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Why That?: An Ecological Perspective of ELL Teachers' Professional Development

Brian Rose
University of Northern Colorado

Over the past decade, the school-aged population in the United States (U.S.) has shifted dramatically. In 2004, nearly 60% of school children identified as non-Hispanic White; in 2014, this population represented less than half (49.5%) of students in U.S. schools (McFarland et al., 2017). During this same period, the number of students from all other backgrounds has increased. Race and ethnicity notwithstanding, the number of students who speak a language other than English at home has also increased across the U.S. during this same time. More specifically, while the overall population of English language learners (ELLs) is close to ten percent, the percentage of these students in elementary grades ranges from 9.8% (grade five) to 16.7% (kindergarten) (McFarland et al., 2017). Of course, these numbers fluctuate from year to year, from grade to grade, and even from state to state. That being said, a majority of states in the U.S. have experienced an increase in school-aged ELL populations in the last ten years (McFarland et al., 2017).

Despite these changes in the diversity of U.S. schools, the teachers in the U.S. are fairly homogeneous. Three-quarters of all school teachers are non-Hispanic white (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), with over 80% of teachers in public schools identifying similarly (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). On the surface, the demographic differences between students

and teachers should not pose any difficulties in the education of children in schools. Sadly, though, this is not the case. Sleeter (2008) argues that "this [difference] matters because it means that students of color...are much more likely than White students to be taught by teachers who question their academic ability, are uncomfortable around them, or do not know how to teach them well" (p. 559). Indeed, this is not a new phenomenon. In 2001, Parsad, Lewis, and Farris found that only one third of classroom teachers felt they were prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students. More recently, research identified that while almost all teachers, in public and private schools, engaged in professional development (PD), only around one quarter of these experiences focused on ELLs and their instruction (Goldring et al., 2013). These authors did find, however, that PD activities related to ELLs were more prevalent in public schools, for teachers in the elementary grades, and for those working in higher poverty schools.

Teachers themselves are not to blame for the paucity of knowledge or skill in working with ELLs. In fact, less than half of the states in the U.S. require teachers to engage in any coursework or field experiences related to ELLs (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Interestingly, despite a majority of teachers in the U.S. believing they need more support in

working effectively with ELLs, only a small fraction of teacher education programs offers opportunities for teachers to engage with ELLs at all (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Ultimately, this need drives the focus of this paper, which aims to identify the ways in which classroom teachers, through PD opportunities, learn to provide more effective instruction to ELLs in their classrooms, and more particularly, to uncover the influences upon teachers to choose their PD, beyond the demography of the classroom.

Literature Review

The legal responsibilities schools and teachers have to teach ELLs have been evolving over the last 50 years, with their origins extending even further back than that. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and its subsequent reauthorizations – the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) – address the educational needs of children in the U.S. However, the most specific guidance for the instruction of ELLs lies in legal precedent. The landmark legal decision of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) prescribed the reconciliation of equitable instruction for ELLs in U.S. schools, and while no particular programming was mandated by this decision, a later case required that any program of instruction for ELLs must be founded upon educational theory, supported materially and with particular personnel, and assessed for effectiveness (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981). Beyond curricular choices and instructional programming, the ways in which states, districts, schools, and teachers can comply with these requirements are reflected in the PD opportunities they provide and those which teachers take up with the

purpose of supporting the teaching and learning of ELLs in the U.S.

Research about the PD of teachers has long identified the need for a wide range of opportunities (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Little, 1993), but a more traditional, one-shot model persists (see Gall & Renchler, 1985; Richardson, 1994, for the effectiveness of this model). Ball (1996) argues that “the most effective professional development model is thought to involve follow-up activities, usually in the form of long-term support, coaching in teachers’ classrooms, or ongoing interaction with colleagues” (pp. 501-502). Richardson (2003) confirms these recommendations, as well as those made by Little (1988) and Abdal-Haqq (1995), and offers the need for PD to also “acknowledge participants’ existing beliefs and practices” (Richardson, 2003, p. 401). Recently, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) extended this discussion by identifying seven elements of effective PD, including (a) a content focus, (b) active learning, (c) collaboration, (d) use of models and modeling, (e) coaching and expert support, (f) feedback and reflection, and (g) sustained duration.

The research on teachers’ PD includes the foci of collaboration with colleagues (Clark, 2001; Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001; Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003; Meissel, Parr, & Timperley, 2016) and researchers (DaSilva Iddings & Rose, 2010; Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001; Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Clair, 1998; Powell, Diamond, Burchinal, & Koehler, 2010), academic coursework (Favela, 2007; Gebhard, Demers, & Castillo-Rosenthal, 2008; Sowa, 2009), and participation in larger, school-wide initiatives (Datnow, Borman,

Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003; Montes, 2002; Shea, Sandholtz, & Shanahan, 2017). The research also identifies the ways in which PD can affect teachers' attitudes and beliefs about ELLs (Eun & Heining-Boynton, 2007; Mantero & McVicker, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Taken together, this body of research highlights the value and effects of a number of models of PD to teachers.

Other studies discuss the differing needs of teachers at varying grade levels and times in their careers. Batt (2008) found that teachers with extensive backgrounds in ELL instruction still felt a particular lack of knowledge in themselves as well as their fellow education professionals. In particular, they desired greater support in parent involvement, curriculum development, and Spanish-as-a-second language. Cho and Reich (2008) found, again, varying needs of teachers who work with ELLs in their classrooms. Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) found a striking difference between elementary and secondary teachers in their stated needs, though both of these groups of teachers appreciated a focus on instructional strategies and learning factors specific to ELLs. However, while elementary teachers benefited most from PD focused on reading and writing in English and English language development, the secondary teachers valued workshops that presented on cultural issues and content instruction.

