide some data on where I am with the survey based on submissions from your school. As you may or may not know, in order for surveys to be deemed appropriate at least 70% of individuals have to respond. Here is our **Central** data:

Central Submissions: 7/14 (50%) --> **THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE SUBMITTED!!!**

Additional Needed from the School: 4

As a reminder, this dissertation study, "Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: *An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in teaching Latina/o High School ELLs*" is designed to explore practices of Math and ELA teachers that instruct ELLs as it relates to culturally responsive practices. If 4 more people could respond you will never receive an email from me about this survey EVER again! On average, it has been taking between **4 and 6 minutes** to complete. It is quick and easy and will help move our district forward so that we can continue being #**PGCPSproud**.

Survey Link: [Click Here](#)

School Name you should select: "School B" **Central**

Thank you all as I would not be able to do this without you.

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix K

Reminder Email to Focus Group Participants

Good Morning Faithful Focus Group Members:

For years, I have longed to become a doctor in education and this is about to finally become a reality thanks to you!

I look forward to seeing you this afternoon at 5PM at [REDACTED]. When you get to the school, please drive to the back of the building and we will be located in Temp 1. As a reminder, we will have some light snacks/refreshments as a thank you for your participation in this research.

I have attached the consent form, which I will have copies of at the meeting, for your review. I am also attaching the questions for today's focus group protocol so that you can get a heads up on what I will be looking at. This is for informational purposes only and will all be coded so your honesty is highly appreciated.

See you soon!

Respectfully,

Carlos M. Beato, Doctoral Candidate
Doctorate in Education

Appendix L

Focus Group Transcription

Researcher: Welcome to our focus group for the cultural responsiveness project. First and foremost I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me realize my dream of becoming a doctor. So we're here today to talk about culturally responsive practices that are being implemented in your classrooms and this is in direct correlation to the survey you all completed a few weeks ago. My name is Carlos Beato and I am a Principal in the district which shall remain nameless. Prior to coming into this role I was in New York City where I was a teacher, admin and college counselor and this topic is one that I'm passionate about because I was an English language learner myself growing up in NYC. I assure you that this process is highly confidential and your names will not be used at any time throughout the research process.

Researcher: Before we get started, please internalize your assigned personas for this conversation so that we keep this process anonymous. So every time you speak please acknowledge your speaker number so that it is easier for me when I'm transcribing the conversation. Let's be as natural as possible in having this conversation. Feel free to expand, agree/disagree with whatever other participants have said. I would love to hear from every single person. It's a very intimate conversation. There's only five of us here and I will not impose my opinions or anything at this point because I'm here to learn from all of you. We are now going to begin with an opening question which we will amend to keep the process anonymous using are assigned persona and school letter.

As some of us may not know each other, please give your assigned persona, subject you teach and perhaps tell us what prompted you to accept the invitation to this Focus Group.

Jane, School E: Hi, I'm Jane, School E. I teach Algebra 1 and I am also interested in learning exactly what Latino and Latina English language Learners need to be truly successful.

Researcher: Thank you, Maria...

Maria, School E: Hi, I'm Maria at school E I teach Algebra I lab right now along with some other stuff and so my interest in being here is first of all to be a participant in what you were trying to do because I believe in that. The second thing is that I wanted to personally kind of hear what everybody else was doing just to see as Jane said to make the kids as successful as they could be.

Researcher: Thank you, Kate...

Kate, School A: Hi, I'm Kate from School A and I teach Algebra 1 Lab and Geometry and I'm here because it's my first year teaching and I have a large ESOL/ELL population in my school and so besides the fact that I am trying to help them now, I might not be doing the best that I physically possibly can and I would like to hear other strategies so that I can be awesome and yay.

Researcher: Awesome, thank you...

Jose, School B: Yes, good afternoon I am Jose from School B. I am currently teaching Algebra I and Quantitative Modeling and I taught Geometry last year. My purpose for me to be here today is that we have a growing population of ELL students and I really want to know and get some feedback from other departments to see what is the best way to go forward for students.

Researcher: Great, thank you so much. We're going to move forward to our introductory question. Are there many Latina/o ELLs in your school? And how do you know? anyone can answer

Jose, School B: So we currently have 280 students in our school out of about 1000 altogether. Most of our students come from El Salvador and Guatemala and we have a few students from Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria so it is a pretty diverse group that we have.

Researcher: Great, anyone else?

Kate, School A: My school also has a large ESOL population and I do not know the number off the top of my head, but I know that there's a lot of them because I teach a bunch of them and so the majority of our students are also from El Salvador but we also have Guatemala, we have Mexico. We have a decent amount of students from various countries in Africa. I think I have 6 students from Nigeria and then we also have a few people from various countries in the Middle East spread out, speaking different languages there. So it is not just having to deal with teaching ESOL to students whose first language is Spanish but also all of the other ones that we have.

Maria, School E: We have 386 students of which the last time I heard we are 90, I'm sorry 89% Latino/a students. Our largest class of course is 9th graders as far as the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th. We have 115 9th grade students and so the majority of those students are of the majority Latino/a population.

Researcher: Thank you. Throwing another prompt and putting it in another way. How do you think your Latina/o ELLs experience school in your building.

Jose, School B: I think that we have in the past been gracious to our kids. I think this year we have made a real conscientious effort to make a change. I noticed for example one of our ESL students was valedictorian this year and that was excellent because in the past probably many of our students were left out. They were

marginalized and they were left out and we saw that in their behaviors and it's been evolving with extracurricular activities.

Jane, School E: I believe that our students value relationships. So sometimes, most often times, they come to school because of the relationships that they have with staff members and peers.

Kate, School A: Presently the way they experience school I think they experience it like kind of moving past them really fast. I think they kind of experience it in blur kind of a little bit. And I only say that because the majority of my ESOL students that I have are in Algebra and Lab which is a course with no ESOL supports and it's ME and I struggle a little bit. And so despite the fact that I try my best to help out my kiddos a bunch in that class I have a student who is illiterate in his native language and I only have so many skills, so many time, and so many headaches that I can possibly go through and so I have not been able to help them as much as I would really like to. And so despite the fact that I have been able to reach a lot of them, a lot of them are missed and I know this. I hate this, but I know this and this is something that I want to try to fix.

