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An Equitable and Culturally Responsive Examination of the Identification Practices of English Learners for Special Education in a Suburban East Metro District

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AN EQUITABLE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EXAMINATION OF THE

IDENTIFICATION PRACTICES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION IN

A SUBURBAN EAST METRO DISTRICT

by

Brandon Auge

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

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To all the wonderful families that I have the privilege of serving everyday.
Their advocacy and resilience inspires and humbles me.

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Special thanks to my committee members, colleagues, and peers who supported me throughout this process. It is because of these people and their dedication to the field that education can truly serve as a vehicle for social change, equity, and justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introducing "Itzel"

A teacher in a 1st grade classroom works diligently with a Spanish-speaking student. "Itzel" has struggled greatly throughout her young career. As the teacher guides her through a printing exercise of numbers Itzel's confusion begins to swell. She is unclear as to the expectation and overwhelmed by the rigor of the task. The teacher asks Itzel again to trace the number 6 and subsequently write free-hand the number 6 to the right of the original. The look on her face reveals a growing confusion. The teacher again carefully demonstrates the expectation repeating, *trace then write*. As the teacher is visibly running out of strategies and patience, Itzel too is becoming increasingly discouraged. As Itzel's confusion continues to grow the young Spanish speaker attempts one more time to clarify the expectation. She raises three fingers on her hand and says, *tres?*

This experience illuminates the complexity of learners in our classrooms. Learners in contemporary classrooms exhibit a mosaic of skills, experiences, cultures, and learning profiles. It is the responsibility of the school in partnership with family to provide programming that is congruent with the unique profile of each learner. English learners (ELs) and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are two profiles that require special attention. With diverse language and cultural assets, ELs require practitioners and schools to provide meaningful access to content through a non dominant language. With the support of effective English language de-

velopment instruction ELs must reach academic and linguistic parity to that of their English-speaking peers. Access to post secondary opportunities depends on practitioners' ability to partner with families to best identify appropriate programming to make this a reality for all students. Challenges around equity, access, and opportunity surface throughout this process; they are subsequently examined with a critical lens when any of the three are not realized for a specific segment of our student population.

With this challenge being the motivation for my research I will focus more acutely on how programming in a suburban east metro school district responds to EL students who are demonstrating academic challenges due to a mosaic of factors. Discerning the difference between language difference and disability is an enormous challenge. Standard metrics are often rendered less effective (Hamayan, 2013) and additional instruments are called upon to more effectively identify the source of a learning difficulty. Concerns around special education identification practices, English language development programming and assessment will also be considered. Family engagement and how their perspective is leveraged and incorporated into the decision making process will be a critical component throughout. The current landscape makes this research critically important. Understanding trends in disproportionality and how special education programs are equipped to serve CLD creates a climate of urgency worthy of immediate action.

Special Education Identification in the US

The linguistic and cultural profile of every student presents contemporary educators with numerous challenges. With student populations changing and reflecting a more diverse aggregate of learners, teachers are called upon to execute a higher level of pedagogical flexibility. English learners represent a significant portion of this demographic shift, a 57% increase over the past 10 years (Nguyen, 2012). This heterogeneous group of learners requires educational professionals to recognize a divergence from the traditional cultural narrative of American schools. Today, teachers are challenged to think about how ELs

achieve academically. Teachers must think creatively about their instruction to ensure that language and cultural difference does not impede access to content.

When access to content is questioned, or growth is profoundly anemic, experts look to special education to discern whether students have a deficit. Special education has a long history of ensuring that all students have access to a meaningful education. Legislation like IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S. Code § 1400) of 1975 was enacted by Congress to ensure this reality; students with disabilities and less traditional learning profiles have the right to a free and appropriate education. What has become increasingly problematic is the reality that the metrics used to determine if a student has a cognitive disability were not designed to address the complexity that a CLD student exhibits. Instruments do little to address the linguistic and cultural components of their learning profile. This incongruence between student profile and metrics used to identify strengths and struggles of CLD and EL students requires immediate attention.

Research suggests, however, that access to rigorous academic content is often impeded. ELs in numerous studies are over represented in special education programs (Ortiz, 2001, Shifrer, 2011, Hartley, 2007). This trend exposes a vacancy in how educators understand the complexity of these diverse learners. Additionally, a trend that over identifies specific groups of students requires educators and scholars alike to question the equitable nature of metrics used to identify these students. What remains opaque is to what degree the metrics and processes used to identify CLD students for special education are culturally and linguistically responsive. Inconsistencies in identification practices throughout the United States would suggest that in fact these metrics are grossly inadequate. Throughout this chapter, I will be looking at special education practices, trends in identification, and determining if there is a need to implement a more culturally and linguistically sensitive set of practices in my own district.

Special Education for ELs: Over and Underrepresentation

There is a growing collection of research which examines trends of the over and underrepresentation of ELs in special education programs. While there are few definitive conclusions the research does illuminate a chronic concern on behalf of educators and policy makers. In Samson's research (2009) she and her colleagues from Harvard define disproportionate representation as "the extent to which membership in a given group affects the probability of being placed in a specific special disability category (149)." She goes on to discuss the problematic nature of disproportionate representation of language minorities in that there is no empirical evidence that would suggest that any aggregate of students is more predisposed to a learning disability than another. This research is not alone in the questions that it leaves with its readers. What are the factors that are contributing to this trend? Are the metrics used to determine disability congruent with the learning profile of the student?

Adding to the complexity of this disability dialogue are questions of equity and the marginalization of groups of students. In Sullivan's research (2011) she explores this conversation of equity. She comments on the policy, history, and rhetoric of the civil rights movement and how special education is built on the idea of fairness and equity. She acknowledges that special education and its supports have fallen drastically short in serving all students, especially language minorities. In her research Sullivan comments on the variation of ELs in special education across the United States. States have reported ELs are identified at rates from 0 - 17.3% of the student population according to a Hopstock & Stephenson (2003). This is compared to the average of 9% of all students regardless of background, socioeconomic status, race, or language (Sullivan, 2011). This broad identification band lends itself to numerous interpretations. The substantial variation that is revealed through Sullivan's work suggests an acute lack of understanding of our nation's ELs and how they best fit into our nation's special education programing. This statistic serves as an important backdrop of this paper. How do we bring more equity to the identification process? Policy makers and practitioners alike need to ensure that there is not a disproportionality among certain segments of our population thus ensuring a fair and equal education.

Disproportionality has not evolved due to a singular force, but rather a mosaic of educational, cultural, and linguistic influence all embedded within a political and historical context. The current age of accountability was in part born out of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. While disproportionality existed well before the installment of this particular legislation it did draw renewed attention to how practitioners understand ELs. This legislation suggested that American schools were in fact falling behind and placed a renewed sense of urgency around outcomes rather than progress. Standards were rewritten that held all students to higher levels of academic performance. Boals and his colleagues suggest that this undeniably contributed to a sense of urgency in how students were served, especially language minorities whom were historically excluded from such measures of accountability. As a result of legislation like IASA , districts had to determine how to best measure the growth of language minorities and provide appropriate programming (Boals, 2000; Improving America's Schools Act, 1994)

In addition to policies that predated IASA, it became clear that school districts did not have educators in place equipped with the necessary knowledge of second language acquisition to address the needs of these learners. A complex linguistic profile was seen as a deficit and in fact the culprit of poor academic performance. It was not leveraged, considered, valued, or understood (Nguyen, 2015). This paired with a lack of programming for these students fueled the trends that I will examine in Chapter 2 of this paper. This climate encouraged a malpractice in education that has been studied for nearly four decades (Artiles, 2008).

Personal and Professional Significance

The personal and professional utility in understanding the complex dynamic between English as a second language and special education is found in my own teaching context. In my short tenure, I have witnessed students and families alike place a humbling level of trust in educators. It is our responsibility to ensure that this trust fuels an incredibly focused and intentional instruction. This instruction must be supported by research based strategies and assessment techniques. Furthermore, this instruction must be

culturally responsive to the narrative and experience of our students. Given the colorful mosaic of experiences, traditions, languages and cultures of our students this task has never been so challenging.

More recently in my own district, there is a growing need to understand the relationship between language difference and disability. Although seemingly innocuous, systems and metrics have fallen short in providing clarity in regards to these complex learner profiles. The result is an underserved student population. In an evolving district who has been historically insulated from such complexity, I will begin to examine this relationship in hopes of more comprehensively serving all students and families. Regardless of background or barrier to learning; the trust instilled in educators requires us to pursue such understanding. It is my understanding that this knowledge is acquired through professional learning and engagement with families, colleagues and district administrators.

It is imperative that all teachers engage in an in-depth conversation around the influence of language and culture in education. How does language and culture manifest itself in the classroom? How do educators discern the difference between a language difference and a disability? The abstract nature of these questions has vexed educators and researchers for four decades (Samson, 2009). Language and culture are assets that are often misinterpreted as the culprit for low academic achievement. In the educational age of accountability, educators and researchers alike have discovered a renewed sense of urgency in these questions. Problems solving teams, child studies, and professional learning communities are consumed with conversations around the complex nature of these learners. While there is great benefit in a more robust conversation as it relates to ELs, these conversations arguably have contributed to a disproportionality among CLD learners. While it is clear that over identification is a possible outcome of this set of circumstances, under identification is equally detrimental.

Trends of of disproportionality have unintended consequences, consequences that will be explored more in Chapter 2. Some educators have become reluctant in bringing students up for evaluation. While there is merit in this caution, in that it assumes a level of understanding of the student's status as an English language learner, it must be matched with systems, metrics and supports that are responsive and

culturally appropriate. Over reliance on a student's status as an EL is grossly inadequate when justifying a need for referral, assessment, or in some cases suspending a teacher's concern about a possible disability. This is the current landscape in which I am investigating and carrying out my research. A cautious reluctance has created a system that is ill-equipped to identify and refer CLD students to special education programs. This reality is corroding the integrity of how we serve all students and families.

The linguistic and cultural profile of our learners often confound educational professionals. More traditional methods of assessment are deemed less valid by English language specialists with our bilingual learners and do not appropriately discern what the true barrier to learning is. With few instruments to effectively collect information about literacy practices in the home, educational history, and dissect the complexity of cultural and linguistic influence, identification practices have fallen short in my district. Ultimately this provides the rationale for my research and implementation. I wish to engage in numerous conversations with leaders, colleagues, and support staff in order to implement a more culturally responsive set of processes to identify CLD students for special education programming.

Research Question

What combination of supports and assessment instruments need to be installed within my district's current set of procedures to ensure appropriate identification of EL students for special education?

Conclusion

Throughout this capstone I will review the research that illuminates the need for a deeper understanding of EL students and how they are identified for special education. Research on this topic is on going but leaves plenty of room for further investigation. Studies are numerous but are cautious to draw definitive conclusions. Scholars are profoundly aware of the complex nature of the diverse learner and thus are reluctant to generalize beyond the scope of their own study. The research reviewed in this capstone will provide readers of this paper a broad understanding of disproportionality and why EL students are more at risk than their English-speaking peers. Questions surrounding bias and equity have surfaced through the work of numerous scholars over the past forty years.

