

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR  
ENGLISH LEARNERS

by  
Rebecca Michelle Chisholm

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## Abstract

English learners (EL) are the fastest growing subpopulation of U.S. public schools. ELs are expected to comprise nearly one-fourth of the school population by 2025. The increase in ELs is not met with enough well-prepared educators. Therefore, ELs continue to underperform. Needs assessment data showed that novice early childhood education (ECE) teachers were less equipped to teach ELs compared to experienced teacher peers. Existing literature indicated limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate and acquire knowledge about EL instruction. Further, the literature showed workshops and coaching as two approaches to EL teacher training. The intervention supported novice ECE teachers in working with ELs by providing training in the form of six professional development (PD) workshops interwoven with four instructional support opportunities facilitated by an expert educator. Based on a small sample ( $n = 4$ ), quantitative findings indicated a positive change in teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. Qualitative data showed professional learning components that contributed to a positive and useful professional learning experience. Through intentional opportunities to explore PD content in the context of their classrooms, participants deepened their knowledge of EL instructional strategies. More frequent opportunities for collective experiences in sharing the benefits of EL instructional strategies motivated participants to integrate professional learning content into their instruction. Finally, teacher self-efficacy findings showed that an expert's ability to draw connections between content and curriculum facilitated teacher interest in professional learning content. Expert and peer collaboration as a motivational factor in EL instructional use emerged as a theme for further investigation.

*Keywords:* English learner, professional development, novice, early childhood



### Dissertation Approval Form

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Richard D. Rosen		10-12-2020
Adviser	Signature	Date
E. Todd Brown		10-12-20
co-adviser	Signature	Date
Committee Member		
Carey Borkoski		10-12-20
Committee Member	Signature	Date
Committee Member	Signature	Date

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved daughters, Anna Marie and Grace Michelle.

May you never stop learning.

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## **Executive Summary**

Quality early-childhood education (ECE) is critical for K-12 academic success (M. Davison, Young, Davenport, Buterbaugh, & Davison, 2004; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Children who fall behind at this important time will continue to stay behind (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikart, 1984; M. Davison et al., 2004). English learners (EL) are a growing student population expected to comprise one quarter of U.S. public school enrollment by 2025 (National Education Association [NEA], 2008). Researchers have suggested that teachers are unequipped to teach ELs (Cellante & Donne, 2013; De Jong & Harper, 2005; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Worthington et al., 2011). Therefore, an increasing number of ELs who start behind in ECE will continue to underachieve (Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003).

In a large northeastern city, the percentage of ELs in public schools is growing faster than the national rate (University of Maryland, 2017). According to Kieffer (2008), ECE ELs demonstrate significant gaps in literacy performance compared to other student groups. Given the importance of early learning and current EL performance levels, ECE teachers underserve a population predicted to increase the share of public-school students.

### **Background and Context**

The district in the study is one of many U.S. school districts serving an increasing number of ELs in K-12 instruction. Between 2000 and 2017, the EL population increased from approximately 8% to 10% of U.S. public school students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). The national trend in U.S. student demographics indicates an increasingly diverse public-school enrollment, where ELs are the fastest-growing student subpopulation (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2008). Since ELs are expected

to comprise one-fourth of U.S. public school students by 2025 (NEA, 2008), all teachers will likely have ELs in their classrooms because of these growth trends.

Given that ELs perform below native-English speaking peers in ECE classrooms and continue to underachieve beyond early learning experiences (Gándara et al., 2003), quality ECE EL instruction is essential. However, teachers may be unequipped to meet the needs of ELs due to lack of training and professional preparation (Banerjee & Luckner, 2014; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

### **Needs Assessment**

The practitioner-researcher used an explanatory sequential design to collect data on ECE teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, and EL instructional strategies. The quantitative findings highlighted connections between teacher beliefs and self-efficacy in working with ELs. When stratified into two groups based on experience, 100% of teachers with seven or more years of experience and 44% of teachers with six or fewer years of experience were confident in their ability to instruct ELs. The qualitative findings further showed the relationship between instruction and self-confidence in working with ELs, with teachers expressing a common desire to deepen their understanding of EL instruction.

A theme about the positive influences of teacher collaboration on EL instructional practices emerged as a further area of research to explore. The needs assessment data analysis suggested a need to explore novice teacher EL knowledge, beliefs, and practices, as the source of ECE educator preparedness for ELs. Thus, the intervention focused on a collaborative professional development (PD) model where novice ECE teachers, teachers with five or fewer years of experience, engaged with peers and an expert educator to advance knowledge, use, and self-efficacy further in EL instruction.



## **Theoretical Framework**

The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and cognitive apprenticeship theory (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1988) interacted to build the foundation for the intervention. The social cognitive theory, which posited that interactions between an individual's experiences, actions, and cognition would influence his or her learning, set the stage for a collaborative professional learning intervention design with active learning embedded into group and individualized PD experiences. Triadic reciprocal determinism (TRC; Bandura, 1986), one component of social cognitive theory, proposes that a reciprocal relationship exists between an individual's beliefs, actions, and environment. This reciprocal relationship influences an individual's behavior.

Drawing on Bandura's (1986) environmental influence within learning, cognitive apprenticeship theory further emphasizes the role of skill masters, also known as experts, when teaching a new skill (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1988). Leveraging the importance of expertise and learning environment within a professional learning model grounded in collaboration and active learning to promote increased teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction set the foundation for the intervention design and implementation.

## **Research Purpose and Objective**

This researcher explored the relationship between novice teacher participation in expert-led professional learning and EL instruction in ECE classrooms. The researcher answered the following research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent did implementation of the PD workshops and instructional support align with the proposed intervention plan?
- RQ2: How do ECE teachers describe their experiences in EL PD workshops and with instructional support from an expert educator?

- RQ3: How has the intervention shaped teacher perceptions about their self-efficacy in working with ELs?
- RQ4: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices?
- RQ5: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher use of EL instructional practices?
- RQ6: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher self-efficacy in EL instructional practices?

Throughout the intervention, it became evident that RQ3 related to RQ6; thus, RQ3 was eliminated from the intervention findings.

### **Research Design**

The study occurred in an urban, elementary-middle school with six ECE teachers. The study participants included four novice ECE teachers working in prekindergarten through first-grade. Two teachers were in their first years of teaching. The researcher used a mixed-methods triangulation design to understand the relationship between participant experience in professional learning and knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. The quantitative data were collected with a survey instrument, the Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy (KUSE) Scale (Thibault, 2017), adapted to the intervention content. The qualitative data were collected through notes from the practitioner-researcher's reflective journal, intersession support meeting documents, participant interviews, and PD session activities documented by written participant communication.

## **Intervention**

The intervention consisted of six 45-minute PD workshops led by the expert teacher, who also served as the practitioner-researcher. Sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5 each focused on one principle selected from Stanford Graduate School of Education's (2013) *Key Principles for English Learner Instruction*. Session 1 served as a pre-session, and Session 6 included logistics and content review. The sessions concluded with an exit ticket highlighting learning and ideas for implementation. Intersession instructional support meetings occurred after Sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5. The expert teacher reached out to participants and scheduled times to meet one-on-one as individualized support to reflect and adjust the implementation of new professional learning content in classroom instruction.

Following Session 4 intersession instructional support meetings, the nation experienced a global pandemic (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). The global pandemic caused stay-at-home orders by most communities, including the one in which this intervention took place (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). Due to the stay-at-home order, schools continued instruction through online learning methods. These restrictions placed some unanticipated changes in the intervention, including presentation format and delivery method for Session 5, Session 5 intersession instructional support meetings, and Session 6. The final duration of the intervention was 17 weeks.

## **Data and Data Analysis**

The study data were collected based on the triangulation mixed-methods design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Due to the research design, the data were collected simultaneously and analyzed together to interpret results. The quantitative data for intervention outcomes were collected using the adapted KUSE Scale (Thibault, 2017) and analyzed using descriptive statistics with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software.

The qualitative data for the implementation and intervention outcomes were collected using PD session activities, practitioner-researcher reflective journal notes, and participant interviews. The qualitative data were analyzed using emergent in vivo coding and a priori descriptive coding with Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

## **Findings**

The quantitative findings from the adapted KUSE Scale indicated that teachers experienced a positive change in knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction while participating in the professional learning intervention experience. The qualitative data illuminated specific intervention components that contributed to a positive and useful professional learning experience. The participants attributed perceived growth in EL instructional knowledge, use, and self-efficacy to engaging with an expert learning partner, peer collaboration, active learning, context-embedded content, and personalized instructional feedback. Given the 100% intervention attendance rate and presurvey responses indicating low levels of previous EL PD exposure, the practitioner-researcher concluded that participation in the intervention was related to participant change in knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction.

## **Discussion**

The participant experience findings showed that cycles of whole group learning sessions coupled with personalized support conversations benefited perceived ECE teacher growth in EL instruction self-efficacy. Through intentional opportunities to explore PD content in the context of their classrooms, teacher participants deepened and broadened their knowledge of EL instructional strategies. More frequent opportunities for collective experiences in sharing the benefits of implementing EL instructional strategies motivated participants to integrate

professional learning content continually into daily instruction. Finally, teacher self-efficacy findings showed that the expert ability to draw connections between content and curriculum facilitated teacher interest in professional learning content. Expert and peer collaboration as a motivational factor in EL instructional use emerged as a theme for further investigation.

## **Chapter 1: Understanding the Problem of Practice**

Quality early learning experiences have immediate and long-term benefits in education (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Currie, 2001; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). For example, acquisition of social skills at a young age not only decreases the likelihood of developing behavioral challenges detrimental to kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) academic success but also has a positive influence on long-term career potential beyond elementary and post-secondary education experiences (Currie, 2001). The positive impact of early-childhood education (ECE) is greatest for children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds (Currie, 2001).

English learners (EL), who make up a substantial number of low social or economic status families in the United States, are the fastest-growing subpopulation of K-12 public school students (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2008). Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, the EL population grew by 51.3% (Clair, 1995). This growth led to about 2 million ELs in public schools by 1991 (Clair, 1995). By 2008, the EL population had tripled in 30 years (NCTE, 2008). ELs currently make up approximately 10% of the public-school population in the United States (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], 2018). Although EL instruction was not a formal educational focus in schools when non-native speakers began to populate the United States, this issue had become a more acute problem based on the current rate of increase in ELs in combination with the deficit in teacher knowledge of strategies to work with ELs (Cellante & Donne, 2013).

As indicated by historical trends in ECE literature, students who start behind stay behind (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikart, 1984; M. Davison, Young, Davenport, Buterbaugh, & Davison, 2004). Consistent with research on the importance of early-

childhood learning, ELs who start behind continue to underachieve (Cummins, 2011; M. Davison et al., 2004). ELs perform below expectations and have lower graduation rates than native-English speaking peers (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Marschall, 2006; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1992). Because the rate of increase in EL students is not being matched by an equal number of well-prepared teachers to serve this population (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Worthington et al., 2011), continuing efforts to support ELs with limited resources, such as instructional materials, will increase the number of students who start behind and continue behind their peers (Worthington et al., 2011).

Federal requirements and educational policy influence educator preparedness for teaching ELs. The Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 established that students should not face discrimination in schools. However, these policies did not define how to provide equal education to students whose backgrounds made it difficult to acquire English language proficiency. Thus, this lack of definition and vision for students learning English as a second language made it challenging to determine strategies that would best meet EL needs.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) defined ELs, federally mandated EL identification and assessments, and emphasized the importance of English-only academic instruction. English-only academic instruction requires teachers to deliver content in English, regardless of a student's native language (NCLB, 2001). According to Harper, De Jong, and Platt (2008), the implementation of NCLB negatively affected EL programming and limited accessibility to instructional resources for this growing population. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2016) replaced NCLB and requires states to develop and assess English proficiency standards for all ELs.

The ESSA also mandates new requirements for EL education, such as specific criteria for identification and inclusion of English mastery as an indicator of school quality (MPI, 2018). A significant difference between the NCLB (2001) and ESSA (2016) includes a movement from federal to state responsibility in terms of how states manage struggling schools (MPI, 2018). This shift allows greater flexibility in terms of opportunities for communities to influence EL-related school decisions. A consistent system for identifying ELs and policies encouraging increased autonomy in school-based decisions regarding EL education allows district-wide opportunities to explore the level of educator preparedness and instructional approach to teaching this growing population.

Debates continue to emerge around what type of instruction and learning environment is best to meet the needs of an increasing EL population (Platt, Harper, & Mendoza, 2003). Lenneberg (1967) proposed the critical period hypothesis, stating that young children had a specific time to master language. Johnson and Newport (1989) extended this hypothesis to propose that this theory applies to second-language learning. However, the type of learning environment in which this theory is best applied to meet EL needs remains debated. Inclusive and separate learning environments for ELs are discussed in the research, as there are advantages and disadvantages of both methods (Platt et al., 2003). Inclusive learning environments allow opportunities for ELs to learn alongside English-speaking peers. Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006) found that sheltered instructional methods correlated with increased EL academic success. Sheltered instruction is a form of instruction in which ELs learn with non-EL peers (Echevarria et al., 2006). Therefore, advocates of separate classrooms for ELs highlight greater consistency in instruction (Platt et al., 2003).



Even though sheltered instruction has been on the rise about the increasing numbers of ELs in the United States (Hansen-Thomas, 2008), Platt et al. (2003) argued that the standardized nature of inclusive classroom environments limited instructional methods for ELs. A separate learning environment can help ELs to feel safe while making an effort to learn language and academics at the same time (Platt et al., 2003). Educator preparedness in any EL learning environment is a problem to investigate as the EL population continues to increase (López, McEneaney, & Nieswandt, 2015; Worthington et al., 2011).

### **Problem of Practice Statement**

Quality ECE is critical for K-12 academic success (M. Davison et al., 2004; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Children who fall behind at this important time will continue to underachieve (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; M. Davison et al., 2004). ELs are a growing student population expected to comprise one-quarter of U.S. public school enrollment by 2025 (NEA, 2008). Furthermore, teachers are unequipped to teach ELs (Cellante & Donne, 2013; De Jong & Harper, 2005; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Worthington et al., 2011). Therefore, an increasing number of ELs who start behind in ECE continues to underachieve (Gándara et al., 2003). In a large northeastern city, the percentage of ELs is growing faster than the national rate (University of Maryland, 2017). According to Kieffer (2008), kindergarten ELs demonstrate significant gaps in literacy performance as compared to other student groups. Given the importance of early learning and current EL performance levels, ECE teachers may underserve a population predicted to increase the share of public-school students.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Chapter 1 investigates the possible factors associated with school preparedness to meet the demands of an increasing EL population in the context of urban, ECE classrooms. The

chapter is organized to present the factors of the problem of practice through the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The existing literature uses the following terms to describe the focus population:

- English learner (EL)
- English language learner (ELL)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Limited English Proficient (LEP)

In this research review, the practitioner-researcher referenced this population with the term of EL. For this literature review, the practitioner-researcher defined EL and other key terms relevant to the problem of practice (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Key Terms for Early-Childhood Educator Preparedness and English Learner Population Increase*

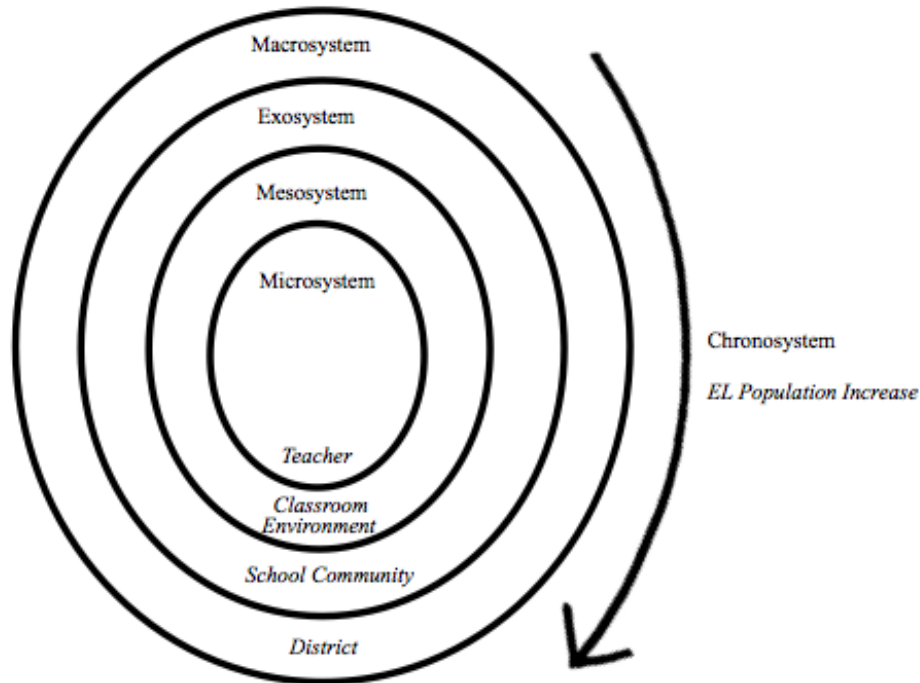
Key term	Definition
Preparedness	Readiness to plan and implement EL instruction
Underachievement	EL performance level below what one would expect based on his or her skills (Cummins, 2011; M. Davison et al., 2004)
English learner	Students whose English skills limit their capacity to effectively engage in learning and experience academic success (Linguanti, Cook, Bailey, & MacDonald, 2016)
English learner instructional strategies	Teaching techniques to make content comprehensible to ELs (Echevarria et al., 2006)

Viewing the problem of practice through a nested version of the ecological systems theory (EST) helps understand individual factors, as well as the relationship between factors that contribute to early-childhood educator preparedness in working with ELs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner (1994) used the EST to propose that various systems interacted with each

other in various aspects of considering the problem of practice. Applying EST provides a lens to view the problem of practice through Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. As in Bronfenbrenner's original model, each system is nested within another while the chronosystem has a perpetual impact on system interactions over time. Considering Bronfenbrenner's ideas around social roles and interpersonal relations, the teacher emerges as a microsystem acting on the problem of practice.

Teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, and classroom identity comprise the immediate environment of the problem of practice (Lee, Butler, & Tippins, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Yoon, 2008). With the teacher as a microsystem, the classroom emerges as a mesosystem acting on educator preparedness to work with ELs. Instructional strategies, barriers to teaching, and teacher-EL relationships comprise the classroom environment in which the microsystem acts as an influence on the problem of practice (Lee et al., 2007; Pappamihiel, 2004).

In thinking about how the mesosystem is nested within the exosystem, the school community is a system of classrooms and teachers influencing practice. The school community as an exosystem, comprised mainly of school-family relationships and interactions, sets the foundation for the outermost system influence, the district (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Acting as a macrosystem, the district interacts with all systems to influence allocations of programs and funds directly affecting educator preparedness to work with ELs (Gándara et al., 2003; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). As illustrated in Figure 1, the nested systems individually and cumulatively influence educator preparedness to meet the needs of ELs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).



*Figure 1.* Ecological systems theoretical approach for early-childhood English learner teacher preparedness. Adapted from “Ecology models of human development,” by U. Bronfenbrenner, in T. N. Postlewaite and Husen, T. (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1643), 1994, Oxford, England: Elsevier. Copyright 1994 by Elsevier.

### **Teacher: The Microsystem**

The teacher acts as a microsystem influence on the problem of practice. By exploring teacher roles and identity, teacher beliefs about ELs and EL families, and teacher self-efficacy in working with ELs, the teacher emerges as the focal individual.

**Teacher identity.** Teacher identity is a microsystem influence on the problem of practice (see Figure 1). In the context of the problem of practice, teacher positioning refers to how an educator views his or her role in an EL classroom environment (Reeves, 2009). In a mixed-methods study utilizing positioning theory to explore teacher investment in EL identity, Reeves (2009) applied qualitative data from case studies and quantitative data from a larger study focused on secondary EL teachers to explore how teacher-created identities influence EL positioning in the classroom. Although Reeves’s quantitative data originated from a larger,

mixed-method study, the researcher applied qualitative methods by conducting a case study with a single participant who exhibited strong identities with his role as a classroom teacher. Through interviews, observations, and student work samples, Reeves found that assigning certain identities to specific populations, such as ELs, might limit their abilities to achieve academic success among their peers.

Consistent with Reeves's (2009) findings on teacher assigned EL identities, Yoon (2008) conducted a case study with three general educators and six ELs to explore how teacher perceptions of their classroom roles contributed to EL perceived positioning and participation. Through surveys, interviews, observations, and field notes from all three classrooms, Yoon's findings indicated how teachers' misunderstandings about their roles resulted in a lack of support for ELs and low levels of EL participation in the classroom. The effect of teacher roles and identity on subsequent EL positioning in the classroom showed an example of how teachers, as a microsystem, could influence the EL learning experience. Teachers may also influence EL learning experiences with their beliefs.

**Teacher beliefs about English learners.** Teacher beliefs about ELs, located within the teacher microsystem of the EST model (see Figure 1), showed an additional example of how teacher views and actions influenced ECE EL academic achievement. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) conducted a seminal research study on teacher beliefs. Resulting student performance showed teacher beliefs on student achievement (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). According to Rosenthal and Jacobson's quantitative study measuring the effects of teacher expectations on student performance for one year, the researchers found that negative teacher beliefs about student potential created a self-fulfilling prophecy that resulted in low student achievement. Rosenthal and Jacobson measured the effects of teacher expectations using student scores on the

Harvard Test of Inflected Acquisition. The research design included the test administration to a control group of 255 students and an experimental group of 65 students in first-grade through sixth-grade at the beginning and end of the study (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Teachers were told that a random group of students were intellectual bloomers at the beginning of the study. The random group of students subsequently demonstrated greater growth in the assessment. Rosenthal and Jacobson also found that teacher beliefs impacted self-efficacy in all students, regardless of age. However, the correlation between negative teacher beliefs and subsequent low self-efficacy and achievement was greatest between teachers and young children (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Researchers have applied Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) findings to a more specific EL population and confirmed that negative teacher beliefs toward ELs exist and can potentially influence the quality of instruction for ELs (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Walker et al. (2004) investigated teacher beliefs toward ELs through an attitudinal assessment. By applying a mixed-method design, Walker et al. collected survey data from 422 mainstream teachers and interview data from six EL teachers. The Likert-scale survey items measured attitudes toward ELs and interviews addressed existing EL supports, attitudes toward ELs, and factors inhibiting EL instruction (Walker et al., 2004). Walker et al. found that negative teacher beliefs occurred when teachers who were not prepared for diverse students encountered challenging EL situations, such as language barriers that inhibited the teaching and learning process. Kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers who were not prepared to navigate EL challenges quickly developed a negative mindset when encountering difficulties with the EL population (Walker et al., 2004). As indicated in Rosenthal and Jacobson's earlier study with a smaller elementary-middle school teacher population, this negative mindset correlates with lower student self-efficacy and poorer

academic performance. Walker et al. applied a mixed-methods approach, which enhances the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data and lessens the influence of individual method weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), to build on Rosenthal and Jacobson's earlier quantitative findings on teacher beliefs and student performance.

