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Curriculum For The Community: Creating A Community-Based English Learner Curriculum Framework

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CURRICULUM FOR THE COMMUNITY:

CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED ENGLISH LEARNER CURRICULUM
FRAMEWORK

by

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

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

December 2017

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To my mother and father, who gave me a love of learning, a love of education, and a love of life. Thank you to my content reviewers, and to my peer reviewers, for helping me through this process.

"Ideas need to be rescued from abstraction."

- Ronald F. Walter

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Using ESL Curriculum: Notes from the Field

I began my career teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) 8 years ago. I have taught middle and high school in Cambodia and Vietnam, and elementary ELLs in North and South Minneapolis. I have worked in private, charter, and traditional district schools, and in each of these situations, I have used many different curricular materials, each with its own applications in the community. In this chapter, I specifically focus on my experiences in Minneapolis, as it was these experiences which led me towards this project: the creation of a curricular framework for Minneapolis ELLs. The purpose of this framework and its concomitant curriculum is to make a rigorous, personalized learning program which is truly responsive to Minneapolis ELLs' needs, so that students and families will recognize the ELL program as deeply rooted in their community. This project addresses several questions. How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning been approached in Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing, place-specific curricular frameworks exist which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and how have they been successful? As a result of examining these questions, I explore my central research question of how to structure my own curriculum to make it maximally culturally responsive, personalized to the community, and rigorous. In this chapter specifically, I provide background on my own teaching career in Minneapolis, the circumstances which drove me to create this curricular framework, and touch on the main

issues of language, rigor, and personalization which will form the cornerstones of my project.

Personal Statement: Teaching and Curriculum-Building in North Minneapolis

When I began working at a Kindergarten through 8th grade charter school in North Minneapolis, my resources were limited. Prior to my entrance into the school, the English Learner (EL) program had not been clearly defined. There was no distinct curriculum or statement of purpose. Students were taught using the same materials used by the content area teachers, and the results were lacking, both on the ACCESS test[1] and in students' performance in mainstream classes. I began to develop a department, writing a more detailed EL Plan of Services, adding staff, and defining curriculum. The school had several different types of EL curriculum already available, most of which were supplementary guides to the mainstream curriculum. In looking at not only the school's test scores, but also the experiences of the students, I realized we needed more; only 2% of students were exiting the EL program each year (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013), and the school experienced student turnover rates of close to 50% year after year.

WIDA Framework and PRIME Correlations

Any curriculum we would adopt, I realized, would have to be correlated to the WIDA Framework[2] and the WIDA PRIME (Protocol for Review of Instructional Materials) Correlations. The WIDA Framework is based in the WIDA "Can-Do"

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[1] A standardized test used to assess ELLs' mastery of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in grades K-12.

[2] WIDA is not an acronym; it is a consortium of 37 US states and territories using a common framework for academic language development and assessment. WIDA originally stood for the states which founded the consortium (Wisconsin, Delaware, and Arkansas), but was later changed to World Class Instructional Design and Assessment. In its current iteration, the organization styles itself simply as WIDA.

Philosophy, which states that "linguistically and culturally diverse learners bring a unique set of assets [to classrooms] that have the potential to enrich the experiences of all learners and educators" (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2014, p. 1). This was important for me in selecting curriculum not only because WIDA creates the assessments that are used to evaluate ELLs in Minnesota, but also because it portrays ELLs, who are often viewed with a deficit mindset, in a positive light. WIDA also publishes CAN-Do Descriptors and Standards to describe what ELLs should be able to do at different levels of proficiency.

To assist me in finding curriculum aligned with the WIDA Philosophy and Standards, I turned to the WIDA PRIME Correlation Program. The PRIME program was developed as a tool to help teachers and companies analyze curricular materials for alignment with the WIDA CAN-Dos, standards, and overall framework (WIDA, 2017). Certified raters from publishers and educational institutions use the PRIME protocol to evaluate curriculum, and these reviews are posted on the PRIME website. I found this tool to be extremely helpful in identifying materials which aligned with the WIDA Framework, and my school purchased curricular materials which improved the achievement of our ELLs. However, though the PRIME Correlations were helpful, there was still something missing in the lessons delivered to the students at my school. The materials, though well-aligned with WIDA, were not as engaging for the students as I would have hoped. In talking with teachers and students, I realized that the students did not see themselves in the curriculum. It lacked specificity and a tie to their community. I set to work trying to find a solution.

Creating Ad-Hoc Curriculum

As a response to the lack of personalization in the curriculum, I began creating my own ad-hoc curriculum for myself and other teachers. I created a string of lessons that were intended to fill in the gaps between what the curriculum we had purchased was teaching and what our students needed: a sense that they were learning about and from their community. I bought dozens of books on Minneapolis, Somali culture, and issues that affected our community to use as anchor texts. I devised units that ended in trips to City Hall and meetings with elected officials. However, I was plagued by the feeling that what I was creating was merely a stop-gap measure; it was not research-based, rigorous, or standardized in any way, and lacked cohesion. I realized that I needed a new solution.

Problem Statement: Re-focusing on Language, Rigor, and Personalization

What my ad-hoc curriculum lacked was standardization. I realized I needed to create a curricular framework that met all my students' needs. I needed a curriculum that focused on the language of the WIDA Framework, and the rigor of new standardized assessments, while at the same time giving my students the community-based connections they needed.

Focus on Language: Common Core Standards and WIDA Standards

The focus on language, I realized, would have to come from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and WIDA Standards. The CCSS include new sections on speaking, listening, writing, and language which seek to boost the academic language skills of all students, not just English learners (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2017). The WIDA Framework, as previously discussed, view ELLs through an

asset-based mindset. It also contains Standards, CAN-Do Descriptors, and Features of Academic Language that provide information on what specifically students should learn to increase proficiency in academic language (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2014). Any framework that I created would need to connect to these two ways of looking at and evaluating language proficiency.

Focus on Rigor: ACCESS Re-Calibration, 2017

I also realized that any new curricular framework I made would need to be rigorous. In 2017, WIDA raised the bar for language proficiency on its ACCESS test, in order to better align to college-readiness standards and ensure that its bar for proficiency matched a high bar for student achievement (WIDA, 2017). This increase in rigor resulted in a corresponding decrease in student scores (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter two), and indicated a clear need for more rigorous curricular materials to meet the demands of this new assessment. Any new framework would need to meet these more rigorous demands to be successful.

Focus on Personalization: A New School

Finally, I realized that any curricular framework I created would need to be personalized for the community students of Minneapolis, so the students could truly see themselves in the curriculum and become more invested in their learning. To that end, when I was contacted about a new school with a focus on personalized learning opening on the North Side, I decided to join the new school. In conversation with the Executive Director, I received permission to develop a new curricular framework for ELLs at the school which would be language-driven, rigorous, and personalized with a base in the

community. The focus on personalization was emphasized even further when the results of the Needs Assessment I gave to community members and staff in advance of creating the EL program indicated a marked preference towards a flexible and personalized program amongst respondents (see Appendix A for more information).

In this project, I repeatedly refer to the concepts of "community" and "personalization." These words mean different things in different contexts; I will briefly define what they mean for my project here. My use of the word community is informed by my reading of Hannah Arendt's conception of the *polis,* or city. For Arendt, the *polis* is "the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (Arendt, 1958, p. 198). Arendt further states that the *polis* exists "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly" (Arendt, 1958, p. 198). In other words, community is not created merely as a side-product of geographic proximity. We have to "show up" for one another, and when this happens - regardless of where it happens - we become more than the sum of our parts. This space of community, where we can appear to each other as equals, is fragile, and has to be closely guarded and nurtured into existence. It is this concept of community as a unique gathering of individuals "showing up" for one another that I use in this work.

Likewise, the terms "personalized" and "personalized learning" are often used throughout this project. When these terms are used, I am making a statement that this personalization is *for the community.* The type of personalized learning discussed in this

work grows directly out of my reading of Arendt's idea of *polis*. Rather than trying to personalize lessons, materials, and topics for individual students, I work to personalize my work for the community of students as I have observed them. From this concept of personalization comes the format of my curriculum which - as will be described in greater detail in chapter three - gives teachers the opportunity to personalize the lessons for their own communities of learners.

<div align="center">

Topic Statement, Assumptions, Point of View

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Topic Statement and Guiding Questions

In light of the above considerations, I am creating a curricular framework - including sample units and lessons - which can be used to develop Minneapolis-specific ELL curriculum which is personalized to my learners' contexts and needs. To create this framework, I explore how well Minneapolis ELLs are meeting rigorous educational standards currently; how personalized and community-based learning have been approached in Minneapolis historically; and what pre-existing, place-specific, and successful curricular frameworks exist which might provide a model for this new framework. As a result of examining these questions, I craft my own framework to meet the specific needs of Minneapolis ELLs, as determined through an analysis of achievement data and personal observation.

Assumptions: ELLs in Minneapolis, Schools, and Curricular Models

In creating this framework, I am making several assumptions. The first is that curriculum is an important factor in student achievement; though I mention this concern here, a thorough discussion of the concept of curriculum as such is not within the scope

of this project. Another assumption is that ELLs in Minneapolis would benefit from what

I will call a "community-based and personalized curriculum." The second is that

community-based and -connected schooling are here to stay in Minneapolis. This is a

large assumption to make, since the Minneapolis education landscape has changed

multiple times over the past few decades, and the charter landscape is particularly

volatile. I also assume that community-based and personalized curricular models from

other communities – such as the Achievement First model from the East Coast – can be

successfully adapted to work in Minneapolis. I will say more about the Achievement First

model and how I have used it as a basic framework for my own model in chapter three.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I have introduced my topic, provided the background information

and rationale for my project, and have introduced my research questions. There are

several which guide this project: How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous

educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning

been approached in Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing, place-specific curricular

frameworks exist which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and

how have they been successful? As a result of examining these questions, I am creating

what I call the Minneapolis English Language Development Curriculum Framework

(MECF), which I hope will be a culturally responsive, personalized to the community,

and rigorous ELD curriculum.

In chapter two, I review the literature on the history of ELL achievement in

Minneapolis to show the need for my framework. I also detail the history of

community-based schools and programs in Minneapolis. Lastly, I discuss the

Achievement First's home-grown literacy curricular model, and the lack of similar

options for ELLs.

In chapter three, I discuss the methodology used to create my curricular

framework, including my setting, audience, rationale,and the framework's components. I

also attempt to answer how a curricular framework should be structured to achieve

maximum results.

Chapter four reflects on the process of creation and indicate areas for further

research and development. The curricular framework itself, and materials related to it, are

presented in a website - minneapolisELD.com - which I have set up for the free

dissemination of the framework and its materials.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

ELLs in Minneapolis: Data Trends

The Minneapolis-based ELL curriculum framework I am creating is focused on language, rigor, and personalization. The framework is informed by the following research questions: How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning been approached in Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing, place-specific curricular frameworks exist which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and how have they been successful?