The installation of a more culturally and linguistically responsive identification process for our CLD students will be reflective of a thoughtful and comprehensive qualitative study. Interviews, questioners and comparative studies of district supports will be explored to identify the needs of my district. After careful analysis of the aforementioned metrics, ideation around creative and innovative solutions will take place. The pretext and rationale for this project will be made clear throughout the course of this process. A collaborative approach will be taken in order to create buy in, generate support, and guarantee implementation with fidelity. Voices from a variety of stakeholders will be sought to ensure that our process is responsive and inclusive. Divergent perspectives will be encouraged and leveraged as I hope to develop a culturally responsive set of supports for my district.

I hope to develop culturally and linguistically responsive supports as a result of the needs assessment and data collection. Interviews that focus on literacy practices in the home, language development in a student's L1 (first language), and cultural narrative will elicit valuable information that contribute to a more comprehensive profile of students. Behavior checklists will be developed for content area teachers; a tool that will clarify the distinction between language difference and disability. I will search for tools that allow teams of teachers and administrators to more systematically consider social/academic language, data, intervention, education and social/cognitive variables. An "EL Plan of Service" will be developed to ensure that we are providing meaningful language instruction to all students K-12. Finally, consistent and deliberate relationships with interpreters will be established. The relational capital in this process must not be lost. This combination of supports and instruments will be crucial in more accurately identifying EL students for special education services. This will be explored and discussed at length in Chapter 3. The results of my study, research, and implementation of this project will be revealed in Chapter 4. A more integrated and culturally responsive approach to the identification process will also be discussed. The efficacy of this more responsive approach will be evaluated based on research, and feedback from stakeholders, and collaborative conversations with district leaders. Students and families that I serve will be at the center of this work. With stories highlighted at the beginning of this chapter constantly reminding me of

the complexity and humility that exists in this field of work I will make few assumptions as I explore a solution to this complex challenge. I, like other researchers, will be careful to suggest my findings and final product will be of profound utility to other professionals in the field. I would predict that the supports developed as a result of my study would be of most utility for districts experiencing similar changes in demographics. As student populations change, so must the institutions that serve them. I do hope that pieces of my findings and final product will contribute to the aggregate of resources intended to more comprehensively serve culturally and linguistically diverse students and families.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The complex relationship that exists between special education and EL (English learners) is one that has captured the attention of many researchers. Questions and concerns around equity, access, identification, referral, and assessment tools are being debated throughout the United States. Few districts across the country have found themselves insulated from such concern. The research that is available is as diverse as the students and dynamics which it is examining. Under identification, over identification, and a reluctance to refer CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) students to special education programs has been covered extensively by researchers concerned with such trends. This chapter will illuminate the current landscape in which these trends have become increasingly problematic, explore the diversity of cases that highlight inequity in the identification process and reveal and explore some possible institutional recommendations to bring a lens of equity to the process of special education identification.

A Discussion of Disproportionality & Equity

The idea of *disproportionality* in special education has been studied for numerous years in search of a paradigm that would bring about true educational equity. Disproportionality is defined by Samson (2009) as "the extent to which membership in a given group affects the probability of being placed in a specific special disability category (129)." The problematic nature of disproportionality is that it suggests that membership to a particular group makes it more probable that a student will be identified with a learning disability. This is the "dilemma of difference" that numerous scholars and school districts are attempting to rectify in practice and policy. While disproportionality in general has been studied for many

years, there is a gap in scholarship dedicated to the representation of language minorities in special education programs (Valenzuela, 2006). EL students exude a complex learner profile and are often required to learn in a programs incongruent with their experience as a language minority. Shifter (2011) and her colleagues expand on this very idea when discussing the increased likelihood that a CLD student will be labeled with a learning disability as a result of the inability to discern the difference between language difference and disability. Manifestation of both of these realities looks dangerously similar. As a result of a lack of programs to address difference, numerous specialities were developed and installed to dissolve the problematic nature of serving students within a program incongruent with their experience as a learner. EL programs, gifted and talented programs and special education programs are just some examples. Consequences of this reality will be discussed later in this chapter.

Special education programs were developed to ensure meaningful access to education regardless of the learning profile of the student (IDEA P.L. 108-446). While it is certainly a step forward, scholarship has been careful to suggest that these programs have served all students and families well. The intent of these programs were to more thoughtfully consider a student's experience and address their specific needs as a learner in the least restrictive environment (Artiles, 2008). While this assertion is widely accepted, the irony and impact is also not lost in scholarship. Sullivan (2011) discusses the devastating reality of disproportionality in the current educational landscape. Grounded in legislation and policy promoting equity and access, disproportionality in identification practices persist. Her analysis links this strong disproportionality of language minorities to that of systemic inequity and institutional prejudice; this is precisely what special education law philosophically purports to alleviate. An analysis of this reality requires educators and policy makers alike to examine the equitable nature of education and the opportunities that it provides.

Congruent with Samson's notion of disproportionality, Artiles (2008) discusses this idea of equity and defines it as a paradigm that is used to enhance meaningful access and participation to a robust education. Equity demands educators engage in practices congruent with that of their student's learning profile.

What remains problematic is that instructional practices are based on assumptions of student ability that are in fact undetectable by traditional methods of assessment and analysis (Artiles, 2008). As a result, students are placed inappropriately into programs designed to address a deficit in ability. Scholarship is careful to conclude that qualification is not a result of some transactional deficit but rather a result of insufficient consideration of external factors such as language, culture, or experience. (Ortiz, 2004) Students' education as a result is corroded while disadvantaged students are further marginalized by placement into programs grossly ill-equipped to address their needs. It appears that Ortiz believes that this education is immediately unresponsive to the needs of the learner, corroding and fragmenting their opportunities to access content and engage in meaningful learning opportunities. The implications of this system are severe and are being examined by numerous researchers (Artiles, 2009; Ortiz, 2004).

Disproportionality and its implications among culturally and linguistically diverse students has been the focus of research for many years. Researchers have intensely examined the programs and metrics that have illuminated a perceived deficit among CLD students with a great deal of skepticism. A higher and lower percentage of CLD students in special education programs reveals for Valenzuela (2006) a need to further investigate these problematic trends. In her study, Valenzuela discovered that African American, Hispanic, Native American, and EL students were more likely to qualify for special education services than their white peers. This suggests problematically that membership to one of these groups makes them inherently more likely to be diagnosed with a learning disability, corroding their access to general education. This is congruent with other studies that have reported similar trends in identification of low income and racial minorities (Ford, 2012). Samson discusses the lack of empirical evidence that would suggest that members of these groups would qualify at higher rates than their white peers (Samson, 2009). The problematic nature of these patterns is a common thread that runs throughout the scholarship.

A counterpoint (not a justification) to the above perspective can be found in *Disproportionality and Learning Disabilities: Parsing Apart Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Language*. Shifter and her colleagues discuss the transcendent influence and impact of socioeconomic status that must be thoughtful-

ly considered. They are careful to acknowledge that while policy makers, educators, and scholars alike cannot rely on SES as justification for such trends it in fact does play an important role in the debate. Anemic academic progress can in fact be partially attributed to poverty. Reports of identification to the state and federal government should be understood and analyzed with this in mind. Vocabulary and language development are often correlated strongly with level of education and economic resources in a household (August, 2005). Artiles challenges this assertion when suggesting that research is weak in explaining disproportionality in terms of poverty and its effects (2008). The conversation in his research suggests that the focus is not sufficiently solution-centered and is instead attempting to explain an inexcusable reality with limited research and shallow understanding of other external factors. Regardless of the disagreement, research like that of Artiles and August seems to inject a perspective into the debate that is less prevalent in the aggregate of research. It falls short of defending trends of disproportionality in terms of a transactional relationship of content and understanding between solely the teacher and student. Instead it acknowledges the complex ecosystem that contributes to our students' cognitive development and academic achievement.

An Exploration and Analysis of Under and Over Identification of ELs in Special Education

Trends in identifications are as complex as the students that are involved in the process. A mosaic of factors contribute to the way practitioners understand the language and learning profile of these students. Socioeconomic status, culture, language, literacy practices, and diverse experiences all play an important role in how students acquire language and content. This section will examine the various possibilities in disproportionality, a look at over identification as well as the equally detrimental reality of under identification in special education. Over identification would suggest that a particular group of students based on their belonging to a group are more likely to be identified with a particular disability, typically in high incidence categories such as speech and language and LD (learning disability). Depending on numerous external factors under identification can also be found in schools across the country. The combination of an over-reliance on a student's status as EL and insufficient instruments to discern the difference

between disability and language difference have contributed to a more judgmental or subjective approach to identification. This reality is highlighted in Sullivan's work when she comments on the significant variation that exists in the American school system. States are reporting that anywhere from 0-17% of ELs are being identified and referred to special education programs (2011).

The variation highlighted in Sullivan's work is not unique to K-12 education. Experts in the field of early childhood education have expressed similar concerns. Hardin (2013) and her colleagues discuss the implications of early child hood screeners that fail to discern language difference from disability. As a result, the determination for appropriate programming is often based on an assessment that is not culturally or linguistically sensitive enough in isolation to make such judgments. Psychometric instruments fail to measure or capture the complexities of these young learners' early development. A complimentary set of instruments need to supplement the more traditional techniques of determining ability. A failure to leverage and incorporate understanding of a student's language development history is neglecting a critical piece of information, one that has been the focus of increasing scholarship (Hamayan, 2013).

The problematic reality that CLD students are over represented in special education is not esoteric in nature but rather an idea that is seen widely beyond the expertise of educational research and scholarship. There are numerous examples that highlight the multicultural complexity and challenging nature of such a dilemma. Scholars like Kangas (2014) and his colleagues analyze a southwestern school district and confirm the assertion above. He confirms that ELs were over identified in certain categories of disability, specifically emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, learning disability, and speech-language impairment. In California, language minorities were not overrepresented until the fifth grade (Samson, 2009). After a careful examination of disability categories, this study revealed that students qualified at higher rates in the area of speech and language impairment and learning disabilities. A comparative look at these two examples illuminates the potential variation in cases across the country.

In disproportionality research it is crucial to examine the trend of under identification and its implications as well. In some districts this is a more innocuous trend but equally as complex. The interface

that exists between culture, language, and disability is often difficult to capture (Yang, 2010). This dilemma has the potential of creating an environment of reluctance on behalf of practitioners. A study conducted by Limbos and Geva (2001) puts on prominent display this passive behavior. These scholars conclude that teachers are often reluctant to refer language minority students for special education as they assume their learning difficulties stem singularly from their limited English proficiency. Other concerns are more introspective and personal in nature (Garcia, 2010). Practitioners grow acutely aware of a tendency (nationally) to over identify culturally and linguistically diverse students for special education (Morgan, 2012). A concern swells regarding the message of cultural bias and poor understanding of multicultural learners. This combination has detrimental effects as highlighted in the studies that suggest CLD students that in fact need special education programming are not benefiting from such programming. Graduation rates vary from state to state. In 2013-2014 Minnesota graduated only 63.7% of their ELs in four years. This is compared to 86.3% of white students (NCES) The complexity that exists around capturing the more enigmatic pieces of these students' learning profiles renders practitioners with few answers or strategies. A thorough review of systems and supports is necessary to identify a combination of additional procedures to bring a higher degree of validity to the identification process.