Ultimately, teachers are indeed engaging in a wide range of PD opportunities focused on a wide range of content. Desimone (2009) argues further that,

Teachers experience a vast range of activities and interactions that may increase their knowledge and skills and

improve their teaching practice, as well as contribute to their personal, social, and emotional growth as teachers. These experiences can range from formal, structured topic-specific seminars given on in-service days, to everyday, informal "hallway" discussions with other teachers about instruction techniques, embedded in teachers' everyday work lives. (p. 182)

These findings are the prerequisites for this study, which focuses on the pathways teachers engage in either by choice or coincidence. The research is clear on what PD should look like and what content is meaningful for teachers to learn. However, the factors that influence teachers has not been as fully fleshed out by the literature. Accordingly, this study aims to extend our understanding of the PD literature by examining not what and how teachers learn, but why they engage in PD in the ways they do. After all, as Doyle and Ponder (1977) noted, "Statements of how change *should* occur are not very useful in interpreting how classroom teachers actually respond to influences which impinge upon their established habits and practices" (p. 1, emphasis in the original). Accordingly, a more nuanced understanding of why teachers participate in their own PD will provide teacher educators and those who provide PD greater guidance in supporting teachers more effectively.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical framework that guides this study is of a bifurcated, yet still unified, nature. One of the frames this research leans heavily on is the conceptualization of learning as socially mediated activity (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) describe sociocultural

theory as a “study of the social group and its cultural history [that] highlights the role of social and material context in understanding how knowledge is constructed and displayed” (p. 1). Context, in this case, is vital in understanding how teachers learn and develop as professionals. As Johnson and Golombek (2003) explain,

For teachers, this means that the constellation of activities in which they engage as learners in classrooms and schools, as learners of teaching in teacher education programs and, later, as teachers in the institutions where they work, shape their thinking, forming the basis of their reasoning. (pp. 730-731)

Ultimately, how and what teachers learn is defined within the contexts in which they participate as professionals.

The means through which this learning occurs is defined as mediation. Mediational means, consisting of any number of tools an individual may appropriate, are the result of the “participation in cultural activities in which cultural artifacts and cultural concepts’ (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 58) intertwine with each other and the psychological functioning of the individual” (Rose, 2012, p. 68). Wertsch (1998) offers some clarity in arguing that mediation “provides a kind of natural link between action, including mental action, and the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts in which such action occurs” (p. 24).

The other theoretical framework that guides this study is ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979). In particular, Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues that,

the understanding of human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on

the part of one of two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multiperson systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. (p. 514)

Rogoff (1990) concurs and states, “Individuals’ efforts and sociocultural arrangements and involvements are inseparable, mutually embedded focuses of interest” (p. 27). In other words, all human action is fundamentally contextual and research needs to identify the ways in which human action influences and is influenced by contextual forces.

To identify these influences and contexts, Bronfenbrenner (1994) offers the construct of environment. He posits this construct is “a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls” (p. 39), and names the nested structures the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem represents the activities and influences an individual engages face-to-face. The mesosystem is the linkage of two or more microsystems, or “a system of microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). An exosystem, by contrast, can be defined as two or more microsystems, which includes one microsystem in which an individual does not participate directly. This particular system is difficult to conceptualize, but in a teacher’s experience, an exosystem could represent the link between the classroom and specific educational legislation. In this case, the teacher interacts directly with the classroom context, but not necessarily with the political structures which create and enact legislation. The final system within this perspective is the macrosystem,

defined as “the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, and exosystems are the concrete manifestations” (p. 515).

Within this study, these two theoretical perspectives converge in a unified framework through which not only social interactions mediate learning, but also the interactions of an individual within and with larger institutions can be seen as mediational means. Of course, teachers’ learning is mediated by interactions with their colleagues and their students. Also, teachers engage in their professional work in particular ways within and in response to particular contextual influences. Employing this unified perspective provides a meaningful analytical tool for researchers to see larger, institutional aspects as mediational means in determining why teachers choose to learn what they do.

Data Sources and Analysis

This study was an investigation of the PD of four elementary school teachers who provided literacy instruction to ELLs in their classrooms. Each of these teachers worked in a different school across two school districts. Two of the teachers were classroom teachers with a mixture of ELLs and native, English speaking students, and the other two teachers provided instruction to only ELLs. Capturing the nature of the mediation of these teachers’ professional development choices required particular data collection. The data sources included collecting records of the professional development activities and conducting interviews with the teachers, school administrators, and district officials. All teachers were interviewed on three separate occasions, with each interview

focusing on the content of the teachers’ past and recent PD experiences, the reasons for their choosing these opportunities, and the effect of these experiences upon their classroom instruction. Also, to provide greater context to the teachers’ perspectives, each of the principals at the four schools and several district-level administrators were interviewed once each.

Employing a naturalistic approach to data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), these data were coded through immersion (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), with patterns emerging during and after data collection. Categorization of these patterns was supported by the prolonged artifact collection and interview protocol discussed above. This process allowed the collected data to more clearly illuminate what the teachers chose as their PD activities as well as the reasons these activities were selected. I focused specifically on the ways in which the immediate instructional and institutional contexts influenced their PD. The codes that emerged are represented below by both the domains of influence exerted upon the teachers in seeking and participating in various PD activities – legislative concerns, administrative demands, school site needs, and classroom issues – as well as the more focused forces within them – licensure and financial concerns, NCLB, student-focused district initiatives, goal setting activities, sharing requirements, collegial interactions, delivery of curriculum, and cultural pressures.

The data presented below also represent a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which allowed me to “pin down the specific condition under which a finding[s] will occur [and] help form the more general categories of how these

conditions may be related” (p. 173). In the case of this study, a cross-case analysis of the four teachers, each at different schools in two school districts, brings into relief the similarities among and differences between all of these teachers’ learning in each of the specific contexts. Understandably, the number of teachers discussed in this paper is a limiting factor in the broad application of any specific claim these data may be used to support. That being said, the nature of the discussion and conclusions of this study offer insights to teachers and teacher educators, given that teachers, within any context, certainly engage in PD, and, indeed, engage in PD for specific reasons.

Findings

As mentioned above, the participants in this study were four teachers, working within two school districts. Also participating in the study were the principals of these schools and two other district-level personnel. Below, I briefly describe each of these teachers, their schools, and their school districts. Also, I present the data related to these teachers’ PD choices and the various influences that precipitated them.

The Teachers and Their Schools

Esperanza and Lionel in the Drake County School District. Two of the teachers whose work is represented in this study taught in Drake County School District, which had seen a near doubling of its ELL population in the ten years prior to the beginning of this study. The district employed a sheltered model of ELL instruction wherein students who spoke a language other than English would attend a separate classroom with a teacher prepared to provide literacy instruction to an entire

classroom of ELLs. More recently, however, the district had switched to an inclusive classroom model that maintained a home room for the ELLs with their English-speaking peers and allowed them to move to other classrooms for content-area instruction.