In a qualitative study exploring how preservice teachers' experiences influence their conception of ELs, Sugimoto, Carter, and Stoehr (2017) built on Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) and Walker et al.'s (2004) findings of the effects of teacher beliefs by highlighting how preservice teachers' field experiences relate to a negative mindset toward ELs. Sugimoto et al. examined how preservice teachers' field-based experiences influenced their attitudes toward EL learners as part of a larger study on a teacher preparation program. By developing the Well-Remembered Event, a narrative-based instrument to collect data within a qualitative design method, Sugimoto et al. asked 49 preservice teachers to describe their preservice teaching experiences. Sugimoto et al. confirmed Walker et al.'s previous findings on negative teacher mindset influence with conclusions that negative preservice interactions with teacher mentors regarding teaching ELs to contribute to feelings of unpreparedness in preservice EL teachers. Teacher self-efficacy may also play a role in teacher readiness to instruct ELs.

**Teacher beliefs towards EL families.** Building on microsystem factors, such as teacher beliefs and self-efficacy in working directly with ELs, teacher preconceived notions of EL families play an integral role in educator preparedness to work with ELs (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Families must feel like teachers value their support for EL-family partnerships to positively affect EL learning experiences (Guo, 2006). However, patterns in family-partnerships reflect teacher feelings toward EL families, which mirror Kozol's (1991) theory that school is bounded by set guidelines. Although teachers mistakenly think that a lack of formal appearances

at school indicates a low level of value on family partnerships, they do not recognize the need to consider an increasing influence of culture on relationships (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). In a qualitative study with 37 teachers and assistant teachers, the interviews with the participants indicated teachers' beliefs that assimilation and teaching English to parents would result in student success (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

There is a teacher tendency to focus on what EL families lack in partnerships with schools rather than what they contribute (Guo, 2006). One or a few negative experiences with low parent involvement, combined with little to no training in parent engagement, may lead to a deleterious outlook and lack of trust in future family-school relationships (Jones, 2002; Swick, 2004). Furthermore, qualitative studies indicated that minimal progress in teacher understanding about barriers faced by EL families affects school-EL parent relationships (Kozol, 1991; Panferov, 2010). In Panferov's (2010) case study of two EL families, the researcher indicated that many school districts use media to distribute important messages, many of which EL families cannot access. Panferov's methods included an interview and questionnaires with families and teachers. The findings indicated that teachers lack knowledge of EL family needs and fail to create avenues for parents to access school involvement opportunities (Panferov, 2010).

Teachers' preconceived notions of an unequal power balance between teacher and EL parents also negatively affect the relationship between these two stakeholders (Shim, 2013). Utilizing qualitative methods within a case study design, Shim (2013) collected data from individual and group interviews with six EL parents recruited from a group of middle-school parents (Shim, 2013). Shim found three major factors negatively influencing school-EL family partnerships. The three factors included teacher beliefs toward EL families, parent incapacity to



affect teacher choices, and parent fears of consequences for addressing concerns. Panferov (2010) and Shim had similar findings of the relationship between teacher-student communication in English and EL academic success. Panferov noted several factors indicating that teachers are limited in knowledge about how to engage EL parents in school, while Shim expanded on what causes challenges in teacher-parent relationships.

Shim's (2013) case study findings confirm Quioco and Daoud's (2006) qualitative data supporting the existence of cultural barriers to school-EL family partnerships due to pre-existing teacher beliefs about EL families. Quioco and Daoud investigated how teachers perceived Latino parent involvement. In a qualitative research study conducted at two elementary schools, Quioco and Daoud conducted interviews and observations with 50 parents, 23 teachers, 16 instructional aides, and five other school workers. Findings indicated that teachers had negative beliefs about Latino parents and Latino parents felt rejected from the school environment, despite wanting to get involved with their child's school (Quioco & Daoud, 2006). By utilizing a larger sample size and triangulating data from two different types of qualitative methods, Quioco and Daoud increased the transferability of Shim's and Panferov's (2010) findings beyond the limited context of the small sample sizes in both studies. The above discussion of microsystem factors, including teacher beliefs and self-efficacy regarding EL instruction and culture, illustrates how the problem of practice exists. One should explore beyond individual teacher beliefs and investigate other factors in an educational setting by viewing the problem of practice through factors within the mesosystem.

**Teacher self-efficacy.** In combination with teacher identity and beliefs, the role of self-efficacy serves as a microsystem influence on teacher readiness to instruct ELs (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Quantitative and qualitative research studies indicate that preservice experiences

and professional development (PD) opportunities in school settings provide minimal opportunities to develop self-efficacy in meeting EL instructional needs (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). In a two-part mixed-methods study exploring how knowledge and teacher self-efficacy contributed to teacher preparedness to work with ELs, Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) explained how preservice teachers' low confidence instructing ELs resulted in subsequent feelings of unpreparedness to instruct ELs. The first part of the study surveyed and conducted knowledge tests with 62 preservice teachers to determine their beliefs and perceived level of preparedness to work with ELs. Next, the researchers observed four of the surveyed teachers to collect observational data on their classroom experiences with ELs (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Lastly, Durgunoğlu and Hughes analyzed findings from both parts of the study to conclude that limited guidance by teacher mentors resulted in a low sense of preparedness and self-efficacy among teachers-in-training.

Durgunoğlu and Hughes' (2010) findings are similar to Sugimoto et al.'s (2017) conclusions about negative preservice EL teaching experiences with teacher mentors. Rodriguez, Manner, and Darcy (2010) also illustrated how low teacher self-efficacy related to the feeling of unpreparedness to teach ELs by exploring changes in knowledge, attitudes, and predicted student outcomes among teachers enrolled in an online EL PD opportunity. Rodriguez et al. used quantitative data collection methods within a pretest and posttest survey design to collect data from 11 in-service teachers enrolled in a distance education methods course for teaching ELs. Findings indicated evidence that in-service teachers had low self-efficacy and inadequate experiences to successfully provide instruction for ELs (Rodriguez et al., 2010). The researchers attributed the limited confidence to a lack of opportunities to infuse quality instruction for ELs within their classrooms (Rodriguez et al., 2010). However, the lack of a comparison group of

students limits the transferability of findings since the authors did not investigate self-efficacy among teachers with non-EL students. Preconceived notions about EL families may also influence teacher readiness for teaching and learning with ELs.

### **Classroom Environment: The Mesosystem**

The classroom environment comprises the mesosystem influence on educator preparedness to work with ELs. Teacher-student relationships, as well as beliefs, barriers, and trends in instructional strategies, influence and are influenced by the teacher as a microsystem and ELs (Gillanders, 2007; Pappamihel, 2004).

Research has found that student-teacher relationships are critical for an effective learning environment in early-childhood classrooms. Through a qualitative exploration of cultural sensitivity and teacher perceptions of care and compassion for ELs, Pappamihel (2004) explored preservice teacher beliefs about showing care and compassion for ELs in the classroom. Pappamihel's findings indicate that preservice teachers demonstrate superficial knowledge of cultural differences and lack the skills to accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds. Pappamihel administered a three-question survey to 28 undergraduate students in their junior year at a U.S. university majoring in early-childhood education. In a survey addressing differences and similarities between strategies used to show compassion for ELs versus all groups of students, Pappamihel found that teacher beliefs about ELs influence relationships with students and subsequent EL achievement.

Gillanders (2007) applied a mixed-methods approach to producing a complete picture (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) of socio-emotional relationships with students. Gillanders also built on Pappamihel's (2004) qualitative findings of preservice teachers by illuminating the importance of socio-emotional connections with Latino students as a strategy to maintain student

engagement. Gillanders applied mixed-methods data collection within a case study design to explore one teacher's relationship with her prekindergarten class. Gillanders triangulated data from interviews, observations, and student assessments to suggest that the emotional component of teaching ELs is crucial to engaging a class without speaking their native language. Gillanders' findings also indicated a correlation between a culturally-sensitive classroom environment and Latino student academic success.

Culturally responsive teaching techniques in the classroom mesosystem play a significant role in teacher-student relationships as an influence on the problem of practice (Rodriguez et al., 2010). According to Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching refers to how teachers incorporate diverse student backgrounds into learning experiences. In a study explained earlier, Rodriguez et al. (2010) found that teacher preparation programs reflect a limited emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy. Therefore, teachers are unequipped with techniques or experiences to help them build classroom relationships that facilitate EL instruction (Rodriguez et al., 2010). Siwatu (2007) explored the effects of teacher unpreparedness and found that it leads to low self-efficacy in building relationships with ELs. In Siwatu's mixed-methods study, the researcher developed the 40-item Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) Scale and the 26-item Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) Scale to investigate preservice culturally responsive teaching experiences with 192 preservice teachers. The CRTSE Scale included Likert-scale responses assessing teacher beliefs, and the CRTOE Scale included ordinal-scale responses assessing the probability that their actions would lead to certain outcomes.

Siwatu's (2007) findings indicated that teachers have higher self-efficacy in their ability to make ELs feel important and build relationships as compared to their confidence in

communicating with ELs, such as delivering praise to ELs in their native language. Although Rodriguez et al. (2010) and Siwatu used similar preservice teacher populations to reveals aspects of teacher preparedness for ELs, findings differed in terms of what pre-service teachers reported as struggling with most regarding working with ELs. The contrast in findings between Rodriguez et al. and Siwatu's studies showed the need for further examination of other factors within the mesosystem, including teacher beliefs about EL instructional strategies.

**Teacher beliefs about English learner instructional strategies.** Along with classroom relationships and culture, teacher beliefs about EL instructional strategies act as a significant mesosystem influence on preparation to work with ELs (Lee et al., 2007). Building on Walker et al.'s (2004) mixed-method conclusions about the relationship between teacher beliefs and EL instruction, Lee et al. (2007) conducted a case study to explore further how teacher preconceived notions may influence EL instructional techniques. Lee et al. observed and interviewed one early-childhood teacher to examine instruction that reflects a tourist approach. The tourist approach recognizes diversity primarily during holiday celebrations, which does not support consistent, culturally responsive instructional techniques (Lee et al., 2007). Based on personal beliefs about best practices for diverse learners, the case study participant valued fun activities rather than opportunities for making long-lasting cultural connections through learning experiences. Findings highlighted how preconceived notions about the relationship between instruction and diverse cultures of ELs might contribute to an approach that seems helpful from the teacher's standpoint but did not support EL learning in the classroom (Lee et al., 2007).

Teacher beliefs relate to the instructional strategies used with ELs. While investigating the effects of PD and school characteristics on the use of research-based instructional strategies for ELs, Rader-Brown and Howley (2014) conducted a quantitative survey study with 419

elementary teachers to explore the relationship between teacher beliefs and implementation of EL-specific instruction. Limited resources negatively influence teacher beliefs, which may influence the use of research-based instructional strategies for ELs (Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014). Like Walker et al.'s (2004) findings that kindergarten through 12th-grade teacher beliefs relate to instructional practices, Rader-Brown and Howley (2014) concluded that negative elementary teacher beliefs were harmful to instructional quality, which eventually influences EL student performance. Walker et al. and Rader-Brown and Howley explored similar research questions. Walker et al.'s findings are transferable to other contexts because of the triangulation within the mixed-methods approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007), which provides a more detailed picture of the consequences of negative beliefs. However, Lee et al. (2007) noted that a seemingly positive mindset toward ELs was not always beneficial to EL academic success. Thus, further research is necessary for teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and EL learning experiences.

**English learner instructional practices in the early-childhood classroom.** Historically, Valdivieso and Nicolau (1992) noted that the key to effective change in education was “not the what, it is the how” (p. 44). Therefore, one should explore why teachers implement EL instructional strategies rather than investigate observations in the classroom. While EL teachers report not feeling prepared to implement EL instructional strategies in the early-childhood classroom (Chen et al., 2008), research on instructional supports for EL teachers remains limited (Molle, 2013). As part of a larger study on implementing a PD program, Molle (2013) conducted ethnographic qualitative research with 11 teachers. Molle's findings indicate a continuous deficit view of EL student potential because of teachers' lack of student language needs. However, PD

solely focused on instructional strategies continued to overlook the dangers of low expectations for ELs (Molle, 2013).

Although approaches to EL instruction vary by state and school district, showing respect for a student's native language and culture may relate to academic and language success (Garcia, 1991). Through the development of the English Language Learner Classroom Observation Instrument, Gersten, Baker, Haager, and Graves (2005) explored variables in the literacy classroom, including explicit teaching and sheltered English techniques, interactive teaching, student vocabulary development, and decoding. Gersten et al. utilized purposive sampling to collect data from 20 first-grade EL classrooms in four city school systems. Findings indicated that teachers who emphasized interactive vocabulary instruction and increased opportunities to infuse writing into classroom instruction produced higher-performing EL and non-EL students (Gersten et al., 2005).

Teachers trained in sheltered instruction produce higher EL achievement scores than teachers who are not trained in sheltered instruction (Echevarria et al., 2006). Mixed-methods data collection with 440 students in three public school districts across the United States provided descriptive and measurable data indicating a positive relationship between sheltered instructional methods and EL achievement (Echevarria et al., 2006). The Echevarria et al. (2006) study included 346 students in an intervention group with teachers trained in sheltered instruction and 94 students in a comparison group. All student participants were identified as ELs by their school district. ELs in the intervention group demonstrated greater growth in writing achievement than students in the comparison group (Echevarria et al., 2006). For example, in the pre and posttest administration of the Illinois Measurement of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) writing assessment, the intervention group participating in sheltered

instruction gained an average of 2.9 points out of 25 points on the post-assessment. The control group grew an average of 0.7 points on the same assessment (Echevarria et al., 2006).

Investigating trends in classroom strategies as a potential contributor to the problem of practice leads to an exploration of potential barriers within these instructional approaches.

**Barriers to English learner instruction.** Although trends show that sheltered instruction can be effective, there are barriers (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). These barriers may inhibit strategies that support EL language and academic success. According to Calderón et al. (2011), EL instructional quality is a significant variable in EL achievement. EL instructional strategies include teaching techniques to make content comprehensible to ELs (Echevarria et al., 2006). The research on instructional strategies indicates collaboration as a possible factor of EL underachievement (Arkoudis, 2006; C. Davison, 2006; Knight & Wiseman, 2006; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010).

**Teacher collaboration.** Limited opportunities for teacher collaboration in the school mesosystem may be one barrier contributing to the limited number of qualified EL educators available to meet increasing EL academic demands (Verplaetse, Ferraro, & Anderberg, 2012). According to Lambson (2010), collaboration between novice teachers and experienced teachers helps novice teachers embrace the mindset needed to teach all student populations. In a research study exploring the role of novice and veteran teachers in collaborative learning communities, Lambson applied a qualitative case study design of observations and interviews to collect data on the teaching and professional learning experiences of three novice teachers. Lambson's findings indicate that expert teachers who are mindful of novice teacher needs may increase their effectiveness as a facilitator of collaborative PD experiences (Lambson, 2010).



However, inadequate opportunities exist for EL teachers to collaborate with EL experts (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). According to Dove and Honigsfeld (2010), EL teacher leaders are often overwhelmed by administrative tasks, which limit their time to interact with and support teachers working with the EL population. The lack of time, funding, and resources also work together to negatively influence collaboration between expert and novice EL educators. Thus, teachers continue to engage in isolated teaching practices and rarely get the opportunity to work with experts and improve instructional quality for ELs (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010).

According to Arkoudis (2006), an EL teacher's understanding of how to address professional collaboration in planning would positively influence a co-teaching relationship and possibly relate to increased EL achievement. Arkoudis used a case study design to analyze planning conferences between a secondary school EL teacher and a mainstream science teacher. Participant-observation methods were used to analyze data from the interactions within the planning conferences to find out what skills an EL teacher could apply to improve relations and overall effectiveness of co-teaching situations. Findings provided evidence that an EL teacher's understanding of how to navigate professional collaboration and gain authority in planning may positively contribute to a co-teaching relationship as an instructional strategy to benefit ELs (Arkoudis, 2006). Arkoudis also found that a lack of consistency in co-planning may relate to decreased instructional quality for ELs. For example, it becomes difficult to deliver consistent instruction for ELs when co-teachers have different goals. Barriers to planning and collaboration play a key role in the resulting instruction for ELs (Arkoudis, 2006; Lambson, 2010).

Although logistical barriers may play a more significant role in teacher partnerships, it is important to recognize interactions and relationships as influences on collaboration effectiveness (McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). C. Davison (2006) and McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor

(2010) examined problems developing from situational complexities of co-teaching for EL instruction. C. Davison's model of collaboration outlines a progressive understanding of necessary supports for co-teaching that benefit EL instruction. C. Davison's model includes five stages of collaboration, ranging from *passive resistance*, which reflects a teacher's desire to remain the sole instructor in the classroom as much as possible, to *creative co-construction*, which describes a fully effective co-teaching classroom model. The stages of C. Davison's model are further delineated based on the amount of effort evident within each stage. Not surprisingly, creative co-construction requires the greatest amount of effort from both teachers.

Using C. Davison's (2006) model to evaluate levels of collaboration among EL and mainstream teachers, McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) applied qualitative methods within an ethnographic design to explore how complex situations, such as teacher schedules and time management, influence the benefits of teacher collaboration on EL achievement. McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor's qualitative findings provided evidence that social factors, such as level of experience among teachers, have an impact on co-teaching. McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor's conclusions also provide ethnographic evidence from interviews and observations indicating further areas for improvement in EL teacher collaboration. The study's evidence included descriptions of a school environment and potential interactions that might influence teacher collaboration effectiveness.

***Making connections between teacher preparation and classroom experience.*** Other mesosystem barriers faced by teachers working with ELs include the struggle to develop a connection between teacher preparation course material and future teaching experiences with diverse learners (Ramanayake & Williams, 2017). In a study consisting of interviews, surveys, and observations with 30 preservice teachers, Ramanayake and Williams (2017) found that an

absence of clear connections between course content and EL instructional techniques negatively affected preparedness to teach students from diverse backgrounds. Ramanayake and Williams, Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010), and Sugimoto et al. (2017) researched preservice teacher preparedness for working with ELs. Ramanayake and Williams's findings build on Durgunoğlu and Hughes's mixed-methods findings that limited guidance by teacher mentors results in preservice teachers who are not prepared to instruct diverse learners. Similarly, Durgunoğlu and Hughes's conclusions about the relationship between EL teacher preparation programs and EL academic progress support Sugimoto et al. more recent findings that negative preservice interactions with teacher mentors contribute to feelings of unpreparedness among preservice EL teachers.

Research shows a relationship between higher-education teaching programs and level of teacher preparedness (McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). Ramanayake and Williams (2017) indicated that failure to recognize a relationship between preservice training and future teaching experiences inhibited the extent to which beginning educators were fully prepared to work with diverse learners. In addition to inadequate preservice experiences in EL pedagogy, many teachers preparing for classrooms with ELs are lacking instructional resources to effectively teach the growing EL population (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Elfers and Stritikus (2014) conducted a case study with four school districts, including 200 teacher interviews, 18 interviews with district leaders, and 37 interviews with school leaders. The researchers found that leadership plays a key role in the level of teacher preparedness for ELs. The findings also indicated that there was differentiated support for teachers in various grade levels to use data for informed instructional decisions regarding teaching ELs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). The consistent qualitative methods between Ramanayake and Williams and Elfers and Stritikus led to similar conclusions

highlighting a lack of clarity among teachers regarding why and how to approach EL instruction. Even though the inherent nature of Elfers and Stritikus' case study warranted a small sample of districts, the number of participants in Elfers and Stritikus' case study was much greater than Ramanayake and Williams's study. Because Elfers and Stritikus reached similar conclusions as Ramanayake and Williams about what teachers lack to plan and deliver effective EL instruction, Ramanayake and Williams's findings might transfer to other contexts despite the small sample size.

Mesosystem factors, including trends and barriers to EL instruction, are essential to consider in developing a comprehensive understanding of how the learning environment indirectly contributes to practice (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Ramanayake & Williams, 2017). In addition, teacher beliefs continually contribute to how educators can approach and implement EL instruction. Exploring various types of support for teachers in different settings leads to an exploration of exosystem factors that indirectly contribute to early-childhood educator preparedness for increasing numbers of ELs.

### **School Community: The Exosystem**

The school community, consisting of classrooms and the surrounding neighborhood and families, acts as an exosystem influence on the problem of practice. Teacher and family values of parent-school relationships may influence teacher preparedness for teaching and learning with ELs. Resources that impact these partnerships indirectly contribute to an educator's level of preparedness to teach ELs.

**Trends in English learner family-school partnerships.** Trusting relationships between teachers and families influence parental desire to be involved in their children's education, as well as the degree to which they contribute to their children's academic success (Mapp, 2002). In

a qualitative case study investigating what contributes to productive school-family partnerships, Mapp (2002) interviewed 18 low-income parents from a diverse school with an established family-involvement program. Mapp also interviewed seven teachers and observed various school-family events. By triangulating data from interviews and observations, Mapp found various factors that influence how and why parents get involved with their children's school. Most pertinent to this literature review include Mapp's findings that a) parents want their children to succeed in school, b) parents know that their involvement positively influences student achievement, and c) parents are sometimes involved in ways that school staff does not recognize. Although Mapp did not include a sample of only ELs, the diverse nature of the sample and that all interviewed parents were from low-income families directly reflected two characteristics of the EL population.

In a study utilizing a 31 question, Likert-scale survey adapted from Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs's (2000) Family Involvement Questionnaire, Vera et al. (2017) explored a similar question to Mapp (2002) with different, quantitative methods. Vera et al. surveyed 329 EL parents to measure agreement on questions investigating factors influencing why parents participate in school-based engagement opportunities. Vera et al.'s findings indicated that teachers who demonstrate devotion to children's success experience increased parent involvement. However, Vera et al. also found that EL parents report that too many family responsibilities limit school-based participation, resulting in decreased parent engagement. Although Mapp only conducted interviews and observations with a small sample, Vera et al. reinforced Mapp's findings with measurable results and a much larger population.

Strong Latino parent value of school involvement is important to EL school performance because parent participation may relate to immediate and future academic success (Ceballo,

2004; Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Ceballo's (2004) qualitative interview study included interviews with 10 undergraduate Latino students. Ceballo used interviews to explore how home or family factors affected participants' previous academic progress and achievement. The results of Ceballo's study offered evidence of four themes that predicted Latino student academic success. These themes included a) parental pledge to the importance of education, b) parental support of children's independence, c) parental involvement in educational goals, and d) teacher role models in students' education experiences (Ceballo, 2004). Ceballo's qualitative findings showed experiences to support Vera et al.'s (2017) measurable data on why and how EL parents would engage with the school setting.