Jose, School B: One of the things I've realized is that we have that gap with some students that can't read and you as a teacher have all of these students in one classroom.

Kate, School A: And to be fair my illiterate student is improving. He can occasionally actually form letters when I say them in English, Which is much better than where he was before. Now he curses to me in English and I'm just like yes, this is fabulous, keep it up. And so, it is magnificent so like he's making steps and everything just particularly slow and it doesn't feel like a lot.

Researcher: Awesome. We already talked a little bit about how diverse your students are in your classes. You also mentioned some of the countries that your Latina and Latino ELL students are coming from so we'll skip over that transition question and we're going to go straight into our core questions. So let's turn now to the survey statements in your experience in the classroom with implementing culturally responsive teaching practices that could possibly enhance the learning experience of your Latino/a ELL students. I will read a statement and then ask specific questions to different members of the group based on how you responded on the survey. Clearly, I don't know how any of you responded on the survey because it was entirely Anonymous, but I will read a statement and if you feel that one of these questions really resonates with you feel free to respond. So the first statement I am going to read is *I am able to communicate with culturally diverse students and their parents or guardians*. Are there reasons why you might not be able to communicate with your culturally diverse students and their families? Particularly Latina/o ELLs?

Jane, School E: There have been a couple of students that have been put into the foster care system and trying to figure out who has kinship rights and whose a legal

guardian has allowed some students to fall through the cracks. Because we usually don't find out about it until they drop in grades or attendance.

Kate, School A: Much less to do with that but just even trying to call them even for some of the students who do a lot of the student numbers in Schoolmax are wrong a lot of the addresses come back return to sender so even if they are not all the way in that situation it still can be hard to get a hold and this is not just for our ELL students but for all students but it can also be a barrier.

Maria, School E: What I have observed is that if the difficulty from communication is that these parents are working long hours so they are not available during the time that you are at school so then if you need language link you gotta figure out ok is language link going to be open so that I can contact parents after the school hours which can make it difficult because I've had parents that I've called that after about ten times I've finally gotten in touch with them, which can be difficult so I really like the help of language link and trying to contact those parents, but there are a few that you just don't make contact with for that reason.

Jose, School B: I've used language link before but I find it very impersonal and there's always that time lapse between speaking to the parent and having the person translate for you. We do have two translators in schools which I find a bit more suitable for our kids because it's almost like that instantaneous feedback that you can give the parent. But one of the things also I find is that absenteeism is a major issue. Kids are either working or they stay away from school because of the fear of the relationships they have with students in their population so yes I have experienced a lot of issues with communicating with parents more so than communicating with students who are there because parents sometimes have that fear of school especially because they don't speak English very well and they come and speak to the teachers and that's it.

Jane, School E: I just wanna add to what Jose said. I noticed my Spanish is limited but I can comprehend a little bit. I've noticed that sometimes when I have allowed certain staff members to translate things to parents they leave out things to kind of cover for the child.

Kate, School A: Yea that happens because for back to school night and teacher conferences kids are usually translating for their parents and I understand enough where I'm sitting here and I'm just like don't make me get my Google translate out.

Researcher: So when you feel that you've communicated well with a parent, how do you know that you've communicated well with them.

Maria, School E: I feel like when I've communicated well with the parent I will definitely see action towards either improvement or consistency or and even the student's ability to communicate with me, they feel a lot more comfortable so that's how I know that the communication has worked for me.

Jane, School E: I know when I see accountability from the student's part where they're not upset or angry that the school called or that I called. They've taken accountability for their own actions so that's the beginning of change.

Maria, School E: I'll also add to Jane also I'm sorry and I'm Maria. I would say that also when the student come and apologize to you like "I'm sorry, I do better" and you say "I just want the best for you" so that works well.

Researcher: I know we have mentioned the tool already Language Link, but what are the tools that help you communicate with parents of culturally diverse students? Particularly Latina/o ELL families?

Maria, School E: Blackboard connect where you can translate it into Spanish and other languages, I've used it for other languages also. So that's a good way because you can send a text message and make a phone call and so usually I do both because I figure one way or the other If I have an email address because that gets a little bit difficult sometimes and it's always sent after I think it's 5:30. And so more than likely parents will get that message a I've had a couple respond to me when I go in to check and see which messages have been sent and that kind of who received them and that kind of thing. The only difficult situation is when the phone number is not correct.

Kate, School A: I also do enjoy using Blackboard although my only issue with them is that I personally will never answer an automatic phone call. If I heard the automation I'd just be like slam so I never send phone calls I only do emails and then I started doing text messages because at least I'll open a text message, but If I hear a robot or something "goodbye" so I do blackboard, but then also when I like create a Math grade self-assessment which goes home with the kids every other week because a Science teacher told me to do it and I didn't have the tools to translate it into Spanish so I like you know do my Google translate and I have my thing and then I have a student translate it for me and I just say "you, can you just check my grammar" and they give me corrections and then I have another person check in another class and they're like "this is right, but this isn't my Spanish, whoever wrote this was in Mexico and I'm from El Salvador." So I've used the students whenever I needed to translate little things, especially with my illiterate student who I can't get through to at all, my other child translates for me when my broken Spanish is not good enough so I'll also use them to assist me when I can't but then I also let them see me try that way they are more willing to help because they've watched my pathetic Spanish come out of my mouth. So they're like ok, ok we got you and I'm like yea thank you because I don't got me.

Jose, School B: I am not sure this is a tool, but just communicating with the students and being accessible to the students. For example, I ask about their favorite food and what's a nice place for me to eat and they say Pollo Loco so you kind of build that on and they are more comfortable in the classroom and so you make progress.

Researcher: So thank you very much for going to move on to the second statement and the statement reads. I am able to find ways to support language acquisition and enhance culturally and linguistically diverse students' comprehension of classroom tasks. Is there a particular reason why you might not be able to support the language acquisition of your Latina and Latino ELLs.