In order to create my curriculum, I need to explore my first research question: how well Minneapolis ELLs are currently meeting rigorous academic standards. In order to determine the needs that my curricular framework should address in the area of rigor, it is necessary to look at how ELLs in Minneapolis are currently performing on rigorous assessments that are aligned to the WIDA Framework and the CCSS. These include the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, specifically the re-calibrated and more rigorous 2017 edition, and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs).

On ACCESS

The following chart from the Minnesota Department of Education (2016) shows the performance of ELLs Statewide vs. the performance of ELLs in Minneapolis Public Schools on the 2016 ACCESS, before the test became more rigorous. Though I am aware that data from Minneapolis Public Schools should not be used as a proxy for all students

in Minneapolis, I present it here as it is the largest data set that exists for ELLs in the city. Its use here should be viewed not as definitive data on ELLs of the entire city, but as illustrative of general trends.
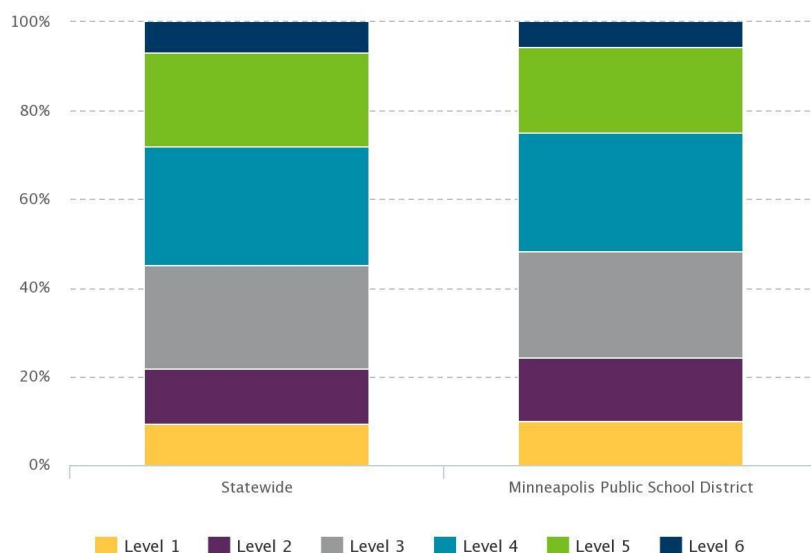
Figure 1: ACCESS Scores showing number of students in each WIDA level in MN v. in Minneapolis Public Schools, 2016 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016)

As can be seen by this graph (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016), Minneapolis Public Schools had slightly more students at lower level proficiencies (10.1% level 1, 14.3% level 2, 24% level 3) than did the state (9.3% level 1, 12.6% level 2, 23.3% level 3). The state average included slightly more students at levels 4 and 5 (26.8% and 21.3%, respectively) than did Minneapolis Public Schools (26.6% and 19.5%, respectively). Minneapolis Public Schools had more students at level 6 (6.8%) than did the state (5.5%). Overall, the state and Minneapolis Public Schools had generally similar data sets in 2016, though the state outperformed Minneapolis Public Schools slightly by having a higher percentage of students in the higher proficiency levels.

In 2017, when the ACCESS test became more rigorous, the results were somewhat different. Though the state again slightly outperformed Minneapolis Public Schools on average, both data sets showed a steep decline in the number of students at the upper proficiency levels.
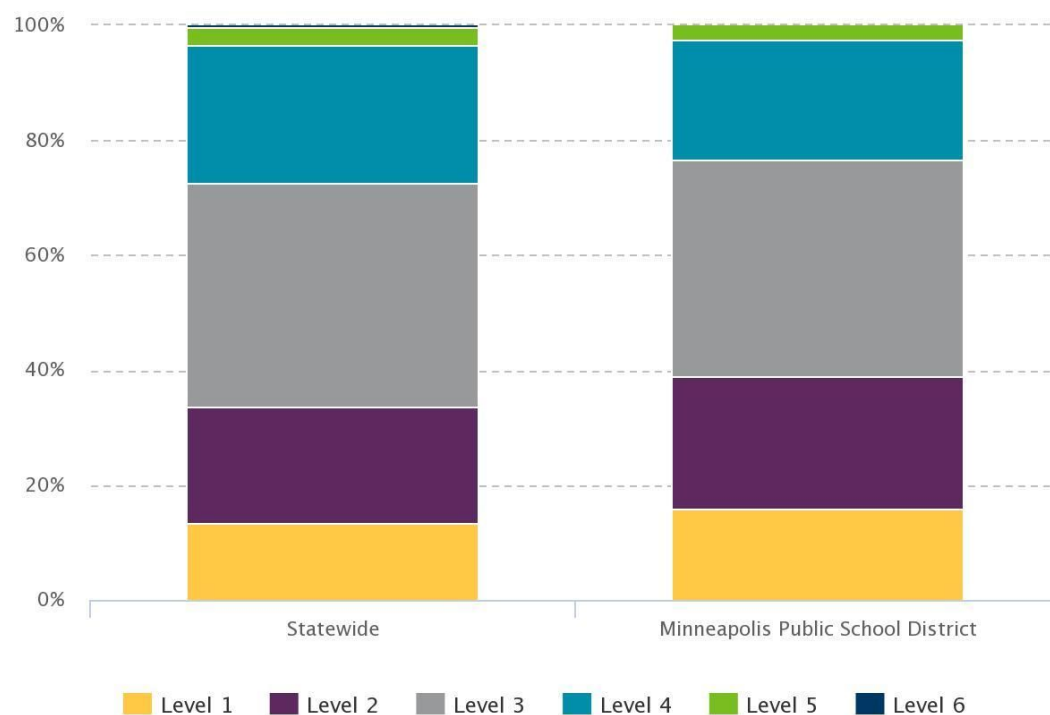
Figure 2: ACCESS Scores showing number of students in each WIDA level in MN v. in Minneapolis Public Schools, 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017)

In this graph (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017), both the state and Minneapolis Public Schools experienced a decline in ACCESS scores. Again, Minneapolis performed slightly below the state on average, with more level 1s and 2s (15.9% and 23%, respectively) than the state (13.5% and 20.3%, respectively). The state had more of the mid-range level 3s (38.8%) compared to Minneapolis Public Schools (37.6%), and more of the high-level 4s, 5s, and 6s (24%, 3.2%, and .2%, respectively) than did Minneapolis (20.9%, 2.5%, and .1%, respectively). Though there might not be a

large difference between the state and Minneapolis Public Schools during each academic

year, there is a large difference *between* the years 2016 and 2017. For example, from

2016 to 2017, Minneapolis experienced a 98.5% reduction of students receiving a perfect

score of 6. The state experienced a similar decline, with a 42.5% increase in level 1

students of compared to just one year earlier. These data suggest that ELLs in

Minneapolis – and indeed the state as a whole – are not fully equipped to reach the new,

rigorous standards put in place by WIDA.

On the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs)

The following graphs from the Minnesota Department of Education (2017) show

the performance of all students Statewide vs. in Minneapolis Public Schools, and then the

same comparison for ELLs on the MCA Reading, Math, and Science assessments. Since

the MCA has not appreciably changed from 2016 to 2017, I will be considering only

2017 scores in this analysis. Again, though I am aware that data from Minneapolis Public

Schools is not a proxy for all students in Minneapolis, it is once more the largest data set

that exists for Minneapolis schools in general, and is used here for illustrative purposes.
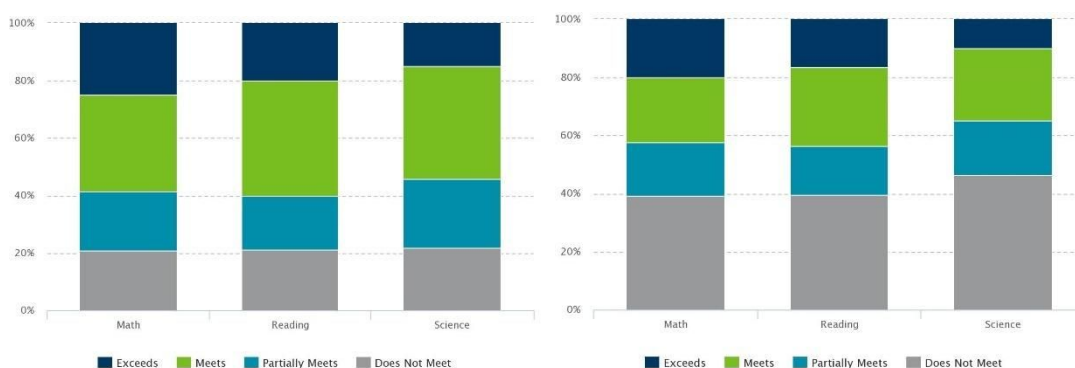
Figure 3: MCAs for All Students in MN and Minneapolis, 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017)
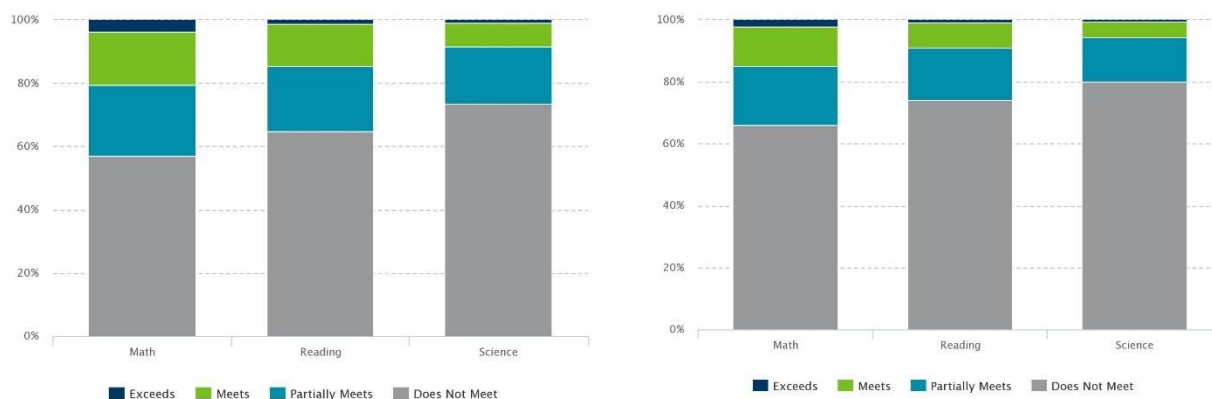
Figure 4: MCAs for ELLS in MN and Minneapolis, 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017)

For both the State and Minneapolis Public Schools, ELLs perform far below the average in all MCAs assessments. For example, 67.4% of ELLs statewide and 74.1% of ELLs in Minneapolis Public Schools do not meet standards in Reading, compared with an overall average of 21.1% and 39.6%, respectively. Similar trends exist for Math and Science. As the MCAs are based on the Common Core State Standards, this is a strong indication that ELLs statewide – and those in Minneapolis in particular – are not as prepared to meet grade level standards as their native English-speaking peers. Multiple factors, however, are clearly at play. The time required to acquire academic language - often known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, or CALP (Cummins, 1979) - can range from five to ten years (Cummins, 1999). Yet the data included in the above set follow federal data practices, which allow that both current ELLs and those who have exited the program in the past two years be counted as part of the EL subgroup (Center for Public Education, 2007).[3] Though this fact does not account for the long time

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[3] Under the new Every Students Succeeds Act, Minnesota will include exited ELLs for *four* years in the ELL subgroup on accountability tests (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

sometimes needed to acquire CALP, the data do suggest that Minneapolis' ELLs are underperforming on content assessments. In fact, Cummins - whose work led to the conceptualization of CALP - himself argues that the development of CALP is not the only factor that determines content success for ELLs. Equally important is the development of a school environment that affirms the identities of students, without which students will struggle to succeed (Cummins, 2014).