Latino parents often feel distanced from the school environment, which negatively influences their ability to get involved with their child's school (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Certain challenges around EL family beliefs continue to affect strong family-school relationships (Marschall, 2006). In Marschall's (2006) quantitative study, the researcher used a longitudinal design to explore how schools support Latino parent involvement. The researcher created a dataset from multiple sources, including district demographic data and teacher surveys. Then, the researcher created three variables to focus on for the analysis, including teacher cultural and community awareness and school efforts toward parent involvement. Marschall used an ordinary least squares regression analysis and the results showed that school policies and practices surrounding supportive parent involvement practices influence EL student outcomes.

As Marschall (2006) found practices that support parent involvement, Chen et al. (2008) concluded that teachers might feel a lack of preparedness regarding how and why to focus on building relationships with EL families. In a research project conducted with 20 classroom teachers and three administrators, Chen et al. investigated specific teacher concerns with

culturally responsive family engagement practices. Through the use of observations, assessments, and questionnaires, the researchers found that lack of school focus on family relationships, language barriers between school and families, and limited time to plan and implement family engagement practices were detrimental to families and teachers who valued involvement but lacked the support (Chen et al., 2008). As noted in the following section, Worthington et al. (2011) provided descriptive evidence of teacher experiences to confirm and extend Chen et al.'s findings on the impact of language barriers on EL family involvement and subsequent academic success. Both Worthington et al. and Chen et al. provided findings supporting Ceballo's (2004) four themes focused on Latino parent involvement and academic success.

**English learner family-school partnership resources.** Increased parent involvement relates to higher student achievement and more positive attitudes toward learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Available resources to support EL family-school partnerships are used sparingly and not necessarily appropriate to meet the specific teacher challenges with EL families (Worthington et al., 2011). In a qualitative study using three focus groups with nine female Head Start teachers, Worthington et al. (2011) applied phenomenological methods to explore the increase in the need to work with the increasing population of ELs and EL families effectively. Worthington et al. found that uncomfortable feelings and guilt among teachers accompanied efforts in communicating with EL families. Building on Siwatu's (2007) findings on communication challenges with ELs, Worthington et al. triangulated data to conclude that difficulty in accessing resources, such as translators, might contribute to teacher frustration and poor teacher-family relations. Elfers and Stritikus (2014) also conducted a case study with 255 participants and provided more recent evidence that resources impact teacher ability to prepare

for instructing ELs. Trickett et al. (2012) further investigated resources for teaching ELs concerning accessibility versus perceived availability.

Although some teachers create opportunities to improve parent-school partnerships through additional parent and teacher workshops, these programs are often volunteer-based and not encouraged due to the lack of funding support (Trickett et al., 2012). Trickett et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative descriptive study exploring challenges associated with teaching ELs. Through the use of researcher-created EL Teacher Stress Measure (ETSM), participants responded to 56 survey questions measuring EL teacher work environments (Trickett et al., 2012). The survey findings from 98 teacher participants indicated that two-thirds of the participants went beyond their required duties to offer additional opportunities, such as creating new programs or teaching students to support family needs despite language barriers, which strengthened EL student and family experiences (Trickett et al., 2012). Building on Worthington et al.'s (2011) qualitative case study conclusions about the difficulty in gaining resources to support EL instruction, Trickett et al.'s findings indicated that workshops providing support to address obstacles to EL family involvement, such as language barriers and cultural understanding, were limited and underfunded.

Exploring exosystem factors, including trends in family-school partnerships and supporting resources, illuminates potential factors at the district level that may impact the problem of practice. As the researcher considered the surrounding community influence on practice, one should explore macrosystem factors that might influence early-childhood educator preparedness for increasing numbers of ELs.



## **The School District: The Macrosystem**

The school district where the study context is located acts as the overarching exosystem influence on educator preparedness to work with ELs. District-level decisions and policies directly and indirectly contribute to teacher readiness to support ELs. Decisions and policies include access and availability of funds, resources, and programs to support ELs.

**Allocation and accessibility of English learner resources.** Research has found that teachers with less training may contribute to fewer ELs receiving essential academic and language instruction, thus sustaining or increasing EL underachievement (Smith & Furuseth, 2006). The NCES (2017) found that only 27% of teachers nationwide participated in annual PD geared toward instructing ELs. Because focused instruction on teacher preparation for diverse learners is lacking within preservice training programs (NCES, 2017), insufficient support and resources at the district level compound the problem of teachers being unprepared to teach ELs. As noted in research (Worthington et al., 2011), human or material resources, such as PD opportunities or EL curriculum, are also limited in availability or underused by early-childhood educators working with ELs.

The influence of limited resources in the home environment and misunderstanding of academic goals contributes to decreased levels of parent involvement (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Resources to support EL academic and language success include affordances that teachers, students, and families can access to support ELs in school (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). In a case study of surveys with 35 teachers, interviews with 10 teachers, and 26 classroom observations, some researchers explored how teachers' attitudes and instructional practices influence ELs' access to resources. Sharkey and Layzer's (2000) findings indicated that teacher-reported parents' perceived lack of availability and accessibility limit the extent to which school and

community resources are utilized. Consequently, EL parents lacking in essential resources are less likely to utilize school-community supports than native-English-speaking families (Vera et al., 2012).

EL families also vary in socio-economic status and, thus, availability of resources to support language and academic success (Ansari et al., 2017). A study conducted by Ansari et al. (2017) provided evidence that a relationship exists between socio-economic status and academic achievement for ELs. Utilizing a longitudinal design, researchers Ansari et al. applied regression and propensity score analyses to analyze academic outcomes of 11,902 EL prekindergarten to third-grade ELs. According to the study, ELs who attended public school prekindergarten had higher achievement in third grade in comparison to ELs who attended center-based care during prekindergarten (Ansari et al., 2017). Although Ansari et al.'s findings lack transferability because of the unknown effect of elementary education experiences on third-grade performance, the conclusions showed how similar socio-economic status among ELs made it difficult to determine which part of the underachievement was due to native language and which was due to poverty or lack of essential resources. Historically, research indicated that language barriers and lack of resources represented one of the greatest challenges for the EL population (Liton, 2016; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1992).

Parenting choices in EL families may also illustrate an example of how home resources are a factor of EL early-childhood achievement (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005). According to Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005), ELs may have fewer literacy resources in the home as compared to non-EL peers. In a study exploring how family characteristics relate to Latino student pre-literacy skills, findings showed that the average EL began school with English and Spanish literacy skills below expectations (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2013). In a mixed-

methods study exploring the relationship between pre-literacy skills and EL family home and language environment of 392 early-childhood ELs, findings indicated that home literacy resources were positively correlated with children's English oral language skills (Farver et al., 2013). Both Ceballo (2004) and Farver et al. (2013) concluded that the home environment influenced EL academic experiences. Farver et al. confirmed Ceballo's conclusions that a relationship existed between family resources and EL early-childhood student achievement. However, Farver et al.'s mixed-methods study only included students from low-socioeconomic EL families with no formal learning opportunities before prekindergarten. Therefore, Farver et al.'s results may not be transferable to the entire EL population.

**Family school partnership support and programs.** Outside of school factors, such as family and culture, must be considered when planning to teach ELs (Kim, Curby, & Winsler, 2014). According to Kim et al.'s (2014) quantitative study with a longitudinal design, ineligibility for free lunch, higher maternal education, and strong critical thinking skills are related to quicker mastery of English. By tracking English language skills of 18,532 dual-language learners from a larger study, the Miami School Readiness Project, Kim et al. applied survival analysis across two years to provide evidence that teacher awareness and understanding of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds contribute to language growth and success. Family socioeconomic status may be one background characteristic that relates to EL instructional quality (Halgunseth, 2009).

According to data from the Pew Hispanic Center, ELs enroll in public schools with many students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (Fry, 2008). According to Fry's (2008) report on EL academic achievement, settlement patterns may result in ELs attending schools with low achievement scores and high levels of students in poverty. Therefore, this group of students may

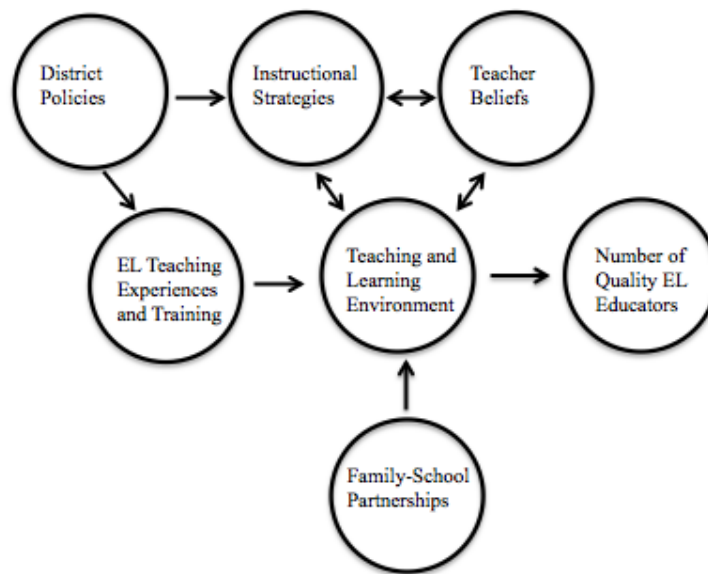
be trapped in a system that produces underachieving students and families with limited knowledge about improving their children's situation. According to Halgunseth's (2009) review of the literature on family engagement, family socio-economic status and home resources influence achievement. Also, attending a school in a neighborhood that most students come from low-income families may contribute to decreased resources to support ELs or lower EL instructional quality. A growing EL population within a concentrated area increases the need for translators and EL educators (Smith & Furuseh, 2006).

If local taxes, from which most funds go to public schools, are unavailable to accommodate this resource, the need for translation goes unmet, and increasing numbers of ELs will continue to struggle and underachieve (Smith & Furuseh, 2006). Trickett et al.'s (2012) qualitative descriptive study confirmed a lack of resources negatively influencing quality instruction and services for ELs. Worthington et al.'s (2011) mixed-method findings indicated that difficulty existed in accessing resources, such as translators, within the school environment.

## **Summary**

Research indicated that the number of ELs had increased significantly during the past decade and would continue to rise at a rate that would require a greater focus on how to meet students' academic and language needs (López et al., 2015; NEA, 2008). However, most existing literature showed different issues in response to the increase in ELs. Therefore, it was unclear what EL needs were being met and how or why the approach might need to change about the increasing number of ELs. Therefore, one should examine beliefs and instructional decisions regarding ELs among early-childhood EL educators (Echevarria et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Shea, Sandholtz, & Shanahan, 2018).

As Figure 2 illustrates, Bandura’s (1986) theory of triadic reciprocal determinism (TRD) facilitates the understanding of a relationship between teacher beliefs (Sugimoto et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2004), instructional strategies (Lee et al., 2007; Siwatu, 2007), and the learning environment (Gillanders, 2007) in which the teacher microsystem interacts. This interaction influences EL success in the early-childhood classroom and provides the foundation for the conceptual framework. Factors outside of school, including prior EL teaching experiences, family partnerships, district policies, and teacher beliefs, indirectly contribute to practice by shaping the instructional strategies and classroom environment. The resulting teaching and learning environment influences the number of quality EL educators in early-childhood classrooms.



*Figure 2.* Conceptual framework for early-childhood education teacher preparedness for English learner instruction.

The literature synthesis showed that low expectations and negative beliefs toward ELs might relate to ineffective EL interactions and instruction (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Yoon, 2008). The evidence that ECE was essential to future academic success, combined with statistics predicting an unprecedented increase in ELs, required further investigation of the early-

childhood EL learning experience through the perspective of prekindergarten and kindergarten educators (Kieffer, 2008). Because few studies showed an early-childhood educator's experience with increasing numbers of ELs, one should examine more about how teachers addressed ELs' needs and what contributed to their current instructional approach for ELs. Therefore, the practitioner-researcher investigated the factors influenced by district policy that impacted the teaching and learning environment in the conceptual framework (see Figure 2). The practitioner-researcher further explored how the teacher microsystem and learning environment mesosystem influenced early-childhood educator preparedness for ELs in the professional context.

## **Chapter 2: Empirical Examination of the Factors and Underlying Causes**

Chapter 1 introduced a review of the literature supporting ECE teacher preparedness for an increasing EL population. Students who experience academic difficulties during the early-childhood years are more likely to remain behind their peers and have lower graduation rates (Calderón et al., 2011; Valdivieso & Nicolau, 1992). Existing literature supports the influence of teacher beliefs (Reeves, 2009; Yoon, 2007) and instructional strategies (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014) on educator preparedness for teaching ELs. While research supports a correlation between prior experiences and pre-existing notions about EL learning potential (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010), it is not apparent how teacher beliefs and self-efficacy relate to the use of instructional strategies that support early-childhood ELs.

It is also unclear how home, school, and community resource availability contribute to teacher preparedness in meeting early-childhood EL needs. Limited resources and culturally unresponsive school-family partnerships further hinder an EL's ability to succeed in early learning (Ceballo, 2004; Fry, 2008). Schools, communities, and families with limited or no resources to support academic and language success may negatively influence early-childhood EL achievement (Trickett et al., 2012; Worthington et al., 2011).

### **Context of the Study**

Given the established importance of quality early-childhood instruction in predicting future academic success, this practitioner-researcher focused on early-childhood educators working with ELs at an urban elementary-middle school in the northeastern city of the United States. Despite efforts to create and maintain quality teaching for ELs, the population trend continued to overwhelm the number and quality of teachers prepared to work with students acquiring English as a second language.

## **Target Population: Educators and School Communities**

ECE teacher preparedness for ELs influences several stakeholders within and around the school setting. Students, teachers, district personnel, families, and community members all influence and are influenced by ECE EL learning experiences and performance. Long-term effects of ECE, such as economic success and family relationships, are influenced by ECE quality (Schweinhart et al., 2005). Teacher beliefs, knowledge of instructional strategies, self-efficacy, and resources individually and collectively influence teacher quality for ELs in ECE classrooms. Accordingly, the practitioner-researcher explored ECE teacher perceptions on how these factors influence their overall preparation for ELs in ECE teaching and learning. The following section presents the needs assessment purpose and research questions.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this needs assessment was to understand to what extent factors identified in the literature review would influence teacher preparation for ELs in ECE classrooms in a large, urban school district. ELs in ECE classrooms underperform as compared to non-EL peers. Given the difference in EL and non-EL performance levels, the practitioner-researcher explored factors influencing ECE teacher preparation for ELs. The factors included teacher beliefs, teacher self-efficacy, instructional strategies and barriers, and resources. The practitioner-researcher measured and described teacher perceptions of how the above factors influenced their work with ELs.

Most importantly, the needs assessment data informed understanding of how teacher beliefs, instructional strategies, and EL learning environment influenced one another as a part of Bandura's (1986) TRD framework. The practitioner-researcher gathered and analyzed data to illuminate novice ECE teacher deficit in EL knowledge and training compared to their



experienced teacher peers. Moreover, data analysis illuminated avenues for strategies that could support novice teachers with existing resources and expertise.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the needs assessment to develop a deeper understanding of how the identified factors influenced ECE teacher preparation for ELs.

- What are teacher beliefs about ELs and EL instruction?
- What is the perceived level of ECE teacher self-efficacy in instructing ELs?
- What EL instructional strategies are utilized by ECE teachers?
- What resources are available and accessible to support ELs?

### **Research Design**

The practitioner-researcher utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to inform understanding of factors related to teacher preparedness for ELs in ECE classrooms. An explanatory sequential design allows the researcher to gather and analyze qualitative data following the initial quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The nature of the problem of practice indicated that a pragmatist paradigm is aligned with the investigation. According to Cooksey and McDonald (2011), a pragmatist approach emphasizes the usefulness of the results. Therefore, the practitioner-researcher chose a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design to explore ECE teacher preparation for ELs as a practical step toward addressing ECE EL academic performance.

Compared to a convergent parallel design, an explanatory sequential design provides the advantage of further exploring unexpected quantitative results through a more in-depth qualitative investigation (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). Given the existing research highlighting the influence of teacher beliefs on EL instructional approach (Reeves, 2009; Yoon,

2007), the practitioner-researcher revealed a deeper understanding of the relationship between factors that influenced ECE teacher quality for increasing numbers of ELs. The research questions and paradigm impacted the needs assessment methods.

Mixed-methods research is effective because qualitative and quantitative data are essential and valuable to research design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As the research questions address teacher perceptions and beliefs, qualitative interviews provide a deeper understanding of the problem while quantitative methods effectively limit bias in teacher responses (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Similar to how Walker et al. (2004) applied mixed-methods research to analyze data on self-reported teacher attitudes toward ELs, the current needs assessment triangulated results to utilize the strengths of various data methods and decrease the impact of individual weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

A researcher can use the explanatory sequential design to adapt interview questions based on participant survey responses, thus providing descriptive evidence to support quantitative data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Although semi-structured interviews show participant knowledge of the EL population, quantitative data about instructional strategies eliminate researcher bias while investigating the impact of possible factors (Chenail, 2011). The advantages of qualitative data collection, such as more detailed participant responses within open-ended questions, provide another benefit of implementing interviews to explore the current practice (Sandelowski, 2000). Researchers can use mixed methods to gather measurable data to complement or enhance descriptive data collected from qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Survey use in educational research is common (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004). Because the survey only includes Likert-scale items, responses remain constant and simple to compare (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The practitioner-researcher used interviews to gain descriptive data about teacher beliefs and self-efficacy to complement the survey results about instructional strategy use. The participants can use the semi-structured interview format to provide detailed responses about beliefs and teaching experiences with ELs while providing flexibility in follow-up questions (Turner, 2010).

Although interactions among teacher participants could influence focus group data, interviews provided an opportunity to compare individual responses and identify themes from qualitative data collection measures (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004). The interactions between participants in a focus group showed a wider view about why and how teachers formed beliefs or developed certain levels of self-efficacy (Kitzinger, 1994). With the practitioner-researcher as the instrument in qualitative data collection, the potential for bias existed (Chenail, 2011; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). However, the practitioner-researcher used focus group data collection measures to triangulate qualitative findings and subsequently increase the validity and reliability of the study (Golofshani, 2003).

### **The Participants**

Study participants included early-childhood educators working in urban school settings with ELs. Among the early-childhood teachers participating in the survey ( $N = 15$ ), almost 75% of the participants taught prekindergarten or kindergarten (see Figure 3). More than half of the participants had seven or more years of teaching experience (see Figure 4). For this analysis, teachers with seven or more years of teaching were referred to as veterans, and teachers with six or less years of experience were referred to as novice teachers.

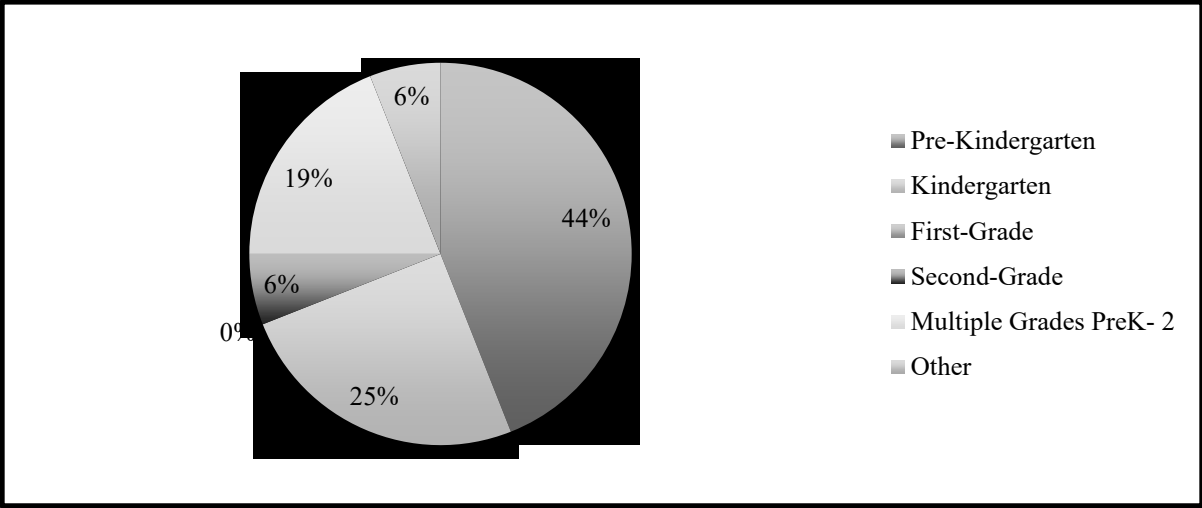


Figure 3. Grade levels taught by survey participants.

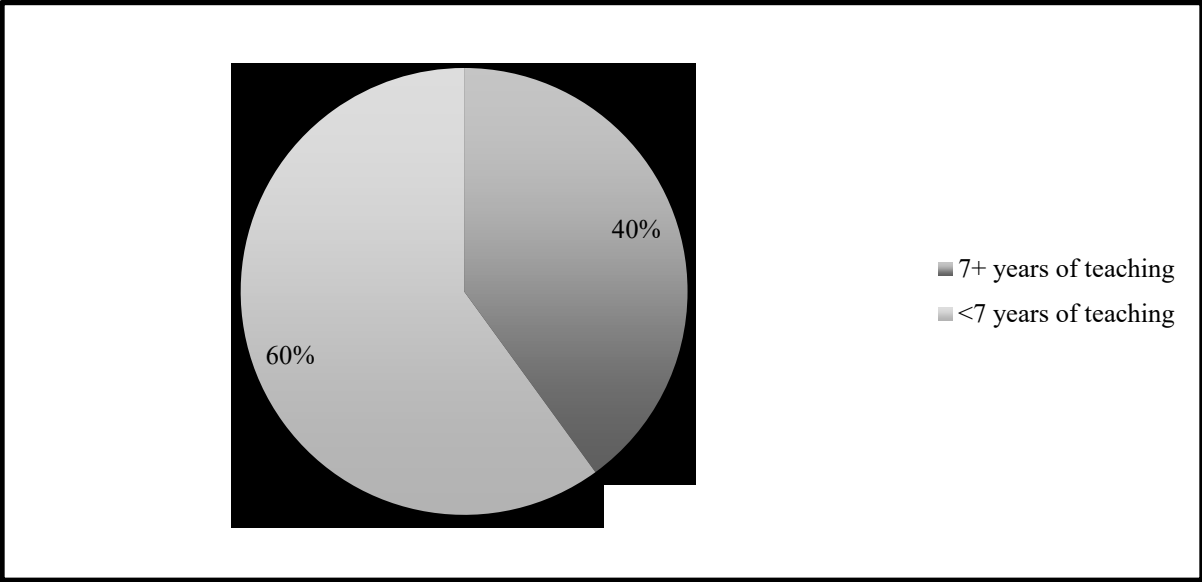


Figure 4. Years of teaching experience for survey participants.

