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Scaffolding Kindergarten Writing For English Language Learners

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SCAFFOLDING KINDERGARTEN WRITING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE

LEARNERS

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

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DEDICATION

To all my friends, family, and colleagues that supported me in the creation of this capstone. Thank you to my co-teachers who have led me down this path and have always inspired me with their tremendous skill and dedication to our students. Thanks to my peer reviewers and content expert for all of your excellent advice. And a special thank you to my partner, Trent, for all the unending love, support, and patience given to me throughout this capstone process and in all other endeavors.

"Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow."
–Oliver Wendell Holmes

"What a child can do with assistance today, she will be able to do by herself tomorrow."

–Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky

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Decades of research has documented the achievement gap between English Learners (ELs) and non-ELs in U.S. schools. According to some measures, one of the areas in which ELs struggle most is writing, an area which is often ignored especially in early childhood and kindergarten classrooms. Furthermore, many teachers report that they feel underprepared to meet the needs of ELs in their classroom. This capstone project addresses the particular challenge of teaching writing to kindergarten ELs and answers the question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?* To answer this question, this capstone delves into the current literature surrounding ELs, instructional scaffolding, and kindergarten writing. From information gathered from researched best practices, the resulting capstone project is a PDF of instructional resources designed to scaffold the writing process and support ELs' during their writing block. These resources specifically are designed to add additional supports to the kindergarten persuasive writing unit in the Lucy Calkins' writer's workshop curriculum. Limitations of this capstone include the project's lack of testing, limited audience and scope, and lack of control over implementation of project resources. There are a number of implications for this capstone project as well, including an impact on teacher professional development, writing instruction resources, efficiency, and writing outcomes for ELs. Overall, this capstone provides instructional scaffolding techniques as a solution to help narrow the pervasive achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs and to promote writing success for ELs in kindergarten.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

My Research Question

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher supporting my English learners (ELs) in the kindergarten classroom, I often find myself overwhelmed during writing instruction time. I struggle because it seems that my students lack the basic language and foundational skills needed to be successful at writing projects. My struggle leads me to explore the following question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?* Exploring this question will help me to better support my kindergarten ELs in their writing development. I believe they can succeed, but they must be given the appropriate instruction, the right tools, and enough time.

My EL writing instruction often takes place within the mainstream kindergarten classroom made up of 26 students. In this class, usually about one-third of the students are identified as EL, with a range of English language proficiency levels from beginning to advanced. Currently our K-5 classrooms use the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* curriculum developed by Lucy Calkins and the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) (2016) at Columbia University. This curriculum is typically referred to by many educators as Lucy Calkins' writer's workshop. A typical writer's workshop lesson at my school includes a minilesson led by the teacher, time for independent writing, time for the teacher to confer with individual writers or small groups, and time to share writing at the end of the lesson. From my perspective as an ESL teacher, classroom teachers are often experts at

following administration-mandated writing curriculums, which they were trained to implement precisely. In class during the minilesson, teachers model by-the-book the scripted teaching objective, such as how to label pictures and sound out new words. When it is time for independent work, most of the kindergarten students go back to their desks and incorporate these strategies into their own writing. On one hand, most students in the classroom seem ready for the lesson's learning objective and are on track in developing as young writers.

On the other hand, I float between the ELs in the classroom, some of whom are drowning. I try to help one student copy his name. I correct another student's pencil grip. I guide the next student on how to draw a picture. Many of them need help finding the words orally before they can attempt to write it down. Then, they lack the phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge to sound out these words. Without prompting, these students will usually stare at their blank paper helplessly. Some have ripped it up in frustration or scribbled angrily over their unsuccessful attempts.

In my experience, many ELs struggle as beginning writers because they lack the same level of phonological awareness, literacy exposure, vocabulary, and grammar as their native English-speaking peers. Therefore, the purpose of this capstone project is to research how to scaffold our school's writing curriculum to meet the needs of ELs. For the purposes of this capstone project, scaffolding is defined as an instructional strategy used to support and enhance student learning by adding supports to the learning process (IRIS Center, 2018). An English Language Learner (ELL), also referred to as an English Learner (EL), is defined by the *21st Century Education: A Reference Handbook* as a student "who speak language(s) other than English at home and who learn[s] English as

the dominant language of the media and education in the host culture" (Li & Wang, p. 97). My project's goal will be to design and incorporate strategies, materials, and resources to help support ELs' growth in writing and meet the expectations of the mainstream curriculum and state standards.

In this chapter, I will tell the story of my personal journey of first and second language writing experiences and how they shape my biases and beliefs about writing development. Next, an explanation of the context and rationale will be provided to orient the reader on the setting and reason for this study. Finally, this chapter will explore the personal and professional significance of my research question to show how this project fits into the larger picture of ESL writing pedagogy. In the next section, the reader will be able to understand how my personal journey has led to the development of my research question.

My Personal Journey

Growing up as a native speaker of English in a suburban public school district, it has become apparent that I had been afforded many advantages before entering kindergarten. First of all, my home was filled with meaningful talk with my parents, grandparents, siblings, and neighbors. Singing to family and friends and making up rhymes was a favorite hobby of mine. My mother read books to me from a young age until I memorized the stories and read them back to her. Preschool taught me the letter names and sounds. I excelled at noticing the letters and words in favorite titles of TV shows or restaurant names. Drawing and copying letters was a way to pass time. I could write my name. Reading and writing came to me naturally. Literacy was something that had always been part of my life.

When I went to kindergarten in 1993, it was a half-day program. The Common Core State Standards (2010), a set of national K-12 educational benchmarks detailing what students should know in English language arts and mathematics by the conclusion of each grade level, had not been developed yet. It seems to me that expectations in literacy for kindergarteners were much lower when I was growing up. Today, kindergarteners are expected to use "drawing, dictating, and writing" to compose opinion, narrative, and informative texts as well as participate in research and problem solving writing activities (National Governors Association, 2010). When I was in kindergarten, no one expected me to write more than my name and strings of letters. I remember the teacher reading to us, doing phonological awareness activities with picture cards, drawing pictures, and lots of play time. Reading or writing coherent sentences on my own was not something that was expected of me, but it is for my students today.

Throughout my K-12 school career, I was often placed in accelerated reading groups and scored high grades on my writing assignments. My undergraduate major was in English, with courses that included writing poetry, drama, fiction, and paper upon paper of literature analyses. Writing essays earned me a number of academic scholarships. Using my skills in literacy was always very rewarding.

Because of the advantages in my upbringing and native English speaker status, being a struggling writer in English was not part of my life experience. I never required additional scaffolds to access the classroom's writing instruction. I recognize this privilege has given me a certain bias when looking at my kindergarten ELs struggling to write in a competitive environment today. However, going on to write in a second language was more challenging for me.

My Second Language Writing Experience

In my undergraduate studies, I also fell in love with linguistics and became an expert on the history, phonology, syntax, morphology, sociology, and pragmatics of the English language. It was because of my experience with linguistics that I decided to teach English abroad and at the same time study another language in a foreign environment. After graduating with my Bachelors of Arts in English, I was accepted into the U.S. Peace Corps to teach English in Sichuan Province, China for two years.

In China, my favorite thing to do was study Chinese, but at first it was difficult being suddenly illiterate. The environmental print all written in Chinese characters held no meaning for me. I could not identify the meaning of any written characters—much less write them—not even my own new name. I found myself frustrated and unaccustomed to being so overwhelmed by the print around me.

For a long time, ignoring the Chinese characters helped me focus on learning only oral Chinese. Reading and writing Chinese characters seemed to be an unattainable goal. The characters just looked too complicated. But over time, some of them started to stand out. There were a few frequent characters that were seen everywhere. And after learning what they meant, some of the signs and labels started to make sense. I began reading simple sentences, then dialogues, and eventually children's stories. Then, I tried writing too.

I learned to write in Chinese from a combination of lessons from a Chinese class, a tutor, and self-guided homework. I would copy familiar characters, one stroke at a time. My copying was very sloppy, but with practice I realized that each character was made up of a number of recurring parts called radicals. I learned how to write these radicals

more quickly, and soon I could write a whole character on my own without copying. Over time, I could write words, then sentences, and then paragraphs. This process of working step by step towards a more complex task aided me in learning how to write in a second language. However, if handed a paper and pencil and told to write a personal narrative the first day I arrived in Chinese class—like my students are asked to do—it would have been very overwhelming,

The entire time in China, I relied on my first language literacy to help me organize my thoughts, construct sentences, and use standard writing conventions. However, my ELs in kindergarten do not have the benefit of relying on literacy skills in their first language before they are taught to learn to read and write in their second language. This privilege has provided me with a further lens of bias that my EL students are at a deeper disadvantage when learning to write a second language in kindergarten. My experiences of second language writing has shaped my concept of second language writing acquisition, but I am aware that my second language writing experience is very different than that of my students.

My Teaching Experience

After returning from China, I enrolled in a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program to attain my initial teaching licensure in ESL. My goal was to help speakers of other languages gain English language skills and learn to live and thrive in our community, similar to my experience in China. I earned my teaching license in the spring of 2015, and later that fall started my first job at an urban K-12 charter school serving a high population of ELs. As of the 2018-19 academic school year, it is my fourth year

teaching ESL at this school, where my role is to scaffold content and build English language skills with students in kindergarten and first grade.

For the past three years, I have spent a lot of time co-teaching during the literacy block in kindergarten. Co-teaching happens when two teachers share the responsibility for planning, organizing, and delivering instruction to a group of students. During my first year at this school, I was shocked by the expectations and pressures put on these students at five years old. To be proficient in writing, ELs need to be able to write about a topic with multiple expanded sentences, technical language, phonetic spelling, and with standard writing conventions, none of which I could do when exiting kindergarten.

Nevertheless, I have witnessed the positive results of high teacher expectations. Although many of my students struggle in the beginning, by the end of the year, they grow tremendously. Many of my students do not even recognize their early drawings and writings from the beginning of the year, thinking perhaps those uncontrolled lines and scribbles were made by a different person.

However, many of my school's ELs do not meet grade level expectations in writing. Many are not able to fully access the mainstream lesson and perform independently in their writing projects. Supporting my students' literacy is a passion of mine, especially given my own love of literacy. This leads me to the context and rationale for my capstone project.

Capstone Context and Rationale

The setting of this capstone project is a K-12 charter school in an urban, Midwestern setting. According to the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) (2018) online statistical database, the Minnesota Report Card, the racial demographics of

our school are 99% Asian, with most of our students being the children and grandchildren of refugees. In our school, 30% are identified as English learners, and 82% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Gaps in income and language play a significant role, especially for the ELs in our school. Many of our EL students have had no prior school experience before arriving in kindergarten. Many times, kindergarten is the first structured, academic environment to which our students are exposed. Some mention having no books, pencils, or paper at home. Parents at conferences discuss their long work hours and lack of confidence in supporting their child's academic learning at home. The separation from their family, strict rules for behavior, and total English language immersion is a culture shock for many of my students, especially those who have recently immigrated to the United States. Poverty also affects many of our EL families. Some students' families struggle with finding affordable housing and access to healthcare. Bedbug bites, lack of sleep, and untreated infections and illnesses can often disrupt learning.

When it comes to writing, ELs enter school with fewer skills than their native English-speaking peers because of limited previous academic experience and language. Poverty, parents' limited English proficiency and lack of education, and lack of pre-K enrollment are setbacks for many ELs (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Hernandez, Macartney, & Denton, 2010). In my experience, many of my ELs struggle with some of the foundational elements of writing, including holding their pencil, drawing pictures, and forming letters. They have trouble retaining letter names and sounds and naming them quickly. Their vocabulary and grammar skills are lacking, often not just in English but in their home language as well. They struggle with phonological awareness and cannot

isolate the sounds they hear in their words or create rhymes. All of these skills that I took

for granted as a native speaker—skills that aided my early writing development—are

skills that I have needed to model and teach explicitly to my ELs. None of these skills

come easily.

In our school's adopted writer's workshop curriculum, the *Units of Study in*

Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing (Lucy Calkins & TCRWP, 2016),

kindergarteners practice their writing skills by creating narratives, all-about books, how-

to instructions, and persuasive texts throughout the year. The projects are challenging and

engaging, and often require extra supports in place for ELs to accomplish their writing

goals. Therefore, the rationale for this capstone is to research and create scaffolds for my

ELs and incorporate them into their mainstream writing instruction. The addition of

scaffolds can ensure that writing time is meaningful for ELs, and they are steadily

growing toward their next personal goal each day of the writer's workshop.