Institutional Recommendations

It is evident from various angles of research that a more equitable system of identification must be installed to ensure and sustain the integrity of special education. A singular focus on the transactional nature of learning has been deemed grossly inadequate when discerning the cause of a perceived deficit. A purely transactional view would suggest that researchers and educational professionals are looking at the transmission of content and the understanding and retention of the material by the student. It does not sufficiently take into consideration the larger ecosystem in which that content is being delivered. It fails to acknowledge the influence of poverty, early learning, the impact of culture and native language. Wilkonson (2006) suggests that there are distinct sources of an ELL student's perceived "deficits." She acknowledges that disproportionally can be in fact cultivated by an inability to discern three types of problems.

She challenges the notion that learning difficulty is transactional in nature or intrinsic to the student. This transactional relationship would suggest that disability and deficits can be identified purely by examining the avenue of learning that is taking place between the teacher and the student. Disability can not be determined with out sufficient consideration and examination of the larger ecosystem in which the student is learning. Sociocultural factors in addition to other environmental factors need to be understood and incorporated into an in-depth understanding of a learner's profile. The systematic categorization of challenges CLD learners face allow practitioners to make more finite and appropriate determinations regarding services and learning opportunities. This is crucial as districts refine their identification practices. While some districts require slight modifications to their practices others require an entire paradigm shift.

Ortiz (2004) highlights the need for an entirely different approach to assessment. He introduces a framework for a nondiscriminatory set of practices meant to more thoughtfully consider the traditionally less measurable components of a learner profile. A significant portion of his work is dedicated to a conceptual distinction between language difference and disorder. For many practitioners, this distinction captures the most fundamental challenge in serving CLD students. A vacancy in understanding between these two ideas can have a corrosive effect on a student's education. In Maxwell's exploration of a San Diego school, teachers speak candidly about the challenge (Education Week, 2012). "Educators say that it is often hard to validly identify students and disentangle the disability from the language problems." This message is one that resonates dramatically through the work of many researchers (Ortiz, 2001, Shifrer, 2011, Hartley, 2007). This critical understanding is part of what many researchers and practitioners are labeling part of the pre-referral process.

Districts have more recently adopted additional screening interventions and pre-referral procedures. This is done to bring enhanced validity and reliability to the assessment process; ensuring that the assessment instrument is capturing the previously mentioned obscure pieces of the learning profile. Hartley (2007) and her colleagues developed a set of supports and procedures that purported to do just this. Like Ortiz, (2004) a crucial piece of her pre-referral process was a sophisticated understanding of lan-

guage difference and disorder. Behavior inventories and checklists can be provided as a way to guide practitioners through this process. Through an acknowledgment of the ambiguity between the two ideas she enumerates behaviors emblematic of both for classroom teachers. As confirmed by the alignment of these two researchers it is reasonable to consider this to be a pillar of any program. While this is a critical piece of the learning profile, additional procedures need to be executed to support conclusions based on behavior inventories like those provided by Ortiz and Harley.

Everett Schools District (2014) developed a sixteen step process to increase the likelihood that practitioners were thoughtfully considering the complex interface between language, culture, and content. The assessment process is intentionally preceded by a comprehensive pre-referral collection of considerations. Interviews, questionnaires, a high degree of collaboration, and thoughtful data collection techniques were all leveraged in the process. Each step of the procedure corresponds to a piece on The Critical Data Analysis Matrix. The matrix at the end of the process is analyzed and used to determine if a CLD student should be referred to special education, further intervention is required, or more intensive language services are needed. Yang (2010) advocates a similar framework in his research. He reports a thorough process to make effective determinations consist of both direct and indirect measures. These frameworks distinguish themselves from others in that they acknowledge the complexity of the learner through the use of more indirect measures. Hardin and her colleagues have devoted entire studies to developing these indirect measures (2013). The hypothesis of these researchers was that if practitioners have more accurate information regarding language use (in both languages), exposure to English, and language development history they will be able to make more accurate programming decisions.

Gap in the Research

It is clear from the robust conversation among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers that challenges around identification of CLD students is not a unique problem. Although there has been 40 years of scholarships in the area, numerous questions remain. How do we discern language disability from language difference? How do we install a lens of equity into the identification process? How do we ensure that we are capturing the more enigmatic pieces of a student's learning profile in a valid and reliable way? These questions do not appear to be reflective of a poor understanding of the dilemma, but rather the diversity and scope of the challenge. Researchers have examined numerous landscapes and have fallen short of making definitive recommendations that go beyond the scope of their own study. The limitations and reluctance of these researchers to prescribe a particular solution reveals significant academic space for further research and analysis.

Research Question

As a result of the research and what it claims to understand about the topic, my research question is the following: What combination of supports and assessment instruments need to be installed within my district's current set of procedures to ensure a more appropriate identification of CLD students for special education?

Conclusion

This chapter explored research that examined the confounding nature of disproportionality among CLD students in special education programs. Studies of equity and access have propelled this conversation to a prominent position in educational research. Through a collection of scholarship, it is evident that traditional methods of assessments have fallen drastically short of validly and reliably identifying EL students for such programs. A mismatch between learning profile and programming has compromised the integrity of their education and has contributed to the further marginalization of these diverse learners. A pursuit of nontraditional assessment techniques that claim to more effectively capture the complexities of these learners have proven lucrative to experts in the field. With this in mind, researchers are reluctant to

prescribe their "solutions" without caveats. Institutional recommendations are available, yet fall short of suggesting they are a product of an understanding as sophisticated and complex as the issue itself. It is evident that there is additional room for research in this area. The following chapter will explore how this research fits into my current teaching context. As a result of various data collection techniques I will establish a sophisticated understanding of our current position. Following this determination I will collaborate with all stakeholders to decide where programming needs to be enhanced to ensure more appropriate identification of our CLD students for special education programming. A combination of supports will then be identified, developed, and installed in collaboration with district leaders, EL teachers, special education teachers, and content area teachers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

Understanding diverse learners and ensuring appropriate programming has always been critical in education. The art behind doing this is what makes this work so profoundly complex. Despite the years of scholarship that has been dedicated to understanding ELs (English Learners), educators and policy makers continue to strive to more effectively serve CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse students) students. This study will be designed to do just this. Throughout my research I will examine and identify a specific combination of supports that will support CLD students and their families in order to bring a lens of equity to the identification process. This research is in large part inspired by the numerous students and families that I have had the privilege of serving. Below are 5 guiding questions I will consider throughout my research, analysis, design, and implementation phases.

Research Question

What combination of supports and assessment instruments need to be installed within my district's current set of procedures to ensure appropriate identification of CLD students for special education?

Subquestions

1. What do the various stake holders (School Psychologists, Administrators, SPED (special education) Staff, Families, & Students) need to ensure a more valid, linguistically and culturally responsive process?

2. What supports specifically can we identify as being *culturally* responsive and what characteristics make it so?

3. What supports specifically can we identify as being *linguistically* responsive and what characteristics make it so?

4. How do we support content area teachers in this endeavor? Are there specific tools we can provide to make them feel more comfortable engaging with CLD students and families?

5. Are there changes in the culture of a school that need to be addressed? Is there a "we" vs. "them" complex that needs to be significantly adjusted?

Overview of the Chapter

In response to a number of qualitative data collection techniques, I will look at the gaps in current programming and determine a road map forward. Traditional instruments used to identify learning disabilities have fallen short and contribute to a disproportionality among our ELs as highlighted in previous chapters (Hamayan, 2013). In this chapter I will seek the perspective of various stake holders in order to best discern the complexities of our current landscape and develop a set of supports to bring a higher degree of validity to the identification process. This holistic institutional lens will allow me to determine in what direction the research needs to go ensuring a responsive approach throughout my study. An overview of the participants, instruments, data collection techniques, location, and other methodology will be explored in great detail below.

Qualitative Research Paradigm

The research paradigm will be predominantly qualitative in nature, a holistic ethnography and case study of two distinct departments and how they interact within the broader context of the institution. A key component of this qualitative approach is explained in Mackey and Gass (2005). The researchers discuss the qualitative approach to research as leveraging an emic perspective; this perspective focuses on fewer participants and how they relate and interact to each other within a particular context (163). This methodology will be broken up into three parts: Institutional investigation and analysis, ideation and external investigation, and a development and implementation. The *Institutional Investigation* phase will establish clarity in our current position as a district. What supports are already working well, what sup-

ports are not serving all students and families, and what still needs to be developed. Ideation and creative planning sessions will take place as I begin to strategically select who I will interview for the development phase of my study. After I conduct these interviews with the various participants I will then begin to ideate as to how to best supplement the current work that is being done in my district in serving CLD students and families. *External Investigation* and research phase will require research and analysis of districts that have already implemented a variety of supports and determine to what level these supports can be replicated with fidelity in my own district. Consistent with qualitative research techniques I will be open to the organic evolution of the study. The focus will sharpen as I work through these various phases. (Mackey and Gass, 162) The *Development & Implementation* phase will bring me back to my current district where we collaboratively look at the implementation of a set of innovative, culturally and linguistically sensitive supports. All phases will consist of position specific questionnaires, interviews, surveys, and needs assessments. Ideation and creative planning sessions will take place throughout these three phases in order to leverage divergent perspectives, encourage a collaborative approach, and create buy-in throughout the process. Below is a blueprint for my study and research.
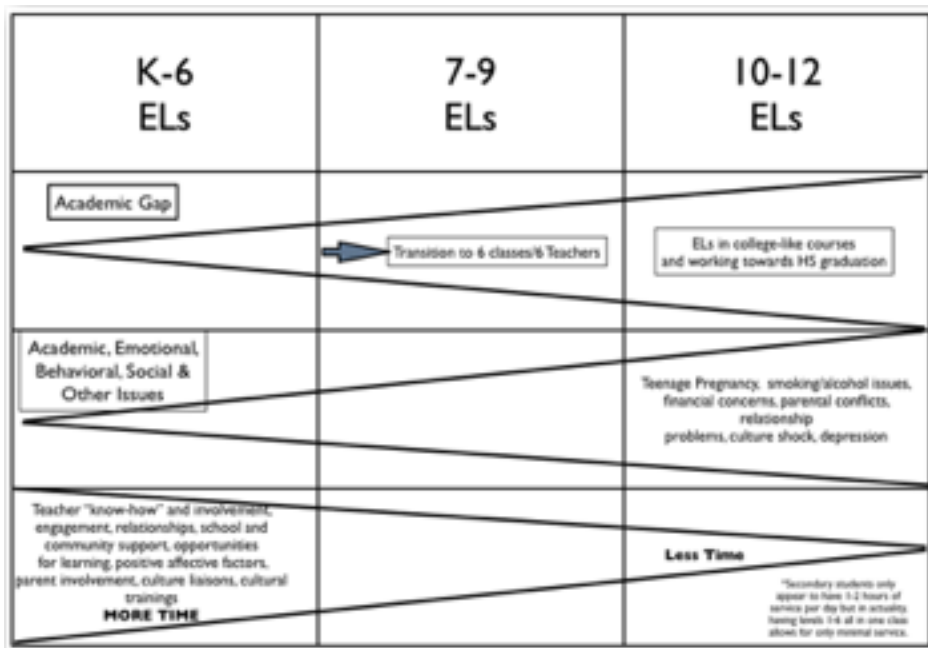