Kate, School A: I can't make clones of myself yet, that's my biggest issue so far because when I sit with my ESOL students we can get stuff done. I can like sit on their desk and we can like work and we can move back and forth cause like I said especially and I focus on my illiterate kid because he is the kid that I am trying to help the most. So when I sit there and I spell every single letter for him and we really try to sound out words like we got this he is in a class of 26 and I can't do that all day. And I can't and if I'm not next to him like he can do some limited things but he's not there yet and that's ok he's not there yet but he's not ready for that and even when I pair him up with somebody the second he starts to feel like he's not ready to persevere, he's not reached that level yet, which is not a bad thing, but I can clone myself is my biggest issue.

Jane, School E: At our school we use a lot of collaboration and heterogeneous grouping for language. One of the things that I found out that the higher English proficiency students don't always want to support and help the lower ones so they feel like it's an extra job for them they just wanna do their work.

Kate, School A: The same issue, sometimes I can get them to do it and usually only for a little bit, but if I ask them to all day then they just don't do it.

Maria, School E: I would conquer with both of my colleagues in saying that a lot of times the kids do not want and actually have said it to me over the years cuz I've been there the whole time is that they had to struggle through learning their English and that people need to take the initiative because they think that once students receive help like that it made it too easy for them to not learn the English language.

Jane, School E: This is Jane and I just want to clarify. They don't mind helping one another with the content. They don't like helping one another with the English.

Kate, School A: It works for me, but only on a limited basis so every now and then I'm just like :hey, can you like translate this one sentence with me." It's when it's more than that that I start having issues.

Researcher: Are there any specific examples of how you might incorporate language supports in classroom tasks?

Kate, School A: For me it's mostly modeling and diagrams so usually, especially it works nicely in Math I can model a question and then go through it and then also put a lot of diagrams on their papers so a lot of times I'll model one for the class and that'll be good enough and then they'll be diagrams on the paper telling you how to

do it and sometimes I will sit with my ESOL and model one more just with them with them poking me with questions and then they'll be ok and I can move on. So maybe one extra one sitting with them doing it and then they're like yes we got the flow, and as long as the problems are still similar then we're good. To get like the new stuff that's maybe another leap that I'm not sure I can answer, but at least with that helps a decent amount.

Maria, School E: I've had a lot of success with using sentence stems especially with the students who aren't as proficient with English and its helped cause you don't have that deer in the headlights look "what in the world is she asking me?" you have the "oh, ok I've got the beginning" and I have found with the previous question that students are a little bit more willing to help each other when there are sentence stems cause then they can say in Spanish dah dah dah dah dah and then they can go back into the English and translate.

Jose, School B: Here's an example, this is a bottle of water and I will ask a kid "how do you say this in Spanish?" and then they will tell me and we will go from there so then in the future we will go "this bottle of water is agua." Also, for directions, for example, I will read not only have it on a document camera but also read it so that they are using more than one modality at a time so there's the visual and there's the hearing as well. I also read it slowly and wait for them to process it because they might be able to translate from Spanish to English and in some cases even more than that.

Jane, School E: The best example that I can think of this year would be when I did a lesson where we did stations work and I was at one station and I was able to work with 4 students at a time on a word problem and we rotated and it took a while to get the students, it took a couple of months, to get the students to be ready to be independent at a station and to use their anchor charts or whatever resources that I had but that was the best example when I was able to do small group instruction.

Maria, School E: I would like to piggyback off that because what Jane and I did was we actually did a document that the kids had to use all the time and the four representations and so they always had a writing piece. They had to establish a claim and evidence and that seemed to be very successful because we were trying to help them get to that Parcc and not be afraid of it and so once we first started the kids and so they would walk into her class and my class is a support for her class and so they walk into her class and she'd have them doing it and they'd come in my class and I'd do the same thing so some of them would get upset at that at the beginning which they did with Jane also, but it was successful in that they got used to it and they stopped complaining. When we first started it was like pulling teeth, like literally pulling teeth.

Researcher: So just to clarify, the repetition is what helped?

Maria, School E: And the stability of the process so that they knew they had to do the same thing.

Jane, School E: and also in addition to what Maria said, the students didn't do so well on one of the quarterly benchmarks. So on the quarterly algebra benchmarks there's a student response sheet where they have to show and explain their work. So what we did is that we started using a student teaching protocol and we basically broke it down into four steps where first you show your work and you ask are there any questions, then the third step would be can you explain your steps and then ask are there any questions? And what we were trying to do is model to the students how to support other students. The second thing we were doing was to increase language production. So they would have to get up and once they did their work come up to the board and actually show and explain and with the use of the sentence stems it's working.

Maria, School E: Yes, so they have to show and explain.

Jane, School E: So they used the language function of sequence first, I did this, secon I did this so by now they are more comfortable with speaking in front of everybody.

Researcher: What are the benefits you see in incorporating more ways to support language acquisition practices in your classroom? This is very interesting because I'm sitting with four math teachers.

Kate, School A: The more ways we support it then the better they do and the less we have to do and then the more they do and then kapoof. I don't have like specific ways it just makes life so much better in general.

Maria, School E: I think that the support comes from the reportition and having a process they have to get used to it. They kind of take that on and it's like Ok I know that Maria is gonna require me to do this when I come to class. The good thing about it was that Teacher one we plan together and so in planning together I would ask Jane what are you gonna do tomorrow, or what are you gonna do Thursday. Then Jane would plan something and typically will share it with me and then I would piggyback off of Jane and students would see that consistency, which I think was good for them because we were speaking the same language in that I'm not talking about English just as far as what were trying to do in class with our processes and then the students could see and we could explain to them we are trying to build your language skills and we are trying to make sure that you can justify your work, explain your work and that sort of thing to the student and they developed an understanding. Whereas before, they couldn't quite grasp and they would say "why are we doing this? Why are we writing in Math class?" and they would say to you "this is Math class, I don't need to write."