Personal and Professional Significance

This study holds personal significance for me because one expectation of my job

role as an ESL teacher is to help make classroom content accessible to my ELs. Using the

body of research around scaffolding writing development for my ELs will help me

become a more effective ESL teacher. By researching how to become an expert at

instructional scaffolding, I can transfer the knowledge I gain from this study to

scaffolding other content area curriculums for ELs. Furthermore, by sharing the results of

this capstone project, I can also help other teachers who work with ELs to scaffold their

writing projects and other content areas.

This study is also significant for providing quality writing instruction for EL

students. Existing research supports that ELs may benefit both academically and personally from use of scaffolds to develop their writing skills. Scaffolding has been widely documented as highly beneficial instructional tool for all students, including ELs and students with disabilities (IRIS Center, 2018; Pavlak, 2013; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983 2013; Price, 2018). Scaffolding is based off of Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and in essence uses the guidance of a teacher and tools to help guide the learner towards the next level of mastery. Scaffolding can allow ELs to grow in writing by making steady improvement toward their personal goals. With the right scaffolds in place, ELs will be given the opportunity to participate in grade-level writing projects and excel as writers.

With appropriate writing skills, ELs will also have more opportunities for higher education. Entrance to college often includes writing a college entrance essay. After entering college, many courses require college level writing skills in the form of essays, lab reports, or written exams. Earning grants and scholarships usually requires a written component. According to the MN Report Card (2018), fewer ELs are attending college versus non-ELs. In 2017, 75% of all students statewide who graduated high school were accepted into an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) within 16 months, whereas only 62% of ELs were accepted to an IHE within 16 months. Therefore, it is important to address the need for effective writing instruction for ELs as it is not only an educational issue but an equity issue.

Beyond post-secondary schooling, writing is a skill required in many jobs. For example, applying for jobs requires professionally-crafted cover letters and resumes. With today's competitive job market, good writing skills can open up a multitude of

career opportunities in fields such as marketing, advertising, publishing, journalism, and media. Nowadays, print is a primary means of communication and our ELs need to have a voice within this literate environment. In her dissertation on interactive writing interventions for kindergarten ELs, Price (2018) asserts, "Writing is a critical skill that all students need in order to thrive in today's world, no matter what goals they may pursue" (p.10). Starting in kindergarten, teachers need to prepare our ELs to have the same opportunities as their native English-speaking peers to participate in this highly literate world.

This study also holds national significance for ESL education. Historically, the United States has performed poorly in educating its EL population in comparison to its native English-speaking population. Nationwide, academic measurements in reading, math, and science show that ELs are lagging behind (U.S. Department of Education [U.S. DOE], n.d). Particularly, writing seems to be a challenging domain for English language acquisition. According to the *English Learner Education in Minnesota* report (MDE, 2017), statewide English language proficiency testing scores show that many of our ELs are struggling to achieve higher performance levels in the productive domains (speaking and writing) rather than the receptive domains (reading and listening). Last year, many of my students' writing scores alone prevented them from exiting ESL services. Writing skills for ELs has become an equity issue, and research on how to scaffold writing for EL populations is a promising solution to help close the educational gap that exists in our country.

Conclusion

This chapter told the story of my personal journey to my research question,

explained the context and rationale for this study, as well as explored the personal and professional significance of my research question. In my research, I hope to answer the question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?*

In Chapter Two, I review the literature related to scaffolding writing for kindergarten ELs. Chapter Three will outline my capstone project, and Chapter Four will describe my reflections on creating my capstone project.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction.

Comparing my own personal journey of writing acquisition in my first and second languages to that of my students' has helped me to realize the challenges faced by kindergarten English learners (ELs) when learning to write for the first time in a second language. In my four years of working as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, writing instruction has been one of my greatest challenges. This has led me to explore the question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?*

This chapter will provide a review of the literature on ELs in the United States, scaffolding as a way to support ELs, and the various demands of kindergarten writing. The section on ELs offers a clear definition of ELs, their demographics, their performance in U.S. schools both locally and nationally, and the unique challenges faced by ELs. A deeper understanding of ELs and their performance and challenges in our nation's schools offers a deeper understanding of this unique population and their needs.

The next section will describe the current literature on scaffolding, including the educational theory behind scaffolding, the research supporting the use of scaffolding, different types of scaffolds, as well as research on successful scaffolding techniques for EL writing instruction. Research on scaffolding for ELs helped inform the types of scaffolds designed in this capstone project.

The last section on kindergarten writing will provide relevant research on ELs' performance in writing, the developmental stages of early writing, best practices for

kindergarten writing instruction, and specific skills linked to early writing success. Understanding the stages of development of ELs' early writing development and components of early writing success is crucial to help inform the types of scaffolds needed to help ELs progress in writing. To inform the development of my capstone project, the goal of this section is to provide relevant research and a deeper understanding of ELs, scaffolding, and kindergarten writing.

English Learners (ELs)

This section will give a review of the literature and data available on ELs in both nationally and within the local region. Reviewing the literature revealed that many studies have been conducted on the demographics of ELs, especially related to their performance in our education system (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), 2015; U. S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE), n.d.). Other studies have documented the unique challenges that ELs face in schools (Hernandez, Macartney, & Denton, 2010; Houstman, 2017). The achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs has been largely documented for decades; however more research needs to be done to find solutions to help ELs succeed in our nation's schools.

This section provides the most recent information on ELs' demographics, school achievement, and unique challenges that ELs face when entering the U.S. school system. However, to participate fully in the discussion of ELs, it is important to have a complete and clear definition of the term "English learner (EL)."

Definitions. National and state laws play an important role in defining the term English language learner (ELL), or English learner (EL). The Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, provides a

national definition for the term English learner (EL). In ESSA, the term "English learner"

replaced the previous term "Limited English Proficient (LEP)" used in No Child Left

Behind (NCLB). According to ESSA, an English learner (EL) is defined as:

> . . . an individual— (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or
>
> preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was
>
> not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than
>
> English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of
>
> the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language
>
> other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of
>
> English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is
>
> a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a
>
> language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking,
>
> reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny
>
> the individual— (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
>
> (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of
>
> instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.
>
> (ESSA, 2015, Section 8101(20))

Locally, the term "English learner" is also favored by state legislation, and is defined

under 2018 Minnesota Statutes, Section 124D. 59, subdivision 2 as:

> . . . a pupil in kindergarten through grade 12 or a prekindergarten student . . . who
>
> meets . . . the following requirements: (1) the pupil, as declared by a parent or
>
> guardian first learned a language other than English; and (2) the pupil is
>
> determined by a valid assessment measuring the pupil's English language

proficiency and by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include

observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally

appropriate assessment instruments, to lack the necessary English skills to

participate fully in academic classes taught in English.

The above two definitions tend to identify ELs from a lens of what they are lacking—

English proficiency. However, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (as

cited in Price, 2018) instead uses an asset-based approach to describe ELs as a "highly

heterogeneous and complex group of students, with diverse gifts, educational needs,

backgrounds, language, and goals" (p. 2). In the following section, it will become

apparent that ELs are an extremely diverse group in the United States., and this

description by the NCTE may better embody this very unique and growing population

within our country.

National background of ELs. The U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE)

(n.d.) has documented how ELs are a growing population in the U.S in their online

publication "Our Nation's English Learners" (n.d.), a webpage report summarizing data

provided by government-based studies on the national trends of ELs. According to this

report, between the 2009-10 and 2014-15 school years, EL student populations have

increased in more than half of U.S. states, with some states reporting a percentage

increase as high as 40%. The U.S. DOE (n.d) also noted that in the 2014-15 school year,

there were 4.8 million EL students in the United States, representing about 10% of the K-

12 student population. In U.S. schools, ELs speak more than 400 languages (U.S. DOE,

n.d). These facts support that ELs are a growing and diverse population within our

country.

This same report by the U.S. DOE (n.d.) found that EL students are also a heavily concentrated population. In 2014-15, almost half of ELs were concentrated into only 7% of school districts throughout the nation. EL students are even more concentrated at the individual school level. Schools with high EL populations (meaning 20% of the school population or more) educate 61% of all EL students in the nation. While these schools educate the majority of ELs, they represent only 15% of all schools in the country. Whatever the reasons, EL school concentration suggests that ELs are a somewhat segregated population. The next section will explore the performance of these EL students in our nation's schools.

National achievement gap. According to Garcia & Frede's (2010) introductory chapter to their book *Young English Learners,* ELs have historically lagged behind other populations in every measures of academic success. Garcia & Frede (2010) maintain that ELs have for decades performed lower on standardized measures of academic achievement in reading, math, and science. They have also shown lower grade point averages and class rankings, and not much progress has been made to close this achievement gap over the past 20 years (Garcia & Frede, 2010). This gap in achievement is commented on by Collier and Thomas (as cited in Price, 2018), who estimate that ELs "must accomplish more than 1 year's achievement for 6 years in a row" to eventually close the achievement gap between themselves and their native English-speaking peers (p. 18). Garcia & Frede (2010) assert that putting socio-economic class aside, when compared with students that have the same parent education, family income, or parent occupation, EL student still perform below their non-EL peers. This information implies

that there is a direct correlation between language proficiency and success in the American public school system.

Data reported by the national Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) (2015) shows that ELs are also underrepresented in areas needed for college and career readiness, such as advanced placement courses and high school graduation. For example, in the 2011-12 academic school year, OELA (2015) reported that five percent of non-ELs and only two percent of ELs were enrolled in advanced placement courses. OELA (2015) statistics from that same year show that 80% of all students, but only 59% of ELs, graduated from high school in the United States. This data provides evidence that our nation's schools are not preparing ELs with the language and skills needed to enter and succeed in college.

Statewide demographics and achievement of ELs. ELs are the fastest growing population in Minnesota schools. According to *English Learner Education in Minnesota* (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2017), a report summarizing EL demographic and academic trends in the state, the EL population in Minnesota has risen by 300% in the last 20 years. Over eight percent of students enrolled in the public school system statewide are identified as ELs, with higher numbers in the elementary grades. Many urban and suburban districts surrounding in the Twin Cities metro area have experienced an increase in enrollment of ELs in the past five years. The language backgrounds of ELs in Minnesota are very diverse. There are 252 different languages reported as home languages spoken in the state, with the top five most-spoken home language including Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Karen. The demographics

of ELs in the state show that this population is growing quickly and is very diverse. Therefore, it is important to analyze the performance of ELs in our state's schools.

Information on the academic performance of ELs in the state is summarized in the *English Learner Education in Minnesota* report (MDE, 2017). Statewide in 2017, ELs performed well below their peers in standardized assessments measuring math and reading. In statewide standardized reading tests, 60.2% of all students exceeded or met academic standards, whereas only 14.7% of ELs exceeded or met academic standards. The percentage of ELs reported to meet or exceed reading standards actually dropped from 16.9% in 2016 to 14.7% in 2017. At the same time, the percentage of all students who met or exceeded reading standards rose slightly from 59.9% to 60.2%. This data suggests that the statewide achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs in reading may actually be widening.

According to the MDE (2017), the rates for graduation are also disparate. In 2017, the statewide four-year graduation rate was 82.7%. However, the graduation rate for ELs is much lower at only 62.7%. The same report also notes that the school dropout rate was much higher for ELs at 11.2 %, compared to 5.1% for all students. The gap in graduation rates indicate that more effort is needed to prepare ELs for success after high school.

Unique challenges for ELs. ELs face many challenges in contrast to non-ELs. In her dissertation, Price (2018) admits ELs face a unique challenge in our educational system because they are trying to learn content knowledge and acquire a new language simultaneously. Furthermore, because of poverty, past trauma, parental skills and opportunities, and lack of prior schooling, many ELs face additional challenges outside of learning English.

Poverty. ELs experience migrancy, poverty, and homelessness at higher rates than the overall student population nationwide. According to the U.S. DOE (n.d.), in the 2014-15 school year, 38.6% of ELs were classified as migrants, meaning their education can often be disrupted due to moving for parents' migratory agriculture work; 15.4% of ELs qualified for Title I, which are funds for services intended to support schools that have high numbers of students who come from low-income families; and 14.2% of ELs were documented to experience a period of homelessness. There are many factors outside the home which may affect ELs' learning in school.