**Population frame.** The accessible population (Pettus-Davis, Grady, Cuddeback, & Scheyett, 2011) for the needs assessment included ECE teachers who taught ELs at various schools in the practitioner-researcher’s school district. The theoretical population (Pettus-Davis et al., 2011) included all ECE teachers working with ELs in the school district. The ECE teachers in the needs assessment represented the theoretical population and consisted of individuals with

relevant knowledge and experience related to the study. Participant professional context had to include involvement with ECE ELs. For this study, ECE ELs referred to students in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade, who spoke a first language other than English. If a participant's professional context was absent from involvement with early-childhood ELs, he or she did not qualify to participate in the study.

**Recruitment and consent.** The practitioner-researcher recruited potential participants by utilizing convenience sampling and contacting early-childhood teachers. The practitioner-researcher used an initial email to inform the participants about the survey logistics and purpose. The participants who responded to the initial email received a follow-up email with the survey link. The final questions on the survey allowed participants to indicate interest in participating in a semi-structured interview and focus group (see Appendix A). The informed consents were gathered through the survey link or in-person delivery of the form with an offer to address any questions or concerns.

### **Measures and Instrumentation**

The practitioner-researcher measured four constructs about early-childhood educator preparedness to work with ELs. Each construct was related to one of the four research questions (see Table 2). The following constructs were measured by the online survey, interviews, and focus groups:

- Teacher expectations and beliefs
- Teacher self-efficacy
- EL instructional strategies
- Resources

**Online survey.** The online survey included 23 items measuring teacher expectations and beliefs, as well as teacher self-efficacy. The survey questions were adapted from Reeves' (2006) and Durgunoğlu and Hughes' (2010) survey instruments. The practitioner-researcher added two demographic questions at the beginning of the survey and a request for participation in follow-up interviews or focus groups after the survey. The lack of a neutral option in Reeves' original survey, allowing respondents to neither agree nor disagree with a statement, limited content validity, and may have caused feelings of coercion. The practitioner-researcher added a neutral option to measure all components of teacher beliefs to mitigate this limitation (see Appendix A).

As a strategy to increase the validity of Durgunoğlu and Hughes's (2010) original survey for secondary teachers, the practitioner-researcher modified existing question wording to refer to all early-childhood subject areas (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Based on cognitive interview results, the practitioner-researcher also adjusted question wording to increase understanding and eliminated questions that caused discomfort to expand the generalizability of results (Dillman, Tortora, & Bowker, 1999). Although the practitioner-researcher used the survey in the manner intended, with a population reported in other research, the changes were minor. These changes did not influence the meaning or purpose of the questions. Therefore, the changes increased construct validity and face validity (i.e., how well the survey provided a valid measure of the constructs).

**Interviews.** Interviews included four questions adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012) and Reeves (2006). As opposed to creating original questions, the practitioner-researcher adapted questions created by previous researchers to increase study validity. Based on the survey results, the practitioner-researcher designed subquestions as a strategy to provide a more specific understanding of the benefits and challenges of EL instruction (see Appendix B). For example,

an original question from Fitts and Gross asked, “What have you learned about the language and culture of the students enrolled in the program?” (p. 20). The practitioner-researcher adapted this question to the early-childhood context by asking, “What have you learned while working with students who are acquiring English as a second language?” The practitioner-researcher asked a follow-up subquestion, “What have you learned *about* working with students who are acquiring English as a second language?” The practitioner-researcher also adapted Fitts and Gross’ original questions based on survey results. For example, Fitts and Gross’ original question asked, “How have your interactions with the tutees impacted your perceptions about English as a Second Language learners?” (p. 20). The practitioner-researcher adapted the question to ask the following: “Based on the beliefs about ELs indicated on your survey, what interactions with ELs support these views?” The practitioner-researcher added the following subquestion: “How might your beliefs about ELs influence future instructional decisions?”

**Focus groups.** The focus groups included four questions adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012). In line with the explanatory sequential design, the practitioner-researcher adapted questions based on survey results to provide additional, descriptive information on teacher beliefs and instructional strategies. For example, Fitts and Gross’ original question asked, “List the instructional strategies you have used in assisting students with homework or other activities. Then explain how you know which strategy to use at what time” (p. 20). The practitioner-researcher adapted this question to eliminate homework and divide it into two separate questions. This adaptation resulted in the practitioner-researcher asking, “What instructional strategies have you used in assisting ELs with learning?” and “How do you know which strategy to use at what time?” Table 2 displays the constructs, definitions, indicators, and data analysis for each instrument in the needs assessment.

Table 2

*Measures for Exploration of Early-Childhood Educator Preparedness and English Learner Population Increase*

RQ and construct	Definition	Indicator	Data analysis
Teacher Expectations and Beliefs RQ1: What are teacher beliefs about ELs and EL instruction?	What teachers expect to see in terms of an EL’s ability to perform at the level of what they would expect based on their intellectual abilities (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968)	Survey: Likert-scale survey Items 4 to 16 (Reeves, 2006); sample question: “The inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classrooms benefits all students.” Individual Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Items 2 to 4 (Fitts & Gross, 2012; Reeves, 2006) Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Item 3 (Fitts & Gross, 2012)	Survey: -Likert analysis and descriptive statistics  Interviews and Focus Groups: -Descriptive coding -Six steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
Teacher Self-Efficacy RQ2: What is the perceived level of ECE teacher self-efficacy in instructing ELs?	Teacher confidence in providing ELs with on-grade-level academic instruction (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Walker et al., 2004)	Survey: Likert-scale survey Items 17 to 22 (Reeves, 2006); sample question “I am confident in my ability to handle most discipline problems with EL students.” Individual Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Item 4 (Fitts & Gross, 2012; Reeves, 2006) Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Item 2 (Fitts & Gross, 2012)	
ESOL Instructional Strategies RQ3: What EL instructional strategies are utilized by ECE teachers?	Teaching techniques to make instruction and content at a level that ELs can equally access (Echevarria et al., 2006)	Individual Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Items 1 to 4 (Fitts & Gross, 2012; Reeves, 2006) Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Items 1 to 3 (Fitts & Gross, 2012)	
Resources RQ4: What resources are available and accessible to support ELs?	Affordances (people, practices, and materials) that facilitate EL academic and language success (Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995)	Individual Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire Item 2 (Reeves, 2006; Fitts & Gross, 2012) Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire items 3-4 (Fitts & Gross, 2012)	

**Data Collection**

The practitioner-researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data following the explanatory sequential design. Online survey data were collected to measure teacher beliefs and



teacher self-efficacy in instructing ELs in ECE classrooms. Interview and focus group data were collected to measure teacher beliefs, teacher self-efficacy, instructional strategies, resources, and instructional barriers.

**Online survey.** Before survey deployment, the practitioner-researcher conducted a cognitive interview with a prekindergarten teacher in the professional context. The final survey was deployed online, thus eliminating the time and resources required to mail and collect a paper-based version (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The survey was open for two weeks, allowing teachers a longer survey window and increased flexibility in completing the questionnaire (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The practitioner-researcher sent a confirmation email to participants who opted into the follow-up interview and focus group.

**Interviews.** Survey respondents indicated an interest in the optional interview on the demographic questions asked at the end of the online survey. Before interviews, the practitioner-researcher participated in an interviewing investigator technique with a peer researcher to address the potential for bias (Chenail, 2011). Interviewing the investigator was useful in adjusting the question's wording, such as adding or deleting words, to maximize comfort level in a population that might be inclined to provide a socially acceptable response.

In-person, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private room after the school day to facilitate participant honesty in responses (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The practitioner-researcher asked open-ended questions one at a time and worded questions clearly to maximize participant understanding (Turner, 2010). The interview script (see Appendix B) was followed and supported confirmability for future researchers around this topic (Guba, 1981). The practitioner-researcher kept a reflection journal to note specific observations immediately following each interview and account for researcher bias (Guba, 1981). Qualitative interview

results were used to support and expand survey findings, like how Buck, Cook, Quigley, Eastwood, and Lucas (2009) used qualitative data as a resource for a deeper understanding of measurable teacher attitudes toward science.

**Focus groups.** Survey respondents indicated an interest in the optional focus group on the demographic questions asked at the end of the online survey. The focus group was conducted in-person and consisted of a single 40-minute session. A focus group script was provided for the practitioner-researcher to conduct each session consistently (see Appendix C). The focus group questions were adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012), and questions were amended to apply to the current professional context (see Appendix C). The discussion among focus group participants determined the amount of time spent with each question. The participants' interactions guided follow-up questions, as the format followed a semi-structured protocol. Like the interview protocol, the practitioner-researcher kept a reflection journal to note specific observations and consider researcher bias (Guba, 1981). The focus groups strengthened the triangulation of qualitative data and interviews and positively influenced the reliability and validity of the needs assessment (see Golofshani, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

### **Data Analysis**

The practitioner-researcher analyzed data according to Creswell and Plano-Clark's (2011) explanatory sequential design. Qualitative data analysis depended on quantitative data collection and analysis. Therefore, the analysis was conducted in two phases to use qualitative analysis to provide a complete understanding of practice (see Figure 5).

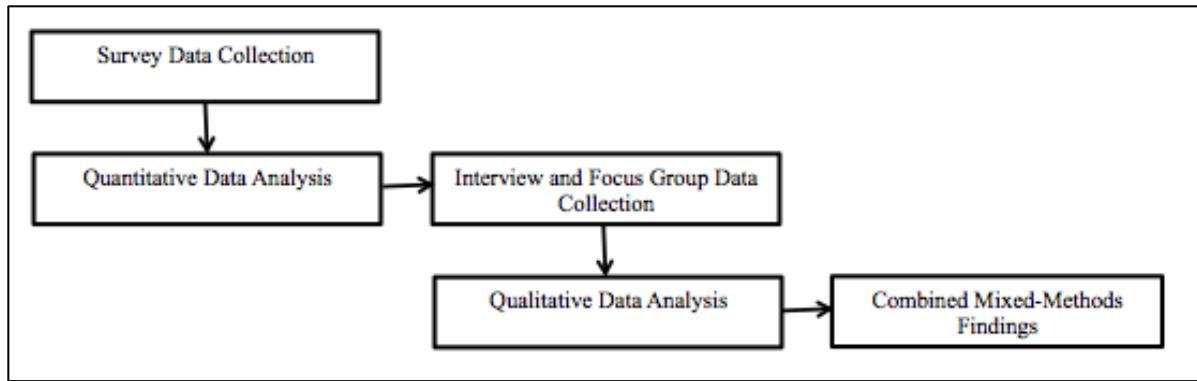


Figure 5. Explanatory sequential design application to needs assessment study. Adapted from Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011).

**Online survey data analysis.** The survey data were downloaded to Google Docs and imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to conduct statistical analysis. Due to the small sample size ( $N = 15$ ), the practitioner-researcher calculated descriptive statistics, including the frequencies and means. The use of SPSS software supported the de-identification of participants. Data were stratified based on teacher experience. Frequencies were compared between veteran and novice teachers by stratifying data based on participant responses to demographic questions and calculating descriptive statistics for both groups. Questions were divided into subsets of self-efficacy and beliefs to identify the role of these two factors in teacher preparation for ELs in ECE classrooms.

**Interview and focus group data analysis.** The interviews and focus groups were analyzed together. The interviews and focus groups were analyzed using descriptive coding (see Saldaña, 2015). Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to provide in-depth understanding about the identified constructs. This includes six phases (see Table 3) and adapted easily across paradigms and methodologies.

Table 3

*Thematic Analysis Application to Needs Assessment Qualitative Data Analysis*

Phase	Description of the process	Evidence of needs assessment application
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading data, noting initial ideas	The practitioner-researcher transcribed data by listening to the recorded interviews and transcribing the interview and focus group responses in Microsoft Word.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code	The practitioner-researcher used multiple colors to highlight interesting features, such as when teachers lacked the knowledge to meet EL learning needs.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	The practitioner-researcher noticed a pattern in evidence of limited knowledge and a lack of instructional strategy use.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work for the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map of the analysis	The practitioner-researcher linked multiple pieces of evidence highlighting limited knowledge and limited use of strategies or resources to support ELs.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme	The practitioner-researcher determined a theme of limited knowledge leads to limited use of EL instructional strategies.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating the analysis to the researcher question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis	The practitioner-researcher selected examples from transcription to support the identified themes in the discussion.

*Note.* Thematic analysis phases and descriptions. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Before coding, recorded interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word. The practitioner-researcher reread transcriptions multiple times to determine general topics within responses and conversations. The practitioner-researcher applied descriptive coding based on the multiple types of data collection in the study, therefore selecting a coding method that best meets the methodological needs (Saldaña, 2015). The practitioner-researcher used descriptive coding to apply the phrase or term that described the data topics generated by multiple transcription readings. Furthermore, descriptive coding is one of the most popular coding methods, especially

among beginning qualitative researchers (Saldaña, 2015). Codes were categorized by construct, and sample evidence was provided to show examples of supporting interviews and focus group quotes (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Early-Childhood Educator Preparedness for English Learners*

Construct	Definition	Code	Sample evidence
Instructional strategies	Teaching techniques to support EL academic learning	Knowledge of Instructional Strategies	“I did a lot of papers but didn’t feel confident in my way of teaching those students.”
		Use of Instructional Strategies	“This summer, with my charts, I am going to make them bilingual. When I speak a little bit of Spanish, they feel I am trying to meet them halfway; they feel validated.”
Self-efficacy	Teacher confidence in planning and implementing EL strategies	Prior Teaching	“I think I went into this year not necessarily with an archetype of what they (EL) were or who they are.” “There is such a big gap already”
		Training Experiences	“More training is good, and every year brings new challenges. There is always constantly new research and practices being found... I would love to learn them.”
Beliefs	Teacher expectations of ELs and EL academic potential	Growth Mindset	“But understanding these are skills I’m lacking and what do I need to do (will help me) understand them and their families.” “My expectations for them (ELs) were lower, and that is definitely something I had to check myself on. It shouldn’t be lower. They are just as capable.”
		Beliefs reinforced by collaboration	“Initially, kids that are different; you always automatically expect less of them. I learned over the years that was a grave mistake.”
Resources	Capital needed to implement EL instruction	Accessibility of Resources	“Advocate for yourself. Get the resources you need.”
		Availability of Resources	“The challenge is not that they (ELs) do not speak English. It is that I don’t have someone to translate. This is the most challenging.” “For myself, learning the language is the best thing I can do. I already have Duolingo, and I am doing it five minutes a day.” “There are lots of picture visual cues...luckily this is part of the curriculum. Things happened, and I didn’t print out all the things.” “You need to go find resources and provide for yourself. They might not come on a platter.”

All data collection and analysis procedures were conducted during the spring and summer of 2018 (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Data Analysis Plan for Needs Assessment*

Activity	Procedure	Timeline
Cognitive interview	The practitioner-researcher conducted a cognitive interview.	May 30th, 2018
Survey window	The survey window was open to participants.	June 1st-June 14th, 2018
Quantitative data analysis	The practitioner-researcher completed a Likert analysis and descriptive statistics for survey items using SPSS.	June 15th-June 16th, 2018
Semi-structured interviews	The participants completed semi-structured interviews.	June 17th-June 18th, 2018
Follow-up focus groups	The participants completed focus groups.	June 19th, 2018
Qualitative data analysis	The practitioner-researcher conducted coding and thematic analysis.	June 20th-July 1st, 2018

## Findings and Discussion

The mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was appropriate for the research questions. Although Turner (2010) indicated that the open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews would make it difficult to code interview and focus group responses, the practitioner-researcher analyzed quantitative and qualitative data by using themes in qualitative data to understand quantitative data results further. As one of the benefits of employing an explanatory sequential design, interviews, or focus groups provided more information about survey results (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, this approach produced a more detailed picture to guide further research (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Findings were organized by the research question and further categorized by quantitative and qualitative results.

### **What are teacher beliefs about English learners and English learner instruction?**

Teacher beliefs about the inclusion of ELs in general education classes were assessed by Items 4

to 16 on the needs assessment survey. Regarding teacher beliefs, 87.5% of the respondents agreed that the inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classes created a positive educational atmosphere. When stratified into groups based on the number of years teaching, the mean difference in a 5-point Likert scale showed that beginning teachers ( $n = 9$ ) had a slightly higher belief that the inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classes created a positive educational atmosphere, as compared to veteran teachers ( $n = 6$ ). Eighty-eight percent of beginning teachers agreed that the inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classes created a positive educational atmosphere, whereas 83.3% of veteran teachers agreed with the same statement. Similarly, most teachers (87.5%) agreed that the inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classrooms benefited all students. Beginning teachers had a slightly more positive view of this statement than veteran teachers. Eighty-eight percent of beginning teachers agreed that the inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classrooms benefited all students, whereas 71.4% of veteran teachers agreed with the same statement.

Surprisingly, a survey item highlighting beliefs about whether ELs should not be included in the classroom demonstrated a contrasting trend in results between novice and veteran teachers. Beginning teachers agreed slightly less than veteran teachers on the statement that EL students should not be included in general education classes until they attained a minimum level of English proficiency. Eleven percent of beginning teachers agreed with this statement, whereas 0% of veteran teachers agreed. This result was unexpected because beginning teachers had a more positive attitude toward the inclusion of EL students. A subsequent question addressing whether teachers had enough time to accommodate the needs of ELs showed that a veteran teacher did not agree with the statement that early-childhood teachers did not have enough time to accommodate the needs of EL students. None of the veteran teachers agreed that they did not

have enough time to accommodate the needs of ELs, while 22.2% of beginning teachers agreed with this statement.

***Limited beliefs and limited knowledge.*** Exploring teacher beliefs using semi-structured interviews and focus groups enhanced survey results by providing descriptive evidence of the experiences that contributed to those beliefs. Interviews further showed a connection between limited beliefs and limited knowledge about ELs. Teachers used self-awareness of preconceived beliefs, as well as evidence of embracing a growth mindset toward future work with ELs, to realize the relationship between what they believed and what they knew about how to teach ELs.

When asked about preconceived notions regarding ELs, a beginning teacher reflected, “To be completely honest, my expectations for them (ELs) were lower, and that is definitely something I had to check myself on. It shouldn’t be lower. They are just as capable.” The beginning teacher’s response supported Reeves’ (2009) findings that teachers assigned certain identities to students based on their EL status. In response to the same question during a separate interview, a veteran teacher noted, “Initially kids that are different, you always automatically expect less of them. I learned over the years that was a grave mistake.” Although participants’ frequent comments about EL achievement were associated with positive terms, such as “capable” and “engaged,” one commonality among all participants’ viewpoints was a desire to learn more what ELs needed and how to provide them with appropriate supports.

Self-reflections on meeting the needs of ELs varied from reflecting a limited understanding of EL pedagogy to being aware of the appropriate accommodations but not knowing how to implement them. For example, one teacher regretted not leveraging the diversity of students to develop and implement meaningful instruction for ELs. This teacher discussed feeling conflicted between using EL backgrounds during instruction while being careful not to



embarrass students inadvertently. The teacher's reflection related to Yoon's (2008) findings that teachers might misunderstand their role as a teacher for ELs. This teacher followed up by noting a few points: "Well, why aren't they reading in 3rd grade? Well, obviously, they didn't understand the things that we said they master when they just were regurgitating something because you said it in a 'sing song-y' voice." This teacher demonstrated not knowing what path to take. However, the teacher also indicated that one of the biggest challenges was learning how to improve the instruction to support ELs. These reflections during interviews and focus groups showed that teachers were aware of their shortcomings yet felt unprepared or unconfident in reaching out for the necessary supports to prepare for the EL population increase.

*Beliefs and expectations based on experiences.* Focus Groups A and B discussed teacher beliefs about EL potential and expectations, rather than beliefs or attitudes toward EL instruction. When two participants, who recognized the value of establishing high expectations for ELs during individual interviews, were brought together in a follow-up focus group, the practitioner-researcher noted that participants often nodded their heads in agreement over the importance of maintaining high expectations for ELs and holding themselves accountable for meeting their needs. Adding to one teacher's response about how beliefs impacted instruction, a prekindergarten respondent noted the following:

All children can learn and are brilliant. It is more about our actions. In terms of my beliefs, recognizing that I didn't have a lot of experience with ELs, and recognizing that I need to be better for them. Everything that I learned about for ELs is also good for all learners.

According to the practitioner-researcher's notes, both teachers nodded their heads in agreement but did not verbally add to this sentiment. However, in a follow-up discussion

regarding instructional areas for improvement, the teacher quoted discussed struggling with learning other languages; however, the teacher's awareness caused the teacher to consider how uncomfortable ELs might feel when they did not understand English. The teachers' comments about EL expectations and common struggles supported Walker et al.'s (2004) findings of encountering challenges, such as language barriers, that influenced teachers' beliefs about ELs. The veteran teammate responded to this reflection and provided a strategy, noting, "Let's make 12 labels in Spanish and English (for next year)." The following conversation showed the strength of team collaboration:

Veteran Teacher: We taught the whole class to count in Spanish. They felt like, "Whoa!"

Novice Teacher: I didn't do that. I think it is a good idea.

Veteran Teacher: We should all do it!

Novice Teacher: She (veteran teacher) always tried to bring out her Spanish in class. It makes them feel really special.

Veteran Teacher: They (ELs) immediately know if you're trying. They instinctively know if you are trying to meet them halfway. All the celebrations helped.

Conversations, such as this focus group discussion, supported Lambson's (2010) conclusions on the positive effects of teacher collaboration and showed the possibility of exploring teacher collaboration due to this needs assessment. The focus groups showed the potential strengths of collaboration. Teacher collaboration may influence how and why teachers establish or adapt their beliefs about increasing numbers of ELs during their teaching experiences.

**What is the perceived level of early-childhood education teacher self-efficacy in instructing English learners?** Teacher self-efficacy in instructing ELs was assessed by Items 17

to 22 on the survey. Survey results indicated that 68.7% of all early-childhood teachers agreed that they were confident in their abilities to instruct ELs at a high level. However, data showed that 100% of veteran teachers agreed with this confidence statement, while only 55% of beginning teachers agreed. The difference in confidence levels between the beginning and veteran teachers supported Durgunoğlu and Hughes's (2010) findings that preservice teachers had low confidence levels in instructing ELs. Even though beginning teachers were not preservice teachers, they had recently begun their teaching careers and were comparable to preservice teachers in their final year of training.

A similar result also appeared in a survey item addressing confidence in providing alternative assessments to ELs. One hundred percent of veteran teachers agreed that they were confident in providing an alternative assessment to ELs, while 33.3% of beginning teachers agreed with the statement. As part of the explanatory sequential design, this item was further explored in follow-up questions with the focus groups. An interesting note in the survey items regarding self-efficacy showed that years of teaching positively correlated with levels of confidence in all areas of working with early-childhood ELs (see Figure 6). One hundred percent of veteran teachers agreed with all survey items addressing self-efficacy. As part of the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2018), the practitioner-researcher adjusted questions during the semi-structured interview protocol to explore the relationship further between years of experience and confidence in working with ELs.