Kate, School A: But then also and then a disadvantage that I want to point out between you guys that get to plan together for Algebra 1 and Algebra Lab and the school where I'm at yes we don't do that. We have problems. And so me getting to do that with my lab kids I go to maybe one or two of the Algebra and to be fair all of the ESOL students that I work from just come from one of the Algebra teachers so I try to take her ideas and apply them but then also now I'm not being consistent to my other students who still also benefit from consistency just not the same with ELL students. So despite me trying to steal ideas it's working with some kids but it doesn't work with others. Anyways, I just had to rant because I don't get to do that often.

Jane, School E: I would say that the best benefit has been trust and relationship building because with Maria students and my students we can't get our students to do anything until their is either a relationship or they trust us. So I would say that was the best benefit and the way that we went about it was when we did the Student teacher protocol. First we would call groups up to the classroom to come and present together and then throughout the rest of the year we were able to do number head activities where we were able to call on specific students and they would come by themselves no matter what their proficiency level is.

Maria, School E: and I have to add to that. Not only would they come, but they would come without hesitation and I like that because instead of having that battle with kids saying "i don't wanna go" or "I'm not coming," but they would come without hesitation and that I liked because I felt like we were making some progress cause we had kids that would never talk and they would never say anything. They go comfortable with their class and being able and free to speak as best they could in front of that group. One of the things that we said is that we're family and I said laughing is not acceptable, teasing is not acceptable we're all at different levels so you should hear me try to speak Spanish fluently it's not happening right now.

Kate, School A: off that though, instead of not having them do it I try to speak Spanish with them fluently in front of them and I let myself make a fool, because that's how I work, make a fool of myself in front of them. I occasionally throw the Spanish word here and there just to be like yea see I'm an idiot and I'm still doing it anyways and it sounds terrible. They laugh at me all the time and then it's like "ok, your turn" and that's probably why one kid started cursing at me in English.

Jose, School B: We all try to have a safe environment for our kids, but it's a constant challenge when you have such a multidimensional multicultural classroom who totally oppose it. For example, one of the things I do is play music so even though I'll play some Spanish music, Latino music and then African American kids they object it but they wanna hear their rap so I try to incorporate all types of music in my classroom so that the kids feel that they're part of the classroom. It becomes more risk free that they [inaudible]

Jane, School E: You're nicer than I am. I put on 60's, 70's and 80's music and they all know it.

Kate, School A: I did that around the holidays because you know I did it around Christmas holidays because you know and I have told them we'll play Christmas songs but you guys get to choose. Whatever holiday song you want to play, or if you want to play a random song, as long as it's classroom appropriate, you can do it so that way I had a whole bunch of my ESOL and ELL students they played liked Hispanic Christmas songs which I learned was about a burrito but it's a little donkey and I was like "I love this," but I also had a lot of my students from Afghanistan and a couple of my students who are muslim who do not celebrate Christmas I had them play other music and they didn't just play their own music they played slightly more religious music based on whatever their holidays were. So we also got to experience them around the holiday season and that was a relief with music a little bit.

Researcher: And that was Mi burrito sabanero anyways. So we're gonna move on to the 3rd statement. *I am able to design assessments to complement the culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that were employed during instruction.* How do you know when you have developed an assessment that complements the culturally responsive strategies you have used during instruction?

Kate, School A: I don't. I do not. I actively do not. I have yet to see it in this setting and I do not know how to.

Jane, School E: I would say when you're able to give some type of project-based assessment that incorporates literacy skills and also some kind of social change or it's taking action because that makes it more culturally relevant for the student, even if it's not their own culture learning about another culture. Either some type of problem in the world.

Researcher: Just to clarify, it's ok to say that you don't do this or that you don't know how you would know.

Jose, School B: Once again, I don't do very well with that. Sometimes I would change the name to a Hispanic name but beyond that I don't do much in terms of an assessment because the assessment we give is already kind of in a certain format so it's a little different for me to stretch towards this culturally responsive way. I can give a scenario, but apart from that we don't do much about it.

Maria, School E: I'm kind of thinking back to not this school year but last school year I had a student that came in the school year before that that we had to teach her how to write the numbers and so my assessment for her was much different from the assessment for the other students because I had to do pictures for her and let her point to the correct answer, but she was successful with it. She is now taking Geometry and will be in Quantitative modeling next year and the English has improved tenfold. Her English is very good. As a matter of fact we had two seniors or students like that and one of them just graduated and we literally had to get the kindergarten Math book and I used to sit in class with them and they had to learn how to count money because

they didn't know if there was a word problem what they were saying in the word problem so we had to start them from the beginning.

Kate, School A: and this is what I want to be able to duplicate myself to be able to do with my kiddos, but I have not found a good way for me to be able to sit down with them and do that because the one time I tried stations in my room, which was the third day of school of freshmen, which was my third day ever teaching yea I know it went horrifically and a fight almost broke out in my room so I haven't tried stations yet this year. I am waiting for next year for me to be ready for this, which I'm hoping is a way for me to do that.

Jane, School E: So I just want to add on to what Kate added. I have a few gears of teaching and the school that I work at is 100% ELL and I was a brand new teacher last year so even though I have years of teaching under my belt, when you teach ELLs you're a brand new teacher. I might have a couple more skills in my toolkit, but I was still brand new.

Maria, School E: I have to say that even though I came in four years ago with the whole attitude that I've been teaching for a certain number of years and our facilitator knows and all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and I got into the classroom that first year with 100% ELL population and I said "I don't know diddly squat." The content I knew, how to get it across to students - I had one student who fled his country he saw his parents get killed and was here under a guardianship. Did not know his birthday, I swear he just graduated and he's got to be 25. His birthday was July 1st and he was assigned a birthday. I remember we were doing an activity the first day of school which was suggested by our math department in which we had to do a basically it was a stats problem and the kids had to put a dot underneath the month of their birthday. And for me, I became an actress the first year I was really good at acting because I had to get him to get up with that dot, he didn't understand any English and he had to get up with the dot and put it under the month of his birthday. My description is if you would have been in the class you would have been laughing at me. And I was like "mommy" [teacher makes gestures of mom giving birth] and I said when did mommy have you and he got that. I don't know how he got it, but he got that and I was very proud that he got that. So he know his assigned his birthday. This child just graduated and not only did he learn English but he learned Spanish also. He wasn't Spanish and I know that he wasn't Latina/o, but I had to tell you that story because it was very inspiring to see him and so he would communicate with other students in Spanish. But this is the other difficult thing, we could not, there was nobody that could translate his language in the school, there was nobody in language link, we couldn't find a dictionary for him, nothing. So he really had to...