Figure 3.1 A Local Understanding of EL Support (Xiong, 2014)

a. Throughout the academic year 2015-2016 I will engage in numerous conversations in order to better understand the supports that we currently have in place to serve our CLD students referred to special education. I will engage in numerous interviews and conduct a needs assessment across the district to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of our current practices. This combination of techniques will allow me to determine our current position and what we need to implement moving forward. Some questions may include the following… "What do you see as your biggest challenge in identifying CLD students for SPED services?" "What are the current supports that you have in place that seem to work well, and what evidence do you have the supports your position?"

b. I will begin consultation and system specific research with other districts with similar demographics to ours and will interview colleagues at the State department, I will begin to construct the blueprint for a more coherent set of procedures in order to support our teachers and families engaging in this identification process with CLD students. I will begin by looking at Minnesota's two most diverse school districts, Anoka-Hennepin and St. Paul Public Schools. In conjunction with this research I will meet with our Director of Personalized Learning and Learning Supports.

c. I will engage collaboratively with district leaders and colleagues to determine how to best implement more culturally and linguistically responsive supports. I will determine receptivity on behalf of my colleagues to a new system of procedures, identify my champions for change and identify more resistant individuals. I will educate staff that seem more resistant and if possible leverage their voice and thoughtfully incorporate it into an eventual document that will serve as a guide for our teachers and administrators.

d. During this period of time I will be writing and preparing to publish a new set of procedures for my district. Throughout this process I will be working with administrators, leaders, and colleagues across the district to ensure buy in throughout the publication process. This will guarantee fidelity in its implementation the following school year.

e. Publication of supports will be made available to ensure implementation during the academic school year 2016-2017.

Participants

The participants of my study represent a variety of stakeholders that impact, take part in, or are affected by the special education identification process. It is essential in my study to leverage divergent perspectives early and often in order to discern the current position of our district and identify the appropriate combination of supports to implement moving forward. These participants will allow me to understand challenges in culture, strengths and struggles at the building level. Other participants will be external experts, administrators, teachers and ESL specialists. These perspectives will also illuminate how we understand impact versus intent. An analysis of interviews with parents will provide the most authentic understanding of this idea. It is important to understand this mosaic of perspectives as just that, a mosaic. While continuums suggest a hierarchy of importance as we gaze from left to right, mosaics suggest a more equal distribution of complex parts with families at the center.

An Exploration of Participants & Stakeholders

a. *School Psychologists* represent the professionals guiding the process at the building level. I will discover to what degree these participants have local control, exercising certain behaviors of autonomy, or are strictly engaging in practices that are being received as directives from administrators. This is a critical understanding as I seek to understand the inter district dynamics. Additionally I will need to determine the culture of collaboration and by whom it is established. Do the school psychologists establish this, encourage this collaborative climate throughout the process or do the administrators? Does it exist? What are the possible implications of both realities? I will also explore the degree to which these participants have gone through a cultural competence professional development training that was offered during the academic years 2012 - 2015. This will provide me a report into how they understand diversity and the cultural capital that our students and families contributor to our community.

b. *Content area teachers* represent the professionals "in the trenches." These are the professionals that spend the most amount of instructional time with our EL students, not the special education teachers, nor the EL specialists. It is crucial to support these teachers and understand their concerns as we strive to better

Figure 3.2 Current Teaching Context - Supplied by MDE Minnesota Report Card, 2015

serve our CLD students and families. While my current building is a suburban elementary building with more opportunity to understand and learn about all varieties of diversity, it will be important to speak with teachers serving students at all levels throughout our district. 30.3 % of my building's student population is receiving free and reduced lunch (Figure 3.2 MDE - Minnesota Report Card, 2015).There are different levels of understanding and support for our culturally and linguistically diverse students throughout our district. In order to access and truly develop a system of supports, it
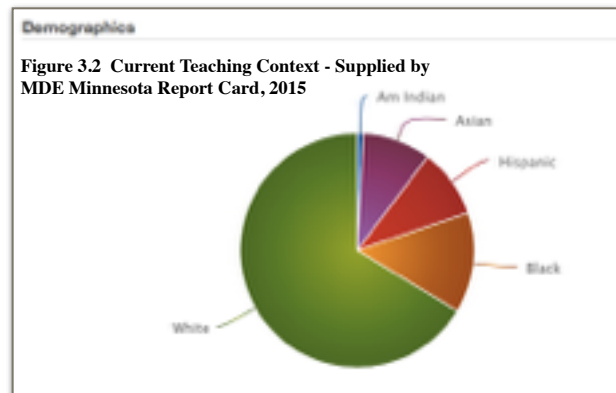
must be congruent with our current knowledge base with scaffolded opportunities to learn about language, culture, and disability.

c. ***Special Education Directors*** represent the institutional piece of Figure 1's mosaic. Many Special Education directors are experts in data, special education, administration, systems, supports, and analytics. These individuals will provide the macro lens necessary to understand how the Special Education Department's mission is manifested in practice. Additionally issues of compliance will be an area of focus with these participants. The degree to which we can ensure compliance with federal and state law is of utmost importance for these stakeholders. How do schools ensure integrity in compliance while addressing issues of disproportionality and over/under identified populations? These are all topics that will be explored with these participants.

d. ***Families*** will provide a critical perspective in this research. Through this process I will provide an avenue for families to discuss their own experiences with referral, identification, and placement in the special education programs. The degree to which families are heard, their concerns sought, and their voices thoughtfully incorporated into the process will be a critical piece of this work moving forward.

e. ***Administrators*** will be another institutional perspective crucial to understanding this complex dynamic. Analogous to Special Education Directors, these individuals are responsible for establishing culture in a building, are most traditionally the instructional leaders of a building, and are the administrative liaisons between the building and families. An administrator's philosophy is often conveyed through the decisions they make and how s/he advocates for students and families. How this philosophy is reflected in this complex process will be indicative of his or her own understanding of culture, language, and disability.

f. ***Special Education Teachers*** are experts in exceptional learners with disabilities. They bring an expertise to the table absolutely crucial to the process. Their understanding of learners with a variety of disabilities needs to be robust. What needs to be determined is what information they need to better

understand our CLD students with possible disabilities. Have these participants participated in the intercultural coaching, and if so what are the instructional implications?

g. *EL Specialists* bring a yet another expertise to the conversation. These individuals have a knowledge of language acquisition, cultural competence, and scaffolded instruction. Many EL teachers have additional training in literacy, vocabulary instruction, and SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol). This instructional framework is a set of protocols developed with English learners in mind. With a high degree of intentionality, attention to vocabulary, and language development in all the modalities through a specific content, the SIOP model is one of the leading instructional frameworks in English language education. I will determine to what degree these participants are actively implementing this framework and how their knowledge is being leveraged and incorporated into the identification process for our CLD students and families.

Location and Setting

The location of this study will vary depending on which stage of my study I am in. Early in the study I will be traveling locally thought my suburban district to numerous buildings at all levels engaging with the participants listed above. This local assessment of our current landscape must take place on site, authentically soliciting perspective, expertise, and understanding of our current position.

Data Collection Technique 1

This information will be collected through an electronic Google form for colleagues of mine and conversations with families who may struggle with access and navigation of technology. This will be an efficient method to distribute and collect the survey from a wide group of participants ultimately giving me the most accurate lens into the current climate of our district and how it is supporting all students, families, and teachers throughout this process. I will select 1-2 representatives from each stake holder group to have a personal conversation with as these questions acting as my guide. These participants will be selected based on a reputation of a robust content knowledge in their respected area.

a. School Psychologists Questions: What do you see as the biggest challenge in identifying CLD students for SPED services?

b. Do you consistently feel that you have enough information regarding a student's linguistic/cultural/experiential profile to make such a determination?

c. What do you perceives the biggest challenge in discerning the difference between language difference and disability?

d. Are there additional supports/contributions you feel that the ELL department could make to this process/conversation?

e. Do you feel we are leveraging the data gleaned from the ACCESS assessment administered by ELL staff in this process?

a. Administrator Questions: How do you see the mosaic of supports in your building as contributing to an effective process in identifying CLD students for SPED services?

b. Do you see parent engagement as a barrier to effective and accurate identification? What are yo doing as a building to ensure this is not in fact the case and that there are well established relationships in place?

c. How do you cultivate a culture of collaboration between ELL and SPED staff? What systems do you have in place to support this work? (i.e. PLCs, professional work tie, conferences)

a. Content Area Teacher Questions: What is the biggest challenge in working with CLD students that struggle?

b. Do you feel that the relationship with the families of these students is as robust as it is with other English-only families? If no, what can be done to support this area of our work?

c. Could you name an additional support that you would like to see implemented that would ultimately contribute to better achievement for your ELL students?

d. Do you feel that there is enough time to collaborate with support staff (ELL/SPED staff) to ensure success for your ELL student?

a. Parent Questions**:** How was your experience throughout the identification process? Can you talk about how the district, teachers, and administrators supported you throughout?

b. Can you think of anything that could have been addressed more sensitively?

c. Do you feel that you trust your child's teacher, administrator, and school? How do you see the relationship with your child's content area teacher? Do you feel comfortable approaching him/her with any concern you may have?

a. ELL Staff Questions: What is most challenging about discerning the difference between language difference and disability?

b. Do you think there is a sophisticated level of understanding of second language acquisition among your colleagues? How does level of knowledge and understanding impact the identification process?

c. Describe to me the characteristics of a student that you suspect has a learning difficulty? How is this different from that of a student that you suspect simply has yet to acquire the language required to be successful in school?

d. Do you feel there is an over reliance on ELLs status as LEP that has teachers suspending their concern for these students? Is this concern anecdotical or based on research based assessment techniques and expertise?

e. What service models would better serve your populations?

f. In your district, are you able to allocate service time based on proficiency or are you tightly bound to scheduling logistics and staffing resources? What would a perfect model look like and what are the steps it would take to implement this?

Equitable Service Model

As a result of the conversations and data collected from this study I will explore the necessity for an "Equitable Plan of Service" for our EL students. While complexity and financial resources will certainly act as a barrier to the implementation, I believe developing a framework for service that will comprehensively support all EL students is a worthy exercise. It will serve as a tool to advocate for more re-

sources, staff, and education for all EL students and families. The different academic, linguistic, and support needs of students will be reflected in the service model in a way which I have not seen before. It will take into thoughtful consideration age, grade, language profile, and content area needs. This will be developed and included in Chapter 5. This service model will be one of three supports developed and implemented as a result of this study.