The performance of ELLs on the MCAs is especially telling given their ACCESS performance. According to Cook (2009), before ELLs reach an advanced level of proficiency in academic language (defined by Cook as an overall score of 4.8 to 5.2 and above on the ACCESS) traditional standardized tests may not fully capture what students know (Cook, 2009). It is therefore telling that, in 2017, 76.5% of Minneapolis Public Schools' ELLs did not reach a level 4 composite score, a number which matches up well with the 74.1% of ELLs who did not meet standards in the reading MCA. The state's results are similar, with 72.6% of ELLs below a level 4 on the ACCESS and 67.4% of ELLs not meeting standards in reading. Though this is hardly a one-to-one matchup, the data do suggest that there exists a correlation between ELLs reaching the minimum threshold defined by Cook (2009) and performance on standardized tests. Clearly, any curriculum that seeks to remedy this would do well to focus on academic language development, as increases in academic language seem to predict increased performance in content assessments as well.

There are other factors related to this project which may have contributed to the lower performance on standardized tests by Minneapolis ELLs. As far back as 1966, a

study on student mobility in Minneapolis public schools found that highly mobile
inner-city students were more likely to be absent than their less mobile peers, and were
more likely to have lower achievement scores as a result (Murton, Community Health
and Welfare Council of Hennepin County, 1966). Though today's ELL population is not
entirely composed of highly mobile students - Minneapolis Public Schools' population of
English Learners is 22.6% of its total student population, while homeless/highly mobile
students account for only 5% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017) - today's
highly mobile ELLs still underperform both their less mobile peers, and also ELLs who
are not highly mobile. As discussed above, ELLs in Minneapolis Public Schools fail to
meet standards in reading at a rate of 74%; for homeless and highly mobile ELLs, that
figure jumps to 97.3% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017). In fact, in the entire
Minneapolis Public Schools district in 2017, only five homeless/highly mobile ELLs met
or exceeded standards in reading. ACCESS scores show a similar trend; 46.6% of
homeless/highly mobile ELLs were level 1s and 2s in 2017, compared to 38.9% of ELLs
overall (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

Though Murton's study and today's proficiency data are not explicit in the exact
way in which high mobility causes lower achievement, I posit that one factor may be a
lack of connection between the learner and the community they are in, due to that
community only being superficially represented in the medium most often used
throughout the day at school: curriculum. In fact, a review of the literature shows that
curriculum of the type I wish to design has a great impact on achievement for all
students; a literature review of curriculum conducted by Johns Hopkins shows that

"content rich"[4] curricula can yield a "major average effect size of

+0.34" (Steiner et al, 2017, p. 3), which here refers to percentage of student academic

gains over peers in a school year. This same review found that well-built curricula have a

positive impact when used in high-poverty schools (Steiner et al., 2017, p. 41), and that

students receiving free and reduced lunch and English learners experienced large

vocabulary and reading gains when targeted with a content-rich curriculum (Steiner et al,

2017, p. 49). It is therefore is my hope that a rigorous, content-rich, community-based

curriculum may be able to reach a highly mobile and low-income ELL population in

ways in which more traditional approaches have not.

Community-Based Schools and Personalized Learning Programs in Minneapolis

Having established that Minneapolis (and indeed statewide) ELLs performance on

rigorous assessments is less robust than would be ideal, I now move on to discuss the

history of community-based schools and personalized learning programs in Minneapolis.

This is of great importance for my project, as I seek to develop a curricular framework

that will not only be rigorous, but also deeply rooted in the Minneapolis community. It is

therefore useful to explore the history of connections between schools and communities

in Minneapolis, as well as the history of similar personalized learning undertakings in the

city.

Community and Personalized Learning in Minneapolis Public Schools During the 1970s

Though Minneapolis Public Schools did not seriously embrace community and

personalized learning until the 1970s, connecting schools to communities goes back at

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[4] Meaning curricula that delve deeply into particular subject areas (here: language and community) and prioritize depth over breadth

least 110 years in the city. In 1907, the Journal of Education featured a letter to the editor on the "Minneapolis School Republic" about the Blaine School's connection to the Minneapolis community. A vignette is described in which students cleaned up tin cans from vacant lots around the school (pp. 467-468). Though this letter paints a portrait of just one school from just one person's perspective, it is a valuable glimpse into Minneapolis' past and the history behind the idea that schools should be connected to their communities.

However, it was in the 1970s that Minneapolis Public Schools truly began to explore the connections between community education and personalized learning. With the establishment of Southeast Alternatives (SEA) with federal grant money in from 1971 – 1979, Minneapolis Public Schools conducted a series of studies and surveys on school-to-community connections, and created many experimental school models as a result (Minnesota Historical Society, 1979). One study which was a precursor to the SEA (Higgins, Faunce, & Minneapolis Public Schools, 1970) looked at the attitudes that neighborhood school children and senior citizens had towards one another. What is especially interesting in this study is that each group had very favorable views of themselves and of the other group, suggesting that though senior citizens and students of the time were separated by a large gap in age and experience, the senior citizen community looked upon school children as vital to their community, and the schoolchildren felt the same about the senior citizens. Though this report may not have any bearing on school-community ties today (this topic will be addressed in an upcoming

section), it provides interesting background information related to Minneapolis' research into community-based schools which continued into the 1970s.

Beginning in 1971, Minneapolis Public Schools dove into the creation of personalized schools designed to involve the community. These schools were concentrated in Southeast Minneapolis, but the district solicited opinions about learning models and school-community connections from across the city. During the implementation of the SEA initiative in 1975, Minneapolis Public Schools conducted a qualitative study in the west area of Minneapolis on teacher opinions about alternative schools and personalized learning (Johnson, Minneapolis Public Schools, 1975). This study was, in part, a follow-up to a similar study about west area parent opinions on community school (Johnson, 1974). In the parent opinions study, Johnson (1974) mentions that Lake Harriet elementary became an "alternative model" school which included the use of "teacher & cooperatively planned flexible groups and activities to develop individual basic skills, to accomplish task-oriented goals, and to provide interest-centered experiences" (p. 2). This focus on "interest centered experiences" is key, as it demonstrates that over 30 years ago, Minneapolis educators were already beginning to realize the importance of making learning relevant to student lives. What is also noteworthy in this study is that 95% of parents said their children should spend most of the day at school, but 66% of those parents felt that their children should spend that time in projects or activities related to the community (p. 21). Here again it is noteworthy that a strong school-community bond has been greatly emphasized in Minneapolis.

In the follow-up 1975 staff study which mirrored this parent study, Johnson found that most teachers were also interested in personalized learning options for students (Johnson, Minneapolis Public Schools, 1975, p. 11). In this same study, teachers demonstrated a preference for an increased use of the community during the day at school, and that "the community should be used more during the school day than for a few field trips" (p. 16), specifically desiring to bring community experts into the classroom to give students insights into the knowledge contained within their own communities. Though teachers were more in favor of student movement and self-directed learning throughout the day than were parents (p. 8), the fact remains that both parents and teachers had a demonstrated preference for both community-based learning and personalized learning in 1970s Minneapolis Public Schools, at least on the west side.

It is difficult to extrapolate feelings of the entire community contained in Minneapolis Public Schools based on several studies done on the West side of Minneapolis; this difficulty is further compounded since the current curriculum framework to be developed focuses on all of Minneapolis, but with a special emphasis on the North Side. Fortunately, Minneapolis Public Schools commissioned a qualitative study on the attitudes of North Minneapolis families towards alternative (or personalized) educational approaches in 1975. The study found that the majority of parents preferred that, in constructing an "alternative" educational program, the program should contain group projects, some flexible grouping, and activities in the community (Farnam, Johnson, Britts, & Minneapolis Public Schools, 1975, p. ii). Though these results are dated, they still indicate that community-based and personalized learning programs have

been under consideration in Minneapolis for quite some time, and that they have been popular both with community members and (in the case of the West area) teachers.

In 1976, Minneapolis Public Schools commissioned a report on how the alternative schools (which were set up in the early 1970s) were created (Reynolds & Minneapolis Public Schools, 1976). These schools were set up to specifically have more flexible learning environments, and to be more rooted in the communities they were in. For example, many schools included more community involvement during the day in the curriculum, and a more bilateral school-community decision making model than had been previously seen (Reynolds, Minneapolis Public Schools, 1976, p. 1). This report also detailed the efforts made by a community-based "continuous progress school" and an "open school" (what we today might call a personalized learning model) to differentiate curriculum for students at different levels (p. 66). At the Open School, students went out into the community to learn (p. 73) and directed their learning in school around what they had learned in the community. This model of learning proved very popular with the community, and two open elementary schools still exist in Minneapolis to this day: Barton Open Elementary and Marcy Open Elementary (it should be noted that Barton was not part of the 1970s alternative school movement).

Importantly, the other alternative schools started by Minneapolis Public Schools in the SEA during this time were all in the South area of Minneapolis, and though the district conducted research on alternative education in North Minneapolis (Farnam, Johnson, Britts & Minneapolis Public Schools, 1975), the experimental schools opened during that time were not located on the North Side. This is significant because North

Minneapolis has a history of being home to marginalized groups, first to Jewish

immigrants in the early 1900s, and then to African Americans after World War II

(Bergin, 2011). Though the SEA schools were located on the South side of the city to

facilitate collaboration with the University of Minnesota (Reynolds & Minneapolis Public

Schools, 1976), one side effect of this was the exclusion of the historically more

African-American North Side from these new initiatives.