Kate, School A: My one student who speaks Arabic know Spanish better than English at this point because he hangs out with all of the ESOL kids who all speak Spanish. Usually when I pop around to my ESOL kids in his class I'll usually blabber to them with my three words in Spanish and then I'll be like "you don't speak

Spanish” so I’ll say “let me speak to you in my broken English” because I don’t speak not a single lick of Arabic.

Researcher: So we’ll move on to the next prompt: please explain why you might not be able to design assessments that respond to culturally responsive instructional strategies.

Jane, School E: I wouldn't say that I'm not able to I would say that I have to be very conscientious about what might trigger my students so I have to think what could trigger some kind of traumatic response out of them so I wouldn't want to cause any trauma.

Jose, School B: Just piggybacking on what you just said, having a one to one talk with the kids so you get to know the kids, what they like and what they dislike, what is culturally accepted for them and what is culturally accepted for us cause sometimes we have to talk to them, for example, and we have to look face to face as opposed to looking away. So those little things that would help in developing an assessment for the kids.

Kate, School A: While I think it's good to modify most assessments those kids are still taking PARCC with the babies and they're still taking the county-based assessments so in spite of the fact that it makes a lot of sense to modify the assessments if they're doing different things we're gonna place them in front of PARCC eventually, they gotta have seen a PARCC problem before and so I'd be more worried about me feeling the need to over modify and not challenge them is what I'm thinking my concern is. I would over modify and give them something that I thought that they could handle because of what I'm teaching them instead of challenging them with something that's above what they can handle because they need to see it and they need to get there eventually. So maybe giving them something too hard and carving it would be a better option than always modifying them because it's important that they take the stuff that the people who are not ELL students are also seeing because that's the county standard.

Researcher: I have a follow-up question. Have any of you tried assessing your students in Spanish, for example, because that's available through PARCC.

Maria, School E: Went to battle, I put on my armor, held up my shield and I said this to the district, I said this to some other folks, I said this to personnel in my school. I was told that I could not test for PARCC in Spanish. When I asked why, they said that the students were supposed to be learning English. So you have to remember I was testing coordinator, so my next question was, that was one of my other jobs to carry a full load of math and be a testing coordinator. So my question was why not because that's their native language. Well we're supposed to test PARCC in English, that's all I could get. I often wonder why we couldn't do it. Why we were told no and I would want to know the success rate of the students if they could take and that's all students, not just Latino/a, if they could take a test in their native language how they

would do and the reason that I say that it's because we have students that it took three years to pass PARCC. We had students that still didn't pass PARCC and had to do an AVP project to graduate and so I almost would like to see it as, I don't want to call it an experiment but it would be an experiment. Have students take the PARCC assessment in Spanish and have them take it in English and let's see what their scores would be like. And the reason why I say that is because then I think we can determine is it literacy or is it content and we would be able to see it too. If people were not so spent on or stubborn because we're supposed to be learning English in an English school because I could tell you in my other school we had a small, very small ESOL population, but we had our kids dropping out because they weren't functioning at the level that people were expecting them to because they didn't understand the language. So that was at the beginning and at the end before I left it seems like we only let the ELLs that were almost exited out of ESOL because their English was pretty good so you could communicate with them. But I've run the gamut from kids that could speak English at my old school to then at the end somebody said "I'm going to take the higher level students" so we didn't have any issues. They were passing the test and everything. I know I'm talking a lot. I'm just wondering what we have to do as a body of schools and the ELL population is growing and it's going to continue to grow where the stubbornness is set aside and that test is given in every language. When I say every language at least to [numerous language mentioned] that those kids are allowed to take it and I bet you that we wouldn't be going through with some of the things we are going through now with kids having to do so many AVP projects and kids thinking about dropping out because they're thinking about "why am I taking this test?"

Jane, School E: To piggyback off of what you said Maria, I know that they give them the accommodation of the bilingual dictionary but I don't know if there's an efficacy for the student to use it on the assessment.

Kate, School A: and especially for math terms, those words don't mean the same things for math in the dictionary.

Maria, School E: and the dictionaries are only word to word. So, like Kate said, the words aren't necessarily our words. They're similar, but they aren't similar.

Kate, School A: like the word similar, it doesn't mean the same thing in Geometry.

Researcher: We are going to move on to the next question, *do you believe that the district created assessments are aligned to meet the needs of your ELL students in your subject area?*

Kate, School A: I don't know how to say that right because if you mean are they aligned for them to pass the answer is mostly no because they don't know English yet so how are they going to pass the test. Also they don't necessarily know what especially I have a few students that got bounced around the education system how many grades did they have before they got to me. I am very sorry that I have a few

students that probably barely learned what 1 plus 1 was because they were bounced around school so many times. So how can they support them in that sense, but also how could anybody support them in that sense is my other thing because that just is different and in that case maybe they shouldn't be given the same assessment because fun fact: no, the same assessment does not work for everybody. Ground breaking, crazy, no one has thought about this before!

Jane, School E: I would say no, because I believe that they are more concerned with keeping the rigor and it's very difficult to keep the rigor and also kind of provide certain accommodations on those kinds of tests.

Kate, School A: The test just also need to be more leveled because I was looking through my Geometry final and there were no type I questions anywhere. And are you telling me that it's not a good thing to have the occasional vocabulary questions? We can build up the kid's confidence going into the type III questions cause now I don't want to give you an entire test of all type III questions that will kill your brain. So if it's more leveled then also though we can see where they are at because if you're passing you know the easiest are the type I's, but then you've been dipping out in the middle of the type I's then our type I's get a tinsy bit harder than the easiest possible type I then I can see. If I'm testing all on type III and you do like awful I don't know where your level of awful is. Are you awful like at a type II? Are you awful at a high type I, like where are you? So I am going with no again because I think they should be more leveled.