Data Collection Technique 2

Teachers will be asked to reflect on Figure 3 (A Local Understanding of EL Support - Pre Case Study G, Xiong, 2014) in the form of a responsive journal. This figure represents my current understanding of how our ELs are receiving support as they matriculate from grade to grade. It is important to keep in mind that this perspective is perhaps premature and will not be used to make any conclusive determinations until my case study is completed. In fact this exercise will be used to ensure that my preconceived notions about our current position as a district are not influencing the integrity of the case study. Participants will be invited to challenge the premise, disagree, or provide additional insight in this reflective exercise. This insight will contribute to how stakeholders' perceptions are aligned with the current position established by the first data collection exercise. I will analyze similarities in concerns, strength, and struggles across all stakeholder groups.

Participants will be encouraged and prompted to reflect on Figure 3. Most fundamentally they will be asked if they agree with the main premise of the figure that ELs receive less support as they matriculate through the grades while their needs become simultaneously more complex. As a researcher and practitioner this is profoundly problematic, but this must be first confirmed before I continue with the case study. The following questions will be the guide to my participants reflection.

1. Do you agree with the premise that ELs needs become more complex as they matriculate from grade to grade while they simultaneously receive fewer services?

2. Are there components of this figure that you disagree with?

3. Are there components of this figure that resonate more profoundly with you than others?

4. What can we do as a district to support these students more comprehensively given financial and staffing realities?

Data Collection Technique 3

Throughout a quantitative analysis of 100 WIDA (World-Class Instruction Design & Assessment) Student Reports (based on results from ACCESS), I will determine *expected growth gains* by examining scale scores in the four language domains. Two data points will need to be solicited in order to discern if students are meeting expected growth targets over time. While there is certainly a predicted, expected gain from year to year, I expect SPED students or those eligible for special education will fall significantly below these targets. This may provide a valuable lens into their cognitive ability through a language specific assessment. It is critical that we understand and leverage these scores in more sophisticated ways. Some of the questions I will explore are the following. Figure 5 shows the tables that will be analyzed to make such determinations and answer the questions below. Consultation with experts at Minnesota Department of Education will assist with this process.

1. What are the expected growth gains at each grade/proficiency level- this will be supplied by WIDA and their data & analytics team.

2. Are there students that are not meeting their expected gains?

3. If so, what are their learning profiles?

4. Is this performance congruent with other standardized content area assessment ?

5. How can we triangulate this data with normed assessments to ensure that we are providing students appropriate programming?

Figure 3.3 shows the type of data that WIDA provides districts. For this case study I will examine 100 of my own students and extract trends among our SPED or suspected SPED eligible students across all modes of language. Doing this will provide practitioners with a valuable, language specific data point, something that I understand to be missing at this point in our current practices. A more intentional and

sophisticated leveraging of this data will enhance the validity of our identification processes when cultur-

ally and linguistically diverse students are brought up for assessment.
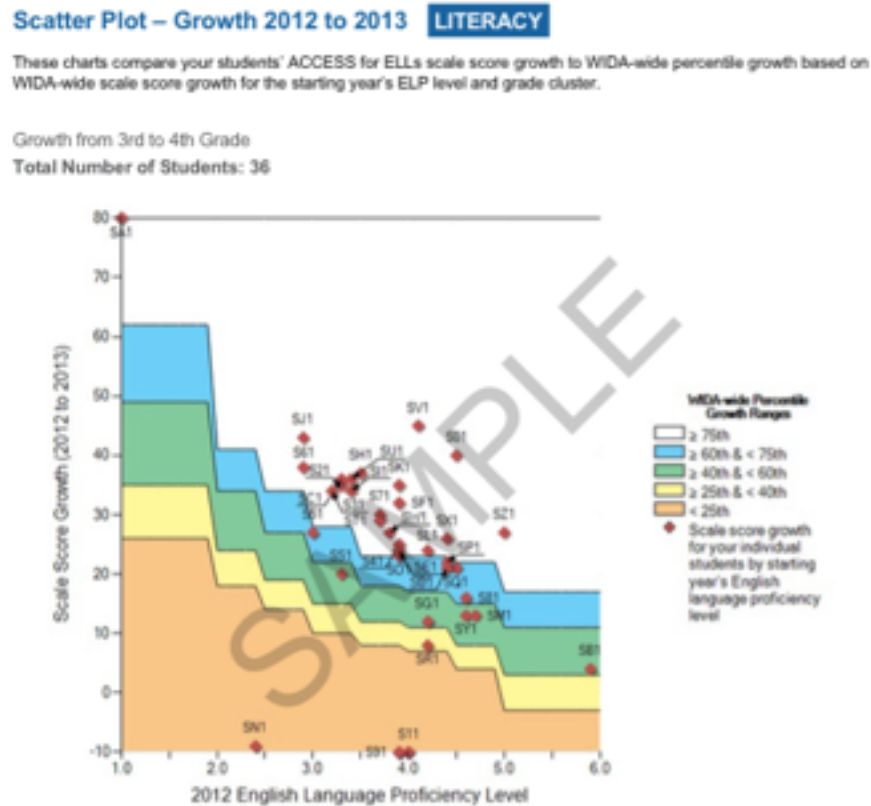
Figure 3.3. WIDA Percentile Growth
2012 to 2013

Ethics

All of my data collection techniques are intimately in line with research ethics prescribed by

Hamline University and my school district. There is no risk in participation. All results will be held confi-

dential and anonymous. I will not record any information regarding participants' names, nor report identi-

fying information in my thesis or research. Participation will be voluntary and participants will be allowed

to opt out at any point and withdraw their voice and perspective from my work. I have received approval

for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and the Executive Director of Student

Support Services. Consent letters were obtained by all participants prior to any contribution on their behalf (see Appendix F).

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the methodology of my case study. It is worth noting that a significant part of my study (*Internal Investigation Phase)* will be executed in order to verify my own professional assumptions about how different stakeholders are impacted, perceive, and are supported throughout this process. I have elected to understand the stakeholders as not a hierarchy but rather a mosaic of participants with families at the center. This is a critical component of my case study. The remaining phases, *External Investigation* and *Development and Implementation* will be responsive to the findings in the *Institutional Investigation* phase laid out earlier in this chapter. Supports and contributions like WIDA percentile growth charts will contribute significantly to a process that has not historically leveraged language development data sufficiently. A thoughtful development of a comprehensive plan of service will serve as the programming anchor for the EL department's work. The guiding questions articulated in my introduction will constantly guide my work and research. Chapter 4 will explore the results of my interviews and require me to reflect on my own assumptions and possibly adjust to a now confirmed reality.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

As discussed in earlier chapters I am interested in identifying supports that would enhance the integrity in which we identify ELs (English learners) for special education services. Chapter 4 will highlight interviews I conducted with all the stakeholders in this process. The purpose of these interviews was to establish our current position in programming as well as leverage divergent perspective from various stakeholder groups throughout the district. Each stakeholder represented a very different piece of the mosaic. The different stakeholder groups brought a diverse perspective, expertise, and lens to the conversation. After careful consideration and thoughtful dialogue, Chapter 5 will highlight the vacancies in systems and supports and prescribe a plan moving forward. The majority of my research was conducted through a qualitative study of a relatively small number of participants. While this is a more focused study I was less concerned about the generalizability of my findings. In contrast, these findings are specific to my current teaching context. In their text, Mackey and Gass (2005) comment on this method of research, "Rather than using a large group of participants with the goal of generalizing to a larger population like quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers tend to work more intensively with fewer participants, and are less concerned about issues of generalizability" (p. 163). As I conducted these interviews my research question remained at the center of my investigation. Conversations were open ended, allowing an almost organic revelation of the needs of current programming. Stakeholders were informed prior to meeting the purpose of these conversations was for academic research. Each participant signed a consent

form (see Appendix F) that ensured their names would remain anonymous while their voice, perspective, frustration, and concern would be incorporated and reflected in the supports that were developed as a result of my study.

Research Question

What combination of supports and assessment instruments need to be installed within my district's current set of procedures to ensure appropriate identification of CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) students for special education?

Timeline for Research

Winter 2015/2016 : Throughout the academic year 2015-2016 I engaged in numerous conversations in order to better understand the supports that we currently have in place to serve our CLD students referred to special education. I conducted numerous interviews and various needs assessment across the district to gain a comprehensive and holistic understanding of our current practices. This combination of techniques allowed me to determine our current position and what we need to implement moving forward. Some questions included the following… "What do you see as your biggest challenge in identifying CLD students for special education services?" "What are the current supports that you have in place that seem to work well, and what evidence do you have the supports your position?"

Winter/Spring 2015/2016: I began consultation and system specific research with other districts with similar demographics to ours and informally interviewed colleagues at the Minnesota Department of Education, I began to construct the blueprint for a more coherent set of procedures in order to support our teachers and families engaging in this identification process with CLD students. In conjunction with this research I met numerous times with our Director of Personalized Learning and Learning Supports. Additionally, I determined receptivity on behalf of my colleagues to a new system of procedures and identified my champions for change. I educated staff members that seemed more resistant and if possible sought to leverage their voice and thoughtfully incorporate it into an eventual document that will serve as a guide for our teachers and administrators.

Spring 2016: During this period of time I wrote and prepared to publish a new set of procedures and supports for my district. Throughout this process I worked with administrators, leaders, and colleagues across the district and state to ensure buy in throughout the publication process. This will guarantee a level of fidelity when these new supports are implemented the following academic year.

Late Spring 2016: Publication of supports were made available to review by my administrators. This ensured prompt publication and implementation the following year.

Data Collection Technique 1

This information was collected through interviews with all stakeholder groups. This was an efficient method to distribute and collect the information from a wide group of participants ultimately giving me the most accurate look into the current climate of our district and how it is supporting all students, families, and teachers throughout this process. I selected 1-2 representatives from each stake holder group to have a personal conversation with, with these questions acting as my guide. These participants were selected based on a reputation of a robust content knowledge in their respected field and established trust with the institution. Their consent forms were collected prior to the conversation with complete transparency at the forefront to ensure a high degree of ethical standards. The questions for each stakeholder and their responses are as follows.

School Psychologists Questions

a. What do you see as the biggest challenge in identifying EL students for SPED (special education) services?

b. Do you consistently feel that you have enough information regarding a student's linguistic/cultural/experiential profile to make such a determination?

c. What do you perceives the biggest challenge in discerning the difference between language difference and disability?

d. Are there additional supports/contributions you feel that the ELL department could make to this process/conversation?

e. Do you feel we are leveraging the data gleaned from the ACCESS assessment administered by ELL staff in this process?

Administrator Questions

a. How do you see the mosaic of supports in your building as contributing to an effective process in identifying CLD students for SPED services?

b. Do you see parent engagement as a barrier to effective and accurate identification? What are yo doing as a building to ensure this is not in fact the case and that there are well established relationships in place?

c. How do you cultivate a culture of collaboration between ELL and SPED staff? What systems do you have in place to support this work? (i.e. PLCs, professional work teams, conferences)

Content Area Teacher Questions (2)

a. What is the biggest challenge in working with CLD students that struggle?

b. Do you feel that the relationship with the families of these students is as robust as it is with other English-only families? If no, what can be done to support this area of our work?

c. Could you name an additional support that you would like to see implemented that would ultimately contribute to better achievement for your ELL students?

d. Do you feel that there is enough time to collaborate with support staff (ELL/SPED staff) to ensure success for your ELL student?