Esperanza is a teacher with nine-years teaching experience, the last seven of which had been in a sheltered, 4th-grade classroom. This was the first year she had taught in the new programming. Her preparation included a degree in Elementary Education and Child Development, a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction and ESL, and an ELL endorsement. She also speaks Spanish, saying she was “not completely fluent, but [understood] enough to communicate with parents and non-English speaking students.” She participated in a great number of PD activities, completing close to 70 hours during the year this study began. (See Figures 1-5.)

Lionel, the second teacher in Drake County Schools, had taught at Woodruff Elementary School for the previous 15 years. Woodruff was one of the most challenged schools in the district in terms of the socioeconomic status of its students. Close to 100% of the students at Woodruff qualified for free and reduced lunch. He had studied Spanish briefly and was able to “follow what they are saying [in Spanish] but [has] limited speaking ability.” Lionel had also enrolled in six credits of ELL certification courses at a local college and had completed 90 hours of PD related to the teaching and learning of ELLs over the course of his career. Typically, though, he usually engaged in the requisite 30 hours, rarely logging hours beyond this requirement, nor keeping complete records of his PD work. Ultimately, Lionel engaged

| Professional Development - <i>Esperanza</i> | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Date | Name of Training/Workshop | # Hours Credit |
| Aug. 27, 2002 | Focus on Achievement | 3 |
| Sept. 17, 2002 | Hands-On Science: Magnets and Motors | 6 |
| Oct. 15, 2002 | Hands-On Science: Technology of Paper | 6 |
| Oct.-Dec. 2002 | COMP Training: Classroom Management | 21 |
| Nov. 19, 2002 | Hands-On Science: Measuring Time | 6 |
| Feb. 5, 2003 | Survive and Thrive for Middle School Educators | 6 |
| June 18-19, 2003 | Changing Behaviors: Strategies to Win | 12 |
| Aug. 7, 2003 | ELL Orientation | 2 |
| Sept. 15, 2003 | Hands-On Science: Animal Studies | 6 |
| December 1, 2003 | Hands-On Science: Land and Water | 6 |
| Jan. 29, 2004 | Guided Reading: 4 Blocks | 5.5 |
| Jan. 13, Jan. 20, Jan. 27, Feb. 10, 2004 | RISE (Responsive Instruction for Success in English) - ELL | 22 |
| Feb. 5, 2004 | Hands-On Science: Food Chemistry | 6 |
| Feb. 6, 2004 | Literacy Presentation-Dr. Mary Bigler | 6 |
| Jan. 14, May 10-11, 2004 | ██████ Writing Assessment Rubric Scoring | 18 |
| March 4, 2004 | IPT Training (ELL) | 6 |
| Sept. 2003-August 2004 | ████████████████████ University-Coursework (Linguistic Applications, Middle School Methods, CALLA Method, Issues in Bilingual Ed) | 12 Graduate School Hours |
| June 3-4, 2004 | Social Studies: Content Area Strategies | 12 |
| June 8, 2004 | Literacy Interventions | 6 |
| June 15, 2004 | ELL Workshop | 6 |
| June 17, 2004 | Family Math | 6 |
| June 18, 2004 | ██████ ArtSmart Program Preview | 6 |
| July 8, 2004 | Cultural Sensitivity Training | 6 |
| July 12-16, 2004 | Marilyn Burns Math Workshop | 30 |
| August 2004-May 2005 | ██████ Coursework (Grammar, Assessment) | 6 Grad. School Hours |

Figure 1. List of Esperanza's PD.

| Date | Name of Training/Workshop | # Hours Credit |
|--|--|-----------------------|
| January 23, 2007 | K-4 ELL Practical Strategies for Accelerating the Literacy and Content Learning of ELLs | 7.5 |
| February 7, 2007 | Designing individualized comprehension folders with reading specialist + Observing 3 rd /4 th ELL class at ██████ Elementary | 6 |
| April 19, 2007 | ELDA Training for 3-12 ELD Teachers | 3 |
| June 6, 2007 | Reading Adoption/Handwriting Workshop - Grades 4-6 | 6.5 |
| July 19, 2007 | Developmental Spelling Analysis (DSA)/Word Study Workshop | 6 |
| July 25, 2007 | Tier III S.D.A.I.E. Avenues Supplemental Textbook and Materials Training-ELL | 6 |
| September 11, 2007 | Quantum Learning—Day 3 | 6 |
| September 12, 2007 | ArtSmart Training—Echoa Unit | 3 |
| September 25, 2007 | ELL Report Card Training | 3.5 |
| October 3, 2007 | Math—Integrating Problem-Solving Workshop | 6 |
| October 23, 2007; November 28, 2007 | ELL Thinking Maps Workshop | 12 |
| January 10, 2008 | Math Hands-On Manipulatives Kit Training | 3 |
| January 11, 2008 | School Improvement Plan Development—ELL Representative | 6 |
| February 12, 2008 | ELDA (English Language Development Assessment) Training--ELL | 3.5 |
| February 21-22, 2008 | Math District Problem-Solving Assessment Scoring | 13 |
| July 21-23, 2008 | We the People Social Studies + Character Education Workshop | 19.5 |
| October 9, 2008 | ELL Portfolio Training | 3.5 |
| December 3, 2008 | ArtSmart Training—Circus InCognitus Unit | 3 |

Figure 3. List of Esperanza's PD, continued.

| Date | Name of Training/Workshop | # Hours Credit |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| February 10, 2009 | ELDA (English Language Development Assessment) Training | 3.5 |
| February 16, 2009 | Quantum Learning--Day 4 | 6.5 |
| April 28, 2009 | State Standards Roll-Out Phase 1 | 6.5 |
| July 22, 30, 31, 2009 | ELL Summer Institute-Experienced ELL Teachers (Kagan Cooperative Learning, Thinking Maps, Cultural Conference) | 19.5 |
| July 23, 2009 | State Standards Roll-Out Phase 2 | 6.5 |
| August 8-9, 2009 | ████████ Faculty Retreat—Professional Learning Communities | 13 |
| September 29, 2009 | ELL Curriculum & Assessment Training | 3.5 |
| January 4, 2010 | Differentiated Instruction Training | 6.5 |
| January 21, 2010 | Balance Math Training | 3.5 |
| February 22, 2010 | Inclusive Services—Part 1 | 6.5 |
| September 3, 2009— April 8, 2010 (monthly) | Thinking Maps K-4: Path to Proficiency for English Language Learners (Cohort Group) | 21 |
| April 28, 2010 | Inclusive Services—Part 2 | 6.5 |
| September 15, 2009— May 17, 2010 (monthly) | ELL Teacher Representative Meetings—Short trainings, discussions, and policies/procedures/initiatives related to ELL | 7 |
| June 30, 2010 | Differentiating Instruction for ELLs in the Integrated 3-5 Classroom | 6.5 |
| August 6-7, 2010 | ████████ Faculty Retreat—"75+ Achievement Boosting Strategies" by Dr. Danny Brassell | 13 |
| September 27, 2010 | ELL Cornerstone Textbook Training | 3.5 |
| Fall 2010 | Jason Foundation—Suicide Awareness & Prevention—Online Training | 2 |
| November 19, 2010 | Dave Weber's "Sticks & Stones Exposed: The Truth Behind Words and Relationships" Video Training | 3.5 |