Minneapolis Public Schools in the Present Day

After the foundation of the SEA, Minneapolis backed off from personalized and

community-based learning for a time,[5] though these initiatives were continued in

individual schools inside the district. What has gained greater prominence as a topic of

discussion in the present day is the issue of community schools and their role in parent

engagement and community segregation. In 2010, the Center for Urban and Regional

Affairs at the University of Minnesota collected and analyzed quantitative data related to

parent engagement at Minneapolis Public Schools. Especially noteworthy in this report

are the difficulties families encounter in being engaged at school due to transportation,

which now – with the rise of open-enrollment and the ability of children to attend schools

outside their immediate neighborhoods – presents a large barrier to family involvement at

school (Skolnik, 2010, p. 7 & 17). The shift away from community-based schools has

thus made it more difficult for members of these communities to even reach schools,

much less interact with them in meaningful ways. Absent a change in the educational

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[5] These focuses would not undergo widespread revival until the arrival of charter schools in the 1990s.

system of Minnesota, schools need to search for creative ways to re-integrate the community back into the school.

Another issue that has arisen related to community schools in Minneapolis is the issue of segregation. Though open-enrollment (which will be discussed in more depth in the following subsection) provides students with access to different school options, one result has been that students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are no longer segregated from one another within their district boundaries (as was previously the case when students could only attend a neighborhood school); instead, they are now isolated from one another *across* district boundaries (Finnigan, Holme, Orfield, Luce, Diem, Mattheis, & Hyton, 2015, p. 781). This means that while community-based schools often segregated students from each other by neighborhood, open enrollment and changing demographics have resulted in more segregation along city lines. Thus, any discussion of community-based schools or curriculum walks a fine line: schools that involve the community have historically been very popular in Minneapolis, but with these efforts have also come neighborhood segregation (such as with the SEA). The slow decline in community-based schools has not halted this issue, but rather changed it in scale from a school issue to a district issue. Thus, in developing curriculum for a "community school" in the age of open enrollment, one must keep in mind that the students attending that school may in fact hail from multiple areas of the city, and any community initiatives at that school should seek to be as inclusive as possible.

The Effect of Open Enrollment

Open enrollment is defined as a family's ability to enroll their child in any

Minnesota school which has space for that child. As previously discussed, open

enrollment has changed the way community schools operate, and even the concept of

what a school community may be and where it is located. It is interesting to note that the

school choice and open enrollment movement in Minneapolis actually grew *out of* the

SEA neighborhood experiment of the 1970s, as families from across the city wanted

equal access to different educational models (Glazerman, 1998, p. 9). However, there is

disagreement about the effects open enrollment has had on Minneapolis communities.

Hong and Choi (2015) held that, in Minneapolis, open enrollment has provided the

African American community with access to schools that are less segregated than

previous neighborhood schools. However, this freedom of choice has not significantly

affected their achievement on academic standardized tests (Hong & Choi, 2015). It has

also been found, however, that many urban families use open enrollment to transfer into

schools with high standardized test scores and lower minority populations (Hong & Choi,

2015, p. 1), indicating that open enrollment does not produce higher test scores for

disadvantaged students so much as draw students towards centers of already-existing

achievement, where these students' lower achievement is difficult to spot. Again, I return

to Cummins' (2014) point that academic achievement for ELLs goes beyond pure

language, requiring what Cummins dubs "identity affirmation" from students'

environments.

A somewhat conflicting study comes from Glazerman (1998), whose study of open enrollment within Minneapolis Public Schools indicates that there is a more equal balance of families who enroll in their neighborhood school and those who enroll further away. Forty five percent of families in Glazerman's study selected a school within one mile of their home, though only twenty six percent selected the closest neighborhood school (Glazerman, 1998, p. 11). The remaining fifty-five percent selected a school further away. Interestingly, unlike in Hong and Choi (2015), Glazerman noted that only eight percent of families made their choice based on high test scores, and only four percent chose based on racial or ethnic group concentration (p. 12).[6] The 17 years which separate the two studies may account for this difference, with families opting to prefer schools that have higher achievement and a more uniform ethnic makeup over time. This hypothesis is supported by Green (2007), who noted that though 80% of the population of Minneapolis was white in 2007, 70% of students in Minneapolis public schools were of color (p. 1), which seems to indicate that white families were opting-out to the suburbs as documented by Hong and Choi. Indeed, by 1995, Minneapolis public schools was so segregated across district lines due to open enrollment that it asked to be released from the State's desegregation mandate (Green, 2007, p. 11).

Though the district and charter systems in Minneapolis are segregated, that does not prevent the community from embracing them. One qualitative study of Spanish speakers in South Minneapolis found that some of these families moved to Minneapolis because of the perceived high-quality of the schools (Hacer, 1998, p. 30). Yet in the same

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[6] The greatest factor influencing parents' choice was, interestingly, which schools their neighbors' children attended (Glazerman, 1998).

study, when new residents of Minneapolis discussed where they and their children found support in the community, schools were nowhere to be found; that function was taken over by Latino/a organizations and churches (p. 31). Yet another, much larger quantitative study of multiple immigrant populations in Minneapolis – including Spanish, Russian, Hmong, and Somali speakers – indicated that Spanish-speaking parents were the most likely of all the immigrant groups (74%) to feel welcome in their children's schools (Mattessich, p. 8). Though the studies present somewhat contradictory data sets, they both point to the fact that close community-school connections are very important for families.

Though rigorous academics, connection to the community, and racial segregation play large roles in Minneapolis families' school choice decisions, it is not readily apparent which factors are the most important in making these choices. In any case, Green (2007) stated that school segregation has existed before school choice, and continues to exist after the implementation of school choice as well, and this new reality challenges Minneapolis to provide "quality education in racial isolation" (p. 2).

Home-Grown Curricular Frameworks

Having established that ELLs in Minneapolis are struggling academically, and after reviewing evidence that community-connected schools and personalized learning have a long, important, and intricate history in Minneapolis,[7] I now turn to describe models of curriculum development. I first touch on the Understanding by Design (UbD)

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[7] I am unfortunately unable to give historical achievement data on the community-based, alternative schools of the 1970s; this discrepancy is due to accountability requirements which gave birth to the MCA not existing until 2001, and with full alignment to standards not occurring until 2010 for math and 2012 for reading (Minn. Stat. 120B.30).

method of designing units of study, and then describe a pre-existing model - that of

Achievement First - which is related to the UbD model, and that helps me to synthesize

rigor, personalization, and responsiveness to the community into one curricular

framework.

Understanding by Design

Understanding by Design (UbD) is a "curriculum-planning framework" (Wiggins

& McTighe, 2011, p. 3) which assists educators in unpacking standards in unit- and

lesson-level instructional planning. The goal of UbD is to assist educators in "backwards"

planning; that is, planning which begins with the desired results in mind and moves

forward towards the standards and learning targets needed to achieve those results and,

ultimately, to the lesson plans themselves (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 4).

UbD follows a general template, though it is not prescriptive in requiring

educators to follow the templates exactly. Stage One of UbD is "Desired Results." In this

stage, educators begin by considering the types of "long-term, independent

accomplishments" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 16) they wish students to acquire in a

unit. Educators then develop essential questions which they wish students to explore

throughout the unit, along with enduring understandings students should have at the end

of the unit. After that, educators plan out the discrete learning targets that students will

acquire throughout the unit.

Stage Two of UbD is the "Evidence" stage. In this stage, educators consider how

students will show their mastery of the enduring understandings which the unit focuses

on (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 17). This might involve formative assessments (ex: a

teacher listening in to student discussions and checking off student use of target language forms on a checklist) or more summative assessments (ex: students write a summary of a play they watched using past-tense irregular verbs).

In Stage Three, the UbD framework focuses on the "Learning Plan." In this stage, educators plan the actual learning which will take place in the classroom, including pre-assessments, learning events (activities), and lesson-level goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 17). Thus, before the educator even plans the lesson which will be taught to students, the educator has already thought deeply about the outcomes they wish the lesson to achieve, and how students will demonstrate mastery of those outcomes. In this way, the UbD framework helps educators avoid the common pitfalls of starting with standards or benchmarks which are too narrow, or starting by planning activities instead of focusing on the understandings and outcomes which should drive those activities (Wiggins & McTighe, 2022, p. 36). The UbD framework informs my project by providing the guidance to begin with the end in mind and work forward to what students will do to achieve those ends, instead of starting with discrete learning tasks which - though important - may not be aligned to rigorous student outcomes.

Achievement First

I now turn to the Achievement First literacy framework, which broadly follows the UbD method, and which I use as a model for planning my own ELL curricular framework.

Achievement First is a network of K-8 charter schools in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York.[8] The network contains a high percentage of low-income and minority students, and regularly posts standardized test scores well above the host district and state averages. Below is a sample of data from the New York network of Achievement First Schools:
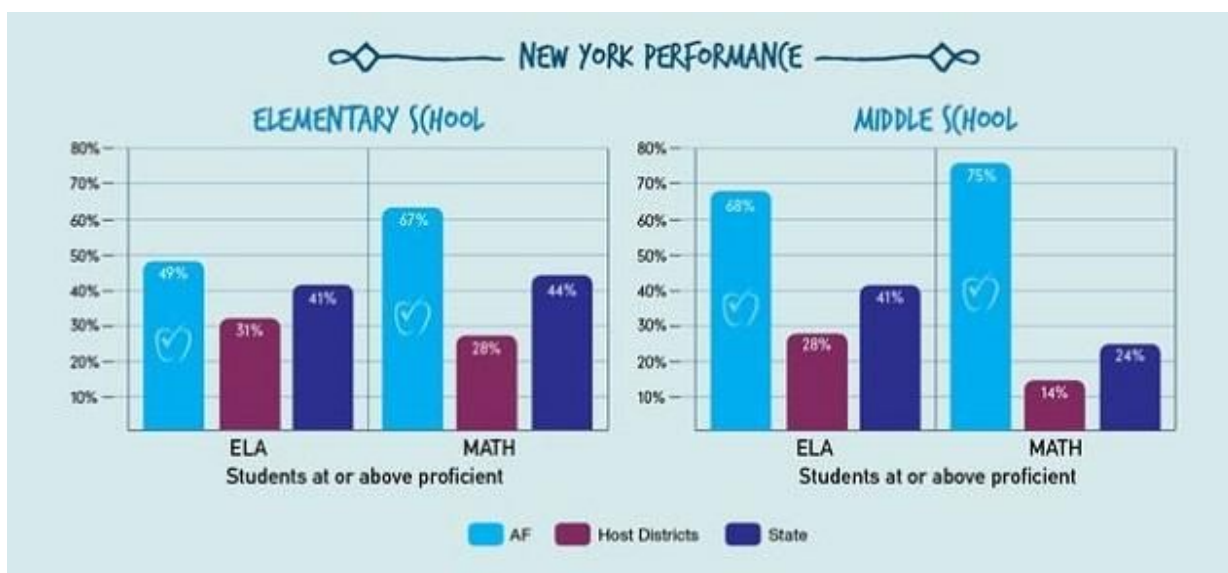
Figure 5: Achievement First New York Data
Source: Achievement First, 2016

Emily Shisler, one of the literacy specialists for Achievement First, believes that one reason for these results is a home-grown literacy curriculum developed by in-house Achievement First curriculum specialists (E. Shisler, personal communication, July 11, 2017). This curriculum is backwards-planned not from grade-level assessments or even CCSS, but from AP English, in order to hold all students to a rigorous, college-ready bar. Shisler and Achievement First believe that to truly prepare students to do well, they need to have a curriculum that is personalized to them, one that does not just aim to meet

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[8] For more information, the reader may wish to visit www.achievementfirst.org

grade-level standards, but overshoots them. In this way, the Achievement First model

takes a cue from UbD; the model is predicated not on a set of learning activities, but

rather on larger goals (here: college-ready students). The Achievement First team then

backwards planned from that goal to create grade and unit-level essential questions and

outcomes, which were matched to standards and, eventually, learning targets and

activities.