Parent Questions

a. How was your experience throughout the identification process? Can you talk about how the district, teachers, and administrators supported you throughout?

b. Can you think of anything that could have been addressed more sensitively?

c. Do you feel that you trust your child's teacher, administrator, and school?

d. How do you see the relationship with your child's content area teacher? Do you feel comfortable approaching him/her with any concern you may have?

ELL Staff Questions (2)

a. What is most challenging about discerning the difference between language difference and disability?

b. Do you think there is a sophisticated level of understanding of second language acquisition among your colleagues? How does level of knowledge and understanding impact the identification process?

c. Describe to me the characteristics of a student that you suspect has a learning difficulty? How is this different from that of a student that you suspect simply has yet to acquire the language required to be successful in school?

d. Do you feel there is an over reliance on ELLs status as LEP that has teachers suspending their concern for these students? Is this concern anecdotal or based on research based assessment techniques and expertise?

e. What service models would better serve your populations?

f. In your district, are you able to allocate service time based on proficiency or are you tightly bound to scheduling logistics and staffing resources? What would a perfect model look like and what are the steps it would take to implement this?

EL Teacher Interview A

a. What is the most challenging about discerning the difference between language difference and disability? Response: What I think is most challenging is ensuring that we are giving the EL student enough time to acquire language but also not too much time that causes them to fall behind. When do you say they have enough language that they should be able to be successful in the classroom? These kids are so complex and there are so many factors at play it is question of giving them enough time to acquire English but not too much time that they would become perpetual EL students…because of their status, colleagues reluctant to consider them for special education. This is a systemic problem.

b. Do you think there is a sophisticated level of understanding of second language acquisition among your colleagues? How does level of knowledge and understanding impact the identification process? Response: Not a sophisticated level of understanding, no. If you haven't tried to learn another language, it is challenging to embed that empathy into your instruction for EL students. I wonder if teacher education programs require their students to take a language acquisition class? EL staff is very knowledgable, however in general it seems to be a great need.

c. Do you feel there is an over reliance on ELs status as LEP (limited English proficiency) that has teachers suspending their concern for these students? Is this concern anecdotical or based on research based assessment techniques and expertise? Response: Yes, there seems to an over reliance on LEP as a status as justification for a longer than appropriate wait. But it also depends on the psychologist… there seems to be a lack of clarity around supports that makes it even more challenging to ensure appropriate programming for students.

d. What service models would better serve your populations? Response: We are covering buildings, it feels like a band-aid. I feel ridiculous because I have way too many buildings. I think we need a centrally located program. We are running a program based on numbers, and not proficiency levels. If we could build a model where we consider proficiency levels, give priority/time/resources to new comers. There needs to be a distinction between how we service our new comers and how we service our long term EL students. When you have a collaborative teacher with a nice group of students that seems to work well. We need to have an equitable service models across the districts with distinction in service, time, instruction, and support for primary, intermediate, and secondary.

e. What service models would better serve your populations? Response: A perfect model would do just that, accommodate for proficiency level, grade, and instructional needs. We are tightly bound by staffing, funding, and geographic limitations.

EL Teacher Interview B

a. What is the most challenging about discerning the difference between language difference and disability? Response: Some things that make discerning the difference between language difference and disability really difficult is also taking into consideration other factors that affect student performance such as: interrupted education, limited formal education, health problems, cultural shock, trauma, attendance, etc. The task of weeding through all of these factors and isolating the main cause of the academic deficiency can be overwhelming.

b. Do you think there is a sophisticated level of understanding of second language acquisition among your colleagues? Response: I believe that there is a solid level of understanding of second language acquisition among my colleagues. Having a firm understanding affects the identification process as well as instruction. As far as how the level of knowledge can impact the identification process, it is important for EL teachers to remember that language limitations can obscure what EL students really know, so it is crucial to allow students options to demonstrate they understand content without having the ability to use their language skills.

c. Describe to me the characteristics of a student that you suspect has a learning difficulty? How is this different from that of a student that you suspect simply has yet to acquire the language required to be successful in school? Response: The student who I suspect has a learning difficulty has very serious retention issues (especially when content has been broken down into small chunks and information has been repeated numerous times with supports such as visuals, realia, graphic organizers, etc.) I would also be concerned with students who are lacking common sense and struggle with things that may be more universal. Ultimately, I would have conversations with parents/guardian, family, and previous teachers regarding the child's performance in their L1 (first language). This is also how I would find out if the student is just an EL student who needs to acquire language to be successful. The data from the L1 is imperative and can guide the teacher and team to making the most accurate decisions for the student.

d. What service models would better serve your populations? Response: The service model that would best serve students where I am is a balance between a "push-in" and "pull-out" as needed. The focus always on language learning and acquisition through the use of specific strategies and best practices. I believe in the "push-in" model because EL student have the opportunity to engage with their peers, receive instruction and content from their teacher while getting the supports needed from the EL teacher. There are times then, when pulling students out to clarify or go over content and or concepts is important as well. But solely pulling out may hurt a child.

Content Area Teacher Interview A

a. What is the biggest challenge in working with CLD students that struggle? Response: The first thing is truly knowing if it is a language barrier or if it is something else? I have 20 years of experience so I think I can usually tell. It is a slow process but I think intuitively you can often make that determination.

b. Do you feel that the relationship with the families of these students is as robust as it is with other English-only families? If no, what can be done to support this area of our work? Response: With some families I have great relationships. Language doesn't seem to affect the relationship in the classroom. There really seems to be a diversity in relationships that exist. I notice that numbers are increasing but our resources are not growing with those numbers. Students with IEPs need support in the classroom in addition to what there is explicitly stated in their IEP. Teachers are expected to absorb inflated case loads, initiatives, and new curricula with less time and compensation.

c. Could you name an additional support that you would like to see implemented that would ultimately contribute to better achievement for your ELL students? Response: More support staff in the classroom.

d. Do you feel that there is enough time to collaborate with support staff (ELL/SPED staff) to ensure success for your ELL student? Response: There isn't time to collaborate with anyone….We are work-

ing with many different teachers and specialists. When your students don't do well, you take it personally.

Content Area Teacher Interview B

a. What is the biggest challenge in working with CLD students that struggle? Response: Overly serviced, students are fragmented…A lot of these students that struggle are fragmented throughout the day and they cannot get the big picture. How can they piece together the curriculum and the content when they are constantly begin pulled in so many different directions throughout the day? Additionally, it is hard to determine their ability level…this may be a result of a "shyness" …students want to speak for them. They don't have the processing time…The students aren't empathetic to the processing time even if the teachers are. Often times my students have been reluctant to communicate because they are embarrassed about the amount of think time they need. So they don't contribute. I think intuitively teachers know the difference between language difference and disability however it is certainly hard to measure and prove with data at times.

b. Do you feel that the relationship with the families of these students is as robust as it is with other English-only families? If no, what can be done to support this area of our work? Response: Yes and no. I don't see a correlation between native language and family engagement. I notice when I have siblings that provides a great opportunity to get to know the family much better. Many cultures are relational and it would make sense to keep siblings together if a particular family is working well with teachers. At times this trend isn't totally adopted and I think there are missed opportunities there.

c. Could you name an additional support that you would like to see implemented that would ultimately contribute to better achievement for your ELL students? Response: Smaller classes, these kids don't get the attention that they are entitled to? I don't think I need an additional assessment. We need time to sit down and work with these kids, but large classes makes this extremely challenging.

d. Do you feel that there is enough time to collaborate with support staff (ELL/SPED staff) to ensure success for your ELL student? Response: Collaboration is always on the fly. Caseloads are growing

and becoming increasingly larger and more complex. There doesn't seem to be the time that we need to support ALL kids. Need is growing more complex but we have the same amount of resources. "How can we best figure out what they can and can't do?" Is there an assessment that gets at the language piece of this? I think intuitively I know!!! There is no assessment that is sensitive enough to discern the difference between difference and disability. We are missing an identification tool!

School Psychologist Interview A

a. What do you see as the biggest challenge in identifying CLD students for SPED services? Response: I think we struggle not as school psychs but as teachers. It is a systemic challenge. School psychs are relying on the expertise of ELL teachers to fill in the gaps in understanding that we have in our own repertoire. There are a lack of systems and structures that allow us to effectively identify these students

b. Do you consistently feel that you have enough information regarding a student's linguistic/cultural/ experiential profile to make such a determination? Response: Not always…some buildings are better than others. When we do get information it is not necessarily because there is a system in place. We have few supports that differentiate the process for language learners from that of English-only speakers. This really seems to be a need of ours in this district.

c. What do you perceives the biggest challenge in discerning the difference between language difference and disability? Response: We don't have a lot of tools that support this process. Many times it is a case by case basis. There must be a better way to make this work for all students and families.

d. Are there additional supports/contributions you feel that the ELL department could make to this process/conversation? Response: I think there would be a number of helpful additional supports that we could come up with collaboratively. I think a "Bilingual Parent Interview" should be conducted that would allow us to get at the linguistic, cultural, and experiential piece of these students which is so hard to capture in the traditional assessment frame. I think if there were a tool for the parent to use

more effectively in the classroom that would allow them to understand the difference between language disability and language difference, that would be extremely helpful.

e. Do you feel we are leveraging the data gleaned from the ACCESS assessment administered by ELL staff in this process? Response: No, I am not really sure how to even comment on this. I am very unfamiliar with what it provides within the assessment context.

f. Would it be helpful to understand growth percentile ranges? Response: It would be! I would love to know how their growth compares to the more "typical" language learner that is perceived as growing at expected rates. I would think this would provide a very valuable lens into the process in which I really see a large hole with our current supports.

School Psychologist Interview B

a. What do you see as the biggest challenge in identifying CLD students for SPED services? Response: Fear of over representation, and therefore we under represent students. The other thing that I see we don't have consistent systems across the district to determine eligibility for SPED. We are under representing kids. We need a systemic approach. Our staff is fearful.

b. Do you consistently feel that you have enough information regarding a student's linguistic/cultural/ experiential profile to make such a determination? Response: Staff that people trust is crucial to this process….I think we need to differentiate the questions that we administer during the evaluation process "Bilingual Family Interview" would be a great idea that I think would really get at the more unique circumstances

c. What do you perceives to be the biggest challenge in discerning the difference between language difference and disability? Response: This is a challenging question as it is so unique depending on each student. I think that is why teachers, staff, and administrators alike struggle with this. There is no way to put these students into "a box." I think as a result of this, we struggle to develop tools to support and educate our teachers around the difference between difference and disability.

d.   Are there additional supports/contributions you feel that the ELL department could make to this process/conversation? Response: I think we could use additional supports, a more systematized protocol district wide.

e.   Do you feel we are leveraging the data gleaned from the ACCESS assessment administered by ELL staff in this process? Response: No, I don't think we are leveraging this information at all. This is something that DOES need to be incorporated into the evaluation process.