Figure 4. List of Esperanza's PD, continued.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| November 22, 2010 | Voyager Intervention Program Training (RTI groups) | 1 |
| December 8, 2010 & February 23, 2011 | 4 th Grade Data Analysis Days with Instructional Coaches | 7 |
| January 3, 2011 | Teaching with Rigor & Bloom's Taxonomy + Technology Training—Examview, Study Island, Discovery Education, Student Data Warehouse | 6.5 |
| February 1, 2011 | Balanced Literacy: Running Records Training | 6.5 |
| 2010-2011 School Year | Technology Trainings—school website, CPS clickers, Gradespeed, ELMO | 4 |
| 2010-2011 School Year | Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings—4 th grade team (Grade-level common assessments, data analysis, & interventions) | 1 hour per week |
| September 2010—May 2011 (monthly) | ELL Teacher Representative Meetings | 7 |

Figure 5. List of Esperanza's PD, continued.

in school-based PD opportunities in a perfunctory manner. Having attended many of the required PD sessions on numerous occasions, he spent much of his time discussing more non-traditional offerings and their origin in the local community. Not surprisingly, he was incredibly involved in the community his school serves, having been granted guardianship over four of his past students, and regularly attending community events such as birthdays, holidays, other celebrations.

Amy and Jane in the Stratton County School District. The other two teachers participating in this study are Amy and Jane. They taught in Stratton County School District, which has implemented an inclusive model of instruction with pull-out programs for ELLs in its schools for the last 30 years. The ELLs in Stratton only represented a small portion of its students, but they regularly failed to reach federal

benchmarks in all subject areas, including reading.

Jane taught mainly at Stoney Creek Elementary School, but also split her time at another school campus. The small population of ELLs at each of these schools determined the itinerant nature of her job. She has been a teacher for over 25 years. She also taught French at the middle school and high school level, and her educational background is eclectic. She has a degree in French and Political Science, a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an ESL concentration, a law degree, Ph.D. candidacy, and multiple teaching licenses in two states. Like Esperanza, she had completed PD hours in vast excess of the required number. More interestingly, however, is that Jane has also developed and presented at least six PD sessions for her colleagues during the academic year in which this study was conducted. She presented one of these workshops on three different occasions. (See Figures 6 and 7).

Jane

██████████ PD Information

2008-2009 (1st year in ██████████ County system)

New Teacher Orientation Aug 04, 2008 6 hrs

District-Wide Teacher Event: Eight Keys of Quantum Success and Moving Beyond Rhetoric Aug 05, 2008 6 hrs

JAE/SCE Help! I Have a Student Who Can't Speak English! Nov 11, 2008 2 hrs

Suicide Prevention Training Oct 20, 2008 2 hrs

Quantum Learning Days 1 and 2 Oct 17, 2008 6 hrs

Reading Street for ELL Students Jun 03, 2008 6

Quantum Learning Days 3 and 4 Feb 06, 2009 6

Also went to Birmingham, AL for SWTESOL conference -- 2 days

2009-2010

Quantum Learning Day 5 May 28, 2009 6 hrs

Assessment & Intervention Strategies for Students with Eng. as a 2nd Language Jul 28, 6 hrs

ELL Professionals: Working with Administrators, Teachers, and Other School Staff Jul 29 6 hrs

Art Teachers: Book Arts/ Binding and Creating a Visual Journal Jun 30, 2009 6 hrs

CEO - ELL Suicide Prevention Training May 01, 2009 2 hrs

Textbook Adoption Committee Feb 09, 2010 6 hrs

██████████: New and Apprentice ELL Training Jan 16, 2010 6 hrs

Attended TESOL annual conference in Boston, MA April, 2010

2010-2011

DIBELS FOR K-2 Jun 22, 2010 3 hrs

I've DIBEL'D, Now What? Jun 22, 2010 3 hrs

CEO - ELL Suicide Prevention Training 2010-2011 Apr 15, 2010 2 hrs

ELL Professional Development Jun 25, 2010 6 hrs - ██████████

Figure 6. List of Jane's PD.

K-2 Teachers: Elementary Drive-In Conference Jun 24, 2010 6 hrs [REDACTED]

Growing Up WILD Aug 28, 2010 3.5 hrs

SCE Comprehension Connections Jul 27, 2010 3 hrs

SCE Understanding SST process - Special Ed.

SCE Comprehension Connections-Infering Jan 25, 2011 .5 hr

JAE Reading Strategies Nov 30, 2010 1 hr

[REDACTED] Close the Achievement Gap Summit: Addressing Culture, Abilities, Resilience
Jun 14, 2010 18 hr

Will attend IRA annual conference in Orlando in May. Seriously, not a boondoggle, although I will need to go do the Tea Cup ride.....

PD Presentations:

2009 on:

- Remix book studies (3xs)
- SIOP/CALLA: Teaching ELLs (1x)
- Instruction that Works (Marzano): Teaching ELLs (1x and we didn't like it)
- Blog: Robust Vocabulary Instruction (1x)
- SCE Vocabulary PD: Robust Vocabulary Instruction (combined with Marzano Academic Voc.): one initial presentation with two shorter follow-up sessions
- Assist [REDACTED] on several Comprehension Connections presentations

2011-2012:

- Possible Beck blog for SCE teachers – not sure if [REDACTED] still wants it
- [REDACTED] I were asked to do an ELL instruction PD by last night's group, so we are going to get with [REDACTED] about that
- Will present the Robust Vocab/Academic Vocab instruction PDs at JAE starting in June; it is one of JAE's initiatives in the SIP for next year. Can add review games/activities.

Figure 7. List of Jane's PD, continued.