The Achievement First model does not include an ELL framework; however, the

components of their literacy framework serve as a potential model for how an original

ELL curriculum could be structured. The framework has three main sections: curricular

documents, unit documents, and lesson documents, which broadly correspond to the three

different UbD stages of Desired Results, Evidence, and Learning Plan. The curricular

documents begin with a vision document which outlines broad goals for the curriculum

and what it hopes to do for the community. This vision includes broad statements about

curricular components (ex: literacy instruction includes vocabulary, guided reading, close

reading, and other instructional areas). Following the vision, there is a more detailed

program description which contains a more nuanced look at each component and includes

indicators of excellence which explain what rigorous instruction looks like in each area.

Following the program overview is a Fundamentals of Instruction (FOI) document for

each component (guided reading, writing, close reading, etc.) which details the "must

haves" for instruction to be rigorous and engaging in that area, as well as an overview of

the parts of each lesson, what happens during that part of instruction, and "markers of

excellence" for that section.

The unit documents begin with unit overviews. The unit overviews describe mastery goals for each unit (ex: by the end of lesson 20, students will be able to independently summarize a story in writing). They also contain the standards taught in that unit, the essential questions students will explore, and a list of lessons in the unit with the titles of the stories being read or skills being taught.

Each lesson contains a connection to the concepts of the general unit, the lesson aims and purpose, any graphic organizers or visuals to be used, and the components of each lesson. For each component, a roadmap of questions asked by the teacher and a place for the teacher to make notes are included. In addition, each lesson has an original assessment and, if necessary, a text relevant to students as well. The assessment is always graded using an original Achievement First rubric made specifically for that unit, aligned to the skills being taught.

The following graphic shows an overview of the Achievement First curricular model.
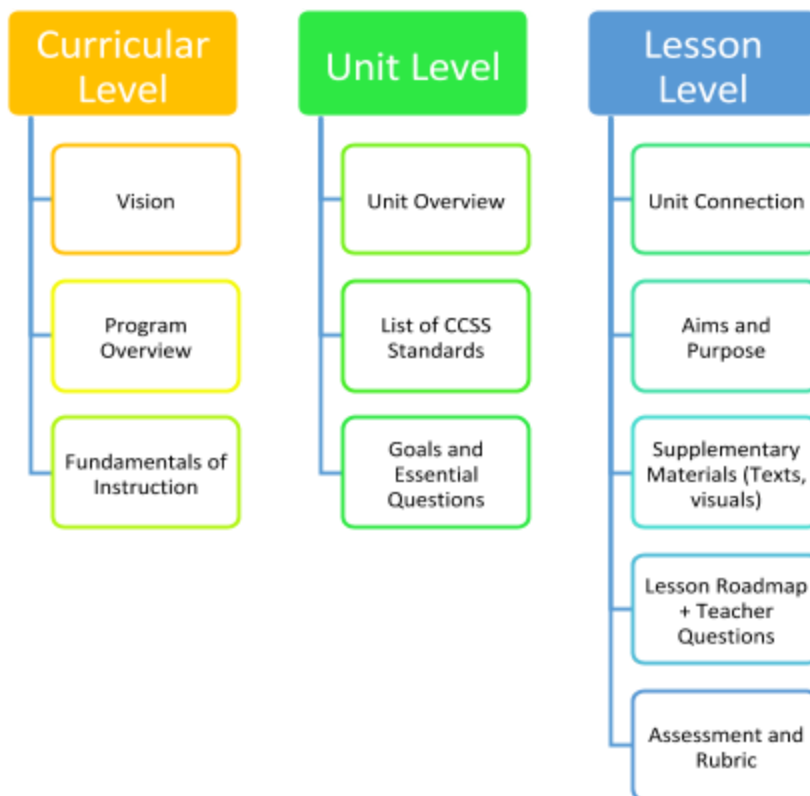
Figure 6: Achievement First Literacy Model

Potential Applications in ELL Context

There is much to admire in the Achievement First model; it is organized, rigorous, and has produced high achievement. It is not advisable, however, to simply adopt Achievement First's entire method. For one, this model was not designed for ELLs, and though it contains connections to the CCSS, it does not contain connections to the WIDA standards or framework. In addition, the Achievement First materials are personalized in that they use texts and other materials that are specific to the contexts its students are in. These materials and contexts are not as relevant to my students, steeped as they are in the communities where Achievement First originated (New York, Rhode Island, and Connecticut). In addition, I believe the personalization aspect of the curriculum could be

a little more robust, for example by including Minneapolis-based connections in each unit and lesson document, and perhaps even a community guide at the curricular level. Therefore, in my methodology, I follow the broad organization of Achievement First's framework while personalizing it for ELLs and the Minneapolis community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature related to my project, including data on ELL achievement in Minneapolis. I considered how well ELLs are meeting educational standards in Minneapolis, and found that the data suggest several areas for improvement. I also reviewed the history of "alternative" or personalized learning and community-based schools in Minneapolis. I briefly sketched the effects that open enrollment has had on communities within Minneapolis. As a prequel to chapter three, I briefly described Achievement First's personalized literacy framework. In chapter three, I further detail how I've built my own rigorous, community-based curriculum in Minneapolis. I outline the setting, audience, and rationale for my project, and describe each of the project's components individually.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Setting, Audience, and Rationale

The Minneapolis-based ELL framework for curriculum which I am creating is focused on language, rigor, and personalization. I have, in previous chapters, explored how well Minneapolis ELLs are currently meeting rigorous academic standards, personalized and community-based learning, and the UbD and Achievement First curriculum models. Throughout, I have explored several research questions: How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning been approached in Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing, place-specific curricular frameworks exist which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and how have they been successful? As a result of examining these questions, I now turn to the creation of my own curriculum framework: the Minneapolis English Language Development Curriculum Framework (MECF). To contextualize the MECF, I discuss the setting in which my curriculum will be used, who will use it, and how I have chosen to design it.

Setting: New Charter School in North Minneapolis

My new curricular framework includes a matrix through which the curriculum was designed (described more fully in this chapter), and samples of the curriculum itself. The setting for the implementation of my new curricular framework will be a new charter school focused on personalized learning, which is opening in North Minneapolis in the fall of 2017. This charter school will consist of grades K-2 for the 2017-2018 academic

year, and will add one grade in each successive academic year. This is an advantage, as it will allow me to create the curricular framework during this first year, and gradually build out units and lessons by grade level as the school expands.

This school will serve around 60 students its first academic year. Of those students, around 40 – 50% are projected to be English language learners, and currently 90 -100% of those learners are expected to be Spanish speakers. Though many of the students live in North Minneapolis, due to open enrollment a sizable percentage of the school's population will come from South and Northeast Minneapolis. Therefore, the curriculum seeks to tie-in with the broader Minneapolis community, as opposed to focusing only on North Minneapolis.

Audience: the EL community

The audience for my curricular framework consists of EL educators and students in the Minneapolis area. Following the lead of Achievement First, I plan to make my curriculum open-source: free and available for all members of the community to use. Thus, though my intended audience is other EL teachers, it is possible that community organizations and families may make use of my framework. In addition, as I build the framework out grade by grade, my audience will grow to include the students I am serving, as I plan to solicit their feedback on how well they believe the curriculum is meeting their needs. However, in the first year of my framework – when my school is still K-2 – I do not anticipate soliciting student feedback.

Rationale: Community's Desire for Rigor and Personalization

The rationale for creating a rigorous Minneapolis-based EL curricular framework is that the community for which this new Minneapolis school was founded has expressed a strong need for such a curriculum. Before the opening of the school, the EL Coordinator conducted a needs assessment of families, community members, teachers, board members, and staff to help build the EL program. In looking at this data (see Appendix A), the community rated flexibility, being culturally responsive, and achieving results through data and assessment as the top three priorities for the EL program at the school, with these three indicators receiving an average rating of 4.8, 4.6, and 4.8 (respectively) out of 5 points, with five being essential. Thus, the community has stated that it wants the EL program to be rigorous, personalized, and rooted in the community. Based on those results, the best move for the school and its community is to create a new curricular framework for ELLs that meets all the community's needs, rather than adopting an existing framework or curriculum that does not fully meet those needs.

In addition, the data presented in chapter two on Minneapolis ELL achievement on both ACCESS and MCA tests indicate that current curricular approaches to ELL education are not achieving the desired results. Therefore, I have decided to experiment with a new framework.

Objectives

Based on the data from the EL Needs Assessment, the data on ELL achievement in Minneapolis, and the historical importance of personalized learning and community-school ties in Minneapolis, the primary objective for this new curricular

framework is to more fully engage ELLs in learning at school. Another objective is to increase the ties between the school and the community it serves by making the community a focal point of the school's curriculum. In addition, though an experimental design is not in the scope of this project, it is also my hope that this curricular framework may, through its focus on rigor and increase in student engagement, increase ELL achievement as measured on the ACCESS and MCA assessments.

Description of the Curricular Framework

Though I use the Achievement First literacy framework as a model for my own curriculum, I will not be copying the framework in every detail. Rather, I take from Achievement First the general concept of dividing the framework into three levels: Curricular Level, Unit Level, and Lesson Level. I then detail the components of what the framework includes at each individual level. Some of these components have been borrowed from the Achievement First model, while others are my own inventions.

Curricular Level: Components and Rationale for Inclusion

At the curricular level, I begin with the Curriculum Vision, detailing the purpose of the curricular framework, the goals it hopes to achieve, and the hallmarks of this approach (community connections, rigor) that differentiate it from pre-existing ELL curricula. This document will be very similar to the Achievement First literacy vision in purpose and format, though it will be geared towards ELLs instead. The rationale for including this vision document is twofold: to orient the user towards the end-goal of the curriculum before putting it into practice, and to make the framework more user-friendly

for community members who may feel intimidated if immediately confronted with a technical document when encountering the framework for the first time.