Jose, School B: Listening to you speak I am thinking that you are thinking of doing more individualized testing and having different types of testing.

Kate, School A: Not even, I'm thinking if there's just one test, but the one test tests you on more of a range. So if I'm testing you on Algebra I, for example, I would have a question that is literally $X+2=7$, solve for X. And that would be the first question, but then I'd also as you $3X+4=-8$, solve for X and then a quadratic problem and so I'd have different levels on the test that way you see you got this but then you don't got this. Like where do you leave off? As opposed to only asking them was $-X/3+7=-2X/3$, solve for X. Then I'm just like oh yes they didn't solve it I wonder why? And I'm just like they could've solved that one. They know something, they just don't know everything so if I give everybody a leveled assessment kind of like SMI, one of the ones like that where is like where you have to answer each of the levels and I see where you drop off. If a lot of the standardized tests had a few basic questions. Oh my God I look at those benchmarks and it's like nothing, there's no like easy brain rest question anywhere on here whatsoever and I'm just like so how are we going to figure out where our low students are? I can tell you where my high students are, where my high students drop, but how can I tell where the low students drop off cause my low students aren't dumb, they're just not geniuses yet. My low students can answer $X+3=7$, just not much more than that.

Jane, School E: I said no earlier and my statement is still no and to support that I would say that even when we use UNIFY if you go and you try to do any kind of analysis, it doesn't tell you standard deviation on the teacher side, it doesn't tell you difficulty index, it doesn't tell you anything so I had an assignment for myself and I actually took one of the tests and I did it and I found out that you know some of the questions were very difficult and then a lot of the questions were very low so I'm like how could you really gauge the concept?

Kate, School A: cause so many kids are from the middle, but where in the middle? Cause if I completely lose them, especially thinking ELL if I completely lose them on a really easy looking, but word problem so like call it a level because it's really easy but then it's a word problem. We've got nothing. So we have to test them because word problems are part of the content, but the content is technically what is $X+2=7$, what is X? It's also being able to interpret a word problem but if you can't interpret the word problem does that mean that you don't know how to solve an equation? No. I have to give you equations and also word problems so I can see where you're at.

Jane, School E: I just was gonna say that on the questions that were highly difficult it was very bias in terms of the language. So I said if they would have taken this part out and this part out, then the student would have maybe understood it. But the language on there was bias.

Maria, School E: I'm going to kind of piggyback off of all three of you. So Jane was the most recent. I would say yes, the language is bias. We had a lesson in our curriculum in which they mentioned ski slope. How many students from central America or Mexico know what a ski slope is. So I had to first explain what a ski slope was. I had to demonstrate what a slope was, it was about slope but they started out with a ski slope. So yes, it's bias because you're not think about what the students...the answer to both of what you all said to Kate and Jose I believe and you guys can disagree with me but I believe that the tests should all be written for the ELL kids to the WIDA levels and I say that because I think we need leveled tests, somebody used that word but I don't think they meant it in that same way that I'm talking about it, but where it scaffolded up and the rigor might become difficult to handle when we have the lower level, but if you are required to take these tests I don't understand why the tests are not leveled according to the WIDA scores, so if you have 100 kids in school and they all have to take the PARCC test and you have 20 kids that are level 1 WIDA beginning and then you have a certain number that are emerging, a certain number that are bridging, a certain number, and you have tests written according to that, including our benchmarks, including our quarterly tests. Cause the difficult thing for me has always been and they required it this year, is that the students benchmarks 2 and four this year they had to do it. You could kind of skip two and three but you had to do 2 and 4. So the first thing becomes first of all, are you on pace? It is very difficult to keep pace with our ELL population because we have to delve so much into vocabulary to get the students to understand. So there needs to be some vocabulary development. I believe that with the ESOL teachers we have in our school, they're not planning with us, they're not planning with anyone in the school.

They do their own thing so I think that they need to be teaching the vocabulary or reinforcing the vocabulary from the content areas. When I say that for Math, English, Science, Social studies and I think it would help the students to develop their vocabulary, their academic vocabulary. The second thing is that when I say that the test needs to be level and it needs to be leveled by WIDA score we get the WIDA data, unfortunately, we don't get it until January. So if you were to do something like that we either you have to look at the January scores from the year before to see how many kids we could put in but we could still develop those tests per level and then we could look at the score from the WIDA and then disperse those students into those tests areas and have it done almost like a PARCC test where this teacher proctors level one, and I think that if they are at beginning, levels 1 and 2, that's where you need the extra support in the classroom with using the word to word dictionary.

Jose, School B: I was wondering if you had to complete an adaptive test, is that one of the things that you're speaking about?

Maria, School E: So one of the things that we found is that with the computers is that there's different levels of literacy there. So then we get into the other thing of teaching some of the students how to use the computers. We have one on one computers. All of our kids are fortunately great using the computers. As a matter of fact, they use it more than we want them to for other things, but they're really good at it. As a matter of fact they've taught me a couple of things. I'm like "oh, that's how you do that?" like change the language on the computer. I changed the language and then I said this is all in Spanish. That was some years ago.

Researcher: I'm gonna have to move us along, I wanna remain faithful to that 6:30 ending time. So we're gonna cut some time into the fourth statement so let's make our responses short and sweet. The last statement reads: *I am able to infuse the curriculum and thematic units with the culture of students represented in the classroom. Can you give a big picture example of how you have infused curriculum and thematic units with the culture of your Latina/o ELLs?*

Kate, School A: Ah, speaking about it and making it short and sweet, I didn't. I infuse it in things that aren't my curriculum. I infuse it in when I talk to them and when I build a relationship with them, but it is nowhere in my curriculum, it was never mentioned, not even thought of, not even a hint of it, it was gone. But I do it when I talk to them about things. So we've had to date talked about what the best Salvadorian food was and we had very passionate debates about it, but yea no, nowhere in my curriculum, no.

Jane, School E: We are developing some new mastery projects for summer school and we decided to use Global competencies so that we know already that it is culturally responsive so the project is basically broken up into themes and each theme focuses on one of the four domains of global competencies.