Amy worked at North Branch Elementary School. Unlike Jane, who moved from school to school, Amy maintained her own classroom solely at North Branch. She is a native Russian language speaker with three years of teaching experience. She also has engaged in more than the required PD hours, and she also regularly provided ESL classes to

the local adult population. She typically attends all mandated PD opportunities to satisfy the state's requirements, but also attends other PD outside of those offered by her school and district. (See Figure 8.) She has a degree in English and German, a Master's degree in Secondary English Education, and a K-12 ELL endorsement.

Individual Professional Development Record

Individual Professional Development Record

| Session Title | Location/Time | Date | Enrolled | Attended | Credit | Focus |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|--------|-------|
| Classroom Instruction That Works with ELL Students K-12 Teachers | Teacher Center - 8:30 am | Jun 10, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 6 | |
| K-12 District Wide Event (K-2 REGISTER HERE) | Long Hollow Baptist Church - 8:30 am | Jul 22, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 6 | |
| K-2 Teachers: Elementary Drive-In Conference | SCM - 8:30 am | Jun 24, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 6 | |
| ELL Professional Development | Teacher Center - 8:30 am | Jun 25, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 6 | |
| Elementary Drive-In Conference (Grades 3-5 Register Here) | SCH - 8:30 am | Jun 24, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 3 | |
| ELL Learning A-Z Webinar | ELL Portable - 3:30 pm | Sep 14, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 2 | |
| PLC for Teachers of English Learners | NBE - 4:00 pm | Sep 28, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 3 | |
| PLC for Teachers of English Learners | NBE - 4:00 pm | Oct 27, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 3 | |
| CEO - ELL Suicide Prevention Training 2010-2011 | Central Office - 6:00 pm | Apr 15, 2010 | Yes | Yes | 2 | |
| Summer Institute 2010 | | | Yes | Yes | 24 | |

Your requirements are a minimum of 30 hours.

You have earned a total of 61 hours.

Your requirements are COMPLETE.

Report prepared on 24-Mar-11.

View by year: 2010-2011

Figure 8. List of Amy's PD.

Influences on Teachers' PD Choices

The teachers chose particular PD offerings in response to a wide range of forces. Again, four main domains of concern emerged from the data – legislative concerns, administrative demands, school site needs, and classroom issues. These domains of influence are parsed into more specific influences, which include licensure concerns, financial concerns, NCLB adequate yearly progress, professional learning communities (PLCs), goal setting activities, school-wide sharing expectations, curriculum and delivery, collegial interactions, and cultural pressures. Each of these influences is outlined below in a descending order, beginning with broader institutional influences and ending with immediate classroom issues.

Legislative concern. The teachers' PD choices were definitely affected by legislative concerns such as the requirements to maintain their professional licenses, payroll schedules, and national assessment demands.

Licensure concerns. Naturally, all of the teachers are guided by the terms of their teaching licenses. Both of the teachers' states of employment required the teachers to engage in a minimum of 30 hours of PD each year. The districts, in response to this requirement, made every effort to put their teachers in a position to complete these hours with little difficulty. The state within which these teachers worked also mandated that each teacher, to renew his or her license, accrue 90 points within a 10-year window. To satisfy this requirement, teachers were able to engage in a fairly wide range of PD, including successfully completing college or university coursework, participating in evaluation programs, developing self-directed projects, and engaging in community and business

work related to their jobs as teachers. This concern made simply engaging in PD, regardless of its content, a requirement.

Financial concerns. Beyond the fundamental need to simply continue learning throughout a teaching career, teachers chose to participate in PD opportunities for other reasons which originated within legislation. One reason in particular stood out to Lionel. He remarked that financial concerns resulting from the payroll schedule at the state level for state employees often prompted teachers to choose not just certain PD offerings, but whether to choose any at all. He remarked,

The teachers here, a lot of them sign up to do a whole lot of [PD] for the stipend, who are being paid 10 months. See, my last paycheck is Friday. I have to go June, and July, and the first part of August operating off of other things. So, a lot of teachers take the stuff in the summer in order for that.

In other words, the content of some PD did not matter; rather, teachers engaged in PD to supplement their income during the summer months when their regular pay schedule was not continued.

NCLB adequate yearly progress. While all of the teachers felt the need to prepare their students for the year-end assessments, Lionel, specifically, discussed how these assessments drove much of his professional learning and, indeed, classroom instruction. He mentioned he learned more about the particular content to be assessed, beyond the state academic standards, through faculty meetings and other instructional planning sessions. As he described these discussions he explained, "They tell you what is going to be asked. They give you the standards, and then we ask the questions saying, 'Alright, this year we are going to talk to you and test on

mean.” These meetings also focused on the development of new ways to address the scope and sequence of the district curriculum, all the while allowing time for him to prepare his students for their tests. This learning helped him integrate these two foci in his instruction. He elaborated by saying, “From January until the [test] you go back over just what they say is going to be on the test. And you keep repeating that plus adding what needs to be added in January, February, and March.” Ultimately, he was able to support student learning of grade-level academic content as well as the testing formats.

Administrative demands. The district offices that governed the operation of the schools represented in this study also influenced the PD choices of the teachers. From more formalized structures (i.e., the PLCs) to face-to-face interactions (i.e., goal setting activities), the influence of this domain on the teachers was widely felt.

Student-focused district initiatives. Nancy, the Stratton District Instructional Coordinator for ELL Programming, instituted a program of PLCs for teachers across the district to work together and learn more about the teaching and learning of ELLs in the district. Essentially, the district was not seeing appropriate achievement from its ELLs and needed to address the feeling that the ELLs were lost between the mainstream and ELL teachers. Nancy said she needed “a really good way to solve, or attempt to solve the problem of...this concept that the ELL children belonged to the ELL teachers and not to the regular ed teachers also.” The PLC program in Stratton aimed to reconcile the difference between ELL teachers, with greater knowledge and skills to effectively teach their students, and mainstream teachers, with a greater number of contact

hours with their students. This form of PD was very meaningful to the teachers, and all but Lionel participated in a PLC in some way. Jane commented on this by saying, I am not on any team in either of the schools I teach at, so I am not included in any particular team’s undertakings – I have tried, but my teaching schedule is such that I am teaching when most team meetings are taking place (related arts, PE times). So, not only do we miss the teamwork at the school level, but at the county level, we itinerant EL teachers aren’t included in things.

In other words, by instituting the PLCs, the district allowed its teachers to engage in learning that would otherwise not be available to them. The PLCs focused upon academic language in classrooms, provided varying community configurations (small group and large group PD workshops), and worked across schools in the district to allow some flexibility in the support they provided teachers. Amy mentioned this specificity in a discussion regarding her work in a PLC. After a meeting where less effective strategies were discussed, she said, “I want to be a good teacher, and here I am using these, and this is less effective.”