Refugees and trauma. The United Nations (as cited in Shaw, 2018) defines a refugee as "as a person who has fled over international borders because of a well-founded fear of persecution" (para. 12). In 2016, 65.6 million people, an "unprecedented" amount, fled their homes in fear and are now living as refugees (Shaw, 2018, para. 11). This worldwide refugee crisis has led to an increased amount of refugee families in the U.S. and refugee children attending U.S. schools (Shaw, 2018). In 2017, the Obama administration's threshold for admitting refugees into the country was set at 110,000 people. Statewide, according to the U.S. Census (as cited in Shaw, 2018), Minnesota has the highest number of refugees per capita in the nation. Refugees make up two percent of the U.S. population, and 13% of the nation's refugees live in Minnesota (Shaw, 2018). In her dissertation, Houstman (2017) asserts that many refugees can also be victims of trauma. Houstman (2017) describes the four stages of refugee resettlement, which are pre-flight chaos, flight, waiting, and finally resettlement—a long process full of "traumatic circumstances, painful decisions, and many displays of courage" that can take many years (pp. 16-18). She also asserts that disrupted schooling and difficulties in

emotional adjustment are barriers to learning for many refugees and trauma survivors.

Houstman (2017) documents how trauma can cause "anger, irritability, withdrawal . . . ,

and sadness" in school-age children, and trauma can affect children both at home and in

school (pp. 14-15). She attests that for many survivors of trauma, coping with their

traumatic experience is a lifelong struggle. Refugee resettlement and related trauma

cannot be ignored as a major additional challenge for some ELs in the U.S. school

system.

   Parents. Parents' language skills, level of education, and economic situation can

also provide additional challenges for their children. The parents of ELs vary in their

English language abilities. According to Hernandez et al. (2010), some ELs may come

from homes where all adults have limited proficiency in English, and their children are

likely to have limited English proficiency themselves when they enter school. In homes

where one parent is fluent in English and the other is not, the child may have intermediate

English language skills. Parents' English proficiency affects their children's level of

English proficiency, but other factors affect their children as well.

   Hernandez et al. (2010) also assert the English proficiency of parents has a

significant impact on their child in other ways outside of language development. Parents

who are not proficient in English may struggle more to find high-paying, secure jobs.

They also may not be able to help their children study or complete homework tasks in

English. EL parents also may be less likely to take advantage of education, health, and

social service institutions that may benefit their children if the outreach of these programs

is not offered in a form they can understand. Limited English proficiency, lack of

economic opportunities, and lack of academic skills are all challenges for EL parents that impact their children attending U.S. schools.

ELs who have immigrant parents face additional challenges. In their study on EL demographics, Hernandez et al. (2010) found that higher numbers of immigrant parents than native-born parents have not graduated from a U.S. high school. And the same study claims that children with parents who have completed fewer years of school tend to complete fewer years of school themselves. Immigrant parents may have high goals for their children, but limited skills to help their children in school and less knowledge about the U.S. school system (Hernandez et al., 2010). When working with ELs, it is important for teachers to consider the situation of ELs' parents and their home life. Helping parents understand how they can support their child's schooling is one way teachers of ELs can help support ELs' academic achievement.

Pre-K enrollment. According to Garcia & Frede (2010), preschool has been shown to have tremendous benefits for a child's education and achievement throughout their school career and into adulthood. The authors indicate that children who attend preschool tend to have higher grades, score higher on standardized measurements of academic achievement, are less likely to face grade retention or placement in special education, have greater graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in college. As adults, they are less likely to have criminal records, more likely to be homeowners, and make higher earnings in their careers (Garcia & Frede, 2010). Given the positive outcomes associated with pre-K programs, it is difficult to understand why every child in the nation cannot be enrolled in a pre-K program.

According to Hernandez et al., (2010), 37% of native English-speaking White families enroll their children in a pre-K program by age three and 61% by age four; however, children of immigrants and parents with limited English proficiency are less likely to enroll their children in pre-K programs. According to the Minnesota Report Card (2018), 86.6% of non-ELs enrolled in kindergarten had attended a pre-K program, whereas only 13.4% of ELs enrolled in kindergarten have previous pre-K experience. Hernandez et al. (2010) cite cultural norms, socio-economic status, and lack of public resources as reasons for why ELs are less likely to be enrolled in pre-K programs. The authors estimate that parents in immigrant communities may have higher family values and less value for pre-K programs that do not incorporate their language or culture; therefore, they may prefer their child to be raised at home by members of their own family.

Pre-K can also be too costly for poorer EL families. Furthermore, Hernandez et al. (2010) asserts that because of limited funding, many low-income EL families that are eligible for pre-K assistance do not receive it. EL parents with limited education may not recognize the importance or be aware of pre-K opportunities in their community as well (Hernandez et al., 2010). The findings on the lack of pre-K experience of ELs suggest that many ELs may lack some social and academic skills needed to be successful when entering kindergarten. Therefore, more research on how to better support ELs in kindergarten and help them "catch-up" may be necessary to help prepare ELs for later academic success.

Summary of English learner (EL) literature. This literature review on ELs found a vast amount of statistical data documenting the achievement gap between ELs

and non-ELs (Garcia & Frede, 2010; OELA, 2015; U. S. DOE, n.d.). Reports from the

federal and state level both find that ELs are lagging behind in every measurement of

academic achievement, including reading, math, science, graduation rates, and enrollment

into institutes of higher education (OELA, 2015; U. S. DOE, n.d.). Other studies

document the unique challenges faced by ELs such as poverty, trauma, parental skills and

opportunities, and under-enrollment in pre-K (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Hernandez et al.,

2010). The next section of the literature review will explore the research behind

scaffolding as a possible solution to help ELs succeed academically in school.

Scaffolding

Scaffolding, also referred to as "instructional scaffolding," is an instructional

strategy used to support and enhance student learning. Scaffolding is defined by Larkin

(2008) in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology* as a "process in which support is

provided to an individual so that he or she can complete a task that could not be

completed independently. The support gradually is removed when the individual begins

to demonstrate understanding of the task" (p. 863). According to Larkin (2008),

scaffolding begins by activating a learner's prior knowledge and builds from there by

adding supports to the learning process. As students become more independent, Larkin

(2018) describes how these instructional supports disappear.

The educational term of "scaffolding" also relates to the more commonly used

term of scaffolding for buildings and construction.Both the IRIS Center (2018), a

federally-funded organized based at Vanderbilt University designed to create equal

education opportunities for all children based on research-based interventions, and Larkin

(2008) describe the metaphorical link between instructional scaffolding and the

traditional term of building construction scaffolding. Both the IRIS Center (2018) and

Larkin (2008) describe how in building construction, scaffolds are used to support

workers and building materials until a building is constructed to the point when it can

stand independently. Similarly, instructional scaffolding is intended to provide tools and

supports for learners until they can reach the desired level of achievement on their own.

Scaffolding has shown to have positive outcomes for learning in all types of instructional

settings (IRIS Center, 2018). Given the positive outcomes associated with scaffolding,

the important components of scaffolding must also be addressed.

An important element of scaffolding is modeling. The IRIS Center (2018) also

refers to the importance of modeling as a way to support student learning. The IRIS

Center (2018) declares there are two critical components to scaffolding: modeling and

practice. During modeling, students watch their teacher perform each step of the task

multiple times in order to understand how each step is completed. This supports student

understanding of each step's importance. During practice, students should have the

chance to complete the task independently or in a group, with the teacher observing and

ready to offer more guidance if needed (IRIS Center, 2018). Modeling is a critical

component in scaffolding instruction.

Scaffolding has been a promising instructional strategy to help all learners access

content and be successful in a variety of instructional settings. The positive outcomes of

using instructional scaffolding for learning have been documented by many studies, and

scaffolding is a widely accepted instructional strategy in the field of education (Pearson

& Gallagher, 1983; Quinn, Gerde, & Bingham, 2016; Read, Landon-Hays, & Martin-

Rivas, 2014). The IRIS Center (2018) emphasizes the importance of the use of

scaffolding in education by asserting "Providing support, or scaffolding, is a critical component in teaching new tasks with multiple steps. Likewise, scaffolding is a critical element in the teaching of instructional strategies" (p. 1). Scaffolding also has an important implication for the instruction of ELs, because a number of studies have concluded that scaffolding has positive effects on academic achievement for ELs (Cole & Feng, 2015; Cooks & Sunseri, 2013; Pavlak, 201d3; Price, 2018; Siegel et al., 2014). This section will explore the educational theory behind scaffolding, different types of scaffolding, and finally several specific scaffolding models and techniques developed by researchers to enhance the teaching of writing to ELs.

Educational theory. According to Larkin's (2008) and Ketterer's (2008) entries in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology,* the concept of instructional scaffolding is based on the works and theories of Vygotsky, especially his theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peer" (p. 86). According to Larkin (2008), the zone of proximal development theorizes that students can reach a higher level of learning with support from a mentor than they otherwise could working alone. In Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development, a learner's interaction with teachers, peers, and their learning environment is a key element of learning.

The zone of proximal development has important implications for instructional strategy. According to Ketterer (2008), using the zone of proximal development as a guiding theory, instructors must first assess a student's current level of performance, then identify the next level of performance. Instruction should target and guide the learner toward the next level. Eventually, the learner will reach that level of performance and the process will start all over again. Ketterer's (2008) description of the zone of proximal development is also a description of exactly how scaffolding works—adding supports and tools to help guide the student toward the next level of learning.

Scaffolding is also connected to the educational theory of social constructivism, another theory heavily rooted in the ideas of Vygotsky. In *Psychology of Classroom Learning: An Encyclopedia,* an entry titled "Constructivism" (2009) proposes that "Social constructivism, heavily influenced by Vygotsky and sociocultural theory, proposes that learning takes place in the interaction between people and their environment" (pp. 263-264). According to social constructivist theory, prior knowledge plays a role in connection to understanding of new learning, but new learning takes place when a learner interacts with other people and the world around them ("Constructivism," 2009). Ketterer (2008) also asserts that Vygotsky believed that learning is a social process, where a learner imitates their teacher until the imitation is internalized and the learner attains mastery of the skill. Vygotsky named this process internalization (Ketterer, 2008). These theories of social constructivism and internalization connect to the process of instructional scaffolding, where interacting with the teacher, peers, and environmental tools can play an important role in guiding the learner toward their targeted goal. There

are many types of scaffolds that can be used to guide a learner towards their next level of understanding.

      Types of scaffolding. Educators can use scaffolding in different areas of their instruction. The IRIS Center (2018) breaks instructional scaffolding down into three categories: c*ontent, task, and material scaffolding.*

      Content scaffolding. Content scaffolding occurs when a teacher chooses to use simple, familiar content as the focus to practice a new learning task (IRIS Center, 2018). For example, when teaching kindergarteners to write a narrative text, perhaps choosing a general experience, such as going to the playground, would be a way to use content scaffolding. Choosing familiar, highly-engaging content can help students learn a new strategy.

      The IRIS Center (2018) highlights that another way to use content scaffolding is to let the teacher model the more difficult steps, and then let the students be responsible for the less difficult steps. Over time, the students will be gradually held responsible for completing the more difficult steps on their own. For example, when sounding out new words in kindergarten writing, the teacher may begin to model sounding out the words for the student, and then gradually encourage students to sound out their own words over time. Using easy, familiar content and modeling the more difficult steps are two ways to use content scaffolding.

      Task scaffolding. According to the IRIS Center (2008), the next type of scaffolding is task scaffolding. In task scaffolding, a teacher explicitly breaks down the steps to a new task. Then, the teacher proceeds to model each step while thinking aloud. Afterwards, the students are given time to practice the task independently with the

teacher coaching in areas which they may struggle. Initially, many students may not be able to do the task independently on the first try, so it is important for the teacher to continue modeling the steps again and again until students achieve mastery.

In task scaffolding, a teacher may give students increasing responsibility for completing each task. For example, in the first lesson, the teacher may be responsible for completing all steps in a task. Then in the next lesson, the students may be responsible for independently completing only the first step, while the teacher is responsible for completing the remaining steps. Gradually, the students would be held responsible for completing all steps to the task independently (IRIS Center, 2018).

An example of talk scaffolding in the process of kindergarten writing is to break down the steps of generating topic ideas, drawing pictures, and writing words. In the first lesson, the teacher may be responsible for modeling all three steps: generating ideas about a topic, drawing a picture, and writing words about their topic. Then in the next lesson, the teacher may be responsible for generating ideas and drawing an example picture, while the students are responsible for writing sentences for that picture. Then in the next lesson, the teacher might generate the topic idea for everyone, but students are responsible for drawing the pictures and writing the text. Finally, in the last lesson, students will be held accountable for generating their own topics, drawing their own pictures, and writing their own text. This is sometimes referred to as a gradual release of responsibility.