Next, I move on to the Community Resource Guide. This guide acts as a resource for educators using the curriculum to learn about Minneapolis. It includes a list of all Minneapolis-based texts used in the curriculum, and where to find them for free or for purchase. The rationale for including the Community Resource Guide is to firmly anchor the curriculum in the community, to promote ease of use by other educators, and to introduce Minneapolis to educators who may work in the city, but live in a different community.

After the Community Resource Guide, I introduce the Program Overview document. The Program Overview mirrors its counterpart in the Achievement First framework. This document details the components of a successful ELL curriculum. These components are the four domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The two components which receive the most attention in the framework are Speaking and Writing, since these two have proven the most difficult for ELLs to master on the ACCESS assessment. Greater emphasis is given to the academic language of each domain over social language in order to increase the rigor of instruction. The rationale for including the Program Overview in the framework is to introduce the major components of the curriculum so that educators and community members will know, broadly speaking, what different areas of language are being taught.

The last component of the curricular level resources is the Fundamentals of ELL Instruction (FOEI) document, which can be viewed as part of the MECF on the website

accompanying this project. This document details the "must haves" for instruction to be considered rigorous, engaging, and relevant to the community. The rationale of the FOEI is for teachers – and instructional coaches – to be able to assess themselves or others to see if the curriculum is being implemented correctly. For example, a teacher may videotape him or herself teaching a lesson, and then review that videotape with the FOEI document to see if the instruction provided meets the criteria for effective, rigorous, and engaging instruction. Instructional coaches and other observation personnel may use the FOEI in a similar manner. In this way, the FOEI functions as a self-or peer-assessment tool that educators may find useful when planning for instruction (see Figure 7).

| Curricular Vision	Community Resource Guide	Program Overview	FOEI
• Purpose of Framework • Big-Picture Goals	• All Minneapolis-Based Materials Used in Curriculum • Resource for non-Community mmebers	• Breakdown of components of EL program • Major focuses on Speaking/Writing	• Indicators of Instructional Excellence • Functions as self/peer observation tool
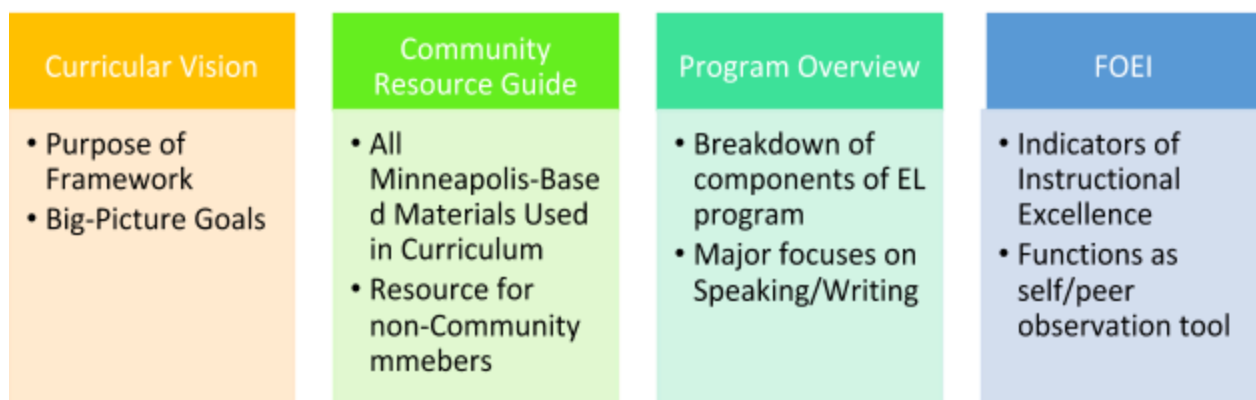
Figure 7: Curricular-Level Components

Unit Level: Components and Rationale for Inclusion

At the unit level, the framework becomes more specific. There are five units included within the Framework: Me, My Community, and Identity; My Neighborhood and Minneapolis; Minneapolis in Our Country; Taking Action in My Neighborhood; and Taking Action in My City.

Each unit includes a Unit Alignment document. This document includes the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that are addressed by the unit, and in which lessons they are addressed. The CCSS areas that are focused on are Language, Speaking & Listening, and Writing. In order to avoid teaching content (instead of language), the CCSS focus areas in literacy and other content areas are not included. This allows the framework to focus specifically on the teaching of language. To further this focus, the Unit Alignment document also includes the WIDA Standards and CAN-DO Descriptors that are addressed by the unit, and in which lessons they are addressed. The rationale for including these components in the Unit Alignment document is to assist educators in providing standards-based, rigorous instruction to their learners. This also assists the school using the framework in meeting Minnesota state requirements to align instruction to CCSS and WIDA standards. This is especially helpful since very few curricular materials – even those that have undergone the WIDA PRIME Correlation process (see chapter 1) – contain explicit unit-level links to the WIDA framework.

Also at the unit level, the framework provides a unit overview, which is included in the same document as the Unit Alignment. The overview consists of the goals and essential questions for that unit, as well as a lesson-by-lesson list of language and community objectives. It was decided to include the goals and essential questions for the entire unit in the Unit Overview document in order to provide teachers with a high-level overview of what will be covered in the lessons themselves. The Unit Overview also provides a list of all the supplementary materials – including books, assessments and assessment tools, graphic organizers, visuals, and videos – used in that unit. The rationale

behind the inclusion of these components is to allow teachers to begin with the end in mind; by looking over the objectives, materials, and assessments first, teachers can see the big picture of what the unit addresses before becoming immersed in the minutiae of each individual lesson.
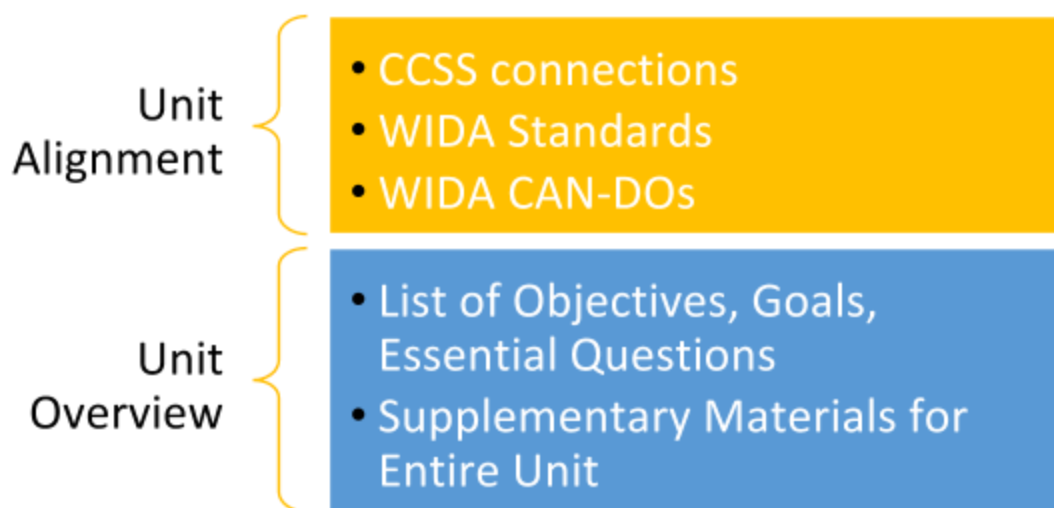
Figure 8: Unit-Level Components

Lesson Level: Components and Rationale for Inclusion

Each lesson consists of four sections: Planning Information, Preparation Guide, Backwards Planning, and Lesson Sequence. A sample lesson detailing the layout of these four sections can be found in Appendix B, and multiple examples can be found on the website. The first section, Planning Information, is filled in by the teacher and includes demographic information such as the teacher name and method used to teach the lesson (pull-out, co-teaching, etc.). This information was included to help teachers organize their lessons.

The second section, Preparation Guide, will be pre-written for the teacher. It includes information on the CCSS, WIDA Standards, and WIDA CAN-Dos addressed by the lesson, as well as an integrated language/community objective. The only field filled out by individual teachers in this section is the Teacher Intellectual Preparation section, which prompts teachers to state, in their own words, what students will learn at the end of the lesson and what new community connections they will make. For example, a teacher might reflect on how students will demonstrate mastery of a language target, or might write notes about how students might learn about refugees in their communities. This section was included to ensure that teachers reflect on the lesson before teaching, and to begin to take ownership of the curriculum.

The third section, Backwards Planning, is the assessment section of the lesson. The rationale for including this section before the lesson itself is so that teachers will have a preview of what the assessment will look like before teaching, in order to better align their instruction to the end product. This section will be pre-written for the teacher, and will include the assessment and appropriate rubric. However, there are a set of guiding questions appended to this section to assist teachers in evaluating the assessment for themselves and making changes they feel will benefit their students.

The final section of the lesson plan is the Lesson Sequence itself. The sequence is divided into Culture Setting, Vocabulary, Objective and Strategy, Modeling, Guided Practice, and Independent Practice. In addition, each of these sections includes a time indicator for how long should be spent in that section, guiding questions for the teacher to think about, a list of teacher-moves and questions scripted by the curriculum, and a place

for teachers to make their own annotations. The purpose of this annotation section is for teachers to note adjustments which may be necessary for their students, and to note potential misunderstandings students may have about the lessons, along with their own responses to those misunderstandings. The rationale for setting up the lessons in this way was to create clear and precise directions to assist teachers in delivering the lessons, while at the same time allowing teachers to maintain ownership of the lesson by providing opportunities to annotate and adapt the lesson for their specific learners in their specific communities.
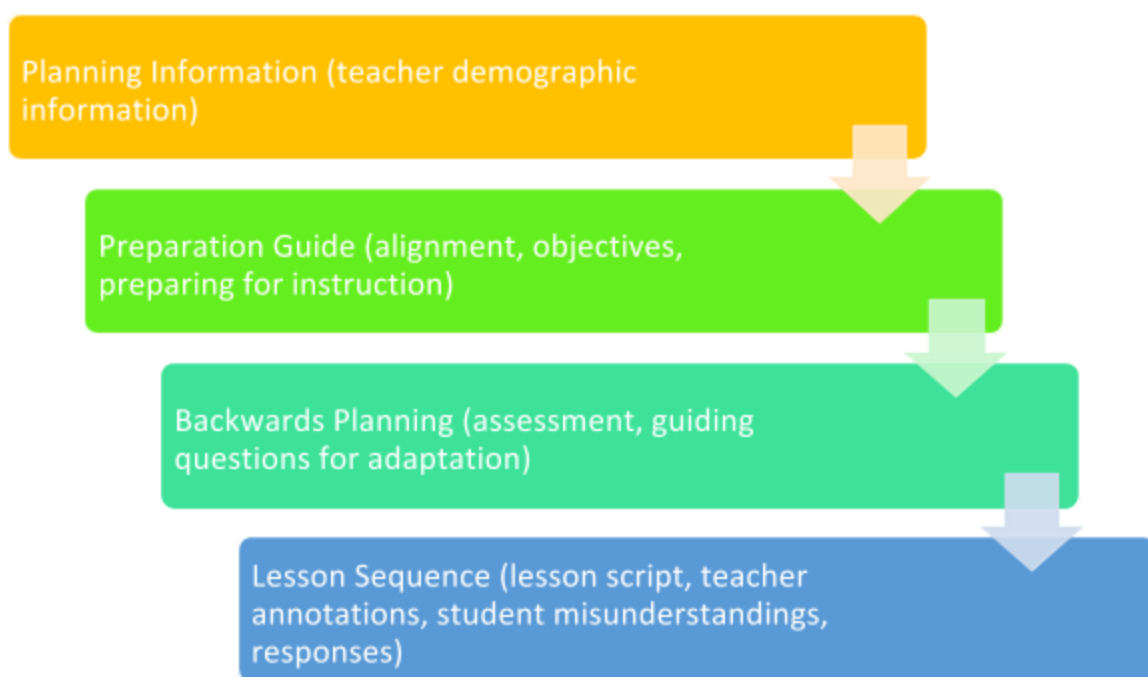
Figure 9: Lesson-Level Components

Potential Follow-Up Ideas

Though an experimental design is not within the scope of this project, I have several ideas for how I might, in the future, assess the effectiveness of this framework.