PLCs were also a feature of the Drake School District. The focus of the communities in this district aimed to develop effective instructional strategies as well as develop assessment procedures and instructional curricula. Esperanza remarked,

We’ve been meeting with the coaches. We’ve worked on creating common assessments, and we were working context clues, and math problem solving, and setting goals. We looked at the *ThinkLink* results and looked at the different sub-skills there. Language

and vocabulary was low, so we wanted to work a lot with context clues.

Goal setting activities. In the Stratton district, all teachers received a yearly performance review. For Amy and Jane, that requirement meant that they needed to meet with Instructional Coordinator for ELL programming – Nancy. During these meetings, among many other items of discussion, Nancy would talk with the teachers about their future professional goals. Interestingly, both Jane and Amy commented on this as a valuable resource for driving their continued learning. Jane mentioned what goals she discussed, “[The] first year goal was technology and continue my coursework, because I wasn’t sure I was going to bother with my Masters.” The next year, her goal became to develop PD workshops for her colleagues addressing any concern regarding ELLs. Jane remarked that Nancy supported her continued effort with this goal for more than a single year, “That was for the second year, and [Nancy] said please continue doing your PDs because they are very helpful for educating the county – the people in them.”

Amy shared similar stories regarding her evaluation meetings. She discussed her continued educational opportunities with Nancy, prompting Amy to begin the process of applying for a Ph.D. program. She said, “Obtaining my Ph.D. – [Nancy] set that goal for me. My boss sees that in me.” This newfound confidence led her to explore other purposes for her graduate study,

I think I would be, like through a Ph.D. program, I would learn more and go even, go through the research and I would, in the future, I would share that with other future teachers because I want to share what I know, and I will know after a Ph.D. program.

Ultimately, these purposes found their origin in the initial goals as set in meetings between her and Nancy.

School site needs.

School-wide sharing requirements.

The principal at North Branch, Karen, defined the roles and responsibilities of her teachers very plainly. In addition to their on-campus work, teachers engaged in PD, and “the expectation is to come back and share.” She expanded on this by saying, “If it is a workshop that isn’t something that’s going to benefit the school and the kids, that may not be a workshop that the teacher would go to.” Amy, then, in her choices of PD needed to account for her own professional learning, as well as the needs to the classroom teachers she supported through her work with their ELLs. Karen continued,

[teachers choose PD in terms of] how important the workshop is to the direction of the school’s vision and goals and what the school’s needs are. We work with our ELL teacher so that everybody is very clear on what those goals are.

Amy’s work with her students was seen not as a sideline support service, but one of integral meaning in meeting the mission of the school and the learning of all of the students are North Branch, not just those who speak English natively. Even at the district level, this focus was clear. As Nancy, the ELL coordinator, mentioned above – consideration of ELLs in a schoolwide context needs to be reconciled with classroom instruction.

Collegial interactions. Esperanza and other teachers at Unified Elementary School participated in a school-wide reading intervention. While this intervention was prescribed in nature, the teachers at Unified implemented many of the

instructional strategies and content presented within the intervention in a variety of novel ways. For instance, she was able to leverage the school's thinking maps to provide greater access to the content presented in the intervention. She developed this practice through interactions provided through her participation in her district's PLC. She also worked with her fellow Unified teachers to develop a wide range of vocabulary activities to engage her students further in this area of their literacy development and content area learning.

Jane's interactions with colleagues helped not only determine the content of her PD workshops, but the nature of the presentation of the material. Also, offering PD for her colleagues required her to unpack the various instructional practices and academic content presented in the workshops. She stated, "Best is for me to present [a workshop], since by presenting/teaching I learn the most. I have to really model the strategies I'm promoting. I am challenged to be at my best, and get to know faculty better." Of interest here is her mention of getting to know the faculty better. This interaction and these relationships are what mainly guided the development of her workshops.

Classroom issues.

Curriculum and delivery. Amy spent much of her professional time focusing on the learning needs of her students and identifying more effective ways to differentiate her instruction for them. She constantly sought PD opportunities that satisfied these dual needs, stating, "I can't find [the perfect strategy] because there are different kids, and they have different ways to learn." Essentially, she was on a never-ending search for as many instructional strategies as she could find so

as to provide the most effective instruction possible. She spoke of some of the strategies she learned through her PD.

I do this [Whole Brain Teaching] with grammar/literature/social studies concepts. It is useful in all contents as you do it together with the class, and then students teach each other. Definitely, this could be a very powerful language-learning tool for them as well as an assessment for me. I can see how much they understand and deliver the knowledge to each other. It is great for speaking skills and developing cooperation among students.

Within this example, Amy provides instruction in both a direct manner as well as through cooperative learning activities. Amy's choice of PD as a way to fulfill curricular and instructional purposes is the hallmark of her continued learning.

Likewise, Esperanza engaged in PD to identify new ways to organize instruction. In discussion of her instructional practices, she explained some of her ideas.

[I provide] a combination of word study and more traditional spelling approaches. We do some word sorts, analyzing patterns in words (i.e. VCV, change y to i and add es, etc.), and giving students a list of words for the week. The list of words usually has a common theme such as short *a* words versus long *a* words or compound words or suffixes. This can tie into the language skills we are studying at the time, and we use the words as vocabulary words too (putting them into sentences, play[ing] "I'm Thinking of a Word" game). Students don't just learn to spell those words then, but they learn the spelling patterns to extend to other words (we give bonus

words on the weekly test that use the same pattern but aren't words students studied). Students also learn meanings of some words they aren't familiar with. We play games with the words, put them into ABC order, and do other activities that make them more meaningful than just "this is your list of words to memorize this week."

She also discussed the source of these practices, "Since the district does not have an adopted spelling book anymore, I combine resources from an old spelling series, word study materials, teacher-made lists, etc." Again, the curricular context of her classroom precipitated her search for more information.

Whereas Esperanza had to look outside of her school and district for support, Lionel was able to utilize his school administration to learn more about the curriculum of his school. The assessments presented in his school required students to be familiar with the genre of test-taking writing and the ways in which writing tests are scored. This content was unfamiliar to him and he reached out to his school administration for guidance. He was provided available assessment protocol and other literature regarding the specific writing requirements and translated this information into instructional lessons for his students.