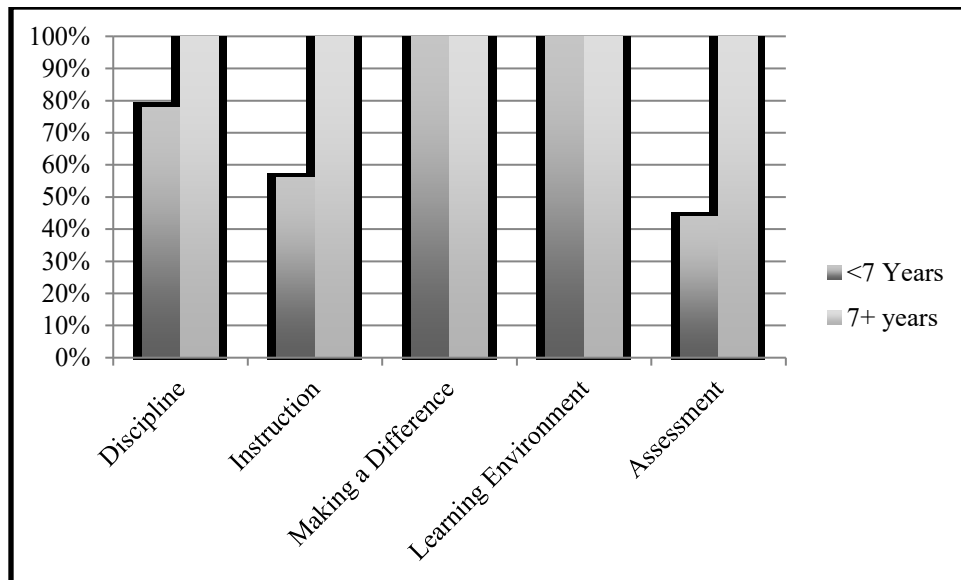


Figure 6. Percentage of strongly agree/agree responses of teacher self-efficacy ratings.

Interview responses regarding self-efficacy varied among participants based on the number of years taught and specific experience with increasing numbers of ELs. In response to a question about self-efficacy in working with ELs, a first-year teacher completed several course assignments on working with ELs in postsecondary education; however, the teacher did not feel confident in instructing ELs. The teacher’s response supported existing research findings of the influence of low confidence on feelings of unpreparedness in teaching ELs (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2010). The participants demonstrated higher confidence when discussing self-efficacy around caring environments and compassion for ELs, rather than research-based instructional strategies geared toward academic and language success.

In response to a question regarding what teachers learn while working with ELs, one interview respondent noted the importance of creating a safe learning space, honoring student identities, and showing empathy to all students as the most important foundations for instructing ELs. The practitioner-researcher noted limited follow-up discussion on instruction and greater participant interest in discussing how to nurture and care for ELs. This finding confirmed

Pappamihel's (2004) findings on limited teacher knowledge about how to accommodate ELs beyond showing compassion.

However, when asked about the current level of self-efficacy in instructing ELs, teachers were reflective of their current confidence and what they needed to do to become more effective in instruction. Regardless of self-efficacy, all participants expressed interest in growing their EL instructional practices. One participant noted the following:

My fundamental belief is that all children are inherently incredible and brilliant. I'm so honored to learn with them, as an adapted peer. I think I went into this year, not necessarily with an archetype of what they were or who they are. But understanding these are skills I'm lacking and what do I need to do (will help me) understand them and their families.

The other participants in the group nodded their heads in response to this teacher's comments. Like the interview responses about teacher beliefs, the participants were aware of what could be done regarding an increased focus on the success of ELs. After an interview with a prekindergarten teacher, the participant summarized personal confidence and interest in growth by reflecting on the potential positive effects of good teaching for all students.

**What English learner instructional strategies are utilized by early-childhood education teachers?** When asked about challenges in instruction and assessment during individual interviews, there was an overall assumption that language barriers limited learning and served as an impediment to academic success. In response to a question about challenges with ELs, one participant noted, "There is such a big gap already." The participant followed up with examples of how ELs were difficult to assess and understand. However, one participant was

self-aware of her feelings and reflected, “I guess that (lower expectations) were something I had preconceived notions...that wasn’t the case at all.”

Further interview participants noted confusion in how language barriers affected using instructional strategies, citing difficulty in what types of support to use, and how much support to provide. When asked about the impact of a participant-identified instructional challenge, the participant noted the challenge of language barriers and uncertainty regarding how much to support ELs in English acquisition. This conversation reflected Chen’s (2008) findings on the language barrier challenge and Walker et al.’s (2004) findings on how negative teacher beliefs influenced their instructional approaches.

A common cause of confusion stemmed from citing experience, rather than formal training, as a source of what ELs needed and how to deliver it effectively. Only one interview participant noted several approaches to ELs and instructional strategies used due to formal training experiences. When asked about the future potential for opportunities to learn instructional strategies, a veteran teacher reflected, “More training is good, and every year brings new challenges. There is always new research and practices being found ... I would love to learn them.”

***Prior experiences influence instructional approach.*** An underlying theme among teacher interview responses was the assumption of an achievement gap or the need for supplemental support for students based on their EL identification. For example, 80% of interview participants ( $n = 5$ ) noted pairing ELs with non-ELs during partner activities as a strategy to support ELs with speaking and listening. Although teachers noted implementing this strategy for various reasons, such as personal experience versus curriculum recommendation,

beginning teacher responses highlighted unfounded knowledge that ELs needed to be paired with native English speakers to benefit ELs.

Focus group discussions on instruction centered on the consistent use of a few strategies with an underlying desire to extend knowledge and instructional techniques. One veteran teacher noted the importance of raising expectations and working toward helping ELs achieve those expectations. Focus Group A discussed concepts of compassion and love as the overall essential elements of an EL classroom environment. However, using visual cues was the only technique cited as a research-based EL instructional technique. Participants agreed that they were confident in providing visual cues as an effective strategy, noting their print-rich classrooms with multiple visual aids to support ELs. This discussion confirmed existing literature findings on the importance of compassion and relationships with ELs (Gillanders, 2007; Pappamihiel, 2004) while illuminating the importance of Nieto's (2008) emphasis on the learning environment.

A respondent in Focus Group B mentioned pairing ELs with non-ELs, building on individual interview responses:

I was very fortunate to have a bilingual student who was also very bright. He would stand up and help like an assistant. I put him with another kid so he can at least hear them talk and hear them use that language and the vocabulary.

All members of focus group nodded their heads in agreement, signifying that they agreed with that accommodation but not verbally confirming that they have utilized that strategy in their classrooms.

An additional member of Focus Group B extended the idea of pairing non-ELs with ELs, a strategy mentioned in all the interviews, with curriculum support. The teacher noted, "[The curriculum] suggests pairing three students because you want them to get exposure to English

language, but you don't want it to be so far over their head." Although this strategy was not mentioned in the individual interviews of the members of her focus group, they nodded in agreement. Another teacher added, "[Each group includes] two Spanish [speaking] and one English [speaking student]."

*Perceived impact of language barriers.* One beginning teacher lamented the perceived limitations of speaking in a native language during interviews. The beginning teacher situated ELs, so they were encouraged to use English vocabulary with their native-English speaking peers. The teacher used this strategy because ELs would only acquire English language skills if required to speak the language in school. The beginning teacher's comments demonstrated a limited understanding of the immediate and future need for bilingual citizens, as well as the benefits of retaining a native language. The beginning teacher also struggled to embrace the value of recognizing a student's home language about their self-confidence in school.

Embracing qualities, such as bilingualism and allowing students to develop pride in their speaking skills by engaging in activities with their native language, may increase their sense of value (Nieto, 2008). A veteran teacher's response to the same question was the following: "This summer, with my charts, I am going to make them bilingual. When I speak a little bit of Spanish, they feel I am trying to meet them halfway; they feel validated." The veteran teacher's response reflected a greater understanding of Nieto's (2008) multicultural continuum.

**What resources are available and accessible to support English learners?** The interviews revealed that the most frequently used instructional resource included visual cues. Although kindergarten teachers referred to teacher-created resources to go along with the current curriculum, prekindergarten educators cited curricular resources noted for use with ELs. Surprisingly, individual interviews reflected a struggle to utilize the resources provided within



the curriculum. One beginning teacher noted that although there were many curriculum resources, there was not always time to implement those sources. During a separate interview, a veteran teacher noted, “You need to go find resources and provide for yourself. They might not come on a platter.” The veteran teacher’s comments not only supported the difficulty in accessing resources noted by Worthington et al. (2011) but also provided a potential solution to the perceived limited support. In a follow-up focus group, the question of resource availability was probed further.

All interview respondents referred to language and translation support as a significant challenge in meeting the instructional demands of the EL population. However, respondents differed in their approaches to getting the resources needed for translation support. First, a veteran teacher noted, “Always begin with high expectations. If you expect less, you are going to get less. If you expect more, you are going to get more. Advocate for yourself. Get the resources you need.” The same respondent recognized that the greatest challenge entailed not having a translator, supporting Siwatu’s (2007) findings on the difficulty in communicating with ELs. This teacher advocated for translation support and discussed an increased effort to learn Spanish using a Spanish language learning program.

In contrast, a beginning teacher pointed to the actual language as a barrier and did not mention translation support as a needed resource. The beginning teacher seemed to have higher perceived self-confidence and believed the necessary resources were provided, speaking to ELs in complete sentences and repeating directions as a perceived strategy to support language acquisition. Focus Group B addressed follow-up discussions on these thoughts around language barriers.

Individual interviews showed personnel resources, specifically regarding language barriers, as a major challenge in accommodating increasing amounts of ELs in need of translation support, supporting Trickett et al.'s (2012) findings on the challenges associated with language barriers in working with ELs. Although focus group conversations were absent of discussion about the need for language support, conversations had a more positive tone, leaning toward a discussion about readily available resources. For example, when asked about instructional strategies and resources, Focus Group A listed several consecutive resources and strategies already in place. These resources included visuals, curriculum resources, and ideas for literacy instructional support. One teacher noted a belief that ELs could learn “like everyone else.”

Focus group members also revealed a greater awareness about the role of teacher understanding in EL academic success. For example, one teacher in Focus Group B noted, “I want to make sure I understand the scientific differences between language, and I feel like I don’t understand that as much.” The role of self-reflection seemed to take up more of the group conversation as opposed to individual interviews. Another teacher in Focus Group B added, “Structures we use for those students really help everyone in the classroom.” This novice teacher reflected unease in terms of overall preparation for working with ELs, suggesting that working with more confident, experienced teachers might have a positive effect on self-efficacy in EL instruction.

**Emerging theme: Positive impact of collaboration.** Teacher self-efficacy varied among focus groups; one included a veteran teacher and two novice teachers, and the other included two novice teachers. For example, one participant in the veteran teacher’s focus group noted, “We (our team) talk a lot as a team, so we don’t feel isolated ... We learned as we went along ... as

we saw what was working for them.” All members of the veteran teacher’s focus group contributed tangible examples of instructional strategies used in their classrooms. These instructional strategies included finding online resources, accessing resources in the prekindergarten curriculum, and sharing those sources with the team. The veteran teacher pointed to the beginning teacher, saying, “She was the leader. She would quickly Google images. Super simple, super-fast, but really effective.” The beginning teacher smiled in response, showing signs of pride in any growth.

Similarly, the focus group with two novice teachers engaged in conversation that reflected the positive impact of teacher collaboration on self-efficacy in working with ELs. The beginning teachers’ focus group responses reflected Dillard’s (2016) conclusions about the need for collaboration among beginning teachers. Teacher collaboration, according to Dillard, could build mutual accountability for student learning. One teacher noted, “Some of my lowest kids acquired the most language and outperformed other students who came in with English as their first language.” The other teacher responded, “I just think you did a great job of benefiting all learners, so many different things that you did not specifically for ELs but for everyone.” This conversation further reflected Dillard’s findings that collaboration among beginning teachers built a unified appreciation for the need to support student learning.

Teacher self-efficacy was higher in a focus group setting. Several individual responses encouraged other group members to reflect on a belief or action that they did not mention in individual interviews. For example, during focus groups, one teacher noted, “It was harder for me to understand the needs of those kids (ELs), It was hard for me to identify their needs, it requires a lot of trial and error, trying new things.” Another teacher added, “There are different ways to show mastery. A kid can have understanding of it and not be able to communicate in

English.” Both sentiments were not reflected in their initial responses to interview questions regarding EL instructional strategies. However, the practitioner-researcher observed an overall increase in willingness to discuss shared ideas around support for ELs in a focus group setting. Also, the practitioner-researcher noticed the use of “we” in focus group settings and viewed that teachers were much more willing to discuss and take pride in teaching ELs in a setting with their peers.

On the other hand, focus groups revealed greater vulnerability when identifying areas in which self-efficacy could improve. As another teacher nodded in agreement, one participant reflected the following:

A lot of the ELs are progressing satisfactorily throughout the year. But what do I do with the students who aren't? Students who aren't making growth? Is it because I'm doing a bad job? Is it because of their lack of motivation to learn the language? Is someone telling them only speak Spanish? What is the hang-up? What aren't they learning?

Awareness and willingness to explore these questions also showed the need for further exploration.

## **Conclusion**

The combination of survey, interview, and focus group findings indicated how and why particular causes of the problem of practice were most relevant to the professional context. The results of the needs assessment survey indicated that ECE teachers had high self-efficacy in instructing ELs and positive attitudes toward EL academic potential. The follow-up interviews and focus groups provided additional insights on teacher beliefs and self-efficacy. Interviews also provided evidence on the limited use of instructional strategies and difficulty in acquiring resources to create a positive and effective EL learning experience.

The needs assessment results remained consistent with contributing factors revealed during the literature review. The quantitative findings indicated positive relationships occurred between self-efficacy and years of teaching experience in working with ELs. Further, qualitative exploration of these findings supported Lambson's (2010) findings on the positive influence of collaboration. The interviews and focus groups showed how collaboration further influenced self-confidence and awareness of specific strategies that benefited ELs in the ECE setting. However, the quantitative and qualitative findings left areas to explore further, including leveraging veteran teachers' strengths and collaboration as tools to expand novice teacher expertise in instructing ECE ELs. Although literature showed logistical obstacles existed to achieving the time and resources for collaboration (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010), needs assessment results indicated collaborative PD would work as a potential solution to the problem of practice under study.

### **Chapter 3: Intervention Literature Review**

Although ECE teaching and learning remain critical for academic success in K-12 education (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; M. Davison et al., 2004), teachers continue to experience challenges in working with ELs. Combined with the increasing trend in EL populations (NCES, 2010), these statistics showed the need for further investigation into how to address the problem. Given the existing literature and needs assessment findings from the professional context, this chapter proposes a professional learning design in which novice teachers may increase EL instructional knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in ECE.

The chapter reviews the needs assessment findings addressing why ECE teachers are unprepared for EL instruction. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) and Collins et al.'s (1988) cognitive apprenticeship theory provides the theoretical foundation for the chosen intervention design. Following the theoretical framework, the practitioner-researcher presents a literature synthesis on two types of professional learning models, workshops and instructional coaching. The literature synthesis also shows the benefits and challenges of implementing both models as strategies to address practice. Finally, the practitioner-researcher combines the strengths of workshops and instructional coaching to design a practical and effective ECE EL professional learning intervention that aligns with the theoretical framework.

#### **Needs Assessment Key Findings**

The needs assessment collected data on ECE teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, instructional strategies, and resources related to EL teaching and learning. Results were organized into four main findings based on the research questions. Descriptive statistics showed that novice teachers did not feel as though they had enough time to accommodate ELs. Follow-up interviews and focus groups highlighted limited teacher knowledge and expectations based on experience as

potential reasons for the survey results. Descriptive statistics also showed that veteran teachers were more confident in their abilities to instruct ELs than novice teachers. The interviews and focus groups confirmed low EL instructional confidence among novice teachers but illuminated an accompanying desire to increase self-efficacy through collaboration and professional learning. Qualitative findings also highlighted prior experiences and language barriers as perceived influences on ECE EL instructional capacity. In addition, teacher confusion between availability and accessibility of language support resources emerged as a barrier to instructing ELs. Lastly, the positive impact of teacher collaboration on EL instructional effectiveness developed as a theme throughout qualitative data analysis.

The key needs assessment findings highlighted novice teachers as the target population for an intervention focused on ECE EL instruction. The survey results, interviews, and follow-up focus groups suggested a need to explore novice ECE teacher beliefs, experiences, and knowledge as potential underlying factors of EL instructional capacity. The following section explores SCT (Bandura, 1986) and cognitive apprenticeship theory (Collins et al., 1988) as the theoretical underpinnings for the professional learning intervention design.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Early-childhood teachers are increasingly unprepared to teach a growing EL population (Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014; Worthington et al., 2011). Limited or overgeneralized training and disinterest in EL PD result in inadequate opportunities to increase EL instructional knowledge (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Reeves, 2006). The synergy of Bandura's (1986) SCT and Collins et al.'s (1988) cognitive apprenticeship theory interacted to provide the theoretical underpinnings that guide the intervention design. These theorists collectively built a deeper

understanding of the key needs assessment findings of EL instructional knowledge and application.

**Social cognitive theory.** SCT establishes the theoretical foundation for the intervention. In a description of SCT, Bandura (1986) proposed that an individual's environmental conditions influenced his or her behavior. Bandura proposed that interactions between an individual's experiences, actions, and cognition influenced his or her learning. Furthermore, Bandura (1997) proposed that a change in one or all these components could impact an intended outcome, enabling individuals to become "partial architects of their destinies" (p. 8). Bandura further theorized that the environment influenced beliefs depending on how individuals acted, thus signifying a reciprocal relationship between all three factors. TRD, one key component of SCT, demonstrated how the environment and beliefs reciprocally influenced an individual's behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura's (1986) TRD might suggest a relationship between constructs explored in the needs assessment. Based on the needs assessment, the EL learning environment could influence teacher instructional behaviors. TRD shows an explanation for relationships between teacher knowledge, beliefs, and EL learning environment. Teacher knowledge and beliefs influence the use of EL instructional strategies. Knowledge of instructional strategies reciprocally impacts beliefs, which act as social influences on the learning environment (Bandura, 1986).

The resulting environment continues to shape future expectations. For example, lack of knowledge about EL instruction creates an environment in which ELs are not successful. Classrooms with low EL academic success reinforce low expectations for ELs. Low expectations reinforce beliefs that ELs are not as capable as non-ELs, which influences the ineffective use of instructional strategies.



Addressing teacher knowledge and using instructional strategies through the lens of TRD may influence teacher instructional behavior and the resulting EL learning environment.

Building on Bandura's (1986) understanding of knowledge and environmental influences, the following exploration of cognitive apprenticeship theory offers a pathway to increase teacher knowledge and use of EL instruction in ECE classrooms (Collins et al., 1988).

**Cognitive apprenticeship theory.** Drawing on Bandura's (1986) environmental influence within learning, cognitive apprenticeship theory further emphasizes the role of skill masters, also known as experts, when teaching a new skill (Collins et al., 1988). Cognitive apprenticeship theory, as described by Collins et al. (1988), theorizes that students learn best through observing and practicing a skill that is modeled as an authentic context. Integrating the learning process into the environment allows the learner to understand how the environment in which knowledge is constructed is an important part of what is learned (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Cognitive apprenticeship builds on the tenets of traditional apprenticeship while incorporating Bandura's theory about the role of the environment in behavioral outcomes. According to Brown et al. (1989), cognitive apprenticeship proposes that individuals gain expertise through cognitive process modeling in a real-world environment.

Learning without modeling is ineffective (Brown et al., 1989; Collins et al., 1988). Collins et al. (1988) theorize that modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection, and exploration are essential components to becoming an expert in a skill. By applying cognitive apprenticeship theory to teacher learning about EL instruction, expert and novice teachers collaborate in an environment that reflects conditions in which pedagogical practices will be implemented (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991). For this research, Table 6 defines novice and

expert teachers as they relate to practice (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Wolff, van den Bogert, Jarodzka, & Boshuizen, 2015).

Table 6

*Key Terms and Definitions for Novice and Expert Teachers*

Key term	Definition
Novice teacher	A novice teacher is defined as a teacher with five or fewer years of teaching experience.
Expert teacher	Expert teachers draw on more than five years of experience to increase understanding of the need to identify and draw connections between relevant information that novice teachers may not notice.

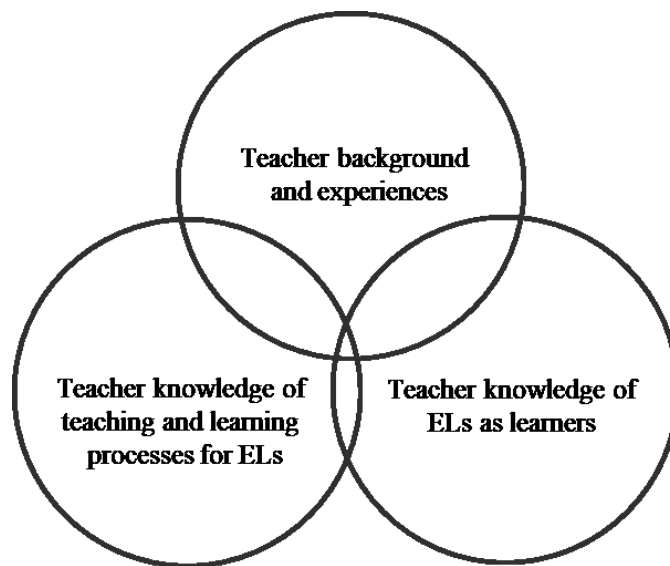
*Note.* Definitions adapted for novice and expert teachers from researchers. Adapted from Ingersoll and Smith (2003) and Wolff et al. (2015).

An environment that encourages collaboration among teachers with varied experiences may illuminate strategies to support ECE EL educators. In summary, Bandura (1978) presents a framework for understanding how teacher knowledge influences teacher instruction, and Collins et al. (1988) provides a strategy for increasing that knowledge. TRD narrows the focus for the problem of practice under study to teacher knowledge and the use of EL instruction. Cognitive apprenticeship theory proposes a strategy specifically effective for increasing novice teacher knowledge and the use of EL instruction through collaboration with expert educators. Both of these theories align to lay the foundation for the proposed intervention design that will address the problem of practice.

**Expert English Learner Educators**

To apply Collins et al.’s (1988) cognitive apprenticeship theory to this model, an expert EL educator must be defined. An expert educator needs essential knowledge and experiences to work with ELs successfully (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011). According to the cognitive apprenticeship model, a student learns through observing and practicing a skill with an expert in an authentic setting (Collins et al., 1988). Therefore, the practitioner-researcher defines an expert

EL educator through the application of Coady et al.'s (2011) characteristics of quality EL teachers (see Figure 7).



*Figure 7.* Characteristics of quality teachers of English learners. Adapted from Coady et al. (2011).