Maria, School E: I would say that Jane and Maria have an advantage because we take our curriculum and kind of rewrite it to support our ELLs where they probably, Kate and I, don't have that advantage. So I would say that we need to be allowed the ability to use our curriculum to create our thematic units for the ELL students. So I think that's an advantage that we're able to do so we're not like sticking strictly to the curriculum that the district gives. We use it and we use a lot of it, but it's adapted to our students.

Jose, School B: Unfortunately, since EL students is the minority in my class, I tend to more focus on the African American kids and changing the curriculum to be culturally aware or responsive to these kids I don't always do so it's always gone like that because of that.

Researcher: and now *What contributes to why you are not able to infuse the curriculum and units with a student culture represented?*

Jose, School B: cause I'm trying to get the curriculum done, pacing guide, whatever because I am trying to get everything done. I do it, but I know I am not doing nearly enough because I am trying to get students to the point where they understand the PARCC tests and the PARCC questions and divulging or going away is not always the easiest thing to do.

Jane, School E: It's a little off topic, but my mom always has told me that as a mother sometimes she sometimes has to put her resources into the one that she knows is going to produce. So hearing Jose's comment you know I understand why you are thinking of the majority and you are trying to get the majority to be successful.

Kate, School A: I know, I know because I've read it and my professors have read it to me I know there is so much research that says that if we do these things it's gonna work. But yea, then I have to do them and they're so much harder to do and I'm a first year teacher and I don't have time for anything. I rarely have time to do this, on really bad days I promise I don't do this, but I rarely have time to Google a [inaudible] software which has to be printed out. Barely. And so, doing this, while it'd be awesome, I don't think that there's a lot of materials out there for me to copy, paste and modify and then to be fair though I know that I have my own cultural biases when I say this. I don't think that my materials are culturally responsive to literally anybody. And that does not make them like that global thingy where they are culturally responsive to everybody, but I don't go about trying to make them culturally responsive to anybody because I even end up missing out on world problems and real experiences cause a lot of times as a first year teacher I'm focused on the numbers. I do it for nobody because mostly because it's not readily available, at least readily to my knowledge available to me.

Researcher: and *in what ways do you all think the district can help improve your practice in infusing more of your students' culture in your curriculum and units?*

Kate, School A: Give them to me, somebody's made them before so just give them to me.

Maria, School E: I think that it would be great if while curriculum is being developed that we have a good ESOL team of educators that also know math really well and they can help develop curriculum for ESOL. I actually had the opportunity a few years ago before I even got to the school and I was at my old school to actually work with the ESOL team for three days and I was writing the end of the Applications in algebra book. So I only saw the true algebra stuff. I didn't see the beginning. Like I said, I only had three days and I wrote the last two chapters which was true algebra. I wish that I had seen the whole thing because I would have said no no no only because it's too broad and that book starts with writing the words one, two and three and ramps all the way up to in the end dealing with functions and it's only five chapters, which makes absolutely no sense to me. I think somebody just needs to sit down and take the time and that hasn't been done. I don't think it's been considered or it may have been considered but I don't think.

Jane, School E: I believe the Math department in the county does a really good job with providing systemic PD, however there's not too many presenters for ELLs so I present when it's time for systemic PD, but that's just me and it's not too many other people.

Jose, School B: I had the opportunity to attend an ELL workshop this year. It was offered by the math department

Maria, School E: that's where I saw you!

Jose, School B: It opened my eyes because there was a speaker speaking Russian and I didn't have a clue what was going on

Maria, School E: I have to piggyback. That was the best PD I've been to in probably five to six years. I think that all ELL teachers, even if you don't have a large population, needs to go through the SIOP training, the SIOP model. They catered it towards Math, but there's SIOP for other parts and there are tons. Even if we did a book study on their tons of resources from SIOP to do different things and I wish I had my book with me and I don't, but that was like the best and it was more than one day. They did it once every other month right four times so basically it went through the entire school year. So it was once every other month, it was all day and I think I took enough notes to write a descent paper.

Researcher: Thank you so much for engaging me in these conversations around these four statements. Just a few follow up questions. In this final commenting period I would like you to think about one of the demographic questions that was asked around being appropriately trained to teach Latina/o ELL students in your classroom.

What specifically do you think will help you improve your practice in any of these areas that we discussed?

Maria, School E: Just more training overall for me would be great with working with the ELL population of students. I think that would be great. Another thing is understanding and I'm still trying to get that. This is going to sound a little weird and off topic, but understanding the trauma because I think that helps us be more culturally responsive. So there was a teacher in our school that did something about the mall in an English class mom was...she was trying to be culturally responsive but it was a little bit too much. Basically mom was picked up by [ice] and deported and when she did that this had just happened to a student that was sitting in her classroom and it messed the student up for a good week. Could not function, couldn't do any work, had to sit in the offices with various people, but some of that comes into play when we're trying to get curriculum and lessons across and trying to be culturally responsive because there are things that other students go through in their travels trying to get here that we can't even imagine.

Jane, School E: I would say not professional development. I would say more instructional accountability in terms of walkthroughs, very focused walkthroughs with some of the SIOP components so that I can see my growth and I can see where I am and so that I can seek out support to support me. located remember to do. I have to say also never hearing anything.

Maria, School E: Also feedback. Instead of just walking through and never hearing anything there should be feedback so we can grow and develop.

Kate, School A: Because I go to a bunch of the [District A] pd's, we don't always like them. I frequently hate them and I take notes. So I'm not going to lie to you, but I also want to go observe people who are doing this really well because I love observing other teachers and I never ever get to do it and it's so much fun and so I got to do it once because my school had a G3 grant and so I got to go, I got sub code days as a brand new teacher and I got to go observe the ESOL teacher who teaches a lot of my ESOL kids Algebra I as I teach them Lab which was super awesome because I got to see some of the things she did. If I watched somebody doing this well because theory, hahaha, I hate theory. Theory don't work, practice work and so watching somebody implement theory in a way that actually works in the setting that I'm working in would be lovely. I think it is one of the only ways to be able to actually work it in my opinion.