Gradual release of responsibility (GRR). A widely-accepted form of task scaffolding is a model known as the gradual release of responsibility (GRR). The GRR model is sometimes summarized in the education profession as the "I do," "We do,"

"You do" model. The term GRR was first coined by Pearson and Gallagher (1983) in their technical report *The Instruction of Reading Comprehension*. In their report, Pearson and Gallagher (1983) set out to review the literature involving instruction of reading comprehension and evaluate their findings.

Based on their review Pearson and Gallagher (1983) explain that "gradual release of responsibility" refers to the gradual process of transitioning responsibility for completing an academic task fully from the teacher to the student, and it is the teacher's role to guide the student toward independence in between these steps. In the following quote, Pearson and Gallagher (1983) assert that a teacher's goal in the GRR model is to eventually become obsolete.

> Only partly in jest we like to refer to the model as a model of "planned obsolescence" on the part of the teacher; but just because you want to end up being obsolete doesn't mean you have to start out by being obsolete! (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983, p. 35)

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) point out that the intended result of scaffolding is for the scaffolds to eventually be removed and the learner to complete the task independently.

Because of the goal for eventual independence, the authors assert that "guided practice,"—otherwise known as the "We do" portion of GRR—is the most critical state of the GRR model. This agrees with the IRIS Center's (2018) view on the importance of scaffolding academic tasks with multiple steps. In their review of research on teaching reading comprehension, Pearson and Gallagher (1983) concluded that a number of studies that incorporated a GRR model were successful. Task scaffolding, like GRR, is an

effective instructional strategy that can also be enhanced with the use of environmental and visual tools known as material scaffolds.

Material scaffolding. The last type of scaffolding described by the IRIS Center (2018) is material scaffolding. Material scaffolding involves supporting the learning task with visual or written cues. For example, using a word web to help students organize their main ideas and details would be one example of material scaffolding. Another example would be to create a poster with illustrated steps and words. This poster would serve as a tool for students to use during their independent work. Eventually, these material scaffolds would phase out as students become more independent (IRIS Center, 2018). Siegel et al. (2014) agrees with the IRIS Center's (2018) notion of material scaffolding, asserting that scaffolding can also be provided through the use of written modifications, artifacts, or tools.

The three categories of scaffolds, content, task, and material are all effective ways to scaffold learning for all students. The next section will detail how scaffolding can also be adjusted to modify the cognitive load by using low-level and high-level scaffolds.

Low-level and high-level scaffolds. In their article, "Help Me Where I Am: Scaffolding Writing in Preschool Classrooms," Quinn, Gerde, and Bingham (2016) distinguish the difference between high-level and low-level scaffolds for early writing. Per the authors' classification, low-level scaffolds are designed for students that have lower skills and can lower the cognitive load to allow students more success. High-level scaffolds, in contrast, are scaffolds designed for students with higher independent skills and are intended to promote higher-level thinking.

Low-level scaffolds. According to Quinn et al. (2016), when using low-level scaffolds, teachers take on a large responsibility for guiding the task by offering more support. Their examples of low level scaffolds include modeling, reducing choices, and guiding. During modeling, a teacher demonstrates the target skill while thinking aloud. This agrees with the IRIS Center's (2019) claim that modeling is one of the critical components of scaffolding.

Quinn et al. (2016) maintain that another effective low-level scaffolding strategy for early writers is reducing choices. Providing choices for composing, spelling, or forming letters can reduce the cognitive load and help "narrow their focus" and "reduce the cognitive demand" for children just learning to write (Quinn et al., 2016, p. 354). Providing choices can be an effective low-level scaffold to reduce the cognitive load and help learners be successful.

Quinn et al. (2016) also claim that guiding is another low-level scaffold for scaffolding early writing. During guiding, a teacher verbally or physically will help guide students to the next step in their task. An example of guiding may be to show them how to form the next letter in their name, or guide them to add another detail to their story. Modeling, reducing choices, and guiding are all effective low-level scaffolds to support early writers.

High-level scaffolds. High-level scaffolds are used when a learner becomes more independent, but still needs some supports in place to guide them toward higher level tasks and thinking, according to Quinn et al. (2016). Their examples of high-level scaffolds include extending, explaining, and comparing. Extending involves helping students make connections between previous learning tasks and extend them toward new

learning tasks. Pointing out similarities between one writing task and another can help writers make connections and extend new learning.

Explaining is another type of high-level scaffolding strategy described by Quinn et al. (2016). For example, a teacher could prompt a child to explain by asking the writer why they wrote "b" for bear, why they added a word to their list, or asking students to share writing with partners. Prompting students to explain is an excellent way to promote student thinking.

According to Quinn et al. (2016), comparing is another strategy to scaffold higher level thinking in early writers. When a teacher asks a child to compare different writing pieces, spelling patterns, or letter formations, it helps build deeper understanding (Quinn et al., 2016). The authors recognize that different students may need certain types of scaffolds and attest that "individualized writing scaffolds" can support children's early writing development (p. 356).

Scaffolding models and techniques. So far, this literature review has identified the educational theory behind scaffolding and a number of different categories and types of scaffolds. The topic of scaffolding in education has been widely researched. Next, this review will explore specific scaffolding models and techniques developed by educational researchers to teach elementary writing to ELs—a topic that is more scarcely researched in academic literature. These scaffolding models incorporate much of the scaffolding theory and various types of scaffolding discussed previously. Promising models and techniques to teach elementary writing to ELs include the IMSCI model developed by Read (2010), the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach (Pavlak, 2013), the use

of thinking maps (Cooks & Sunseri, 2013), and the use of interactive writing (Price, 2018).

  IMSCI model. The IMSCI model was developed by Read (2010) as a method to teach genre writing in a series of scaffolded steps. In her model, "I" stands for Inquiry, "M" stands for Modeling, "S" stands for Shared writing, "C" stands for Collaborative writing, and "I" stands for Independent writing.

  During the inquiry step, teachers and students read model texts of the genre they aim to write and analyze its features. The next step is modeling, where the teacher should model every step in the writing process, including brainstorming, using graphic organizers, drafting, and revising. The next step is shared writing. The teacher and student write a text together, and students have input on every step of the writing process. In their studies on interactive writing and teaching persuasive writing, both Price (2018) and Read, Landon-Hays, and Martin-Rivas (2014) assert that shared writing is an especially valuable scaffolding strategy for ELs. After shared writing comes collaborative writing. In this step, students work in partnerships to create a text in the genre. They can work in partnerships either by taking turns doing the writing, or by sitting side-by-side and sharing ideas and writing the same or similar text. Independent writing is the last step in the IMSCI scaffolding process. Because of the previous scaffolding steps, Read (2010) insists that students are more prepared to be successful at writing independently.

  In their article "Gradually Releasing Responsibility to Students Writing Persuasive Text," Read et al. (2014) uses the IMSCI model in order to teach persuasive text to fourth graders. The authors found that both teacher modeling and model texts had a large impact on the students' writing. Students' writing samples from their study

showed that students successfully incorporated qualities modeled by the teacher. For example, students used transition words, closing phrases, supporting reasons, second person, questions, authoritative voice, and other stylistic choices that were modeled by the teacher and found in model texts (Read et al., 2014). Their study provided basis that the IMCSI model can be an effective scaffolding tool for teaching genre writing.

Scaffolding with systemic functional linguistics (SFL). In another study, Pavlak (2013) used systemic functional linguistics (SFL) as a framework for scaffolding writing in a sheltered English immersion (SEI) classroom. Using SFL in writing instruction means that the teacher "unpacks" and explicitly teaches the essential language features of a particular genre of writing (Pavlak, 2013, p. 406). Pavlak (2013) asserts that SFL is a beneficial instructional method for ELs' literacy development because it explicitly teaches language constructs in context. The SFL technique can be used as a tool to create scaffolds for ELs' early writing development.

The study took place at a school with a high population of low-income students and a high immigrant population. The researchers tracked the progress of three EL students, one low-achieving, one mid-level, and one high-achieving in the domain of writing. Teachers in the study incorporated a number of scaffolding strategies to help ELs become more successful at biography writing, including analyzing mentor texts, developing vocabulary for the genre, incorporating students' home language, and shared writing. The results showed that throughout the unit, the three participants made steady improvement in essential components of biography writing over time. At the end, during the independent writing stage, Pavlak (2013) concluded that, in terms of vocabulary, grammar structures, and organization, all the EL participants were able to produce more

mature pieces of biography writing than at the start. This study suggests that incorporating SFL into writing instruction for ELs may be an effective means for scaffolding language within genre writing.

   Thinking maps.   Another widely used scaffolding technique for writing instruction is the use of a graphic organizer or thinking map to organize ideas. Cooks and Sunseri (2013) realized that that ELs are at a disadvantage in writing assignments, so they set out to research effects of prewriting strategies and thinking maps on the organization and ideas of ELs' writing. The researchers collected data by analyzing student writing samples created in the class. Throughout the study, students completed 13 expository compositions. Students were guided through a pre-writing process, including analyzing a prompt collaboratively, generating ideas on a "thinking tree" graphic organizer, sharing their ideas with partners, and watching teachers model how to turn an outline into connected text. All eight EL students who participated in the after-school writing program showed significant improvement from their first pretest to their last composition in the areas of "ideas" and "organization" as assessed by the district's writing assessment. This study shows promise that thinking maps and other graphic organizers may be an effective scaffolding tool to help ELs organize their ideas in writing.

   Interactive Writing.   Interactive writing, also known as shared writing, is another instructional strategy that has shown to be a promising scaffold for ELs' early writing development. Interactive writing allows both teacher and students to "share the pen" (Price, 2018, p. 43). In interactive writing lessons, the students and teacher collaboratively come up with the words while the teacher acts as scribe. At key points during the writing process, the teacher shares the pen to allow students to write words

targeted in the lesson. McCarrier et al. (as cited in Price, 2018) claim that interactive writing experiences are "particularly language-enriching for children who are English learners" (p. 191). In her 2018 dissertation, Price explored the use of interactive writing interventions to support the writing development of ELs in a kindergarten classroom using the writer's workshop model.

Her participants included five kindergarten ELs with beginning to early-intermediate writing proficiency skills in English. Results showed that four out of five students who participated in the intervention group made significant growth in their writing development in the spring semester. All five students met kindergarten writing expectations by the end of the school year. The average growth trend for all students showed growth from pre-kindergarten level writing in January to kindergarten level or above writing skills in May. This study supports the idea that providing additional scaffolds to the writer's workshop model may be beneficial to EL writers in kindergarten.

However, some limitations to her study include lack of comparison groups and data from the beginning of the year. Price's study does not compare the growth of her participant sample to other EL groups who did not have the interactive writing intervention. Because of this, it is impossible to know if her interactive writing invention caused the writing growth. Also, since she did not collect writing samples from the beginning of the year, it is difficult to know what skills may have already been pre-taught before the interactive writing intervention took place.

 It would be interesting to know what kinds of supports these students may have received in foundational skills leading up to the interactive writing groups. Although her

study shows that additional interventions for ELs participating in writer's workshop may be beneficial, more research can be done to reach this conclusion.

  Summary of scaffolding. In summary, this review of the literature on scaffolding found that scaffolding, a strategy rooted in the educational theory developed by Vygotsky, has been widely researched as an effective instructional tool for all learners (IRIS Center, 2018; Ketterer, 2008; Larkin, 2008; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Quinn, Gerde, & Bingham, 2016; Read, 2010; Read, Landon-Hays, & Martin-Rivas, 2014). Furthermore, research on scaffolding in relation to EL writing instruction shows that scaffolding strategies can serve as promising tools to heighten EL achievement in writing (Cole & Feng, 2015; Cooks & Sunseri, 2013; Pavlak, 2013; Price, 2018; Siegel et al., 2014). The next section will explore more information on the current academic literature sounding the topic of kindergarten writing.

Kindergarten Writing

  The introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 brought new, higher expectations for writing in kindergarten (Kent, Wanzek, Petscher, Al Otaiba, & Kim, 2014; Price, 2018). Previously, writing instruction in kindergarten had a greater focus on basic transcription skills such as letter formation, spacing, and capitalization (Auguste, 2018). Since implementing the CCSS, writing expectations became more focused on genre-based writing projects where kindergarteners are asked to "Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose" narrative, informative, and opinion pieces (National Governors Association, 2010). Nevertheless, even after the introduction of the CCSS, some researchers agree that writing has often been a "neglected" skill in kindergarten and early childhood classrooms (Price, 2018; Gerde,

Bingham, & Wasik, 2012). In their article "Writing in Early Childhood Classrooms: Guidance for Best Practices," Gerde, Bingham, and Wasik (2012) assert the importance of writing in kindergarten, maintaining that writing abilities in kindergarten are a predictor for future success in later literacy skills, including decoding, spelling, reading comprehension, and letter-sound knowledge. This section of the literature review on kindergarten writing will detail the current research on ELs' performance in writing, the developmental stages of early writing, best practices for kindergarten writing instruction, and specific skills linked to early writing success.