Expert EL teachers possess knowledge of ELs, understand EL pedagogy, and have the background and experiences of working with this population (Coady et al., 2011). By using Coady et al.'s (2011) definition of an expert EL educator, the application of cognitive apprenticeship theory may support increasing teacher knowledge components to develop more effective EL teachers. Therefore, schools must create professional learning opportunities that enable novice and expert teacher collaboration to develop EL instructional capacity. The following literature synthesis highlights the benefits and challenges of two approaches to professional learning, workshops and instructional coaching, as guidance for a PD focused on ECE educators working with ELs.

### **Early-Childhood Educators' Professional Learning for English Learners**

Based on the theoretical underpinnings of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Collins et al. (1988) cognitive apprenticeship model, a potential intervention for the problem of

practice must utilize expert-novice collaboration as a means to increase novice ECE teacher EL instructional capacity. Professional learning workshops and instructional coaching formats are two potential PD designs that align with the theoretical framework. For this research, Table 7 defines PD workshops and instructional coaching as they relate to the problem of practice (Banerjee & Luckner, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Table 7

*Key Terms and Definitions for Professional Learning Designs*

Key term	Definition
PD Workshops	ECE educators receive instructional training in a whole-group setting (one-time opportunity or multiple sessions).
Instructional Coaching	ECE educators work one-on-one with an expert to receive personalized instruction and feedback on teaching in their classrooms.

*Note.* Definitions adapted for ECE educators working with ELs from researchers. Adapted from Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) and Banerjee and Luckner (2014).

The following sections synthesize literature exploring PD workshops and instructional coaching as potential methods to support novice teachers in expanding knowledge and the use of EL instruction.

**Professional development workshops.** Historically, PD workshops have been documented as a strategy to address teacher knowledge and positively influence subsequent student performance (Desimone, 2009; Dove & Honigsfield, 2010). Bandura (1986) used TRD to suggest that increased knowledge about EL teaching and learning would simultaneously influence teacher beliefs and positively change the EL learning environment by increasing EL instructional strategies. PD workshops may enhance educator capacity and increase the number of teachers equipped to instruct ELs in early-childhood classrooms. With substantial leadership support, PD workshops may offer collaboration across multiple professional learning experiences between teachers with different experience levels (Banks, 2015; Learning Forward, 2011). Further, while difficult in meeting individual teacher needs at one time, PD workshops

offer a unique opportunity to share curriculum-embedded content with a broad range of teachers in a group setting.

**Multiple opportunities for professional learning.** Although efficient in their ability to reach a large audience in limited time, one-time workshops are not effective in implementing new ideas or sustaining teaching strategies in the classroom (Cooter, 2004; Edwards, Sandoval, & McNamara, 2015). Single PD workshop learning opportunities deliver knowledge to teachers in the absence of follow-up opportunities to try new learning and reflect on use (Cantrell & Callaway, 2008). However, a series of PD workshops allow for coherence with existing instruction and provide opportunities to integrate new learning into established classroom structures (Swinnerton, 2007). PD workshops that offer multiple opportunities for peer and expert collaboration over time may help increase teacher knowledge and use of focus instruction (Swinnerton, 2007).

In a case study exploring the potential benefits of PD on teacher quality for ELs, Hutchinson and Hadjioannou (2011) suggested whole-group professional learning over time as a strategy to address the number of unprepared teachers working with ELs. The 25 study participants included five upper-level students in a university elementary education program and 20 in-service, public school educators. Researchers collected qualitative and quantitative data using surveys before and after the PD, classroom observations, reflective writing exercises, and online conversations. Each data collection tool acted as an instructional tool or feedback device within the PD, such as reflective writing integrated into participant assignments throughout the sessions. The researchers utilized multiple data sources as a strategy to collect a broad range of data covering participant experiences and outcomes of the PD program. Results indicated

increased feelings of camaraderie among participants due to the embedded teacher collaboration components (Hutchinson & Hadjioannou, 2011).

Hutchinson and Hadjioannou (2011) concluded that implementation of a yearlong PD program consisting of multiple PD sessions built a common understanding of pedagogical challenges with ELs. The shared feelings helped build the foundation for greater support and increased knowledge of strategies to plan and confidently implement in the classroom. Moreover, participant reflections further support the need for long-term PD programs (Hutchinson & Hadjioannou, 2011). Before implementing Hutchinson and Hajioannou's PD program, participants who engaged in one-time PD opportunities showed "powerful feelings of inadequacy in working with their ELL students and displaying perceptions and reporting practices inconsistent with ESL theory and research" (p. 109). Hutchinson and Hadjioannou's conclusions align with Cooter's (2004) theory that collaborative PD overtime effectively leads toward pedagogical improvement.

Findings from Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) qualitative study on support systems for EL instruction align with Hutchinson and Hadjioannou's (2011) conclusions that consistent opportunities for teacher collaboration are necessary for EL pedagogical growth. Elfers and Stritikus applied strategic sampling to select three school participants from each of the four different districts serving ELs. Data collection methods consisted of interviews and observations with 12 schools across four months during one school year (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Elfers and Stritikus' findings on instructional support systems for EL teachers suggested that regular staff collaboration opportunities offer a more unified focus on EL instructional needs. More specifically, providing time and space for collaboration within and across grade levels, motivates teachers to put EL instructional knowledge into action within their classrooms. PD workshops,

which are conducive to the type of professional learning setting that allows for peer collaboration over time, are an effective strategy in building the types of instructional support systems advocated by experts in the area of EL instruction (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Hutchinson & Hadjioannou, 2001).

**Collaborative planning and reflection.** In a 2-week PD workshop series designed by district-level instructional coaches, Lewis, Perry, and Hurd (2006) found that that participation in a collaborative lesson study might increase individual commitment to instructional growth. The study followed five elementary and middle school teacher participants. At the same time, they engaged in a lesson study that required them to collectively plan, implement, and reflect on mathematics lessons in a diverse school district (Lewis et al., 2006). The participants took turns teaching, revising, reflecting, and re-teaching a lesson based on improvements. One researcher in the Lewis et al. study served as both study author and participant. The researchers collected data that naturally occurred throughout the collaborative planning and teaching process. Qualitative data sources included anecdotal records, recorded conversations, and lesson study artifacts (e.g., lesson plans and student work). The findings indicated that a sense of community developed across a short period. Although the study's single lesson nature limited participants' abilities to personalize the professional learning over time, self-reported data indicated that the study's collaborative emphasis set the foundation for future and long-term instructional change emphasized by Elfers and Stritikus (2014).

In a review of best practices in professional learning, Desimone and Garet (2015) presented a framework that emphasizes, among other components, the importance of collective participation in group professional learning experiences. Collective planning and practice are key highlights of PD workshops that provide teacher peers with opportunities to adjust and reflect

instructional practices. Desimone (2009) defined collective participation as “groups of teachers from the same grade, subject, or school participate in PD activities together to build an interactive learning community” (p. 253). Much like Lewis et al.’s (2006) emphasis on the collaborative advantage to instructional growth, Desimone and Garet elaborated on the value of collective learning and propose that PD workshops address the challenge of meeting individual teacher needs by grouping teachers based on ability, interest, or areas for growth. This approach provides an alternative to the ever-present challenge of adapting group PD workshops to individual teacher needs while retaining the collective advantage of multiple teachers working and learning together.

**Leadership role and support.** Leadership structures must be in place to support teacher engagement in PD workshops and sustain the implementation of new practices beyond professional learning experiences (Hegde et al., 2018; Learning Forward, 2011). As such, leadership support could be a potential resource or drawback in gaining the needed personnel and investment to implement PD workshops as a source of professional learning effectively. In a mixed-methods study with 20 kindergarten teachers, Hegde et al. (2018) found that 85% of participants were willing to engage in EL PD. Still, only 59% of the participants participated in professional learning geared toward ELs. Hegde et al. suggested that this difference might be related to school-wide encouragement for participation in such initiatives.

Furthermore, school culture and administration must urge and affirm positive attitudes toward PD experiences for teachers working with ELs (Hegde et al., 2018). As noted in the needs assessment results, teacher beliefs contribute to the insufficient use of instructional strategies for the growing EL population in early-childhood learning environments. School-wide support for PD provides a greater opportunity to address teacher beliefs and increase



understanding of how to best approach the EL teaching and learning experience (Hegde et al., 2018).

The extent to which school leadership supports teacher collaboration may also influence how participation in EL professional learning influences subsequent, long-term instructional quality (Crawford, Schmeister, & Biggs, 2008). Crawford et al. (2008) explored how participation in PD influences use of one EL instructional strategy known as sheltered instruction. In a mixed-methods research study with 23 teachers and teacher specialists, including the school librarian, the researchers investigated the effectiveness of ongoing collaboration-based PD opportunities (Crawford et al., 2008). Crawford et al. found, “The highly collaborative and supported participation of the members of the school secured the success of the professional development” (p. 337).

According to experts in the area of EL professional learning, EL teachers benefit from collaborative PD in which they have the chance to implement what they learned from peers, as well as receive feedback in an authentic classroom setting (Crawford et al., 2008). Leadership support and involvement in the logistics of peer feedback and multiple collaborative learning sessions are essential to making this type of shared PD most effective (Crawford et al., 2008). Like F. A. Russell’s (2012) case study described later, Crawford et al. (2008) concluded that school leadership should value the teacher specialist in the professional learning context by recognizing and affirming his or her master skills.

**Curriculum-embedded context.** Professional learning that lacks coherence with classroom practices is ineffective (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Teachers report a need for more PD opportunities that align with their subject and content area (Wei et al., 2009). In a quantitative research study with a longitudinal design, Polly, Wang,

McGee, and Lambert (2014) demonstrated that PD workshops were conducive to facilitating curriculum-based instructional content. Polly et al. investigated the effects of participation in a PD program on teacher beliefs, teacher instructional practices, and student performance on curriculum-based assessments. The intervention, which consisted of PD workshops and sessions on elementary mathematics instruction with 52 teachers, showed that participation positively influenced teacher knowledge. Further, change in teacher practice due to intervention participation may be linked to student learning outcomes, as measured by 542 student assessments. Although researchers recommended further study to fully support a connection between teacher PD participation and student outcomes, Polly et al.'s findings reinforced Desimone's (2009) emphasis on the importance of coherence and content in effective PD learning experiences.

In another quantitative study with a longitudinal design, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2002) used a national probability sample of 1,027 teachers to explore the relationship between selected PD features and teacher knowledge, skills, and instructional practices. The interventionists used survey data to investigate teacher outcomes due to the form, duration, and degree of collective participation in PD activities, such as workshops, study groups, collaboration, and coaching. The findings indicated that integrating content knowledge, active learning components, and coherence with existing instruction was valuable for professional learning components (Garet et al., 2002). Regarding coherence, the teachers self-reported that connection with previously learned content and instructional goals supported further developing knowledge and instructional skill level. Building on Polly et al.'s (2014) suggestion that PD workshops are an appropriate professional learning setting for curriculum

integrated learning, Garet et al. provided deeper insights into how and why coherence was an essential component of effective PD.

**Difficulty in meeting individual teacher needs.** Although PD workshops are beneficial with the right combination of leadership support and multiple learning opportunities, a whole-group approach encounters challenges in meeting individual teacher needs (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Reeves, 2006). Reeves (2006) investigated teacher attitudes toward teaching ELs and EL PD and perceptions of how ELs acquire a second language. Reeves selected 16 items from a previously used 38-item survey and administered the survey to 279 secondary teachers from four high schools. Reeves found that educators might not be interested in EL PD because of previous, unhelpful PD experiences that did not relate to individual teacher needs. The findings further revealed that teachers were unprepared to serve EL students and lacked interest or motivation to engage in PD focused on EL instructional content. Reeves established that participation in poor, overgeneralized PD experiences or existing beliefs that professional learning was unneeded to deliver EL instruction could sustain participant disinterest in further EL PD enrollment. As opposed to an individualized coaching model, PD workshop leaders thrive on reaching a broad audience in limited time and may not include one-on-one classroom support.

Hiatt and Fairbairn (2018) further explored Reeves's (2006) initial findings on low teacher interest in EL PD by investigating ways to focus professional learning so that it may be more appealing or useful for teachers. First, Hiatt and Fairbairn used a pilot study to increase instrument validity and modify items before distributing the instrument to participants. Then, the researchers divided their instrument, which measured teacher knowledge and instructional needs for ELs, into three parts. The three survey sections included background information, teacher knowledge and instructional practices, and obstacles and training needs for teaching ELs (Hiatt

& Fairbairn, 2018). The researchers administered the online survey, which included 34 Likert-scale items and two open-ended responses, to 884 in-service teachers in grades K-12.

Although only 126 teachers completed the survey, Hiatt and Fairbairn (2018) confirmed that the small sample reflected the population they intended to investigate and mitigated limited study transferability (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The results from Likert-scale survey items indicated that most participants felt unprepared to teach ELs. The themes in the open-ended responses included obstacles preventing teachers from feeling prepared to teach ELs, such as not knowing how to use data to inform instruction. Based on their findings, Hiatt and Fairbairn recommended increasing EL PD, making connections to federal guidelines within EL PD, and maintaining flexibility in approach when considering how to deliver EL PD. In addition to whole group PD, instructional coaching provides an alternative approach to professional learning.

### **Instructional Coaching and Support With Expert English Learner Educators**

Instructional coaching, a personalized and authentic professional learning strategy to support long-term instructional growth (Teemant, 2014), can serve as a potential intervention component to increase novice ECE teacher preparation for ELs. Instructional coaches provide similar benefits to PD sessions plus personalized support from expert educators (Teemant, 2014). Given the reciprocal relationship between teacher knowledge and implementation of instructional strategies suggested by TRD (Bandura, 1986), instructional coaching may provide an opportunity for novice ECE teachers to increase individual knowledge based on connections within their own EL instruction. Further, instructional coaching and individualized support allow an expert teacher to provide personalized feedback to a novice teacher and have a positive impact on teaching pedagogy in an authentic learning setting (Collins et al., 1988). Unlike

collaborative PD experiences in which several teachers may learn from one facilitator, instructional coaching and support offer individualized instruction, trusting relationships, and authentic feedback that may result in faster, quality changes in the long-term instructional approach (F. A. Russell, 2015; Teemant, 2014).

**Individualized instructional support.** A coaching model incorporating Collins et al.'s (1988) cognitive apprenticeship theory as a tool for improving pedagogy may contribute to system-level change rather than isolated changes in individual classrooms (Hersi, Horan, & Lewis, 2016). Hersi et al. (2016) conducted a 6-month long case study with three teachers exploring the role of professional learning communities in literacy and EL pedagogy. The study participants included an ESOL teacher, a literacy specialist, and a fifth-grade teacher. The researchers collected data through participant interviews, classroom observations, planning meeting observations, and document analysis. Using the community of practice framework as the foundation for the study, the researchers coded data to reveal insights on EL instruction. The findings indicated that participants must value the expert's teaching knowledge for a professional learning community to benefit from a collaboration opportunity. Furthermore, Hersi et al. indicated that the EL population growth increases the need to value EL expertise in teacher collaboration. By valuing teacher expertise in collaborative PD, all participants may benefit from the learning opportunity and thus have a greater, collective impact on teaching and learning with ELs (Hersi et al., 2016).

Teemant (2014) also explored the role of instructional coaching and suggested that individualized support is consistently effective and efficient in short-term change. Extensive one-on-one pairings may not be logistically practical in producing long-term pedagogical improvement (Teemant, 2014). In a longitudinal mixed-methods study on pedagogy for diverse

learners, Teemant suggested that instructional coaching positively affected teacher practice with diverse groups of students, including ELs. By conducting focus groups, observations, and pre-post survey methods with 36 kindergarten through sixth-grade teachers, Teemant maintained that teachers struggled to sustain implementation of practices one year after coaching. While there was a statistically significant positive change in teaching practices during the coaching intervention, along with an increase in teacher awareness and reflection in those practices, accountability factors and institutional mandates interfered with sustaining change significantly beyond the duration of the intervention. Teemant's findings reinforced Hersi et al.'s (2016) conclusions on the benefits of individualized support for EL instruction while illuminating the factors that solidify this method as a reliable, professional learning source for long-term pedagogical change.

In another case study focused on instructional coaching, F. A. Russell (2015) narrowed the teacher participant criteria to explore how novice teachers developed the capacity to meet EL instructional needs. With one EL expert facilitator and one novice teacher, F. A. Russell explored one-to-one collaboration as a potential support for increasing EL teacher quality. The one-year long case study utilized grounded theory to analyze data from field notes, interviews, and documentation (F. A. Russell, 2015).

According to F. A. Russell's (2015) findings, interactions between the novice teacher and EL facilitator throughout the year expanded the novice teacher's access to resources and best practices within a school community. By developing a relationship with an expert EL educator, the novice teacher had opportunities to understand, practice, and receive EL instruction (F. A. Russell, 2015). This ongoing support can increase the number of ELs receiving quality instruction from a novice teacher (F. A. Russell, 2015). Although F. A. Russell offered findings

that showed the positive effects of a collaborative coaching model on EL teacher quality, the case study model was limited by the inability to generalize conclusions to other school settings (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). However, F. A. Russell's more in-depth conclusions aligned with that of Teemant's (2014) larger mixed-methods study, which might increase the credibility of findings and increase transferability to other school settings such as the context for the problem of practice.

**Trusting relationships and authentic feedback.** Instructional coaching also allows for greater trust in coaching relationships and personalized feedback (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Muñoz, & Beldon, 2010). In a longitudinal mixed-methods study with 28 teachers and two instructional coaches, McIntyre et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between implementing a sheltered instruction model and EL achievement. The findings indicated that PD models lacking one-to-one collaboration between coaches and teachers resulted in superficial professional learning relationships absent of the trust needed for pedagogical growth and feedback (McIntyre et al., 2010). Instructional coaches provide a sense of caring that establishes and maintains relationships in which teachers feel comfortable opening up their practice to others for feedback and improvement (McIntyre et al., 2010). McIntyre et al.'s findings reflected an example of Bandura's (1986) reciprocal relationship between learning context and instructional behavior in working with ELs. McIntyre's findings were confirmed by Haneda, Teemant, and Sherman's (2017) findings of the benefits of teacher and instructional coach collaborative relationships on instructional improvement.

Instructional coaching lends to more comfortable learning experiences in which non-hierarchical relationships between the expert coach and teacher expedite pedagogical growth and mastery (Haneda et al., 2017). In a longitudinal case study with one kindergarten teacher and one

coach, Haneda et al. (2017) investigated the purpose of dialogue in a teacher coaching experience between a veteran coach and teacher working with ELs. Observations, interviews, and researchers' notes indicated that the coach and teacher could co-create a similar understanding of specific pedagogical practices through repeated interactions and multiple instructional feedback opportunities (Haneda et al., 2017). These findings indicated that instructional coaching models established opportunities for a "safe dialogic space" (Haneda et al., 2017, p. 61) that positively contributed to an increase in early-childhood EL teacher effectiveness. Haneda et al. reaffirmed the value of personalized instructional support highlighted by previous studies in the area of EL professional learning (McIntyre et al., 2010; F. A. Russell, 2015).

**Professional development workshops with follow-up instructional coaching.** The combination of collective learning experiences within PD workshops and personalized feedback from instructional coaching offer multiple opportunities for novice ECE teachers to increase their knowledge and use of EL instructional strategies confidently. According to Collins et al. (1991), learning new strategies in an authentic environment may be a more effective method in building teachers' skills. In a research study with 93 ECE teachers from five school districts, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found that a combination of workshops with instructional demonstrations, opportunities for active learning, and personalized feedback contributed to high implementation rates of new teaching strategies. Using cluster sampling, the researchers applied quantitative data analysis methods to explore the impact of four types of PD based on Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy (see Table 8). The survey results indicated that a combination of PD workshops and subsequent instructional coaching resulting in mastery experiences was most effective in positively influencing new strategies.



Table 8

*Relationship Between Self-Efficacy Sources and Professional Development Models*

Sources of self-efficacy	Example professional development
Verbal persuasion	“workshops that provide knowledge of a new strategy as well as persuasive claims about its usefulness” (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009, p. 229)
Vicarious experience	“observing another person successfully perform the action that one is contemplating” (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009, p. 230)
Mastery experience	“the actual use of the new knowledge presented in a professional development workshop... The proficiency of a performance creates a new mastery experience that serves as a new source of self-efficacy” (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009, p. 230)
Physiological state	“trying out a new strategy in a supportive workshop setting where encouragement and assistance are available” (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009, p. 231)

*Note.* Sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) relate to PD formats according to researchers’ theory on implementing new teaching strategies. Adapted from Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009).

Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) found that teachers who participated in workshops with no coaching support noted a decline in self-efficacy, along with low instructional implementation levels. This research was important because Tschannen-Moran and McMaster demonstrated that an effective PD model reflected the application of Bandura’s (1986) TRD and Collins et al.’s (1988) cognitive apprenticeship theory. Tschannen-Moran and McMaster reinforced the relationship between teacher participation in PD, knowledge, and instructional change while emphasizing the importance of demonstration and practice of a new skill in an authentic setting with support from a master (Collins et al., 1988).

In a randomized control trial with 45 teachers and 105 students across 12 elementary schools, the researchers further confirmed that participation in a series of PD workshops with ongoing coaching opportunities positively influenced EL growth literacy and language skills over one school year (Babinski, Amendum, Knotek, Sánchez, & Malone, 2018). Babinski et al. (2018) explored using high-impact instructional strategies through literacy instruction with early-

childhood ELs. The intervention, which balanced the introduction of new content with active learning and feedback, leveraged peer collaboration with expert-guided support to facilitate exploration of instructional strategies within the existing grade-level content. For example, the PD program provided specific knowledge of how teachers can provide the best scaffold literacy instruction for ELs, such as teaching academic vocabulary to support necessary English language skills needed to master comprehension. Using teacher observations and student performance measures, the findings indicated that teachers in the PD program consisting of peer collaboration and expert support through workshops and coaching benefited early-childhood ELs in language and literacy skills growth. Babinski et al.'s findings were noteworthy because the researchers extended Tschannen-Moran and McMaster's (2009) findings to suggest that the combination of workshops and coaching create mastery experiences that would benefit the ECE EL population.

In a case study exploring how PD with EL facilitators improved EL instructional quality, F. A. Russell (2012) also investigated how leadership support facilitated collaboration within whole group professional learning and instructional coaching. F. A. Russell analyzed data from a longitudinal case study lasting for one school year at a high school in which 30% of the student population consisted of ELs. The participants included an unidentified number of teacher teams throughout the high school and one EL facilitator. The findings indicated that school leadership support and recognition of the EL facilitator's expertise positively impacted the effectiveness of collaboration on EL instructional quality (F. A. Russell, 2012). By recognizing the importance of an EL expert's role in the school community, F. A. Russell found that leadership created a learning environment that enabled all teacher participants to benefit from EL instructional support. Although the inherent nature of a case study limits the generalizability of F. A. Russell's conclusions, Hegde et al.'s (2018) more recent study had similar findings with a larger mixed-

methods design. Therefore, F. A. Russell's findings, in combination with Hegde's measurable results, may transfer findings of the benefits of a combined professional learning approach to other school contexts.