Jose, School B: A greater collaboration between ESOL and regular Ed teachers because it'll go a long way towards us understanding the culture shock that students go through when they come in to our building.

Researcher: Are there any specific professional development experiences that you believe have helped to prepare you to meet the needs of your Latina/o ELLs?

Jose, School B: Maria has eloquently referred to the SIOP program training she detailed it and that has been an eye-opening experience for me.

Kate, School A: I haven't been to any yet, but that doesn't mean that there aren't any out there.

Jane, School E: I would say more training toward, for me it's very difficult teaching students who are older. For example, I teach Algebra I and many of my students are not traditionally aged students and trying to do things that are not too kiddie and a little bit more older. In the beginning of the school year I had students who were 13 to 17 in one class. Even some of my strategies, I've had to change them.

Researcher: I'm going to rephrase the question. Are there any specific PD's you have already experienced that you believe have helped to prepare you to meet the needs of Latina/o ELLs?

Maria, School E: I think some of the PDs from the Internationals have been OK, but they have not been extensive enough. So you got a little bit of this and a little bit of that and a little bit of that but it wasn't enough to develop me professionally. And then you got into the trenches and it was "oh, ok" well they kind of said we should do this, but actually we can't do that, we need to do this. And also I think it needs to be PD in the sense that it's continuing PD. It's not okay let's do this little bit and it needs to be expanded upon with your years of experience, but I don't want to see the same thing. I saw some of the same stuff last summer that I saw the first year I was here. For me it was kind of like a waste of time and it was kind of insulting. 'Cause it's like I've been here before. And I'm all about learning something new and I'm always happy if I can take one thing away at PD then it's like I've done something.

Jane, School E: Me providing professional development has helped me because I have to walk what I talk.

Maria, School E: I also wanna add that it has to be meaningful.

Researcher: All right. And last question What other experiences do you believe might help you in developing more culturally responsive practices to support the Latina/o ELLs in your classroom? Teacher one I think this is where you were going earlier when you mentioned....

Jane, School E: providing professional development. Also traveling.

Kate, School A: I feel like also having a focus group like this, but of ESOL students will be awesome because I mean until you hear it from them I don't know what actually works. I'm sure the data will say so. I'm assuming that you test them right? Which doesn't mean that you test them right, but they know if they're learning because they're really excited when they learn something. So it's like yea did this thing that I did, did this do anything to you and they're like "no, I wanted to throw

you out of this window.” So just talking to them because they’re the ones that we have to teach and maybe not even ones that are still in school because they might just joke around. They actively might not know what affects them yet ‘cause even though teenagers know more than we think they know, they don’t know everything. So I’m asking graduating ESOL students that did well and also ones that dropped. Why did you do well? and why did you drop? Similarities and differences. Ones who are older who are like “yes, I actually know what’s up now.”

Maria, School E: An experience that I had was when I visited the schools in New York and I loved the idea and I keep pushing for it and it won’t happen is that I feel that kids need to have a language portfolio where they present every school year at the end of the school year to their peers and their teachers and the administrators. Because I don’t think the kids are encouraged enough to develop their English language skills because there’s no accountability. I don’t feel there’s accountability for it. Once it leaves the accountability, the accountability is taking place in the classroom but once it leaves our immediate classroom and if everybody is not on the same page, it’s not happening.

Researcher: Alright. Any last comments?

Jose, School B: Food is my thing, going to some of the Latino restaurants and getting some arroz con pollo [chicken with rice] and come back and talk to kids about that.

Researcher: So thank you so much for taking your time to participate today I loved this conversation and it actually in thinking through and combining the data with the survey results. It was very interesting to see some of the responses because what I noticed in the survey data, specifically with statements 3 and 4 that’s where most of the difficulty is in the infusion of the culture into the curriculum. It’s also then thinking about how we are assessing that. And so, thank you so much. We will be combining all of your responses and aggregating all of the data to help make recommendations to the district about what we now understand around teacher perceptions in implementing culturally responsive practices in schools that are highly diverse in District A and needs that exist in preparing teachers to work with diverse learners. If you want a copy of the dissertation you are absolutely privy to having a copy and of course I will give you all so many thanks without naming you in the dissertation itself. So thank you so much, appreciate you for being here.

Appendix M

UMD IRB Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4202
FAX 301.314.1475
ah@umd.edu
www.umsonline.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: April 24, 2019

TO: Carlos Beato, MA

FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1400940-1] Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: An Analysis of Math & ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in Teaching Latino High School ELLs

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: April 24, 2019

EXPIRATION DATE: April 23, 2020

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category #7; Waiver of written consent requested under 45CFR46.117(c)(1) [Survey]

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Prior to submission to the IRB Office, this project received scientific review from the departmental IRB Liaison.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 23, 2020.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Unless a consent waiver or alteration has been approved, Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Appendix N

District A IRB Approval

May 3, 2019

Mr. Carlos Beato

Dear Mr. Beato:

The review of your request to conduct the research titled "Cultural Responsiveness in the Context of a Large Urban School District: An Analysis of Math and ELA Teacher Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Practices in Teaching Latina/o High School ELLs" has been completed. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation has granted authorization for you to proceed with your study.

Authorization for this research extends through the 2018-2019 school year only. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a written request for an extension. We reserve the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities.

Prior to your data collection activities, you are required to secure the written approval of the principals of high schools where you intend to conduct your research using the forms included with this letter. The original signed copy of each form should be forwarded to this office and a copy given to the respective Principal. Also, the content of the participant consent form must be exactly as that of the version approved by our office. Only approved copies (stamped "APPROVED") of the consent form may be distributed to your target subjects. Should you revise any of these documents or change the procedure, the revisions and the revised procedure must be approved by this office before being used in this study.

An abstract and one copy of the final report should be forwarded to the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation within one month of its completion. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301-749-5226 ext. 40020 or by e-mail at c . . . I wish you success with your study.

Sincerely,



Carole Portas Keane, Ph.D.
Supervisor, Office of Research & Evaluation

CPK:cpk

Enclosures

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