Writing performance and ELs. Writing is a difficult subject for all students; however, it is an especially difficult subject for ELs who must learn to master subject content while simultaneously learning a second language (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Price, 2018; Zheng, 2012). In his qualitative study on EL writing development in kindergarten and third grade, Zheng (2012) writes, "Due to their limited English proficiency and lack of background knowledge in some content areas, ELLs are facing extensive difficulty in learning to write" (p. 2). Language and other unique challenges faced by ELs impact their achievement in writing.

ELs' struggles in writing have been documented by multiple standardized measures on both the local and national scale. Minnesota is a member of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium and has adopted WIDA standards statewide for English language proficiency. Annually, the state administers the annual Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State test, or ACCESS test, to measure ELs' English language proficiency. Reports released by the state's department of education indicate that ELs in kindergarten typically have lower

levels of English language proficiency than other grade levels. Statewide results from the ACCESS tests administered in 2016 report that all ELs in grades K-12 had trouble attaining higher proficiency scores in the productive domains of speaking and writing. This data indicates that many ELs struggle in the domain of writing, and many ELs in kindergarten have low overall English language proficiency when learning to write.

The WIDA Consortium, made up of 39 U.S. states and territories, has released ACCESS proficiency reports most recently for the 2017-18 school year. Data from that year shows that ELs in kindergarten nationally across WIDA Consortium member states struggled most in the domain of writing, where 81% of kindergarten ELs scored in the bottom proficiency levels, WIDA Levels 1 and 2 (WIDA Consortium, 2014). Data from this same report shows that kindergarten ELs are more challenged by the literate domains (reading and writing) than the oral domains (listening and speaking). In the 2017-18 school year, 83% of kindergarteners in WIDA member states scored a Level 1 or 2 proficiency in literacy composite scores, but only 39% of these same students scored a Level 1 or 2 in oral language composite scores (WIDA Consortium, 2014). This means that kindergarteners with higher oral language skills in English are often not able to transfer these abilities into their reading and writing.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2012), a standardized writing test called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was most recently administered in 2011. The NAEP measured students in grades 8 and 12 in their "ability to write on the computer for specific purposes and audiences" (para. 2). In the 2011 NAEP writing assessment, both in grades 8 and 12, 28% of non-EL students scored at or above proficiency in writing, whereas only one percent of ELs

scored at or above proficiency in writing (NCES, 2012). The results of NAEP writing assessment suggest that the majority of students in the nation are struggling writers, but 99% of ELs are struggling to write proficiently.

Now that the current performance of ELs' writing in kindergarten is understood, the next section will detail the stages of writing development that take place in kindergarten.

Stages of early writing development. Researchers on early writing development agree that children follow a predictable path of writing development (Calkins, 1994; Gerde et al., 2012; Soderman, 2005). Both Harrison et al. (2016) and Zheng (2012) note in their studies of writing development in young ELs that both ELs and native English speakers follow a similar path of early writing stages in their writing development. In her book, *Scaffolding Emergent Literacy: A Child-centered Approach for Preschool through Grade 5,* Soderman (2005) describes each stage that may take place during a child's early writing development in kindergarten: the scribble stage, the prephonemic stage, the semiphonemic stage, the phonemic stage, the transitional stage, and standard spelling.

During the scribble stage, children first begin by holding a writing utensil and making marks on the page (Soderman, 2005). Children at this stage may also communicate their message by drawing pictures (Gerde et al, 2012). In her book *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Calkin's (1994) asserts that drawings are an important way for children to formulate their ideas. Zheng (2012) remarks in his qualitative study how many parents may overlook their children's early scribbles for what they really are—early writing attempts. Scribbling is considered the earliest stage in a child's developmental writing.

The next stage in a child's developmental writing is the prephonemic stage. During this stage, the scribbles transform to look more like letters, and may include letter-like symbols, copied letters, or random letters (Soderman, 2005). During this stage, the letters may progressively move from letter-like symbols with a "zig-zag or looping" shape to more recognizable letter formation (Gerde et al., 2012, p. 352). This stage may be characterized by strings of letters that have no sound-symbol correspondence to the child's intended message, thus termed "prephonemic" (Soderman, 2005).

Afterwards, Soderman (2005) describes the semiphonemic stage in which children use letters to represent specific sounds in some parts of the word. For example, writing only beginning sounds (ex: "t" for "toy) would exemplify writing at this stage. Children in this stage typically write one sound for each syllable (Soderman, 2005). Calkins (1994), Gerde et al. (2004), and Soderman (2005) all agree on the predictable path for inventive spelling: first children are only able to identify the beginning sound (ex: "d" for "dog"), then the beginning and ending sounds (ex: "dg" for "dg"), and finally all beginning, middle, and ending sounds (ex: "dog" for "dog"). Calkins (1994) also comments that when students start to demonstrate letter-sound correspondence, they often use the name of the letter instead of the sound to write, such as writing "YNDO" for "window" (p. 89). Children in this stage may also include some high frequency words like "mom" or "me" (Soderman, 2005). Traditional writing conventions like spacing between words or capitalization may not be present at this stage; however, some sound-symbol correspondence in the child's written message will show a crude representation of their oral message.

After the semiphonemic stage comes the phonemic stage. During this stage, children will use a sound for each phoneme in a word and spell words exactly the way they say and hear them (Soderman, 2005). For example, the word "they" may be spelled as "da" or "phone" might be spelled "fon." This is called inventive spelling. Calkins (1994), Gerde et al. (2012), and Soderman (2005) all agree on the importance of inventive spelling in a child's early writing development. Teachers should encourage inventive spelling in emergent writing because students' invented spelling will indicate their growing knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. During this stage, more conventions like word spacing and increased use of lowercase letters may appear, and the child's message may be clearer to the reader.

The next stage is the transitional stage. During this stage, some words (often high frequency words) are spelled conventionally, while other words are spelled phonetically (Soderman, 2005). Calkins (1994) agrees that in order for students to write fluently, they should be able to automatically recall the writing of a number of high frequency words. During the transitional stage, many traditional writing conventions may be inconsistently present such as spacing, punctuation, and capitalization. Children progress through the stages of writing development at different paces, but many kindergartens can reach the transitional stage by the end of the school year.

The last stage is called "standard spelling" where writers are using conventional dictionary spelling for published works (Soderman, 2005). At this stage, traditional writing conventions of spacing, capitalization, and punctuation are fully present. In kindergarten, students are not often able to achieve the stage of standard spelling, but go on to practice this stage in later grades.

Best Practices for Early Writing Instruction. Now that the developmental path of early writing is clear, research on best practice for early writing instruction is important to develop this capstone. During review of literature on kindergarten writing, multiple researches offered similarities in their recommendations for best practice in early writing instruction (Calkins, 1994; Gerde et al., 2012; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012). These recurring recommendations included time for writing, drawing, student talk, and publication.

Time for writing. Both Gerde et al. (2012) and Calkins (1994) assert the importance of providing ample time for writing in the kindergarten classroom. Calkins (1994) maintains that setting a predictable time for writing and providing a lot of time for writing is essential. In her book *The Art of Teaching Writing,* Calkins (1994) asserts:

> The writing process requires a radically different pace than we are used to in schools and in society. . . If our students are going to have the chance to do their best and then make their best better, they need long blocks of time. Sustained effort and craftsmanship are essential in writing well, yet they run contrary to the modern American way. (pp. 185-186)

Calkins argues that the hustle and bustle of the typical school day needs to stop and transform during writing time to provide an appropriate, creative space for students to write. In her book, *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop: Primary Grades,* Calkins (2013) recommends a total instructional block of 50-60 minutes for the writing workshop, with 30-40 minutes reserved for independent writing time. Like any other skill such as reading, math, or athletics, Calkins (2013) asserts that students need lots of time to practice in order develop successful writing skills.

Gerde et al. (2012) also advocates for incorporating writing into multiple activities throughout the day in a kindergarten or early childhood classroom. She recommends having students write their name for attendance, chart the weather during calendar, or "play write" using writing pads and pencils in their play areas. Gerde et al. (2012) points out that incorporating writing into multiple activities during the day is an important way to encourage writing for all children.

Drawing. Many researchers agreed on the importance of drawing for early writing development (Calkins, 1994; Gerde et al., 2012; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012). As noted earlier, drawing is present as a means of communication in the prephonemic stage, the earliest stage of writing development. Calkins (1994) remarks that—for early writers—more information about the child's message is in their drawings than in their writing. In a dissertation on kindergarten and third grade EL writing development, Zheng (2012) notes that the kindergarteners felt that their pictures "were more effective than words in telling stories" (p. 253). Drawings are also important because they are the primary means children use to plan their writing. Calkins (1994) refers to drawings as a "rehearsal" for writing (p. 88). The kindergarten ELs who participated in Zheng's (2012) study mainly relied on pictures to organize their ideas, and would normally draw pictures before writing words. Soderman (2005) also insists that drawing is an important step in emergent writing because it allows children to plan and organize their ideas before attempting to write the words (Soderman, 2005). Instructional best practice for early writing instruction recommends giving children the time to draw before they write.

Student Talk. Another recurring theme for best practice in early writing instruction is the use of student talk. Soderman (2005) declares that children often talk

much more about what is happening in their writing than they are able to write on the page and claims this talk is a very important part of student writing. Talk aids students as they generate writing and helps others understand their "intended messages" (Soderman, 2005, p. 45). Calkins (1994) also elaborates on the valuable connection between speech and writing for young learners:

> . . . for many young writers, writing is deeply embedded in oral language. Speech—like drawing—provides a scaffolding within which the text can be constructed. A tremendous amount of talk surrounds the production of even a few written words . . . (p. 91).

Calkins' (1994) quote on student talk reiterates the importance for kindergarteners to construct their message orally before putting it down into writing.

Zheng (2012) also observed and compared the effects of different types of writing instruction methods in two different sheltered kindergarten ESL classrooms—one that highly valued student talk, and one that did not. One teacher focused on the importance of shared writing experiences and student talk in order to develop writing skills. The other teacher emphasized individual quiet writing time, no-peer collaboration, and teacher-only conferences. Zheng (2012) concluded that the model that emphasized student collaboration and talk was a more effective instructional model than the quiet, individualized writing time. Zheng (2012) found that the different types of writing instruction provided by the teachers made a significant difference in students' writing growth.

Publication. Another best practice in early writing instruction is the publication of early writers' work. Per Gerde et al.'s (2012) definition: "Writing is the activity of

expressing ideas, opinions and views in print: writing for communication or composing"
(p. 351). Central to the purpose of writing is that it should be a means of communication
with others, and should be read by someone. Calkins (1994) asserts the importance of
publication as a means for early writers to establish identities as authors and develop a
critical eye to analyze written texts: "when students are published authors, they make
reading-writing connections. . . Publication does not mean that the process is over, that
children can now gaze at their monuments. Instead, publication inducts us as insiders into
the world of authorship" (pp. 265-266). Calkins (1994) adds that publication should
happen early on, should happen predictably often, and should be put into the hands of
young authors in the classroom. The process of publication also ensures that early writers
are making what Gerde et al. (2012) attests is an important connection between reading
and composition—that you and others can read what you wrote.

   Skills for Early Writing Success. With a background of best practices for
writing instruction, it is important to note that there are several skills students must
master in order to develop successfully as young writers. A number of studies have
documented the impact of these skills on writing success in the early years (Kent et al.,
2014; Harrison et al., 2012; Soderman, 2005). Among these skills are oral language,
handwriting fluency, spelling (including phonological awareness and letter knowledge),
and attention and self-regulation.

   Oral Language. As mentioned previously, incorporating student talk into writing
is considered best practice (Calkins, 1994; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012). Oral language
abilities have been shown to positively transfer to writing in areas such as vocabulary and
sentence generation (Harrison et al., 2012; Kent et al., 2014; Soderman, 2005). Soderman

(2005) asserts that a child's oral language abilities, especially their ability to communicate new information and discuss "decontextualized" ideas (that is information that is outside the current context), is strongly linked to future literacy abilities (p. 32). Soderman (2005) goes on to explain the important effects of children talking with adults. Opportunities to engage in conversation have been shown to have a positive effect on a child's oral language development. For example, children who communicated mainly with siblings or with their parents for lower-level communication functions, such as communication to satisfy basic wants and needs (ex: "I want water."), tended to use lower-level communication functions in their oral language and in their writing. In contrast, students with no siblings and who regularly talked with parents for higher-level communication functions, such as imagining or discussing new information, tended to use those higher-communication functions in their writing as well (Soderman, 2005). This means that early writers' oral language experiences are important to their later writing development.