Administrator Interview A

a.   How do you see the mosaic of supports in your building as contributing to an effective process in identifying CLD students for SPED services? Response: I think this is an another area where we need to improve. Perhaps, conduct a needs based inventory and really identify a few areas where we need to bulk up services and supports.

b.   Do you see parent engagement as a barrier to effective and accurate identification? What are yo doing as a building to ensure this is not in fact the case and that there are well established relationships in place? Response: I think parent engagement is a barrier if there is not an effective liaison between the school and the home. I think in some schools were we have a stronger cultural liaison presence this is less of a problem. Additionally we if have staff that speak the first language of these families that is a huge advantage when addressing the challenge of relationships and parent engagement.

c.   How do you cultivate a culture of collaboration between ELL and SPED staff? What systems do you have in place to support this work? (i.e. PLCs, professional work tie, conferences) Response: We need to carve out time. We need to come up with time to collaborate. How are we using our data? Are we using out site data teams ? Are ELL teachers' perspective leveraged during these meetings?

Parent Interview

a.   How was your experience throughout the identification process? Can you talk about how the district, teachers, and administrators supported you throughout? I think the hardest part is always the communication for us. We speak Spanish and really struggle with understanding and navigating "the

system." We do our best and really trust the school to do the right thing for our student. We so appre-

ciate all the help for our student.

b. Can you think of anything that could have been addressed more sensitively? I know we don't speak

English but I wish the communication could be better. There is a lot of confusing paper work that

comes home and sometimes feel that I am not understanding, I feel that I am missing something im-

portant.

c. Do you feel that you trust your child's teacher, administrator, and school? Do you feel comfortable

approaching school personnel with any concern you have? I am very comfortable with you. I also

know I can always call our cultural liaison. She is invaluable. I am worried about when my kids go to

the Junior High and we don't have the same support. The principal is very visible, he comes to all of

the meetings with our Latino families. This is so appreciated, I am not sure if this will happen at the

middle school. That presence is so important.

Data Collection Technique 2

In Chapter 3 I suggested that this graphic (Table 3.1, Appendix C) would be analyzed in a sepa-

rate conversation with my participants. In part due to their generous availability I made the determination

that a more efficient way to collect their response to the graphic below was to add an addendum to the

interview. I allowed each stakeholder approximately a minute to look at the graphic, discern its most

salient points, and then asked them to respond to the assertion that the graphic represents: There is less

time, resources, expertise to serve EL students as they matriculate through our current system.

As I spoke with the various participants many commented on the fact that the graphic in fact does

capture the level and sophistication of support throughout our district. Teachers commented on the "team

approach" that exists at the primary level while the school psychologists that I interviewed commented on

the "islands" that sometimes surface at the secondary level. The "islands" metaphor suggests that in the

secondary setting there is less collaboration with specialists, EL teachers, and school psychologists. Sys-

tems and structures are built and less conducive for effective collaboration at the secondary level accord-

ing to the results of my interviews. As a result of the change in culture, the administrator that I interviewed suggested that diverse perspectives, expertise, and resources are not effectively leveraged as they are in the primary setting. This is problematic as the graphic highlights as students matriculate through the school system, their needs become more complex. This graphic resonated strongly with all stakeholders as they cited numerous examples that were congruent with the three different sections.

Data Collection 3

In Chapter 3 I suggested that language proficiency data needed to be more thoughtfully leveraged throughout the referral and identification process. It was apparent through conversations with all stakeholders that this was not sufficiently considered and incorporated into programming decisions for these complex learners. The purpose of analyzing WIDA percentile growth ranges was to identify trends and patterns in language data that would support a referral or suggest that additional intervention and language instruction is instead appropriate. Discussion with colleagues was robust and thought provoking. While we did not have enough data to draw definitive conclusions my colleagues and I were left with some general conclusions around the data and how it should be considered throughout the referral and evaluation process. This data will be used more systematically when considering the "Referral Consideration for EL Students" in Appendix E. The following are observations and questions that remain.

1. WIDA percentile growth ranges divide a student's progress up into four percentile categories: ≥75th percentile, ≥60th & < 75th, ≥ 40th & < 60th, ≥2 5th & > 40th, and < 25th

2. It is evident that students at lower proficiency levels grow at more rapid rates with the majority of students growth

3. From the limited data set we examined, students had slower rates of growth as they reached parity to that of their native speaker peers.

4. When considering students that we suspect should be brought up for referral numerous students showed less than expected growth based on the established norms articulated above. 6/10 consistently grew below the 40th percentile, a comparatively lower rate of growth compared to peers.

5. While my colleagues and I were cautious to draw definitive conclusions it was notable that there was a congruence between anemic academic performance and achievement and slower rates of growth as indicated by ACCESS for ELLs.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the findings of our current programming needs as communicated by a number of different stakeholders throughout the district. This was done to establish clarity regarding our current position in programming and make a determination as to which supports needed development to enhance the fidelity of the identification process for our EL students. In Chapter 5 I will present the products that were created in response to the concerns, comments, and needs of the stakeholders as well as discuss next steps.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Introduction

As a result of research and interviews with various stakeholders I was able to identify and install four supports that represented significant vacancies in the way we identify CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) students for special education. Each stakeholder brought a different perspective to the conversation and was uniquely qualified to comment on the complexity of such a process. While each of the interviewees was competent in their respected field it became immediately evident that there was a lack of cohesion and consistency in the way that they worked together throughout the referral process. Classroom teachers brought up concerns around time, and the lack of tools available to make the distinction between language difference and disability. Other concerns included lack of clarity on the time each EL student was entitled to receive from the EL teacher. Administrators commented on the lack of standardization between buildings. The profound lack of consistency made creating efficient systems extraordinarily difficult. Lack of information regarding family history, schooling, and language use was one support that was reported as a significant need. Below, these support systems are explained in greater detail. It is my hope that these tools will be thoughtfully integrated into the larger process and expanded upon in future years. Throughout the development of these instruments I remained careful to ensure that they were congruent with the needs of my stakeholders. Additionally I hope to enhance the way in which we appropriately identify CLD students for special education.

<div align="center">**Research Question**</div>

What combination of supports and assessment instruments need to be installed within my district's current set of procedures to ensure appropriate identification of CLD students for special education?

Support #1: Bilingual Student and Family Profile

Appendix A shows the *Bilingual Student and Family Profile* Interview. This profile will be used as teachers communicate concern for a bilingual student. This will serve as a tool to acquire information around language use of the student and family. The lack of information that we leveraged around language development and linguistic family practices as a district proved to be a large vacancy in the way that we understand our linguistically and culturally diverse students and families. It is important that this profile be filled out with the assistance of a licensed interpreter. The nuance and complexity of these questions require somebody skilled and competent in the first language of the family and student in question. Additionally this survey is designed to be administered in person and not sent home to be done in isolation. It is yet another point of contact, an opportunity to cultivate a relationship built on trust and the best interest of the student. This was designed to be a collaborative process, one which perhaps will elicit more crucial information anecdotally that will only be captured through conversation with school personnel.

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Support #2 Possible Indicators of Language Learning Disability Inventory

As indicated by the commentary made by colleagues in the mainstream classroom it is evident that there are few tools that effectively differentiate between language difference and disability. The above inventory (see Appendix B) will draw specific attention to this distinction. For students that practitioners suspect may have a learning disability, this tool that will allow them to more thoughtfully reflect on the different behaviors exhibited in the classroom that perhaps illuminate more clearly the complexity between these two realities: language difference and language disability.

Support #3 Referral Matrix for ELL being Considered for Special Education

Appendix D is a supplemental tool used when considering the complex learning profile of an EL student. Considerations such a disposition, language proficiency, educational experience, documented intervention, and acculturation status are a few of the components considered for EL students. It is a document that will guide a systematic conversation around the more nebulous components of our ELs' profile. Next steps would be to get this documented translated into Spanish. It will be crucial in the future to continue to build relationships, leverage the perspective of families, and keep them at the center of our work. Additionally, examining the degree of congruence families indicate on this form compared to teaching staff may be a valuable exercise.

Support #4: An Equitable and Comprehensive Plan of Service for ELs (English Learners)

Appendix E shows a comprehensive look at the varying degrees of intensity and support that has been identified as a need in future programming for EL students. This plan of service takes a deeper look into proficiency, grade, and academic need than that of the standard "Plan of Service" that all districts are required to have published. Through the development of this service model I argue that the standard model does not go far enough in identifying the complex needs of our learners. Staffing is often based on numbers and not that of need, proficiency, or age. The following plan of service needs to serve my district in the future as a guide for staffing levels. While I recognize that this is an ambitious goal, the effort and forward thinking philosophy is one that is driven by my passion for serving diverse students and families

<div align="center">Opportunities for Further Research</div>

This thesis represents a far from comprehensive overhaul of programming or systems of supports. While these supports contribute valuable instruments and supports to the process work remains to be done. Additional supports to be explored may include a systematic way to incorporate and leverage WIDA (World Class Instructional Design & Assessment) data into the identification process, additional classroom tools, and program manuals that prescribes how EL department and SPED (special education)

departments collaborate effectively. Standardization of procedures will need to be articulated as well to communicate clarity to all stakeholders in the process. I will continue to investigate the gaps in programming to determine next steps and identify a viable path forward.

Conclusion

In this capstone I sought to identify barriers to identifying CLD students for special education programming. Through various conversation and data collection techniques I determined there were numerous instruments that needed developing to bring a higher degree of fidelity to the process. Students and families are at the center of the work we do in public education. Students like Itzel, whom I mentioned in Chapter 1, will continue to inspire me to seek clarity in the often opaque process of distinguishing the difference between language disability and language difference. It is our professional obligation to strive for this. While this master's thesis certainly represents concrete additions in programming and systems of support, more work needs to be done to ensure we are providing appropriate programming for all students, regardless of background or barrier.

Appendix A

Bilingual Student & Family Profile

Bilingual Student and Family Profile

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of your child's home language environment we are looking for the following information. With full understanding that being bilingual is a gift and your child's first language is an asset, it is crucial to understand the linguistic experience of your child outside of school.

1. Understanding of (speaking/listening) in English for all persons living in your home.

Relationship	Name	No Comprehension	Understands words or phrases	Understands conversation with little difficulty	Understands most conversation	Full comprehension/ ability
Mother						
Father						

2. Understanding of (reading/writing) in English for all persons living in your home.

Relationship	Name	No Comprehension	Understands words or phrases	Understands reading/ writing with little difficulty	Understands most reading/ writing	Full comprehension or ability
Mother						
Father						

Bilingual Student and Family Profile

4. Understanding of (speaking/listening) in _____ (first language) for all persons living in your home.

Relationship	Name	No Comprehension	Understands words or phrases	Understands reading/ writing with little difficulty	Understands most reading/ writing	Full comprehension or ability
Mother						
Father						
(other)						

5. Understanding of (reading/writing) in _____ (first language) for all persons living in your home.

Relationship	Name	No Comprehension	Understands words or phrases	Understands conversation with little difficulty	Understands most conversation	Full comprehension/ ability
Mother						
Father						
(other)						

Bilingual Student and Family Profile

6. Place a check in the box that applies.

Please reflect on the the types of experiences your child has to use language. Outside of school, how many cultural, religious, or experiential opportunities does your child have to engage in English, and his or her first language?