In a 3-year quasi-experimental study with prekindergarten classrooms in seven elementary schools and child care centers, Griffith, Kimmel, and Biscoe (2010) developed a three-legged PD model providing teachers with training on what to teach, how to use instructional strategies, and when to apply specific teaching practices. The model, known as the Griffith-Kimmel model, integrates the five features of effective PD highlighted by Desimone (2009). The five features, including content focus, collective participation, active learning, learning duration, and content coherence, moved from a professional learning approach that divided content knowledge and classroom implementation.

Through a structure that balanced collective learning and active learning with coaching support, the participants in the intervention group learned new content through interactions with peers (Griffith et al., 2010). The participants also implemented practices through the guidance and support of coaching demonstrations and feedback. By the third year of implementation, the statistical analysis showed that children in the intervention classrooms scored significantly higher on alphabet knowledge, print concepts, and rhyming skills than control classrooms. Although Griffith et al. (2010) recognized that the study validity might increase with a larger sample size that includes more classrooms, findings aligned with experts in the area who advocated for the benefits of a workshop-coaching professional learning approach (Desimone, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

In summary, the needs assessment illuminated novice teachers as the target population for the intervention. Interviews and focus groups further illustrated a need to address limited

novice teacher knowledge about EL instruction. The practitioner-researcher connected Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Collins et al.'s (1989) cognitive apprenticeship theory to provide the theoretical foundation for a professional learning design that might increase teacher knowledge and use EL instruction. The intervention literature built on the theoretical framework by synthesizing two types of professional learning that offered a collective and personalized instructional learning experience. The following intervention proposed a professional learning design modeled after Tschannen-Moran and McMaster's (2009) findings on the benefits of workshops and instructional support to increase novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices.

### **Proposed Intervention: Expert-Novice Teacher Collaboration Model**

Although PD workshops and instructional coaching models may have individual advantages in providing teachers with opportunities to increase knowledge and use of EL instructional strategies, strategically weaving these two approaches together may minimize the drawbacks of choosing a single design. For the following intervention, PD workshops and instructional support combine to propose a design to increase novice ECE teacher knowledge and the use of EL instructional methods. A professional learning design supporting the development of content knowledge through PD workshops and opportunities for applied practice of new skills with instructional support would present multiple touchpoints for novice teachers to increase EL instructional knowledge and apply it in the ECE classroom setting.

Although limited expert resources in the professional context present challenges in implementing instructional coaching cycles, the feedback component within active learning cycles embedded between PD workshops will provide a foundation for opportunities to explore knowledge gained through the presentation of new content. By giving teachers the opportunity to

gain new knowledge in a PD workshop and providing feedback upon opportunities to implement those strategies in ECE classrooms, the intervention builds on the growth mindset to learn and practice EL instructional strategies illuminated in the needs assessment.

### **Sustaining Long-Term Instructional Change**

Although the current resources in the professional context are sufficient to establish a starting point for PD workshops and instructional coaching, maintaining partnerships and gaining access to available resources on a long-term basis influences the long-term effectiveness of increasing novice ECE teacher knowledge of EL instructional strategies. According to Choi and Morrison (2014), school budgets make it difficult to establish and maintain needed professional learning resources that keep up with the growing demand.

According to the Chapter 2 needs assessment data, teacher confusion between which resources were available and accessible to support instruction further compounded the inability to plan and deliver EL instruction. In a mixed-methods study investigating how PD opportunities best meet the needs of school environments with diverse student populations, the researchers found that a combination of in-person and online approaches to ongoing PD supported teachers in changing their practice to meet EL needs (Choi & Morrison, 2014). Face-to-face meetings, online collaboration, individual mentoring, and group mentoring reflected the use of Baker and Nelson's (as cited in Choi & Morrison, 2014) bricolage principles to meet the growing needs of ELs despite the insufficient educational resources. The partial use of teacher classrooms to meet the authentic learning setting component of Collins et al. (1988) cognitive apprenticeship principles may aid in utilizing resources that are readily available for the coaching component of the intervention. The conclusion summarizes the professional learning intervention about preparing ECE educators for the EL population increase.

## **Conclusion**

The EL school age population is growing, and teachers are unprepared to meet the instructional demands associated with teaching increasingly diverse student groups (Shea et al., 2018). Although the number of ELs in public schools is expected to expand at an increasing rate shortly (NEA, 2008), there are several theories and little action in response to preparing educators for the changing demographics of early-childhood classrooms (Shea et al., 2018). This problem becomes more significant as ELs will make up a quarter of all public-school students by 2025 (NEA, 2008). Teachers can use workshops and instructional support opportunities to model best practices for novice educators and provide opportunities for novice educators to receive feedback in authentic classroom settings with ELs (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Therefore, the combination of workshops with classroom support has the potential to more quickly increase educator preparedness for EL instructional methods. The professional learning intervention design consisting of workshops and individualized instructional support presents a chance to establish ongoing collaboration to meet the pedagogical needs of today's early-childhood EL teachers and students.

## **Chapter 4: Intervention Procedure and Program Evaluation Methodology**

As discussed in Chapter 1, ELs are the fastest-growing subpopulation of public-school students (NCTE, 2008) and are expected to comprise nearly one-fourth of the school population by 2025 (NEA, 2008). The number of well-equipped educators is insufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing EL population (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Worthington et al., 2011). Therefore, ELs continue to underperform (Banerjee, Alsaman, & Alqafari, 2016). The needs assessment data showed that novice ECE teachers, teachers with five or fewer years of experience, were less equipped for teaching ELs compared to experienced teacher peers.

The existing intervention literature indicated that opportunities for teachers to collaborate and acquire greater knowledge about EL instruction was limited, underfunded, or inauthentic to classroom needs (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Teemant, 2014). Further, the literature identified two key approaches to teacher training—workshops and coaching—as potential steps toward increased teacher preparedness (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). The intervention would support novice ECE teachers in working with ELs by providing training in six PD workshops interwoven with four instructional support opportunities with an expert educator. Given the number of novice teachers in the practitioner-researcher’s school district, the researcher targeted a teacher population with a substantial influence on EL learning experiences.

### **Study Purpose**

According to the needs assessment, novice ECE teachers reported a need for relevant pedagogical knowledge to instruct ELs and shift beliefs about EL teaching and learning. The teachers demonstrated interest in collaborating with other educators to improve their EL instruction. The veteran ECE teachers had high self-efficacy and greater EL instructional

strategies. The purpose of the subsequent intervention was to understand how novice teacher participation in PD workshops and intersession instructional coaching influences novice teacher preparation for ELs in ECE classrooms. The intervention intended to provide 12 weeks of PD workshops and intersession instructional support for the novice, ECE teachers working with ELs. The following research questions were created to guide the intervention study:

- RQ1: To what extent did implementation of the PD workshops and instructional support align with the proposed intervention plan?
- RQ2: How do ECE teachers describe their experiences in EL PD workshops and with instructional support from an expert educator?
- RQ3: How has the intervention shaped teacher perceptions about their self-efficacy in working with ELs?
- RQ4: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices?
- RQ5: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher use of EL instructional practices?
- RQ6: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher self-efficacy in EL instructional practices?

### **Research Design**

The proposed intervention followed a triangulation mixed-methods research design, which is based on the convergent parallel design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). It took place during the 2019 to 2020 school year at an urban elementary-middle school in a northeastern city in the United States. As indicated by the logic model (see Appendix D), the research questions supported the intervention's short-term goals. The short-term goals included



increasing ECE teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in working with ELs (see Appendix D). Process evaluation measures were used to assess fidelity of the intervention, while outcome evaluation measures were used to assess the goals of the intervention. The practitioner-researcher related quantitative and qualitative analyses, according to the triangulation mixed-methods design (see Appendix E), and drew conclusions based on the research questions. A visual model adapted from Creswell et al. (2003) showed key components of the triangulation mixed-methods design (see Appendix E).

Researchers of the triangulation mixed-methods design intend to gather and analyze different corresponding data to understand the intervention and its related outcomes (Creswell et al., 2003). A researcher can apply the triangulation mixed-methods design, according to Creswell et al. (2003), to minimize the weaknesses and strengthen the advantages of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. One specific advantage of this mixed-methods design is that a practitioner-researcher can use quantitative data to confirm qualitative findings while collecting both types of data simultaneously (Creswell et al., 2003). The one-phase triangulation design involved collecting data simultaneously and integrating those data to interpret the results.

**Process evaluation.** Process evaluators explore how well the intervention functions regarding reaching the intended teachers, providing quality PD, and assessing how the intervention works toward the intended outcomes (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2003). Fidelity of adherence, a component of process evaluation, reflects the degree to which the intervention was executed as planned by the practitioner-researcher (Saunders, Evans, & Joshi, 2005). Fidelity of implementation, according to Saunders et al. (2005), may be applied summatively to assess the implementation of intervention components. For this study, the fidelity of implementation was defined for the two main participant activities in the intervention: PD workshops and

instructional support meetings. High fidelity was defined as completing six PD sessions, five exit tickets, and four intersession instructional support opportunities. Low fidelity was defined as completing three to five PD sessions, three to five exit tickets, and three to five intersession instructional support sessions. Lack of fidelity was participation in less than three PD sessions, less than three exit tickets, and less than three intersession instructional supports.

Process evaluation also includes participant satisfaction with the intervention (Saunders et al., 2005). If teachers demonstrated low participation and lack of commitment to implementing new strategies, the chances were greater that participants are dissatisfied with the overall process. As recommended by Rossi et al. (2003) regarding developing a process evaluation, the interview questions provided an opportunity for novice teacher ECE teachers to describe satisfaction with the intervention content and collaboration with an expert teacher.

**Outcome evaluation.** The intended intervention outcomes included an increase in knowledge of EL instruction, use of EL instruction, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. The long-term goals included an increase in ECE EL achievement due to the greater number of prepared teachers. The practitioner-researcher measured indicators, including knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction, to evaluate the PD workshops and intersession instructional support intervention success.

The following sections include participants, measures, and instrumentation for the proposed intervention. Two instruments, a survey and interview protocol, measured novice teacher data according to the proposed research questions. The connection between instruments, measures, and research questions is illustrated in the summary matrix (see Appendix F).

## **The Participants**

The target population for the study included novice ECE teachers working with ELs in Mid-Atlantic state urban schools. The participants were identified using purposive sampling to leverage the availability of teachers in the researcher's professional context. The practitioner-researcher used purposive sampling by applying a homogeneous sampling strategy to select "information-rich cases" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This sampling strategy resulted in teachers whose selection was essential to answering the proposed questions (Patton, 1990).

The participants varied in several years teaching (first-year teacher through the fifth-year teacher), training (alternative or traditional), certification, and previous EL PD and intersession instructional support experiences. Based on the current availability of novice ECE teachers within the professional context, four novice ECE teachers participated in the intervention. The final number of participants included three first-year teachers and one fifth-year teacher.

## **Measures and Data Sources**

The intervention study included quantitative and qualitative data sources. The quantitative data source included a survey measuring ECE teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in working with ELs. The qualitative data sources included a reflective journal, PD session activities, intersession support notes, and post-intervention follow-up interviews with novice ECE teacher participants.

**Teacher Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy Scale.** The survey instrument (see Appendix G) provided pretest and posttest data utilizing items from the KUSE Scale (Thibault, 2017). Three Likert-scale demographic questions were added to collect data on teaching experience and training experience (see Appendix H). One close-ended question was added for participants to indicate interest in participating in follow-up interviews. The researcher used the

survey with a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item from the knowledge category included the following: “I have knowledge about using ELL students’ home language skills to make content comprehensible.” A sample item from the use category included the following: “I use diagnostic tools and formative assessments to monitor ELL students’ learning.” A sample item from the self-efficacy category included the following: “In my teaching, I am certain I can monitor ELLs students learning and subsequently adjust instruction.” The practitioner-researcher used data from the pretest and posttest survey to explore variables including knowledge of EL instruction, use of EL instruction, self-efficacy in EL instruction, years of teaching, and training experience.

**Qualitative instruments.** The practitioner-researcher distributed exit tickets during the last five minutes of each PD session. Exit tickets included topic-specific questions, such as, “How can you implement [focus principle] into your instruction?” The practitioner-researcher kept a journal as a tool to note experiences and thoughts before, during, and after PD workshops and intersession instructional support. The reflective journal was used to mitigate any limitations associated with researcher bias during qualitative data collection (Guba, 1981). For example, the researcher recorded feelings, actions, and gestures associated with each component of the intervention.

The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted following the intervention on EL PD and intersession instructional support. Interviews were based on Fitts and Gross’ (2012) survey instrument and interview questions about the variables of knowledge, use, and self-efficacy resulting from participation in the PD sessions and intersession instructional support. A sample question included the following: “How has your instructional approach to students who are acquiring English as a second language changed during your participation in the EL PD?”

## **Intervention**

The proposed intervention was intended to include 12 weeks of professional learning during the 2019 to 2020 school year (see Table 9). The proposed intervention included six, 45-minute, in-person PD sessions and four intersession instructional support opportunities using the Stanford Graduate School of Education's (2013) *Key Principles for English Learner Instruction*. The practitioner-researcher served as the expert teacher in all sessions and intersession meetings for the entirety of the intervention. The PD sessions were planned to occur during the school day. The sessions should have lasted 45 minutes and began within 10 minutes of the intended start time. Each session began with the participants sharing positive classroom experiences and concluded with an exit ticket.

The first session, a pre-session, introduced the participants to the PD focus. The participants were asked to draw and share a picture of EL instruction. The expert teacher provided an overview of all principles, and participants engaged in a collaborative puzzle activity. After the first session, the practitioner-researcher presented the four focus principles.

Sessions 2 through 5 followed the same protocol and occurred from mid-February to early March. First, the practitioner-researcher introduced the focus principle and presented a video for participants to watch and reflect on strategies to implement. Following each video, participants brainstormed how to implement the focus principle with their students. The participants engaged in a context-specific strategy facilitated by the practitioner-researcher to use the principle within their curriculum. The participants received materials to apply the principle in the session and their classrooms. The sessions concluded with planning time, as indicated by the agenda, to discuss how each participant planned to integrate the principle into their instruction. During the planning time, the teachers discussed the value of having resources connected to the

curriculum as a key component in how they planned to integrate the PD content into their instruction. The sixth and final workshop provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect on current instruction, discuss intervention experience, and plan interview logistics.

The intervention included intersession instructional support with the expert teacher following PD Sessions 2 through 5. The intersession instructional support occurred following each session that introduced new content and intended to occur during a time selected by teacher participants. The intersession instructional support provided novice teachers with an opportunity to reflect on implementing the principles introduced during PD sessions. For example, the intersession instructional support following the second PD session supported the focus principle discussed during that session. The practitioner-researcher created an organizer to guide each meeting (see Appendix I), which lasted between 15 to 20 minutes. The practitioner researcher recorded notes throughout the entire intervention within a reflective journal.

### **Data Collection**

The practitioner-researcher collected data based on the triangulation mixed-methods design (see Creswell et al., 2003). The quantitative data for proximal intervention outcomes were collected using the adapted KUSE Scale (Thibault, 2017). The qualitative data for implementation and proximal intervention outcomes were collected using novice teacher interviews, PD session activities, intersession support meeting notes, and the reflective journal.

**Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy Scale.** The researcher sent a message by e-mail to all ECE teachers working with ELs in the professional context, asking for voluntary participation as part of the study. The email included the nature and logistics of the study. Follow-up communication to participants who indicated an interest in participation provided information on completing the informed consent form and presurvey. The practitioner-researcher offered to

address any questions or concerns after in-person delivery of the presurvey and informed consent. The adapted KUSE Scale included information on demographics and questions about their interest in participating in an interview. The pretest and posttest survey window lasted for 2 weeks. A reminder e-mail was sent approximately one week after each survey distribution.

**Novice teacher interviews.** The practitioner-researcher sent an email to the participants indicating potential interview times. The researcher intended to conduct 25-30 minute interviews in a convenient, private room in the school setting. The interviews consisted of five questions, with approximately five minutes allotted for each question. The interviews were audio-recorded for transcribing and coding responses.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Creswell et al.'s (2003) triangulation mixed-methods design, the practitioner-researcher collected data simultaneously and analyzed data together to interpret results. The quantitative data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The qualitative data were collected and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2008) thematic analysis.

**Quantitative data.** The demographic data and Likert-scale data were uploaded to SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data from the adapted KUSE Scale (Thibault, 2017). Descriptive statistics included frequency and mean scores for novice teacher data. Subscale scores were analyzed for three factors: knowledge, use, and self-efficacy. Due to the small sample size, statistical significance was not calculated. Quantitative survey data were triangulated with qualitative interview data to strengthen the credibility of the results.

**Qualitative data.** Qualitative data from novice teacher interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The thematic analysis consisted of six phases of coding (see Table 9; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis was useful because of its

flexibility and ease in using it as a novice practitioner-researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Research Questions 4, 5, and 6 explored knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction.

Using descriptive coding, the interview responses were coded according to the type of knowledge, frequency of use, and degree of self-efficacy (see Appendix J; Table J1).

Table 9

*Thematic Analysis Application to Needs Assessment Qualitative Data Analysis*

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading data, noting initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work about the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating to the analysis to the researcher question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

*Note.* Thematic analysis phases and descriptions. Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).



## **Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion**

This chapter contains the findings of a professional learning intervention for novice ECE teachers working with ELs at an elementary-middle school in a large, urban school district. The intervention occurred between the beginning of February and late May of 2020. The process and outcome research questions presented in Chapter 4 guide the intervention findings and subsequent discussion.

Midway through the intervention's implementation, the nation experienced a global pandemic (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). The global pandemic caused stay-at-home orders by most communities, including the one in which this intervention took place. Due to the stay-at-home order, schools continued instruction through online learning methods (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). These restrictions placed some unanticipated changes on PD. Although Sessions 1 through 4 were implemented as planned, the global pandemic forced school leaders to transition to online instruction; thus, the intervention concluded under an online learning format. This change is discussed in more detail in this chapter.

This chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for future research directions inspired by this intervention and guidance for additional school leaders looking to support novice ECE teachers with the knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instructional practices. The practitioner-researcher used a triangulation mixed-methods design (Creswell et al., 2003). The researcher used this design to collect qualitative and quantitative data to explore the research questions.

### **Description of Intervention**

The following section entails a discussion of the process of implementation. The section includes adaptations to the intervention plan according to data from the practitioner-researcher's

reflective journal. The changes to the original intervention plan are described in chronological order from the initial recruitment process to the final interview sessions. The information about specific changes to professional learning delivery amid the global pandemic occurrence is provided following Session 4.

**Recruitment, presurvey, and consent process.** In mid-January, the practitioner-researcher recruited eligible teachers, as described in Chapter 4. The recruitment process went as planned. Before the first PD session, the practitioner-researcher met with two school leaders to finalize the intervention schedule. The focus principles for the intervention, selected from Stanford Graduate School of Education’s (2013) *Key Principles for English Learner Instruction*, included considering English proficiency, leveraging home language and culture, fostering EL autonomy, and practicing discipline-specific methods. Table 10 shows the focus principles and accompanying sessions.

Table 10

*Professional Development Whole Group Session Content of Key Principles for English Learner Instruction*

Session	Content
1	Introduction and logistics
2	Consideration for English proficiency level and prior schooling
3	Leveraging home language, cultural assets, and prior knowledge
4	Fostering EL autonomy
5	Discipline-specific practices
6	Review and logistics

**Sessions 1 through 4.** The practitioner-researcher served as the expert teacher in all sessions and intersession meetings for the entirety of the intervention. The PD sessions were conducted during the school day in the library, and the teachers were always reminded beforehand via email. The sessions lasted 45 minutes and began within 10 minutes of the intended start time. Each session began with participants sharing positive classroom experiences

and concluded with an exit ticket (see Appendix K). The only variance with participant attendance occurred during Sessions 2 and 3. The makeup sessions were held the following day. The practitioner-researcher recorded notes in the reflective journal immediately following every session.

The first session, a pre-session introducing participants and the PD focus occurred in early February. First, the practitioner-researcher confirmed the completion of required documentation for intervention participation and presented intervention logistics. The participants were asked to draw and share a picture of EL instruction (see Appendix L). The expert teacher provided an overview of all EL instructional principles, and participants engaged in a collaborative puzzle activity as planned. At the session's conclusion, the practitioner-researcher presented the four focus principles. The participants remained eager to see that their interests aligned with the selected principles.

Sessions 2, 3, and 4 followed the same preplanned protocol and occurred from mid-February to early March. First, the practitioner-researcher introduced the focus principle and presented a video for participants to watch and reflect on strategies to implement. Following each video, the participants brainstormed how to implement the focus principle with their students. The participants engaged in a context-specific strategy facilitated by the practitioner-researcher to use the principle within their curriculum. The participants received materials, such as student activities or anchor charts, to use the principle in the session and their classrooms. The sessions concluded with planning time, as indicated by the agenda, to discuss how each participant planned to integrate the principle into their instructional strategies. The participants also completed exit tickets, which were important to establish a subsequent examination of process fidelity.

The intersession support meetings occurred after the sessions when a new focus principle was taught. New principles were introduced in Sessions 2, 3, 4, and 5 (see Table 10). Session 1 served as an introduction pre-session, and Session 6 was a wrap-up session. Following Sessions 2, 3, and 4, the practitioner-researcher confirmed the time and date of intersession instructional support with participants. The intersession support occurred in an individual teacher classroom or a communal space during lunch or planning time. As planned, the practitioner-researcher recorded notes on the intersession support graphic organizer to capture participant responses to the four questions and recorded observations in the reflective journal.

**Sessions 5 and 6.** Between Sessions 4 and 5, the leaders of the school district in which the research took place transitioned to online learning due to state orders during a global pandemic. For the remainder of the intervention, the practitioner-researcher applied Allen and Seaman's (2016) definition of online instruction to operationalize the professional learning delivery format used during the global pandemic. As defined by Allen and Seaman, online professional learning comprised at least 80% of online content. Sessions 5 and 6 occurred synchronously via Zoom software to allow for essential, real-time interactions between participants (McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009).

Because of the unpredictability of global pandemic restrictions and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) amendment process, the transition to online learning sessions resulted in an extended break between Sessions 4 intersession support and Session 5. Additionally, participants had to complete and submit a revised consent form electronically (see Appendix M) before resuming the intervention. Due to the amendment process, the total intervention occurred over 17 weeks with a 5-week hiatus. The average length of time between remaining whole group sessions and intersession support remained the same. Although the transition to online learning

for Session 4 required ingenuity in making changes to the presentation format while retaining PD content and goals, teachers made a similar effort to utilize resources and implement PD ideas with their classes. However, due to the low student attendance rate during online learning, teachers noted limitations in practicing new strategies online with ELs.