Multiple quantitative studies also document the effects of oral language ability on early writing production. Harrison et al. (2012) conducted a study on how various components of writing might function as predictors for writing achievement in both native English-speakers and ELs. The study found that for both native English-speakers and ELs, oral language skills are a predictor of writing quality. In their quantitative study measuring the impact of various skill components on writing quality in kindergarten and first grade, Kent et al. (2014) concluded that children who have more developed expressive language are more likely to achieve higher levels of writing in their early school years. Furthermore, Kent et al. (2014) maintains that oral language abilities in

kindergarten are a predictor for narrative writing achievement in later elementary grades. The strong correlation between oral language ability and early writing development points to the need for oral language development to be present in primary classrooms.

Handwriting fluency. Handwriting fluency is the ability to form letters by hand with automaticity (Gerde et al., 2012). Both Harrison et al. (2012) and Kent et al. (2014) studied the impact of handwriting fluency on kindergarten writing development. Harrison et al. (2012) found that handwriting fluency is an important component of successful writing. The authors also report that differences in handwriting fluency "constrain children's writing ability in early childhood and into adolescence" (p. 72). Kent et al.'s (2014) study agrees with the findings of Harrison et al. (2012), asserting that handwriting fluency and spelling ability are significant factors of writing fluency in kindergarteners:

> Automaticity in handwriting also had a small, yet statistically significant relation
> to the efficient production of words, sentences, and ideas in writing in
> kindergarten . . . without automatic retrieval of letter forms, generating text
> becomes slow and effortful and the strategic thought processes required for
> writing are impeded. (p. 1183)

In relation to ELs in particular, Harrison et al. (2012) discovered that lower-level transcription skills such as handwriting fluency also were significant contributors to overall writing ability. These studies suggest that although kindergarten writing instruction consists of more than the teaching of letter formations, the importance of handwriting fluency on writing ability cannot be ignored.

Phonological awareness, rapid letter-naming, and spelling. Other important components for early writing success are phonological awareness, rapid letter-naming,

and spelling skills. Soderman (2005) defines phonological awareness as "the ability to

hear the sounds in language and to comprehend them in spoken language. Phonics, in

contrast, is the "relationship between sounds and letters in written language" (p. 34).

Soderman (2005) asserts that children need to be able to hear the sounds of a language

before phonics instruction can be useful, before children can manipulate letters in writing.

Soderman (2005) insists that phonological awareness is "staunchly recognized as a very

powerful apparatus for literacy development" (p. 34). One aspect of phonological

awareness is the ability to segment. Segmenting "is the act of breaking words into

discrete phonemes" (Soderman, 2005, p. 36). Breaking the word "tent" into the individual

phonemes /t/ /ɛ/ /n/ /t/ would be an example of segmenting. Both Harrison et al. (2012)

and Soderman (2005) agree that segmenting and phonological awareness abilities are

strongly associated with spelling achievement.

  Harrison et al. (2012) also makes the connection between rapid letter-naming

abilities and spelling. Their study suggests that phonological awareness and rapid letter

naming may have a particularly strong impact on the spelling of ELs versus native

English-speakers. Both Harrison et al. (2012) and Kent et al. (2014) concur that spelling

abilities have a significant impact on kindergarten writing fluency and future writing

outcomes. To sum, phonological awareness, especially segmenting, and letter knowledge

are important skills needed for spelling, which has a large impact on student writing

ability. Therefore, phonological awareness, rapid letter-naming, and spelling are all

important skills for early writing development.

  Attention and self-regulation. Kent et al. (2014) also hypothesized in their study

that executive functions such as attention and self-regulation may impact early writing

ability. In their study, Kent et al. (2014) found that students who have higher self-regulation and attention abilities are better at planning, reviewing, revising, and paying attention to detail in their writing. The authors claim that as writing becomes more complex, the attention and self-regulation abilities become more critically needed. This relates to Calkins' (1994) affirmation that writing is a skill that requires "long blocks of time" and "sustained effort" or attention for students to create quality writing (p. 185-186). Harrison et al. (2012) also elaborates that writing is a multi-faceted and complex process that requires the simultaneous use of low-level transcription skills and high-level text generation. Calkins (1994) also points out that early writing is especially difficult for young children who do not have the ability to write fluently at the same time that they are composing their ideas. It makes sense that children with higher functions in attention and self-regulation would have advantages when tackling such a complex and difficult task such as writing.

Summary of Literature Review

A review of the literature found a vast amount of literature on the academic performance of ELs, scaffolding, and early writing.The review of the literature found a common agreement that ELs are performing well below their native English-speaking peers in all measurements of academic success, including reading, writing, math, science, graduation rates, and enrollment in institutes of higher education (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2010; NCES, 2012; OELA, 2015; U. S. DOE, n.d.). This disparity is apparent at both the national level and locally in the state where this capstone project takes place.

Much of the academic literature on scaffolding agrees that it is a promising, research-based instructional tool to help all students, including ELs, make steady academic progress and work towards meeting challenging state standards (IRIS Center, 2018; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Siegel et al., 2014). Research on scaffolding categorized scaffolds into three types: content, task, and material (IRIS Center, 2018). Quinn et al. (2016) describes how scaffolds can also be used to reduce the cognitive load (low-level scaffolds) or increase the cognitive load (high-level scaffolds). Some promising tools for scaffolding EL writing include Read's (2010) IMSCI model, Pavlak's (2013) method of incorporating Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Cooks and Sunseri's (2013) use of thinking maps, and Price's (2018) study on the use of interactive writing in kindergarten. The research on the types of scaffolds and different models has been very useful to inform the development of this capstone project.

A review of the literature also found a large amount of of research on early writing development and best practice for writing in the primary grades. However, literature specifically on early second language writing development for young ELs was scarce. The literature generally agreed on a developmental path of early writing development, and some research has documented that the path of early writing development for both ELs and non-ELs is very similar (Calkins, 1994; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012). Multiple studies related best practice for early writing instruction that includes time for writing, drawing, student talk, and publication (Calkins, 1994; Gerde et al., 2012; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012). Other studies researched the connection between different skill components and early writing success. The results of these studies agreed that oral language, handwriting fluency, spelling (including phonological

awareness and letter knowledge), and attention and self-regulation were all important components needed to develop early writing success (Harrison et al., 2012; Kent et al., 2014). The findings of best practice for early writing instruction and components needed for early writing success have been included in the development of this capstone project.

The Gap. Although the review of literature found a vast amount of resources documenting ELs, scaffolding, and kindergarten writing, academic literature that incorporated all three components of scaffolding kindergarten writing for ELs was scarce. In all the research, only one article was identified that studies all three components. This was a doctoral dissertation by Price (2018) that studied the use of incorporating small group interactive writing into her kindergarten writer's workshop for the ELs in her classroom. The results from her study support that introducing an interactive writing group as a scaffold during independent writing time for ELs can help these students to make rapid progress in their writing development. This capstone adds to to the research on scaffolding kindergarten writing for ELs and creates further techniques and resources to help support teachers of writing for ELs in kindergarten.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to set out to answer the question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?* The research found in this literature review has provided key understandings about ELs, scaffolding, and kindergarten writing needed to develop this capstone project. Chapter Three will provide more information detailing my capstone project which purposes to develop additional EL-appropriate scaffolds to supplement a curriculum unit. It will also detail how my

project aims to develop resources and materials to help support ELs' growth in writing

and meet the expectations of their mainstream curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

Project

Introduction and Rationale

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who has worked primarily with kindergarten English Learners (ELs), the most challenging aspect of my work has been teaching writing. Oftentimes, when supporting ELs in the kindergarten mainstream classroom, I am juggling the expectations of our school's adopted writing curriculum with the specific needs of ELs. Since I began teaching elementary ESL in 2015, I often find myself wondering: what do I do when the curriculum's lesson content is not addressing my students' developmental level? What if my students are failing to independently perform at the level the curriculum demands? In my literature review, my goal was to better understand best practices in primary writing instruction and effective scaffolding methods to meet the needs of ELs. Framing my work in the literature surrounding these best practices helps me better determine how to support my ELs during their mainstream writing blocks and answer the question, *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?*

Data from the World-Class Instructional Design (WIDA) Consortium (2014) coincides with my personal experience that many ELs in kindergarten demonstrate the lowest proficiency levels in the domain of writing. Other research supports my professional experience that my kindergarten ELs are at a disadvantage in comparison to their native English-speaking peers when learning to write (Price, 2018).Furthermore, many teachers have reported feeling underprepared to serve ELs in their classrooms

(Siegel, 2014; Soderman, 2005). Because of the pervasive gap in achievement for ELs in writing and lack of preparation to support ELs in this domain, more resources must be developed and implemented by teachers to help ELs make steady progress toward grade-level writing expectations.

This purpose of this project is to provide a variety of tips, tasks, and material resources that can supplement a writing curriculum unit to help scaffold writing for ELs in kindergarten. Although many of these resources address a specific curriculum unit taught in my school, my intention is that these scaffolding resources are generally helpful for teaching persuasive writing to ELs in a variety of contexts. In this chapter, I will first describe the setting and participants, next provide an overview of my capstone project, then describe the research theory and project framework, and finally the project timeline and methods for development and presentation.

Project Setting and Participants

This project took place at an inner-city K-12 charter school located in Minnesota. According to information provided by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) (2018), the demographics of the school are 99% Asian, with 81% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. At this school, 35.5% of students are meeting state expectations in reading achievement in 2018, versus 59.2% of all students statewide. Within the school, 31% of students are identified as ELs, and the primary home languages include Hmong and Karen.

The K-12 charter school has separate sections that house the elementary, middle, and high school. This project will take place in the elementary school at the kindergarten grade level. The elementary school holds over 1,000 students and over 60 staff members.

The kindergarten grade level consists of seven classrooms with class sizes ranging from 22 to 26 students per classroom. There are 167 students enrolled in Kindergarten, 66 (39.5%) of which are identified to receive EL services.

Results from the school's 2017-2018 kindergarten ACCESS test provide the following WIDA proficiency level averages in each domain: Listening 2.8, Speaking 2.5, Reading 1.5, Writing 1.3. Kindergarteners at this school site take the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth test to assess their growth in meeting academic state standards three times annually. School data from the previous year, Spring 2018, indicates that 18% of all students in kindergarten met or exceeded proficiency in state reading standards, and only 12% of EL students met or exceeded proficiency in state reading standards. It is evident from the data that kindergarten ELs at this school site are scoring lowest in the domain of writing and are also struggling to meet proficiency in state-mandated ELA standards.

The intended participants for this capstone project include all staff who work with kindergarten ELs. Staff who work with the kindergarten students in the area of writing include seven classroom teachers, and two EL teachers (who split time serving both kindergarten and first grade). Although this project is created specifically to meet the needs of my kindergarten ELs in their writer's workshop, it is my intention that the results can be used by any educator of ELs, including but not limited to ESL teachers, classroom teachers, special education teachers, teachers' assistants, or paraprofessionals.

In the 2017-2018 academic school year, our school adopted a new K-5 writing curriculum, the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing,* a writer's workshop curriculum developed by Lucy Calkins and the Teachers' College Reading and

Writing Project (TCRWP) (2016) at Columbia University. This curriculum is typically

referred to as Lucy Calkins' Writer's Workshop. The writer's workshop model consists

of three parts: the mini-lesson led by the classroom teacher; independent work time for

students to work on their own writing projects; and the opportunity to share their writing

with partners and with the class. In the workshop model, the goal is for the bulk of the

workshop to allow for students to engage in uninterrupted independent writing time

while the teacher supports students either by conferring one-on-one or leading small

writing groups.

All ELs participate in the writer's workshop model and ESL teachers typically

support their students either by pushing-in to work with small groups in the classroom,

pulling-out groups during independent work time, or conferring one-on-one. EL students

typically receive support from the ESL teacher during writing workshop two or three

times per week. On the days that ELs are not receiving support during writer's workshop

time, they are working independently in the mainstream classroom. Because ELs of all

proficiency levels spend about half of their time working alone in the mainstream

classroom, providing mainstream teachers with additional scaffolding resources is

imperative to help many ELs make progress on their own when not receiving direct

support from their ESL teacher.