One of these is student performance on the ACCESS in the spring of 2018, as well as in subsequent years. If the curricular framework is working properly in the areas of rigor, I would expect to see ACCESS scores that outpace Minneapolis' results from 2017, after the recalibration of the ACCESS test. Another measure to evaluate the project would be student retention numbers at the school during the subsequent academic year. If students and families are feeling engaged by the curriculum's community-oriented focus – more engaged than they have been at other schools – I would expect to see lower mobility and turnover rates when compared to Minneapolis as a whole. The final measure to evaluate the curriculum would be family surveys rating the EL program. The school's district assessment coordinator has already created mid- and end-of-year surveys for families to use to rate the EL program's effectiveness and responsiveness. Average scores of a 4.0 or better on the 5-point scale would indicate high levels of satisfaction with the program and curriculum.

Conclusion

Chapter Three has outlined the approach I will take to the developing my curricular framework. I began with the setting, audience, rationale, and objectives for my project. I then described the components of the framework at the curricular, unit, and lesson level. Chapter Four includes a reflection on the process of creating the framework, which is presented in its entirety on a website (www.minneapolisELD.com).

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection

Introduction

Throughout both this capstone and its accompanying project, I have explored several research questions: How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning been approached in Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing curricular frameworks exist which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and how have they been successful? As a result of examining these questions, I responded by structuring the framework of my own curriculum – the Minneapolis English Language Development Curriculum Framework (MECF) – to be as culturally responsive, personalized to the community, and rigorous as I could make it.

In this chapter, I reflect on the process of creating the MECF. I first discuss the purpose of the project and my own learning while completing it. I then reflect on the literature reviewed in chapter two. I move on to detail the project's implications and areas for future research, as well as the limitations inherent in the work. Finally, I touch on how the project's results will be communicated, and how it may benefit the English teaching profession. I conclude with some general reflections on the creation of the project, and reaffirm the guiding philosophies which led me to create it.

Purpose of the Project and Major Learnings

The purpose of my project was to provide an instructional framework for ELLs that challenges and excites them, that does not hold lowered expectations for their

success, that reflects their connections to their communities while simultaneously

deepening those connections, and that prepares them to succeed in mainstream content

area classes. As it currently stands, my framework is like a scaffold of a house with only

a few rooms roughed in; only one unit of 2nd grade WIDA level 3 and 4 instruction has

been fully planned, with texts selected for only a few grade levels beyond that. The

framework remains to be completed, and my hope is that the secondary purpose of my

project – to inspire other educators to also pursue rigorous and community-based

instruction for ELLs – will be successful in the near future as my framework becomes

more complete.

From completing my project, I learned to approach teaching from a more

long-range perspective. As a teacher, I sometimes get wrapped up in the day-to-day

events of the classroom. *How can I help my students get along? When will I have time to*

make copies? What did I need to prepare for that meeting? These and other questions

make it difficult to focus on identifying unit outcomes I want my students to master, and

even more difficult to focus on the most difficult question of all: what enduring

understandings do I actually want my students to take away from class this year?

Creating this project taught me to ask myself that difficult question, and to answer it by

linking back all learning to the community which my students and I call home.

This project also helped me learn more about myself as a teacher, and about the

importance of self-evaluation. Built into the project are resources which serve as a

resource for me to check my own day-to-day teaching against the framework I have built.

I commit myself to using the tools I have created to evaluate my own practice, even if the

dictates of my day-to-day teaching necessitate that I teach materials outside the MECF. I hope to use the tools I developed – particularly the Fundamentals of ELL Instruction (FOEI) document – to evaluate myself and improve my own teaching practice.

Revisiting the Literature Review

In my literature review, I reviewed data which mapped the academic progress of Minneapolis ELLs, both in acquiring English and in content areas. The data indicate that ELLs are underperforming in content areas compared to their native English speaking peers, and that they are also struggling to attain higher levels of English proficiency as measured on the ACCESS test. This downward trend was recently reinforced when the ACCESS was changed to align more closely to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which catalyzed another dip in ELL achievement as measured on standardized tests. This proved to be one of the most important part of the literature review for me as I drafted my project. I found myself constantly referring back to the data from the literature review and asking myself if the work I was doing in the project was truly aligned to the WIDA framework and CCSS. Was it rigorous enough? Would it help students achieve higher levels of English proficiency and greater access to grade-level content?

I also reviewed literature which showed the deep roots that community-based learning has had in Minneapolis, beginning with Minneapolis Public Schools' Southeast Alternatives (SEA) experiment in the 1970s. The bond between community and school is also present in research on open enrollment. The research on open enrollment is conflicting, with some studies seeming to point towards families choosing schools along racial and ethnic lines, while others point to families choosing schools based on location,

academics, or other factors. Whatever the reasons driving families to choose particular

schools, the research indicates that schooling remains a priority for families of varying

communities inside Minneapolis. This influenced my project by forcing me to think of

Minneapolis not as a monolithic community, but as an intersection of varying

communities. Gone are the days where students from one single neighborhood all attend

one school. I therefore paid close attention to the selection of texts for my curriculum, as

well as the assignments I wrote to go with those texts. I wanted to ensure that they

represented a multitude of perspectives, even if the students I work with come from

predominantly one culture.

I also reviewed two approaches towards curriculum design: the Understanding by

Design (UbD) framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011) and the Achievement First

framework. Both have in common a focus on standards-based instruction, in which

educators begin with the end-goal for students in mind and backwards plan from there

towards the lesson itself. The Achievement First model – and the strong student outcomes

associated with it – is an example of what can be achieved when a district uses the UbD

philosophy to design an entire K-12 curriculum from the ground up with the needs of

their students in mind. I chose to model the MECF after Achievement First's curriculum

with the hopes of creating similarly robust results for my students. As I wrote my project,

I developed a deeper understanding of the principles behind Ubd and the Achievement

First model. I looked at my lessons not from my normal day-by-day perspective, but from

a viewpoint based in long-range planning. Instead of focusing on activities - a trap I

sometimes fall into - I focused on the outcomes I wanted students to have by the end of

the entire unit, and even the entire program. This shift in perspective informed by my

literature review proved very valuable to me as I constructed the project.

Project Implications and Future Research

My project answers my research questions – outlined in the introduction above –

by presenting a curriculum framework that I believe is rigorous, personalized to the

Minneapolis community, and truly focused on academic language. My project addresses

these areas by anchoring its essential questions, goals, objectives, texts, and learning

activities in the Minneapolis community. I used the CCSS and WIDA CAN DOs to

create material appropriate for ELLs, yet I tried to make the curriculum as rigorous as

possible to assist students on the path toward English proficiency.

One of the implications of my project is that it may raise awareness of the need

for curriculum which is truly tailored to its environment. If others try the curriculum and

find success in using it, my project may attract others who are interested in developing a

similar curriculum for their own home communities.

Another implication is that my project may re-ignite an interest in

language-informed teaching. Though my project is not a set of drills on grammar, it does

contain more explicit instruction on form that I have observed is currently practiced in

ELD classrooms currently, which seem to favor a more exposure-driven language

teaching philosophy, and are often co-taught with a content teacher. Though I recognize

the benefits of this model, my own experience has favored whole- or small-group

ESL-teacher led instruction, which mixes content and language objectives together, as the

mode of instruction most likely to increase student achievement results. I will be interested to see if other teachers feel the same way after looking at my curriculum.

One area I look forward to exploring in the future is whether or not the curriculum has a positive effect on student achievement outcomes. Doing an experimental design with the efficacy of this framework as its focus was not within the scope of this project, and I have yet to be able to test out the curriculum exactly as I have written it here due to time constraints. I hope one day to be able to fully use this curriculum with students, and to see the results. Depending upon these results, rewrites to the curriculum may be necessary.

I also intend to continue to work towards the eventual completion of the project on a larger scale. I envision the MECF eventually growing to encompass all grades K-12, with alignments to all WIDA levels and all CCSS standards in Language, Writing, and Speaking & Listening. I intend to embark on this work immediately, and I hope that other teachers who are exposed to my project might consider joining me.

Finally, I wish to continue my search for high-quality children's literature and nonfiction texts which feature Minneapolis and Minneapolis communities. I want to expand this library of texts to provide even more options for teachers working in Minneapolis to give students books which more accurately reflect their own experiences outside the classroom, as I feel this is the first step to investing students in their learning.

Project Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this project in its current form is that it is just a start. Currently, there is only one complete unit available on the website, and though the

existing framework eases the process of creating further units, the process of doing so will certainly take time.

There is a further limitation in the mode of my project's presentation: a website. I was fortunate to be able to use a template from Wix.com to create the website; however, this template also has its limitations, namely the lack of Minneapolis-specific imagery it can offer. I was able to use some of my own photography of the city to provide contextualizing imagery, but this too is a limitation, since I do not possess enough high-quality images of the city to truly give my project context. My own limited web-design skills are also a limitation; though I am sure it is possible to organize the information on the site better than I have done, I have come up against the barrier of my own inexperience. I need to further develop my web-design skills to understand if there is a better way to present my project online.

Another factor limiting this project is the finite number of communities it includes. The current unit contains texts from the Somali and Vietnamese communities, but leaves out the multitude of other groups and communities present in Minneapolis. Though the curriculum does include guidance for the inclusion of other groups in future units – including a list of texts to be used – the fact remains that not all communities are represented in all units.