Cultural pressures. As each of the teachers interacted daily with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, they participated in professional learning and developed cultural awareness to more effectively work with their students. Every single teacher in this study either spoke other languages or allowed students to speak languages other than English in their classrooms. Amy is a native Russian speaker and speaks English and German. Jane speaks English and French and spent

some time learning Spanish. Lionel is a native English speaker and can speak and listen in Spanish to some extent. Esperanza speaks fluent English and learned Spanish for a number of years. Jane, in particular, focused on increasing not only her own cultural awareness, but that of her colleagues. In one of her PD workshops, she engaged everyone in reading the text, *Remix: Conversations with Immigrant Teenagers* (Budhos, 1999). She discussed the first workshop with this text, "The first one we did, we had a group...who got up and we asked them to lead the discussion about their kids, and they kept making fun of their names, they made fun of their situation." She revised her work and focused on empathy.

At the start, we don't always know how to pronounce their names, the kids' names, we don't always understand their culture, but we have to be respectful. We made it clear we were talking about the cultural issues and emotional issues that these kids face, and we are not going at all into the need to teach them differently and how you learn how to teach differently. Focusing on the experiences of children and not the instructional roles of teachers made it easier for her to work with the notion of culture and its presence in their classrooms.

Discussion

The data reveal the presence of four systems that influence these teachers' PD choices – legislative concerns, administrative demands, school site needs, and classroom issues. Each of these systems influenced the teachers in different ways and to differing extents. These systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1994) mediated the PD selection of the teachers (Vygotsky, 1978,

1986) and each system is discussed below. Also discussed is how the convergence of these systems definitely exerted heavy influence on these teachers.

At first blush it seems as though the legislative arena influences only teachers in ways related to a basic need for PD. However, this system also affects the nature of the curriculum and assessment, as we see very specifically in Lionel's experiences. In fact, this microsystem governs the very nature of these teachers' work. Indeed, specific legislation enacted in the last half century determines the nature of current classroom teaching across the country (i.e., Bilingual Education Act, 1968; Civil Rights Act, 1964; Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965; in all of their forms). The legislative arena exerts enormous influence on all of the other microsystems, from the need to even provide specific instruction to ELLs in schools (Castañeda, 1981; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982), to determining the requirements to maintain licensure and organizing pay schedules. In some way, for all of these teachers, the legislative arena influenced not just their choices to engage in PD, but also the specific content of these choices.

The teachers also engaged in interactions with officials at the district level. For two of the participating teachers, Amy and Jane, these interactions were fairly frequent and influential in determining the nature of their PD choices. For instance, the goal setting activities promulgated from the district's evaluation process pushed both Jane and Amy to engage in PD explicitly. Goal setting has been shown to increase teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Ross & Bruce, 2007), and for Amy and Jane, these activities resulted in the exploration of numerous learning opportunities. For

instance, Jane developed a series of PD workshops for her colleagues, increased her participation in professional organizations, and extended her university study. Similarly, Amy participated pursued higher education opportunities as a result of the goal setting segment of her yearly evaluation. Castle, Peiser, and Smith (2013) argue that continuing university study offers teachers the opportunity to increase agency, take instructional risks, and engage in specific reflection related to not just instructional practice but also to theoretical understandings. Academic study can also affect the ways teachers build relationships with local immigrant communities (Favela, 2007) and view language and literacy learning (Gebhard et al., 2003). These goals, then, helped shape their vision of their work to contain a leadership element. This new role included a larger focus not only on their instructional capacities, but also those of their fellow teachers.

As mentioned above, the districts also implemented a PLC program of which Jane, Amy, and Esperanza (not Lionel, though he could have participated in a PLC as well) took advantage. PLCs have been shown to improve instructional practice and facilitate collegial interactions among teachers (Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Fulmer, & Trucano, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), and these interactions provided yet another pathway through which these teachers could continue their professional learning. Whether it be an increased awareness of, and instructional repertoire for, vocabulary instruction or a more finely understood perspective on the relationship between ELL and mainstream classroom teacher in terms of educating ELLs in schools, the PLCs offered each of these three teachers something specific to their individual instructional needs.

The school site is yet another system in which the teachers interact personally. At Drake, for instance, the principal defined the roles of a teacher, any teacher, as one who also takes into account the learning of fellow teachers when engaging in PD. In fact, teacher-led professional development is most effective when it is based upon the specific needs of the teachers involved (Patton, Parker, & Tannehill, 2015). As a response, Amy always needed to attend to the professional needs of her colleagues as well as her own when choosing among PD opportunities, for every choice required her to return to her school and present the content she learned to her colleagues. After all, a focus on the specific content of the classroom and the ways in which that content is learned, is a hallmark of effective professional development (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

Jane's PD choices also hinged on the experiences she and her colleagues had on campus. In presenting workshops to her colleagues in her school, Jane provided a unique opportunity for herself and others to engage in explicit instructional strategies in their classrooms and then return to a workshop to extend these practices. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that both a content focus and the use of instructional models is integral to the professional development of teachers. Further, the sustained duration of these experiences – initial PD offering, classroom application, and a subsequent PD session – provides teachers with multiple opportunities to refine and reflect upon particular classroom practices (see Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007, for the specific effect of sustained PD on classroom instruction). This ongoing support was only possible at the school site, as a more district focus would fragment the

experience with differential attendance and the possible application of PD content across varying contexts.

For Lionel, the classroom specifically was his main influence, but in general, his school site afforded him access to the local community at large. His focus resembled Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2014) conception of culturally relevant teachers. Specifically, Lionel "made [a] conscious decision to be a part of the community from which [his] students [came]" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 479). This influence increased over time as his participation in local community events allowed him to create relationships with students of all ages throughout his school. In other words, the children in his immediate classroom were not his sole focus; rather, he viewed his teaching service as an investment in his wider community. In this way, his work was not simply on behalf of the students in his classroom, but also all of those who had come before in his school, as well as those who had yet to arrive on campus.

For Jane, the classroom provided a reason for her to extend her language studies to include Spanish. Maintaining connections with her students and their families through their native languages was of paramount importance to her. Her use of native languages also provided her additional instructional options in the classroom. Esperanza also uses Spanish in her classroom in a response to the demographic makeup of her students. Indeed, all of the teachers engaged their knowledge of languages other than English in the classroom and sought opportunities to develop this knowledge further. Harper and de Jong (2004) argue that teachers need "to explore ways that languages are similar and different" (p. 159). Further, PD that provides for the development of

linguistic knowledge, even of non-English languages, can offer teachers ways in which they can “apply their (linguistic) content knowledge...to teach aspects of English that ELLs need to learn and use in school” (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013, p. 93). In other words, the development of linguistic knowledge of English or otherwise, can aid in ELL instruction. This goal, along with increased communicative ability, drove these teachers to pursue greater language skills.