Project Overview

The purpose of this capstone is to provide a range of scaffolding resources to

supplement one unit in the kindergarten writer's workshop curriculum, the *Units of Study*

in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing developed by Lucy Calkins and the

TCRWP (2016). The name of the unit is *Persuasive Writing of All Kinds: Using Words to*

Make a Change (Calkins & Dunford, 2016), and it is the fourth unit of the curriculum**.** This unit is specifically chosen because of its difficulty level and because of its timing at the end of the year. Since it is one of the last units, this project was shared with the kindergarten classroom teachers as they were preparing to launch the unit.

For my project, I created a large portable document format (PDF) file that contains diverse types of scaffolding ideas and resources. I chose a PDF file format because it easy to share by email or publish online. It also easy to choose specific pages and print needed materials from a PDF file, so teachers have flexibility to choose the resources form the file that they wish to use. Also, PDFs have a feature where I was able to create clickable links in the table of contents that can quickly allow the user to move to the desired page in a long file. For these, reasons, a PDF file seemed to be the best medium for my capstone project.

The scaffolding resources in the PDF file include unit planning resources, visuals, and writing materials for all three types of scaffolding recommended by the IRIS Center (2018): content, task, and material scaffolding; and it has a table of contents that includes links to each resource provided. To provide content scaffolding, there is a map of language objectives paired with each of the unit's lessons in order to assist teachers in teaching the language features found in persuasive writing. To provide more content scaffolding, the file also provides a list of recommended read alouds, mentor texts, and visuals for kindergarten-friendly persuasive writing topics, such as persuading students to walk in the hall, pick up trash on the ground, or share toys at playtime.

To provide task scaffolding, the PDF file includes a pacing guide for how to break up the writing task and scaffold the process over multiple days. For example, the pacing

guide will include recommended days for discussing topics and building background

knowledge, analyzing mentor texts, generating ideas, filling out a graphic organizer,

turning a graphic organizer into connected text, editing and revising, and finally

publishing. To provide task scaffolding for the language, this project also includes a unit

map that adds language objectives, vocabulary terms, and sentence stems that can be

added to teach each lesson in Calkins and Dunford's (2016) published unit *Persuasive*

Writing of All Kinds: Using Words to Make a Change.

To provide material scaffolding, the PDF file provides a variety of recommended

kindergarten-friendly graphic organizers and visuals. Different graphic organizers for a

variety of persuasive writing projects will be included to help students organize

persuasive writing ideas. Other printed visuals were designed to help teach the parts of a

persuasive text, the parts of a specific genre, or strategies to help write, such visuals for

the steps for sounding out words or editing. These visuals could be displayed in front of

the class on a projector, made into anchor charts, or printed and placed into student

writing folders or writing bins. The PDF file also includes specialized paper suitable to

help prompt students towards the next idea in different persuasive writing tasks.

Upon completion of the PDF file resources, I held a meeting with the kindergarten

teachers and the ESL teachers to introduce the resource during their team meeting. I

chose to present my capstone during a team meeting because it is a planned time that all

the members in my project's audience regularly meet, so I could present my capstone

project work face-to-face. During the meeting, I first explained the purpose of my

capstone project, then presented a short summary of the best practices for kindergarten

writing instruction, important component skills for writing, and the scaffolding strategies

that I had learned from my research in chapter two. Then I displayed the PDF file and explained the resources I created and how they can be used to support ELs' success during this writer's workshop unit. This meeting also provided time for kindergarten teachers to ask questions about this capstone's research and the project's resources. Finally, I asked the kindergarten and ESL teachers to complete a short survey providing feedback on my capstone project to help me gauge the successfulness or usefulness of my project.

Research Theories and Project Framework

The major theory inspiring my project is the social constructivist theory of learning originated by Vygotsky ("Constructivism", 2009). His theory of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is closely related to the theory of scaffolding (Larkin, 2008). In social constructivist theory, individuals use interaction between themselves and another to make connections and create new learning ("Constructivism", 2009). ZPD +1 refers to the technique of challenging the learner to learn a skill that is just one step higher than his or her current abilities (Ketterer, 2008). The strategies included in my project will help teachers to appropriately challenge and support ELs in their writing development.

The design of this project also relied on multiple frameworks and best practices of scaffolding writing discovered in the literature review. The IRIS Center's (2018) recommendations for content, task, and material scaffolding provided a framework for the different types of scaffolding resources included in the PDF file. Also, I drew from Read's (2010) IMSCI model in order to develop a pacing guide for scaffolding tasks within the kindergarten persuasive writing process. Furthermore, I included summaries of

best practice strategies for scaffolding writing in kindergarten classrooms recommended by Price (2018) and Quinn et al. (2016). To help scaffold language, I drew from Pavlak's (2013) study on the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to identify language patterns, vocabulary, and sentence structures inherent in kindergarten-level persuasive texts. All of these theories and frameworks helped provide me with my guide for what to include in my PDF file of scaffolding resources.

Project Timeline

The timeline for this project development took place throughout February and March 2019. In the first week of February, my goal was to reread the unit *Persuasive Writing of All Kinds: Using Words to Make a Change* (Calkins & Dunford, 2016) in depth. Then I took time to create a map of language objectives, vocabulary, and sentence stems that coincide with the each lesson. I also created a pacing guide offering a suggested sequence for scaffolding persuasive writing projects tasks day by day. These unit planning documents helped me to create a list of all of the visuals, graphic organizers, and specialized paper templates that I would need to create in order to supplement the unit.

In the second week of February, I researched how to design visuals. I purchased Adobe Acrobat Pro DC and familiarized myself with its tools. A knowledgeable coworker educated me on the specific tools she used to design her own classroom resources, such as purchasing fonts and clipart and creating resources in Microsoft Powerpoint. This coworker taught me where to find the information to adhere to clipart and font designer licensing terms, too. Then, I spent time downloading and purchases needed fonts and clipart I would need to create the material resources in my project.

For the final two weeks of February, my goal was to create the content scaffolds (list of model texts, list of kindergarten-friendly persuasive writing topics), material scaffolds visuals (anchor charts, graphic organizers, portable word wall and sentence stems, specialized writing paper, etc.), and informational resources for instruction and assessment (ex: two page summary of best practices and component skills, scaffolding the process of genre writing handout, kindergarten writing scoring rubric). This work embodied the bulk of the design of the resources in my PDF file.

In the first week of March 2019, I spent time completing the final editing of my PDF file and created a Powerpoint presentation and Google survey in preparation for presenting to the kindergarten and ESL teachers at their team meeting. In the second week of March, I presented my capstone research and project to the team, and also collected their feedback from the survey. With the conclusion of the presentation, the sharing of the PDF resources, and the responses from the survey, my project was complete.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of my capstone project and explain its rationale. In order to frame the context of the project, the setting and participants were described. This chapter provided an explanation for the theories and frameworks guiding the design of the project. Finally, it provided a timeline for project completion. The final outcome of the project is a PDF file of various scaffolding resources intended to support kindergarten ELs in their persuasive writing unit of the writer's workshop curriculum. The next chapter will reflect on my project's journey to completion and answer the question: *What information and strategies would support*

elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the

unique needs of ELs?

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

In the effort to improve writing instruction for my English learners (ELs) in kindergarten, I set out to answer my research question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?* In order to answer this question, current literature was reviewed along with data relating to ELs, scaffolding, and kindergarten writing. Using the information gathered from my literature review, I designed a project that would introduce additional scaffolding strategies and resources into an existing writing curriculum, the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing,* a writer's workshop curriculum developed by Lucy Calkins and the Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) (2016) at Columbia University.

This chapter will first provide a description of the final result of my project creation and the discoveries from the literature review that were most helpful in the design of my project. Next, this chapter will describe the professional significance, implications, and limitations of my project. Then, I reflect on my year-long journey researching, writing, and creating my capstone project and illustrate any future steps for further development and sharing of my capstone project resources. In this chapter, I provide an answer my research question and a reflection of my research and project development.

My Project

  The final result of my project development is a portable data file (PDF), which contains printable unit planning and instruction resources, anchor charts and visuals, mentor texts, graphic organizers, and writing paper templates. Within the unit planning and instructional resources, I created documents to help plan and implement best practice and instruction for teaching genre writing. These unit planning and instructional resources include a language objectives unit map, a procedure for scaffolding genre writing, a scoring rubric to assess the proficiency level of an EL student's writing, a summary of kindergarten best writing practices and skills, and a read alouds book list. These resources are designed to help teachers incorporate language objectives, scaffolding strategies, knowledge of EL writing development, and best practices into the persuasive writing unit.

  Next, the PDF contains an assortment of anchor charts and visuals. This sections begins with a document suggesting ways that teachers could incorporate the pre-made visuals into their classroom, such as by displaying on the projector or Smartboard, copying to a large paper chart, creating individual privacy folders with posted visuals, or placing copies into individual student writing folders or table bins. The visuals for writing strategies include sounding out words, editing sentences, or using high frequency words and sentence stems. There are also visuals to help students dissect a mentor text, for example visuals highlighting the parts of a persuasive writing text or the parts of a letter. And finally, there are visuals providing writing topic choices and word banks that coincide with the curriculum unit's topics of school problems or environmental problems.

These visuals are designed to help support students throughout different stages of the writing process.

Finally, the PDF contains mentor texts, graphic organizers, and writing paper templates for three different writing projects: a sign, a letter, and a speech. These three writing projects were chosen because they are recommended and taught within the writing curriculum unit. The mentor texts, graphic organizers, and writing paper templates are meant to coincide with one another; they all follow a similar organization pattern and incorporate matching symbols to help guide the writer toward the next component idea in their writing project. Teachers and students can first study the mentor text, then use the graphic organizer to organize their own ideas, and finally write their own draft on the writing paper template. The writing projects are also designed to become more challenging, with the sign being the simplest writing project, the letter becoming a little more dense, and finally the speech becoming the longest and most challenging piece of persuasive writing.

I selected a PDF format because it is easily shareable and it provides choices and flexibility for teachers to choose the page or resource they need to use. In order to be more user-friendly, the PDF contains a table of contents with clickable links. Teachers can quickly click on the name of the resource they want to use, and the PDF will jump to that page location within the file. It is meant to be both easily shareable, and easy to use.

This project of scaffolding resources is designed not to replace, but to supplement the lessons in an existed writing curriculum unit that has been purchased by our school, *Persuasive Writing of All Kinds: Using Words to Make a Change* (Calkins & Dunford, 2016). This unit is part of what is typically referred to as Lucy Calkins' Writer's

Workshop, a popular and frequently-used curriculum throughout the United States. Although my project is designed specifically for kindergarten and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in my school, it also could be a useful resource for kindergarten and ESL teachers across the nation.

Connections to Literature Review

In the development of my project, I incorporated many of the learnings gained from my literature review. Specifically, the research focused on types of scaffolding and scaffolding strategies as well as best practice for kindergarten writing instruction were most beneficial to the design of my project.

The IRIS Center (2018) explained the three types of scaffolding: content, task, and material. Content scaffolding refers to choosing content that is well-known or developmentally appropriate for the learner. For example, choosing to address a simple school problem such as running in the hallway would make a familiar topic for a kindergarten persuasive writing exercise and help scaffold the content. Task scaffolding refers to breaking apart the learning task into different steps and clearly modeling each step. For example, breaking the writing process into six steps (discussing topic ideas, studying a mentor text, filling out a graphic organizer, writing a first draft, editing, and publishing) can help provide task scaffolding. Material scaffolding refers to providing visual materials and resources that can help support the learner. For visual materials, my project contains word walls, topic word banks, steps for editing or sounding out words. When developing my project, I made sure to create resources that address all three types of scaffolds described by the IRIS Center (2018).

Other research on scaffolding that was helpful in the design on my project were the studies on specific scaffolding tools and strategies. Read's (2010) development and description of her IMSCI model helped inspire my method for task scaffolding. IMSCI stands for Inquiry, Modeling, Shared Writing, Collaborative Writing, and Independent Writing. Her model gave a template for how to break up the tasks of the writing process and move students toward independence. The IMSCI model also advocates for the importance of analyzing mentor texts. The importance of using mentor texts was also supported by other studies as well, such as Read et al.'s (2014) study on scaffolding persuasive writing, and Pavlak's (2013) study on using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to scaffold biography writing. Another scaffolding strategy this project relies on is the use of graphic organizers, also known as "thinking maps." Cooks and Sunseri's (2013) study on the use of thinking maps to help improve the organization of ELs' writing influenced my decision to incorporate graphic organizers to help support the persuasive writing unit. These studies on scaffolding writing were very influential to guide my project design.