English	☐ None	☐ Few	☐ Some	☐ Many	☐ Daily
First Language	☐ None	☐ Few	☐ Some	☐ Many	☐ Daily

7. Where was your child enrolled through his/her E-12 experience?

Grade	Yes or No	Location (city, country, school)
Early Childhood		
Kindergarten		
1st Grade		
2nd Grade		
3rd Grade		
4th Grade		
5th Grade		
6th Grade		
7th Grade		
8th Grade		
9th Grade		
10th Grade		
11 Grade		
12 Grade		

Bilingual Student and Family Profile

The following questions are to be answered with school personnel present. This may be the ELL teacher, special education teacher, school psychologist, or building administrator. It is encouraged that families answer the questions below but also are encouraged to anecdotally share additional information that they see as pertinent to the identification process.

Parent Name _____ Building Personnel _____

Questions: Development/Language Use/Academics (DLA)	
D1 Is there anything notable about your child's development when compared to that of his or her siblings?	
D2 Is there a history of developmental delay?	
L1 What language did your child learn first?	
L2 Does your child have the opportunity to read or write in his/her first language?	
L3 What language is most used in the home?	
L 4 What language is used most between parents and child?	
L5 What language is most used between siblings?	
L6 What language does your child feel most comfortable using?	
A1 What do you see as your student's strengths in school?	
A2 What do you see as your student's biggest struggle in school?	

Appendix B

Possible Indicators of Language Learning Disability Inventory

Possible Indicators of Language Learning Disability Inventory

	Never Observable	Sometimes Observable	Always Observable
Difficulty in learning language at a normal rate, even with special assistance in both languages.			
Deficits in vocabulary			
Short mean length of utterance			
Communication difficulties at home			
Communication difficulties when interacting with peers from a similar background			
Auditory processing problems (e.g., poor memory, poor comprehension)			
Lack of organization, structure, and sequence in spoken and written language, difficulty conveying thoughts			
Slow academic achievement despite adequate academic English proficiency			
Family history of special education/learning difficulties			
Slower development than siblings (as per parent report)			
Reliance on gestures rather than speech to communicate			
Inordinate slowness in responding to questions			
General disorganization and confusion			
Difficulty paying attention			
Need for frequent repetition and prompts during instruction			

Possible Indicators of Language Learning Disability Inventory

	Never Observable	Sometimes Observable	Always Observable
Need for a program of instruction that is more structured than that used with most other student			
Difficulties affecting grammar and sentence structure			
Difficulties in the use of precise vocabulary and an over reliance of words such as stuff, things, you know, etc.			
Inappropriate social use of language (e.g, interrupts frequently, digresses from topic. is insensitive to the needs or communication goals of conversational partners, cannot stay on the topic of discussion, cannot take turns in conversation)			
Poor sequencing skills. Communication is disorganized, incoherent, and leaves listener confused			
Overall communication skills that are substantially poorer than those of peers			

If the majority of these behaviors are noted as "sometimes observable" or "always observable" this would suggest a move in the direction of referral instead of additional language intervention. The purpose of this tool is give classroom teachers the language and tools to talk about this dynamic between language difference and disability. As captured in the interview with classroom teachers the distinction is often difficult. A lack of tools and language to talk about the differences was reported as a significant need. The above behaviors were found from Roseberry-McKibben (2002) while I integrated these behaviors and created the inventory as you see above.

Appendix C

A Local Understanding of EL Support

K-6 ELs	7-9 ELs	10-12 ELs
Academic Gap	Transition to 6 classes/6 Teachers	ELs in college-like courses and working towards HS graduation
Academic, Emotional, Behavioral, Social & Other Issues		Teenage Pregnancy, smoking/alcohol issues, financial concerns, parental conflicts, relationship problems, culture shock, depression
Teacher "know-how" and involvement, engagement, relationships, school and community support, opportunities for learning, positive affective factors, parent involvement, culture liaisons, cultural trainings **MORE TIME**		**Less Time** *Secondary students only appear to have 1-2 hours of service per day but in actuality, having levels 1-6 all in one class allows for only minimal service.

Appendix D

Referral Considerations for EL Students

Referral Considerations for EL Students

Rate each factor along its continuum to determine whether to wait or proceed with evaluation.

More likely to WAIT   More likely to PROCEED

1. Measures of CALP in English

1	2	3	4	5

2. Literacy Level or Suspected CALP in Native Language

Illiterate	-----------------------------	Literate

3. Educational Experiences

Only Educated in English	-----------------------------	Educated in Native Language

Formal Years of Education Significantly Less than Grade-mates	-----------------------------	Formal Years of Education Commensurate with Grade-mates

4. Social/Cognitive Variables

Introverted	-----------------------------	Extroverted

*Author Unknown - Obtained at a Conference for School Psychologists in 2015

Referral Considerations for EL Students
Rate each factor along its continuum to determine whether to wait or proceed with evaluation.

WAIT (left margin, repeated vertically)

PROCEED (right margin, repeated vertically)

5. Acculturation

Unacculturated	----------------------------	Acculturated
Similar to Siblings	----------------------------	Discrepant from Siblings
Similar to Cultural Peers	----------------------------	Discrepant from Cultural Peers

6. Pre-Referral Interventions

Informal	----------------------------	Research-based
Undocumented	----------------------------	Documented
Few	----------------------------	Many
Positive Response	----------------------------	No or Negative Response

*Author Unknown - Obtained at a Conference for
School Psychologists in 2015

Appendix E

Plan of Service

English Learner Plan of Service K-12

EL Plan of Service for K - 5				
	Entering	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Expanding**	**Bridging**
Kindergarten	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/week • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week.	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status
1st Grade	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/week • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week.	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status
2nd Grade	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/week • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week.	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status

B. Auge 2015

English Learner Plan of Service K-12

	Entering	Beginning	Developing	Expanding	Bridging
3rd Grade	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/ week • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week.	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status
4th Grade	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/ week • SIOP Trained Teacher • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/day classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 2 hour/week classroom support • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week. • HS 1hr	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status
5th Grade	• 1 hr 5x/week • EA: 1-2 hours of classroom support/ week • SIOP Trained Teacher • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 3x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • SIOP Trained Teacher • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 2x per week. • EA: 1 hour/week classroom support • HS 1 hr	• Teacher: 30 minutes at least 1x per week. • HS 1 hr	Quarterly Evaluations Monitor Status
EL Plan of Service for Grades 6 - 9					
	Entering	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Expanding**	**Bridging**

B. Auge 2015

English Learner Plan of Service K-12

|					
6th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction)/ daily • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • HS 1 hr	• Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction daily) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • HS 1 hr	• 3 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • HS 1 hr	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • HS 1 hr	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult
7th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction Daily) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction daily) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult
8th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math • 3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• Sheltered English/ Math • 2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult

B. Auge 2015

English Learner Plan of Service K-12

9th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher - Reading • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult

EL Plan of Service for Grades 10 - 12					
	Entering	**Beginning**	**Developing**	**Expanding**	**Bridging**
10th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - English • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult
11th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	•Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - English • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult

B. Auge 2015

English Learner Plan of Service K-12

12th Grade	• Sheltered English/ Math (3 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• Sheltered English/ Math (2.5 hrs of Sheltered Instruction) • Contracted Bilingual EA 2 hours/day • EL Resource Hour	• 3 hours/day • SIOP Trained Teacher - English • EA Classroom Support - 1hr • EL Resource Hour	• 2 hours/week • SIOP Trained Teacher • EL Resource Hour	• Weekly Grade Check • Need Based Teacher Consult

Service models need to look different at each grade level and proficiency level. Academic, social, and emotional needs must be taken into consideration when administering English language support. Consider the needs and how they grow as our students progress through the grades. (See graphic)
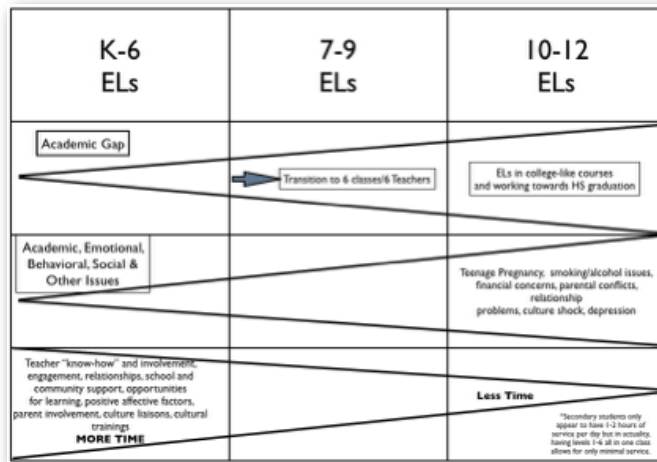
B. Auge 2015

Appendix F

Human Consent Form

December 20, 2015

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to you as a teacher here in XXXXXX Schools pursuing an advanced degree in ESL at Hamline University. As an integral part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research as it relates to my topic of study. I will be doing this work throughout the academic school year of 2015-2016. This research will be public scholarship. The abstract and the final published copy will be catalogued in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. This would also indicate that it may be published or used in other ways in a public forum.

Throughout my research I will be looking at the responsive assessment tools, supports, and systems we have in place when we identify culturally and linguistically diverse students for special education programs. In my short tenure I have engaged in numerous conversations with colleagues, administrators and school psychologists that have illuminated the need for further understanding in this area. As we are facing a demographic shift, most predominately in the southern part of our district, it will be crucial to have a more sophisticated understanding of how we are serving our CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) students. Through conversations, needs assessments, interviews, and diligent research I want to articulate, create and implement additional systems and supports that will be more culturally and linguistically responsive to the learning profile of these learners.

There is no risk in your participation. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record any information regarding administrator's names, nor report identifying information in my thesis or research. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any point that you would like to withdraw your voice and perspective from my work.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from Paul Lee, Executive Director of Student Support Services in Stillwater Area Public Schools. I hope you will consider this case as I believe that it will enhance the integrity in which we are serving all students, regardless of barrier or background.

Sincerely,
Brandon Auge
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Lake Elmo, MN 55042
11030 Stillwater Blvd

If you agree that you would be willing to participate, keep the above page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate below and return to me by mail or copy the form in an email to me no later than January 15, 2015. If you have any questions please email or call me in my office. (651-327-XXXX)

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interviews and Needs Assessments

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be engaging in conversations, needs assessments, and interviews with district staff. I understand there is little to no risk involved for myself as a representative of Stillwater Area Public Schools. Additionally I understand that my confidentiality will be protected and that I may withdraw my agreement to contribute to this study and research at any time.

_____   _____

Signature of District Employee/Interviewee   Date

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