Continued language learning was not the only opportunity these teachers pursued in response to issues arising from their classrooms. Jane developed the PD workshops for her colleagues based upon her classroom experiences. Mainly, these workshops focused on the actual, lived experiences of students. Developing a wider view in terms of cultural awareness that includes not just a focus on linguistic knowledge (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000), but also an understanding of other cultural knowledge and practices (see Jimenez, Smith, & Teague, 2009, for examples of classroom application of student cultural practices), allows teachers to engage students with a larger array of academic

content in ways that are familiar to them. Esperanza also engaged in a PLC to develop instructional strategies and assessments based upon the needs of her students. Amy engaged in PD to identify instructional strategies to employ in her classroom. Lionel, while not engaging in formal PD opportunities, leverages his community involvement to provide his students greater access to academic content.

The Convergence of Systems

The various, singular systems certainly exert influence upon the teachers’ intellectual and professional lives. However, the convergence of these systems (mesosystems) not only mediate the teachers’ choices of PD, but also helps determine the primacy of specific choices. For instance, the school site and district link to create a mesosystem which provides these teachers PLC experiences and opportunities for collegial support, while identifying the responsibilities of an ELL teacher. Further, another microsystem, the classroom, connects to this mesosystem by influencing the content worked through in the various PLCs. Figure 9 depicts the systems and convergences suggested by these data.



Figure 9. Ecological Map of the Participating Teachers.

The ecology depicted in Figure 9 is not an exact representation of any of these four teachers, nor is it a framework for any and all teachers working today. What it does represent, however, is a possibility, as determined by these data, as to what microsystems might exist in a teacher's professional life and how certain PD opportunities reside in their convergence. The ecology in which Jane works was most heavily affected by district influence in the form of goal setting and the PLCs. This analysis does not mean that she was not influenced by any other system or convergence; rather, the district influences upon Jane simply converged more often with the other microsystems in which she participated.

Amy, on the other hand, was influenced more acutely by school site influences. The convergence between the district, classroom, and school site defined her role as an ELL teacher in her school in a very particular way. The main thrust of this convergence was the expectation within North Branch that teachers take responsibility not just for their own students' learning, but also the learning of colleagues. Meeting this expectation, Amy chose PD not just to extend her own learning, but to build the expertise of her fellow teachers. In this way she was able to create more unified access to academic content for her students.

Lionel's ecology was dominated by the classroom. The convergence of the classroom and school site provided him with a greater understanding of his students' needs in and out of the classroom. Whether it be in terms of the academic content or the assessment schedule of the school, Lionel always based his PD activities on how they would best support his classroom work. His experience

is similar to Esperanza's in that her classroom focus provided an impetus for her PD choices. However, Esperanza was also guided by the other microsystems in a more balanced way than the other teachers. While federal benchmarks for student achievement guided much of her work, the fact that her ELLs were not meeting those benchmarks provided a classroom focus as well. She also engaged in a PLC and developed common assessments with her grade-level teaching team. Essentially, all of these influences converged for Esperanza, leading her to develop innovative instruction and thinking.

Conclusions and Implications

This study suggests that ELL teachers are definitely interested in continuing their learning. Whether their PD choices stem from classroom influences or other outside forces, ELL teachers desire to develop their professional acumen. Teacher development, however, does not happen in a vacuum – it is supported by a number of factors. This support can come in the shape of singular systems in which teachers work, or from a greater convergence of systems that impacts teachers' professional lives. For instance, one of the teachers in this study offered PD workshops for her colleagues. Jane developed these sessions at the urging of the district office, but she may not have persisted in this endeavor without the alignment of the other systems in which she was engaged. Further research is needed to uncover the true extent to which convergences lead to teacher action. More specifically, future research may reveal whether the magnitude of a convergence is related to the likelihood a teacher will act. This focused understanding on the mediating power of a teacher's ecology will certainly

provide concrete directions for teachers and teacher educators in guiding both teachers and others within specific ecologies to support teacher professional development.

Implications for ELL Teachers

The findings of this study offer some guidance for ELL teachers in their continued professional learning. In particular, in developing a more nuanced concept of their work, ELL teachers can live up to the expectations of their roles in schools as well as pursue meaningful, personal directions for their professional growth. Ultimately, ELL teachers are members of a larger ecology, and, as such, also act as mediational means in the systems within which they reside, as well as in those within which they do not. This specific understanding truly provides a greater vision for how ELL teachers' roles in their schools can be conceptualized. Whether they are asked to take up leadership roles in schools, what ELL teachers know, are, and can do, is a mediational force that provides support for, influence upon, and examples of the nature of the professional lives of other teachers. One way ELL teachers can embody this recommendation is to pursue PD that enables them to extend their own instruction as well as that of their colleagues. These choices, then, define the ELL teachers' role, indeed the role of all teachers, as one of true collegiality – a role which defines the work of a teacher as more than to provide classroom instruction, but to also support the work of other teachers in their professional pursuits. Additional research is needed to identify the ways in which ELL teachers mediate the development of other teachers with whom they work. The result of such research could provide insights into how teachers can more effectively develop work in

community with their colleagues and how, specifically, individual, school-site communities can reflect the nature of the faculty involved.

Implications for Teacher Educators

These data also provide some direction for teacher educators, whose job it is to prepare pre-service teachers for their work in schools and with children. Within teacher preparation programs, teacher educators can organize coursework and field experiences to provide more numerous opportunities to engage with the complete range of school-site personnel. Pre-service teachers can gain a greater understanding of the work of teachers, as well as develop a more complete vision of the institutions in which they will teach, through interactions with other school and district personnel. In response to these interactions, reflective activities can help pre-service teachers extend their learning by not simply articulating their experiences, but also identifying ways they can continue learning about the experiences they are having in the field. The end result of these kind of activities may be that ELL teachers enter the field with a clearer vision of themselves and their work. Research on these topics can provide guidance for teacher educators as they support pre-service teachers in their attempts to navigate the larger institutions in which they will more fully participate upon receiving their licenses. After all, their work is situated within a larger set of systems, and these systems greatly affect the nature of their work as teachers.

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