In my project, I also incorporated and spread awareness of many of the best practices for early writing instruction found from the literature review. My project's expectations for kindergarten writing are in line with research on child writing development described by Soderman (2005), Calkins (1994), and Gerde et al. (2004). Also, much research by Calkins (1994), Gerde et al. (2012), Soderman (2005), and Zheng (2012) on the importance of drawing in early writing development guided the development of my project materials. My project includes the use of drawing as a method to plan writing in the graphic organizers and also provides picture space on all of my

paper templates. Also, during the literature review, many researchers (Calkins, 1994; Soderman, 2005; Zheng, 2012) asserted the importance of student talk, and other researchers (Harrison et al., 2012; Kent et al., 2014) maintained that oral language abilities are a component skill to successful writing ability. Because of this research, I included additional language objectives, vocabulary, sentence frames, and topic discussion time into the unit planning resources included in my project. Much of the literature on best practices for early writing instruction, specifically the developmental path of writing, the use of drawing, and building student talk and oral language abilities impacted the design of my project. The design of my project relied heavily on connections made from the literature review.

Professional Significance

This capstone project is significant because it addresses the need for more solutions to help close the educational achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs. Much research has been done to document this EL achievement gap (Garcia & Frede, 2010; OELA, 2015; U. S. DOE, n.d.). Reports from the federal and state level both find that ELs are lagging behind in every measurement of academic achievement, including reading, math, science, graduation rates, and enrollment into institutes of higher education (OELA, 2015; U. S. DOE, n.d.). Other studies document the unique challenges faced by ELs such as poverty, trauma, parental skills and opportunities, and under-enrollment in pre-kindergarten services (Garcia & Frede, 2010; Hernandez et al., 2010). More studies have documented the specific struggle for ELs to meet writing proficiency standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Price, 2018; Zheng, 2012).

These studies are just some of many that show how our schools are not meeting the needs of ELs in the United States.

Although there is an abundance of research supporting that ELs are struggling in our nation's schools, less research has been done on ways to close the gap and find solutions for ELs (Price. 2018). Much of these studies focus on scaffolding (Cooks & Sunseri, 2013; Pavlak, 2013; Price, 2018; Siegel et al., 2014; Zheng, 2012). The positive outcomes of using instructional scaffolding for learning have been documented by many studies, and scaffolding is a widely accepted instructional strategy in the field of education (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983; Quinn, Gerde, & Bingham, 2016; Read, Landon-Hays, & Martin-Rivas, 2014). Scaffolding has been named by many researchers as a promising way to help improve the educational experience of ELs and close the gap (Cole & Feng, 2015; Cooks & Sunseri, 2013; Pavlak, 2013; Price, 2018; Siegel et al., 2014).

This capstone project fits into the gap in research by developing a solution to provide quality, scaffolded writing instruction for ELs in kindergarten. Although more studies have been done on scaffolding writing for all students, or scaffolding other types of instruction for EL students, there is little research on scaffolding writing for ELs, particularly younger ELs. In my literature review, I was only able to find one other study that specifically addressed scaffolding early writing instruction for ELs in kindergarten (Price, 2018). This is significant because kindergarten is often the first educational experience for ELs, and it is important for ELs to receive quality instruction that addresses their unique needs when entering school (Hernandez et al., 2010). Providing quality instruction and incorporating scaffolding strategies can help kindergarten ELs

make more growth and eventually catch up to their non-EL peers. This capstone project provides tools that help ensure that kindergarten ELs are receiving equitable writing instruction.

Implications

My capstone project has mainly had an impact on the kindergarten teachers and students at my school. This capstone project has a number of implications in the areas teacher professional development, writing instruction resources, efficiency, and writing outcomes for ELs.

One implication is that the kindergarten classroom and EL teachers were able to participate in an additional professional development session during one of their team meetings. During this professional development session where my capstone project was described, I also presented many of the best practices for early writing instruction and important component skills for early writing success. The outcome of this professional development was that teachers now have an increased awareness towards important practices and skills needed to for kindergarten writing instruction.

Another implication of this capstone project is that it also encouraged teachers to use scaffolding strategies. As part of the presentation for kindergarten classroom and EL teachers summarized the importance of adding scaffolding strategies and tools into their current curriculum. Resources in the capstone project PDF also provide a clear-cut scaffolding process to help teachers plan their writing instruction. Other resources include easy-to-use premade visuals or writing paper templates. The professional development and resources provided in the project may help teachers become more confident in using

scaffolding strategies and help them easily incorporate scaffolding resources in their classroom.

A third implication of this capstone project is that it saves teachers time in creating scaffolding resources. Development of the scaffolding resources for this unit took many hours, hours that many teachers do not have. Since these resources are premade, teachers can easily print off or display what they need without spending time searching for or creating their own resources. Time is one of the most valuable resources for teachers, and the less time they use creating their own resources, the more time they have to focus on improving instruction and meeting their students' needs.

The most important implication, and the main purpose of this capstone project, is that ELs may make more growth and be more successful at completing writing projects in this targeted unit. The task scaffolding, content scaffolding, and materials scaffolding will provide an engaging, structured plan for ELs to practice their writing skills and create their own persuasive writing projects. ELs will have the right structures in place to actively participate and learn during writing instruction time.

A number of implications of this project have been named, including an impact on teacher professional development, writing instruction resources, efficiency, and writing outcomes for ELs. However, the next section will describe the limitations of this capstone project.

Limitations

Although the development of this capstone project was ultimately successful, there were a number of limitations affecting its scope and development. These limitation

include lack of opportunities to receive feedback, the limited scope in audience and content, and also the lack of control over final implementation of project resources.

One limitation of this capstone project was that I did not have a chance to try to test this project or receive feedback from kindergarten teachers before implementation. This was mainly because of time constrictions and lack of collaboration time between ESL and classroom teachers. Although I used best practices of research to develop my project, I was not able to use my capstone project to teach the persuasive writing unit to a group of kindergarten ELs. I was also not able to get my project resources reviewed by kindergarten teachers ahead of time. I had to complete the design of my resources quickly within the span of a month and share it with teachers right as they started the unit. If I had tested my resources by using them with a group of ELs or collected feedback from the kindergarten teachers, then I may have found flaws in my scaffolding tools and could have made improvements before sharing with my project's audience.

Other limitations of my capstone project have to do with my project's audience. First of all, the audience of my project is a very small pool of teachers. In the end, I was only able to share my project with eight teachers (seven kindergarten classroom teachers, and one kindergarten ESL teacher). Because of the small audience, the impact of my capstone project remains small. Secondly, the use any of my capstone project's resource is dependent on teachers' choice. The PDF of scaffolding resources for the unit is designed to be a package of resources that are flexible for teachers to use. Teachers can choose any of the resources that they want to use, and leave out resources they do not. As an ESL teacher, I lack ultimate authority in a classroom teacher's instructional decisions

during writing time. Therefore, it is difficult to enforce the implementation of my project resources and judge its ultimate impact.

The next limitation has to do with the scope of my capstone project. Because of time constraints, I chose to focus on scaffolding only one unit of our school's writing curriculum. Because of the timing of my capstone project completion, this unit is one of the last and takes place toward the end of the year. I did not introduce scaffolding resources in all curriculum units starting from the beginning of the year. If I had, it's possible that teachers could have had more time to familiarize themselves with the different resources, and EL students could have had a longer time to benefit from the use of scaffolds. Because of the limited scope of this capstone project, it is also difficult to judge its impact.

Due to these limitations in the project's lack of testing, the project's small audience, lack of control over implementation of project resources, and limited scope of the project, it is difficult to gauge just how large of an impact my project had or might have had on the writing instruction of ELs. These are all factors that influenced the ultimate success of my project. Despite these limitations, however, in the next section I will discuss my personal reflection on the success of this capstone.

Capstone Reflection

This section provides a reflection on the level of success of my capstone project based on the responses collected from my participant survey and from my own observations. I will also reflect on my personal growth as a result of this capstone.

The last step of my project involved sending out a survey to all its participants to collect their feedback. Of the eight participants, I received six responses. In the survey,

100% of the respondents felt the information from my presentation of best practice research was helpful to them. All of the respondents (100%) also reported that they planned to use some of my project's scaffolding materials or resources during their instruction of persuasive writing. Of the specific types of scaffolding resources provided, five out of six respondents (83%) stated that they planned to use the visuals and mentor texts, and all of them (100%) stated they would use the writing paper templates. I did include one optional open-ended survey question asking for helpful feedback to improve my project resources. Only one respondent provided some open-ended constructive criticism. One of the suggestions included creating different levels of paper templates for various levels of writing ability, such as shorter letter or speech writing paper templates or graphic organizers with less prompts. Another suggestion was to create an anchor chart to help remind students of what the graphic organizer and paper template symbols represent, because some students were confused by them or forgot the symbols meaning during independent writing time. If this project is implemented in the future, I would add additional resources within my PDF to accommodate these helpful suggestions. Gathering from the survey responses, I found that teachers generally did appreciate receiving more professional development on scaffolding early writing instruction for ELs, and that the teachers planned to use some of the most helpful scaffolding resources from my project.

From my own observation, I also noticed that some of the classroom teachers did incorporate some of my project's resources. I do not co-teach during kindergarten writing instruction time this year, so it was difficult for me to observe what impact my project made in all classrooms. However, I did step into one teacher's classroom and saw my

world problem visual and word bank displayed on the projector in the front of the room. I also walked down the hallway and viewed persuasive signs depicting school problems and solutions hanging on the walls. In reviewing finished student work, I saw my letter paper template used in another classroom. My observations confirmed that my project resources were incorporated according to teacher choice in different ways throughout the kindergarten classrooms.

In this capstone, I also learned a lot about how to teach early writing to ELs. Research from my literature review has helped make me more knowledgeable and provided me with so many more tools and strategies to help scaffold and teach writing to ELs students. Development of my project materials has also made me better at designing future scaffolding resources and materials. As a result of this capstone, I have grown in confidence as a writing teacher and in scaffolding future writing projects. In the next section, I will describe how this confidence and experience has guided me toward future steps in using the knowledge and skills developed by this capstone.

Future Steps

The future steps I have for this project include widening the scope and the audience of my project. Ideally, the knowledge gained about scaffolding and early writing best practices could be used to create scaffolding resources for all units of the *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* (Calkins & TCRWP, 2016). That way, teachers would have a laid out map of language objectives and resources for scaffolded writing projects ready at the beginning of the year. ELs would benefit from planned scaffolds from the start, instead of being overwhelmed, lost, and confused.

I also plan to widen the audience of my project by making my resources available online. Although my project will be available in Hamline's digital commons, most teachers do not have the time to look for instructional tools by sorting through and digesting graduate capstone theses. Instead, several colleagues have recommended that I make my project resources available on Teachers Pay Teachers, a very popular website dedicated to sharing free and paid resources created by teachers for teachers. Setting up a store on this website is simple, and it would be an easy way to allow other educators who are searching for early writing scaffolds to locate my project. Also, the resources available online for ESL teachers and scaffolding writing for ELs in younger grades is very limited, so my project may help fill in this gap of resources.

By continuing my project work to incorporate scaffolds into additional curriculum units and by making my project resources available on a popular educational resource website, I plan to widen both the scope and audience of my capstone project. In the next section, I will offer my conclusion to my capstone journey and my answer to my research question.

Conclusion

Long ago, I began my journey struggling to support kindergarten ELs during their writing instruction time. I did not know how to adapt a new curriculum to meet their needs. I was not confident in my knowledge of early writing development and best practices, or scaffolding strategies for struggling writers. This led me to my research question: *What information and strategies would support elementary teachers when scaffolding writing curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of ELs?*

The outcome of my journey has led me to answer the question by reviewing studies that provide information on scaffolding and early writing instruction best practices. Learning about the different types of scaffolds, different strategies to scaffold writing, and early writing best practices helped me to develop my capstone project. As a result, I created a PDF of scaffolding resources including unit planning and instruction resources, anchor charts and visuals, mentor texts, graphic organizers, and writing paper templates, which were shared with kindergarten teachers and ESL teachers to implement. After collecting feedback on my project and witnessing the effects of my project, I consider my project an overall success. Since the start of this journey, I have become much more knowledgeable and confident about teaching kindergarten writing to ELs and about creating writing scaffolds.

In the future, I plan to widen the scope and audience of my capstone project to create a larger impact on the support of writing instruction for kindergarten ELs. It is my hope that other educators of ELs will use my scaffolding resources to enrich writing instruction for ELs and lead to their success. It is possible that my capstone project can contribute to promoting equity and closing the achievement gap for ELs in our nation's schools.

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