I am further limited by my own inherent bias as someone who is not a Person of Color (PoC); though I have tried to look critically at my curriculum and eliminate unintentionally damaging views of PoC from it, and to place emphasis on the diverse voices of my community wherever possible, the fact that this curriculum originated with

me means that it is, inherently, flawed. I hope that feedback from others in the future will allow me to further improve my curriculum and make it an even better fit for my community.

Communicating Results

I am communicating the results of my project to the general public through a website. The project itself is housed at the website www.minneapolisELD.com. The project consists of curriculum documents including a program vision, list of texts used in the program, a community overview, and a teacher-centered Fundamentals of ELD Instruction document which can be used as a self-assessment tool. Each unit consists of a Unit Overview document which details alignment to Common Core State Standards and WIDA CAN-DO descriptors, as well as unit essential questions, both as relate to discrete ELD skills and to the community.

Each lesson is fully scripted and includes all documents necessary to teach the lesson, except for outside-published books, a list of which is included in both curriculum and unit-level documents.

On the website, the curriculum itself is housed under the Curriculum tab. There is a subpage for all curriculum-level documents, and each unit has its own sub-page as well. The website also contains a brief "about" section, as well as a section on resources for teachers in the Minneapolis community. There is also a section which readers may use to contact me with questions or suggestions.

Benefits to the Profession

The main way in which my project benefits the ELD profession is that it provides a model for what rigorous instruction for ELLs could look like. Since the WIDA re-standardization of the ACCESS test to be more in line with the CCSS took place only just this year, I have spoken to many teachers who feel no small degree of panic over the new, higher academic language demands students are asked to grapple with. They want their students to reach these challenging standards, but are unsure how to support them in doing so. Meanwhile, data from my literature review suggest that current methods are not facilitating the development of ELLs' academic language to a degree that allows them full access to content. I hope that my project can benefit the English teaching profession by providing one model of how teachers might address the more rigorous demands of current content, language, and assessments.

Most of all, I hope that my project benefits students. I have witnessed in my own practice how eagerly students take up difficult tasks when they are provided with the right support, and how they hunger to learn more when they see themselves reflected in texts, assignments, and lessons. I hope that by anchoring my project in the diverse communities of Minneapolis that I benefit students by providing them with engaging and challenging educational experiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reflected on the process of answering my three research questions: How well are Minneapolis ELLs meeting rigorous educational standards currently? How have personalized and community-based learning been approached in

Minneapolis historically? What pre-existing, place-specific curricular frameworks exist

which might provide a successful model for this new framework, and how have they been

successful? As a result of examining these questions, I created the framework and a

sample unit for my own curriculum: the Minneapolis English Language Development

Curriculum Framework (MECF).

In creating this curriculum framework, I reflected on the connections it had to my

literature review, specifically to the data showing current trends in the education of ELLs

in Minneapolis. I also reflected on the implications of my project and the ways in which

it will hopefully benefit my profession, which include increased outcomes for students

and renewed teacher engagement with the Minneapolis community. Though my project

may benefit others, it is also has limitations. It is limited by its online format, its current

narrow focus on second grade, and by my own blind spots and shortcomings as a

privileged, non-person of color in today's educational landscape. Despite these

limitations, I am optimistic that I can continue to expand the MECF, either by myself or

with the help of other interested teachers.

At the close of this project, I feel drawn to reflect on the epigraph to this

Capstone, told to me over a decade ago by my favorite teacher. He once told me to

"rescue ideas from abstraction." I have tried to do that in this project, tried to take

something out of the unorganized vault of my own mind and make it accessible in the

real world. I hope that I have rescued the ideas of rigor, language, and community from

abstraction for my readers, and for those who will use my curriculum. This project began

with a simple desire to do better: to be a better teacher, learner, and member of my

community. I know that I have fallen far short of perfection, but I hope that completing this project has made me a better teacher than I was when I began it. It may be a small thing – and it is certainly a cliché – but if I can make the world of school just a bit better for my students, then I move my community that much closer to having the education it deserves.

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Appendix A

Needs Assessment Results

1. In the space below, write three words which you feel describe or should describe the school's general approach to education.

    Holistic, personalized, effective
    Relationships, academics, culture
    Culturally specific, inclusive, student-centered
    Personalized, equitable, rigorous
    Personalized, responsive, compassionate
    Love, support, productive disruption
    Motivation, success, passion
    Accessible, personable, caring
    Differentiated, caring, rigorous
    Flexible, rigorous, meaningful
    Personalized, rigorous/academics, caring, equity and culture

2. From your perspective, what should the primary goal of an EL program be?
    a. To move students towards academic proficiency in the English language as quickly as possible = **10% of responses**
    b. To assist students in developing a deep   knowledge of language and communication which will assist them in their futures. = **90% of responses**
    c. To ensure that all students can access grade-level standards, no matter how much English they might know right now. = **0% of responses**
    d. Other = **0% of responses**

3. Please rate the following EL program traits from 1 – 5. You may assign each rating more than once, or not at all.
    Key:
    1 = not at all desirable
    2 = neither important nor unimportant
    3 = somewhat important
    4 = very important
    5 = essential

EL Program Trait	Rating (Average)
Rigor: the EL program holds high expectations for all students.	4.3
Standardization: the EL program is basically the same across classrooms and grade levels.	2.7
Flexibility: the EL program responds to needs of individual students.	4.8
Culturally Responsive: the EL program integrates students' home cultures into the program.	4.6
Results: the EL program is driven by data and constantly assesses itself to see if students are progressing towards proficiency.	4.8
Compliant: the EL program is compliant with all state and federal rules, statutes, and laws.	4.3
Knowledge: the EL staff is knowledgeable about EL content and provides training to other staff members.	4.2
Innovative: the EL program takes risks and tries new things to assist scholars towards English language mastery.	4.0
Research-based: the EL program follows existing research and teaches using tried-and-true methods.	4.2

4. As a community member, what questions, comments, or concerns do you have about the EL program that you want the school to answer? Sample questions might include questions about curriculum, number of hours per day students are given services, etc.

1. No comment (several surveys)
2. How do you nurture L1 development while building proficiency in L2?
3. How will EL services be individualized to support each student?
4. I think your expertise and enthusiasm is a tremendous asset for us.

5. What pain points can you share from previous programs? If you had 3 wishes for the program, what would they be? As the principal, what are 2-3 things I could do that would be out of bounds (undermine EL leadership)?
6. What's the time kids of EL will spend in class?
7. I trust you – show us the way!
8. How will the EL program expand as the school expands?
9. Just wondering about how kids are serviced...pulled out? Etc.?

Needs Assessment Summary Write-Up

In analyzing the responses to question one, it became clear that the idea of personalization is very important to our stakeholders. The community wants the school in general to be personalized, flexible, and responsive. Stakeholders also expressed investment in rigorous academics, results, and support for students. Both personalization and rigor were main themes in the results for section 3; "flexibility" and "results" were both given the highest rating by stakeholders, with each receiving an average of 4.8 points. Being culturally responsive was another item rated as very important, coming in third place with an average of 4.6 points.

There was near unanimity on the purpose of the EL program: 90% of respondents stated that the purpose of the EL program should be "to assist students in developing a deep knowledge of language and communication which will assist them in their futures."

Integration into Plan of Services

Based on the results above, the EL Program Philosophy in the EL Plan of Services will read:

The EL program guiding philosophy was created with input from our board, teachers, staff, and community members through a needs assessment. Our community believes that all children learn differently, and that all should be held to high standards. We provide a high rigor environment coupled with high supports of all types: linguistic, academic, behavioral, and cultural. We integrate rigor and support with a focus on a deep knowledge of the language we teach and learn, working with students to make them masters of their own forms of self-expression. Recognizing that there is no such thing as a successful one-size-fits-all education, we personalize our program for scholars, empowering all children to achieve at a high level through different pathways and connections to our community.

Appendix B

Lesson Plan

Note: the original version of this lesson plan was developed by Dae Selcer in conjunction with Teresa Gloppen in 2014; the version below has been updated.

Section I: Planning Information

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL
GRADE LEVEL/CLASS	DATE
MODEL USED SMALL GROUP PULL-OUT PARALLEL TEACHING OR STATION TEACHING CO-TEACHING	SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS NEEDED

Section II: Preparation Guide

Modality	☐Reading ☐Writing ☐Listening ☐Speaking
Common Core Standard	☐Language ☐Writing ☐Listening & Speaking
WIDA Standard	
WIDA CAN-DO Descriptor	
Community Focus for Today	
Integrated Community / Language Objective	SWBAT + Bloom's Verb + Community Connection + Language + Support
Teacher Intellectual Preparation. State, in your own words, what students shall be able to do at the end of this lesson. State the new	

community connection students will create.	

Section III: Backwards Planning

Assessment	☐Individual	☐Group	☐Written	☐Oral
	☐Formative	☐Summative	☐Formal	☐Informal

Assessment Description	Assessment and rubric to be attached here.
● Does the assessment align to the objective? ● Does the assessment reflect the community and language objective? ● Is the assessment appropriate for your learners in your community? ● Are students addressing mastery in the **correct** modality?	

Section IV: Lesson Sequence

TIME	LESSON PORTION	TEACHER MOVES AND QUESTIONS	ANTICIPATED MISUNDERSTANDINGS + RESPONSES
1 MIN	CULTURE SETTING ● *What is our big community goal?* ● *How do we get there? Why is it important?* ● *Use first-language support*	TO BE SCRIPTED BY THE CURRICULUM	TO BE ANNOTATED BY THE TEACHER
2 MIN (1 MIN PER WORD)	PRE-LESSON VOCABULARY TEACHING ● 1-2 words (last day is review) *7 words per week ● BECK's Model: *[a. text/context reference, b.*		

	student-friendly definition, c. example, d. aural prompt, e. question prompt to assess comprehension of meaning, f. aural prompt]		
2 MIN	**OBJECTIVE & DIRECT EXPLANATION OF STRATEGY** ● *What is the community and language objective for today?* ● *What is the strategy to help students master that objective?*		
5 – 10 MIN	**MODELING** ● *Think aloud of strategy application to meet the objective.* ● *Visual support(s)* ● *Linguistic support(s)* *Aligned to assessment		
10 - 20 MIN	**GUIDED PRACTICE** ● *How are you releasing responsibility to the students?* ● *How are you giving feedback?* ● *What student errors do you anticipate? How*		

	will you correct? **Script at least 2* *possible student* *errors and your* *response.*		

10 -
15
MIN
	INDEPENDENT PRACTICE
	● *What assistance*
	  can you give?
	● *How will you*
	  prompt students to
	  think on your own
	  without your
	  assistance?
	● *What student*
	  errors do you
	  anticipate? How
	  will you correct?
	  *Script at least 2
	  possible student
	  errors and your
	  response.		