The researcher reimagined the originally planned PD delivery mode and format to ensure that the suggested strategies for principle implementation could be easily adapted to online learning. All resources for Session 5 could be used in an online learning or in-person classroom setting. Moreover, any suggested strategies for implementation were emailed to the participants instead of providing hard copies as in the previous sessions. The online learning continued with the same student curriculum; thus, teachers continued to modify and use previous and current session resources that best fit with their current content. All participants were present and enabled their video settings to communicate during online PD Sessions 5 and 6. Like the structure of in-person Sessions 1 through 4, online learning Sessions 5 and 6 began with participants sharing good things and concluded with an exit ticket question using the Zoom chat window.

The online sessions began within five minutes of the intended start time and lasted for approximately 45 minutes. Session 5 occurred in late April and concentrated on the first principle, which focused on discipline-specific practices. Session 6 occurred in early May included a review of principles and final logistics. During Session 5, participants viewed an online video to support leveraging the principle in their instruction and discussed integrating curriculum-aligned strategies that support the focus principle. Session 5 concluded with planning time to integrate the principle into online or in-person learning. The participants completed the exit ticket in the Zoom chat window, and Session 5 intersession support meetings occurred the

week following the fifth PD session via phone. The practitioner-researcher recorded notes on a digital graphic organizer while participants responded to the planned questions. During Session 6, participants reviewed each principle and composed a new picture of EL instruction.

**Postsurvey implementation and interviews.** The practitioner-researcher emailed electronic copies of the postsurvey to participants following PD Session 6. All participants completed the surveys within two weeks. The participants received a choice of dates to conduct the online interview with an outside researcher. Before the interviews, the practitioner-researcher and the outside researcher discussed the interview questions. All participants attended interviews during the week following Session 6. The outside researcher shared interview audio-recordings with the practitioner-researcher. The final interviews lasted 15 minutes and included five questions (see Appendix N).

## **Findings**

The qualitative method for answering research questions included descriptive and in vivo coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) for four data sources. The data sources included PD session documents, practitioner-researcher reflective journal notes, intersession support meetings, and interview responses. The participants were assigned a label (A, B, C, and D) for reflective journals, intersession support meetings, and interview response data. The PD session documents were anonymous; therefore, the practitioner-researcher could not attribute comments to any one participant.

The practitioner-researcher first applied a priori descriptive coding by creating a phrase to highlight evidence from the transcripts based on each research question (see Miles et al., 2014). Following the a priori descriptive coding process, the practitioner-researcher applied emergent in vivo coding by taking a word or phrase that emerged from the journal or transcript to label that

section of the data (see Table 11; Miles et al., 2014). Applying a term from the transcripts as the code for qualitative data ensured that the themes reflected the exact thoughts of participants. The coding process was successful in capturing all trends in the participants' experiences throughout the intervention.

Table 11

*Data Analysis Sample Codes, Examples, and Themes*

Code	Example	Themes	
Previous EL PD	"I feel like I pretty much always learned simple things to help teach ELs."	Perceived relationship between intervention participation and self-efficacy	
Immediate use	"Every time, every week, I would get results based on whatever principle we were doing. And then I was kind of able to just like embed those moving forward."		
Accountable	"Checking in between the sessions helped me keep on track with it too, and just kind of held me accountable for it."	Ease of access to timely and personalized expert-led instructional support	
Feedback	"So, any question I would ever have. She [expert teacher] would just, you know, answer right away."		
Design	"I was able to like go through it and break it down a little, and then if I need anything, she made herself available."		
Order	"I love the cycle. Talk about something, do something, implement something."	Overall intervention design conducive to learning	
Resources	"We never walked out of a session empty-handed. Always with supports that I could go right into my classroom."		
Connections to context	"[Expert teacher] always had stuff already prepared, and we would work on it and then have an end product at the end."		
Learning partner	"If I needed any help implementing something, checking in between sessions helped me."		
Online learning	"I feel like, with the last sessions online, the switch was like seamless. We were still able to meet."		Knowledge through active Learning
Knowledge	"After the sessions, I definitely think that my idea of what it looks like to work with ELs has changed. I definitely feel like I am able to do it like more professionally."		
Curriculum	"You know, just the support that she gave us. For example, there was a poem for [literacy]. And we actually wrote down the poem, and we have visuals, and I actually have like picture cards."		Connecting the why and the how of instructional strategies
Experience	"So my knowledge has really increased, and it's just getting more experience like this experience helps."		
Strategy importance	"I will implement the notice and wonder cards. This will provide a visual tool for all students to understand their role."		Multiple perspectives provided by peer collaboration
Internalizing principles	"I feel like this principle means making things developmentally appropriate level so they can talk about it."		
Long-term EL instructional value	"If they actually understand what they are talking about, they can have conversations with each other and teachers."	Universal instructional benefits	
Other teachers	"I liked working with other teachers because I could hear different peoples' ideas and point of view."		
Expert collaboration	"Getting others ideas and hearing what your [expert] thoughts were was helpful during the session."	Expert teacher as accountable learning partner	
Vertical collaboration	"[The intervention] gave me a chance to collaborate with teachers that I normally wouldn't, and it helped me see how the principles apply going upwards."		
Universal benefits	"I found that a lot of the things that I do for the ELs also just benefits the whole class, especially since they are so young."	Curriculum-embedded context	
Alignment to existing instruction	"It's [EL instruction] been starting to be really pushed in, so it was cool seeing the alignment to what [the expert teacher] was saying and our curriculum."		



By combining a priori codes and emergent codes, the practitioner-researcher arrived at potential themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process (see Table 11). For example, the practitioner-researcher combined the a priori code (*support*) with emergent codes (*individualized advice*, *timely feedback*, and *available and accessible*) to arrive at the potential theme (*ease of access to timely and personalized expert support*). The quantitative method for answering RQ4, RQ5, and RQ6 included descriptive statistics for presurvey and postsurvey participant responses. For the quantitative analysis, the Likert-scale responses of the dependent categorical and ordinal variables included knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. Throughout the intervention, RQ3 related to RQ6; therefore, RQ3 was eliminated from the intervention findings.

**Fidelity of implementation findings.** The intervention must align with the PD plan to address fidelity in adherence within the first process research question (see Dusenbury et al., 2003). Additionally, the practitioner-researcher must recognize any changes to the initial plan. The first process research question is discussed in this subsection.

RQ1 was the following: To what extent did implementation of the PD workshops and instructional support align with the proposed intervention plan? The discussion of this research question included a review of program differentiation, dose, program quality, and participant responsiveness as related to the alignment between final intervention implementation and the intervention plan. The practitioner-researcher's reflective journal notes were the main data source for all workshops and intersession support meetings to measure adherence to the professional learning plan. All preselected EL instructional principles were presented in a series of PD workshops. The notes included the time associated with introducing and interacting with each principle during PD workshops. The intersession support meetings occurred the week

following the introduction of new content in PD sessions. The length of time designated for each intersession support meeting compared to participant use of principles was also noted. Because there was a shift to online learning after Session 4 due to the global pandemic, the online sessions were resourcefully planned to mirror in-person professional learning experiences.

Program differentiation refers to other professional learning or support programs that may influence intervention outcomes. The main data sources for program differentiation were the demographic survey and interviews. The participants indicated experiences with past professional learning and teacher training with EL instructional content on the survey. Three out of four participants indicated that they had received training for working with ELs during preservice teaching experiences or alternative teacher certification programs. However, only one participant indicated participating in PD for working with ELs during the teaching career.

The dose was measured by participant responses to PD workshops and intersession support meetings. The participant conversations during PD sessions indicated that the PD delivered was sufficient. During intersession support meetings, Participant C noted the importance of PD content in her everyday instruction: “Now, we are not hindering the vocab, but we are making it more accessible for students.” Participant B similarly reflected, “Having you [expert teacher] there helps give me ideas, and it helps me enhance my own classroom.” Following the final PD session, all participants commented on the value of expert teacher presence within each feature of the intervention. Participant D reflected, “You [expert teacher] guided the process. It [PD] was definitely helpful.”

The program quality was measured by the expert teacher’s role in modeling and facilitating the use of EL instructional principles in the ECE classroom. Professional learning content was chosen based on Thibault’s (2017) research on principles for EL instruction

(Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2013). The structure in which the expert teacher introduced and guided active practice with new content was guided by the cognitive apprenticeship theory (Brown et al., 1989).

Further, the participants found the frequency and content of instructional support sessions beneficial to EL instruction. As noted in the reflective journal during an intersession support meeting, Participant D showed an appreciation for the intervention structure: “I love the cycle. Talk about something, do something, implement something.” Participant responsiveness refers to participant engagement levels (Dusenbury et al., 2003). All participants attended every session and actively participated in discussions and written activities. The participants were also present for the entirety of all sessions and intersession support meetings.

As noted by the reflective journal, participants took notes during videos, voluntarily discussed ways to implement the principle during PD planning time, and requested personal access to PD resources following each session. The participants self-reflect on engagement with professional learning by completing an exit ticket at the end of each workshop and responding to questions during intersession support meetings. Following a PD session, one participant internalized the value of the focus principle by writing, “[What resonated most] was the importance of giving the students opportunities to process information and giving more chances for them to speak [in the classroom].”

**Participant experience findings.** The participant experience research questions were important for providing insight into how intervention components and overall participation influenced changes in EL instructional knowledge, use, and self-efficacy. The findings on participant intervention experience answered RQ2 addressing participant experiences.

RQ2 was the following: How do ECE teachers describe their experiences in EL PD workshops and with instructional support from an expert educator? Two themes emerged from the participant intervention experience in the ECE EL professional learning intervention. The themes concerned ease of access to timely and personalized expert-led support and an overall intervention design conducive to learning and applying skills to individual classrooms. The three main data sources for these findings included PD session activities, reflective journal notes, and participant interviews. Through emergent coding and a priori coding for constructs, the potential themes emerged about intervention design components specifically associated with participant outcomes (see Table 11). Within the intervention design, a PD experience with accessible and personalized instructional support appeared as the most valuable component. These themes illuminate a positive connection between intervention participation and increased self-efficacy in EL instruction.

*Ease of access to timely and personalized expert-led instructional support.* The timely and personalized feedback emerged as a valuable intervention component embedded within an overall appreciation for the accountability provided by the intersession support meetings. The interview responses indicated a deep appreciation for the frequency and content of instructional support sessions. In response to an interview question asking whether intersessions were helpful, Participant B answered,

It [intersession support] kept me aware of what I was doing and how I was using the principle in my teaching, and it was like midway like what have I been doing and what can I still work on before the next session. So, I do think those were very helpful.

Participant D also affirmed the importance of having intersession support meetings in keeping up with professional learning implementation expectations: “She [expert teacher] was always

reaching out in between sessions to see how things were going from learning about that principle.”

The timely feedback within each intersession support sessions made these meetings even more helpful. Participant D stated, “So, any question, I would ever have. She [expert teacher] would just, you know, answer right away, and I didn't have to wait.” Several participants highlighted having an expert teacher available in between PD sessions to answer questions specific to individual implementation. For example, Participant C responded the following to an interview question about the value of intersession support:

Now, this was very helpful, like, if I needed her outside of the session. She emailed me information that I needed. The session, I was able to like go through it and break it down a little, and then if I need anything, she made herself available.

Participant B similarly expressed that the expert teacher’s availability increased confidence in reflecting on the whole group sessions and reaching out after having a few days to consider the different components of each principle.

***Overall intervention design conducive to learning.*** The teachers found the intervention format more helpful than they initially thought. The intersession support meeting documents and participant interview responses indicated positive intervention experiences due to the PD structure, content, and resources. Participant D initially admitted, “I wasn't exactly sure what I was signing up for in the beginning.” However, the participant attributed unanticipated satisfaction with the intervention to the expert’s ability to personalize supports and resources to each classroom. Moreover, Participant D emphasized, “We never walked out of a session empty-handed. Always with supports that I could go right into my classroom and just start using them. I just like the focus was something that helps us that same day.” Participant D also summarized

her experience by acknowledging, “The sessions are definitely helpful. Often I did things on the fly without considering. Now, I am talking about it and thinking about it, so it makes me feel more prepared.”

The multiple learning platforms, including alternating whole group sessions with intersession support meetings, facilitated opportunities to build on the much-appreciated connection between EL instructional strategies and curriculum. Regarding the intervention design, Participant D affirmed the importance of connecting the PD content and curriculum:

So, I really liked the way that was set up, it kind of set us up for success in that [the expert teacher] always had stuff already prepared, and we would work on it and then have an end product at the end of every session.

The addition of intersession meetings supported in teacher implementation and reflection throughout the intervention. Participant D acknowledged, “If I needed any help implementing something, checking in between sessions helped me.” Lastly, Participant D insisted that the transition to online learning maintained the same benefits as in-person instruction, despite being unable to reach all ELs due to low online attendance following Session 5. Participant D claimed, “I feel like, with the last sessions online, the switch was like seamless. We were still able to meet. She still shared resources like it was great.” Although the practitioner-researcher adapted the design for Sessions 5 and 6, the participants continued exploring EL instructional strategies in the new online learning environment. They demonstrated similar satisfaction with overall PD experience.

***Summary of participant experience findings.*** The participant experience findings showed the overall intervention design was conducive to teacher learning as a valuable theme within the intervention. The personalized expert-led support with accountability created an

intervention experience to support novice teacher self-efficacy with EL instruction. The participants consistently attributed participation in the intervention to their increased use and confidence in planning and integrating EL instructional strategies into the existing curriculum. In reflecting on the intervention benefits, the participants noted timely, personalized feedback as opportunities to adjust EL instructional strategy implementation and maximize the integration of new learning into instruction. Participant reflections on content usefulness and expert teacher effectiveness can indicate program quality (Dusenbury et al., 2003). Participant responsiveness to PD content through meaningful implementation of EL strategies can show the value of an intervention with the whole group and individualized support.

**Expert instructional support and teacher knowledge.** Exploring the connection between instructional support and teacher knowledge is important in understanding how certain aspects of expert guidance influenced the overall change in ECE teacher understanding of EL instruction throughout the professional learning experience. The findings on instructional support and teacher knowledge answer the following outcome research question. RQ4 was the following: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices?

Quantitative analysis of pre and postsurvey data indicated that participants increased their knowledge of EL instructional practices throughout the intervention. Table 12 shows the overall mean scores by variable for presurvey and postsurvey responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) on a Likert scale. The presentation of quantitative data in Table 12 aligned with how KUSE Scale data were presented in previous research (Thibault, 2017). Novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices was assessed by Items 1 to 7. Regarding teacher knowledge, the presurvey overall mean knowledge score for all participants was 3.79,

and the postsurvey overall mean knowledge score for all participants was 5.82. The minimum knowledge score on the presurvey was 3, and the maximum knowledge score was 5. The minimum knowledge score on the postsurvey was 5, and the maximum knowledge score was 6. For these participants, the pattern in mean scores between the presurvey and postsurvey indicated an increase in teacher EL instructional knowledge.

Table 12

*Overall Mean Scores for Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy in English Learner Instruction*

Variable	Presurvey							Postsurvey						
	6	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	6	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
Knowledge	0	6	10	12	0	0	3.79 (.66)	23	5	0	0	0	0	5.82 (.21)
Use	0	6	10	12	0	0	3.57 (.39)	17	11	0	0	0	0	5.60 (.49)
Self- efficacy	0	9	13	6	0	0	4.1 (.77)	21	7	0	0	0	0	5.75 (.50)

*Note.* Respondents indicated knowledge, use, and self-efficacy of key principles for EL instruction on a Likert-scale survey ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

The qualitative analysis of interview responses, intersession support meeting notes, and PD session documents agreed with the quantitative data analysis. The qualitative data analysis illuminated active learning experiences and session emphasis on the importance of EL principles in ECE instruction as intervention components that might have contributed to the increase in participant knowledge of EL instruction instructional practices.

***Knowledge through active learning.*** During the intersession support meetings and post-intervention interviews, the participants attributed their increased knowledge to the apprenticeship components of the professional learning experiences. The practical components of whole group sessions, such as opportunities to reflect on the instructional videos, helped participants understand the principle by seeing it in action and planning out how it would look with their students. Participant D reflected on knowledge growth throughout the trajectory of the



intervention: “After the sessions, I definitely think that my idea of what it looks like to work with ELs has changed. I definitely feel like I am able to do it like more professionally than I was before.”

Following each video, teachers discussed why the principle was important to their instruction. The participants found these discussions valuable to their knowledge base. In a review of Session 4 exit ticket responses, one participant wrote, “Knowing all the background behind it and having more knowledge on it was super helpful.”

After each session, the participants found the expert-created materials aligning each principle with their current curriculum to be instrumental in fully comprehending how EL instruction fits into their daily practice. Participant C exclaimed,

You know, just the support that she gave us. For example, there was a poem for [literacy]. And we actually wrote down the poem, and we have visuals, and I actually have like picture cards with English and Spanish, and the kids really love that principle we were doing.

Finally, the time for implementation and reflection within each intersession cycle gave teachers the in-classroom experience to fully understand the meaning and value of EL instructional strategies in their classroom. Participant C stated, “So my knowledge has really increased, and it's just getting more experience like this experience helps.” Participant B shared a similar sentiment: “I feel like having those visuals and materials and having the knowledge how to make them accessible for ELs has helped me set up the lesson and prepare and do a mini-lesson.” Having the resources to implement the strategies in the classroom allowed participants to apply their new knowledge of EL strategies and see it in action within their instruction. Participant A proposed that learning about one principle increased her overall knowledge on how

to work with ELs: “I feel like the native language one helped me get to know the kids better. I feel like it gave me a lot more knowledge on how to work with them.”

*Connecting the why and the how of instructional strategies.* Throughout the professional learning, participants were encouraged to consider why and how EL instructional strategies were integral to ECE instruction as an approach to ground their overall understanding and key-takeaways of each principle. The participants drew connections between their deeper knowledge of the meaning behind EL instruction and the ease at which they could put their new learning into action.

During the first PD session, the participants noticed the value of PD to support teachers in understanding how and why to change their instructional practices. In the first session’s exit ticket, participants were asked to describe what resonated most with them about the session. One participant wrote, “How to get them [ELs] excited and why this [EL instruction] is important.”

As sessions progressed, participants were prompted to share new learning after each workshop. Without prompting, participants often went beyond sharing what they learned to explain why it was important. For example, one participant recorded the importance of implementing principles in her classroom during whole-group session planning time: “I will implement the notice and wonder cards. This will provide a visual tool for all students to understand their roles and expectations.” Another participant reaffirmed the value of understanding why EL instruction is important to ECE students within the exit ticket for session four: “Read a little, chat a little is a great tool I want to use in my class to help ELs have the opportunities to process thoughts through language and with a partner who is a strong language model.” The teacher referenced using a strategy demonstrated in the video viewed during the fourth PD session.

At the beginning of each intersession support meeting, participants had to put EL instructional strategies in their words as a starting point for grounding their thinking about connections to their classrooms. Participant D took a few moments to consider the question before responding, “I would say it looks like giving them [students] opportunities to learn from each other, so you know in school that is small groups.” In talking about the same principle, Participant B acknowledged, “I feel like this principle means making things developmentally appropriate level so they can talk about it.” The participant added why the principle was important: “And then if they actually understand what they are talking about, they can have conversations with each other and teachers.” The participants demonstrated an increased understanding of EL instructional strategies by explaining those strategies and expanding why each principle was important in their classrooms.

**Expert instructional support and teacher use.** Investigating the relationship between instructional support and teacher use of EL instructional practices showed how specific intervention components played a role in teacher motivation to apply professional learning content in their classrooms. The expert instructional support and teacher use of EL instructional practices answered the following outcome research question. RQ5 was the following: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher use of EL instructional practices?

For these participants, the pattern in mean scores between the presurvey and postsurvey indicated an increase in the use of EL instruction. Novice teacher use of EL instructional practices was assessed by Items 8 to 14. Regarding teacher use, the presurvey overall mean use score for all participants was 3.57, and the postsurvey overall mean use score for all participants was 5.60. The minimum use score on the presurvey was 3, and the maximum use score was 5.

The minimum use score on the postsurvey was 5, and the maximum use score was 6. The decrease in score range between the presurvey and postsurvey responses indicated that participants increased their use of EL instruction during the intervention. For these participants, the pattern in mean scores between the presurvey and postsurvey indicated an increase in teacher use of EL instruction.

The qualitative analysis of interview responses, intersession support meeting notes, and PD session documents revealed a collaboration with peers and the ability to use EL instructional strategies as a scaffold to support all students. The peer collaboration and universal benefits of EL instructional practices were two sources for increased use of EL instructional practices in daily teaching and learning.

***Multiple perspectives provided by peer collaboration.*** Throughout the process of collaboratively exploring instructional strategies during whole group sessions and communally reflecting on the implementation of EL instructional strategies in their classrooms, participants increasingly noted the value of working with teacher peers in further improving their use of professional learning content in their classrooms. During the first intersession support meeting, one participant attested to the general benefit of being with others and sharing ideas. Participant A maintained, “Getting others ideas and hearing what [expert teacher] thoughts were was helpful during the session.” During the second and third intersession support meetings, more participants discussed the value of feedback due to collaborating with peers across grade levels. During the second intersession support meeting, Participant C asserted, “You get other peoples’ points of view and other peoples’ feedback for what and what not to do.” Participant D similarly touted the benefits of collaboration: “It was helpful to get bulk feedback in teams after creating the language objectives.”

By the fourth intersession support meeting, participants noted the role of collaborating across grade levels in motivating each other to continually improve their use of EL instructional practices through consistent sharing of classroom experiences with EL instruction. Participant C explained,

I liked working with other teachers because I could hear different peoples' ideas and points of view. If I try one lesson and [Participant A] tries it and then if I do this and she does that, we can help each other.

Participant A elaborated on the role of collaboration as motivation to increase the use of EL instruction: "It is just nice to hear other peoples' thoughts and what they think about learning. It helps me think about what can I do better and how can I do that in my classroom." Participant B also affirmed the importance of collaboration in sharing best practices that might have been limited to individual classrooms without the designated group time during PD sessions. Participant B claimed, "I think it is helpful to be with other teachers because people give each other ideas and bring up ideas from the videos that I wouldn't have thought of."

Collaboration even inspired participants to learn more about use of EL instructional strategies in other grades. During the last intersession support meeting, Participant B elaborated, "[The intervention] gave me a chance to collaborate with teachers that I normally wouldn't, and it helped me see how the principles apply going upwards." Finally, in response to an intersession support question about what participants need to continue implementation during an intersession meeting, Participant D requested to continue collaboration and have opportunities to share EL instructional experiences and ideas.

***Universal instructional benefits.*** An emerging trend in the intersession support meetings' reflective journal notes from PD sessions and interview responses was increased participant

awareness and value of EL instructional strategy use as beneficial to all students. Therefore, participants were more likely to implement a strategy that could be used with all students. During the second and fourth PD sessions, participants discussed implementing EL instructional strategies that might benefit all students. One participant wrote during exit ticket time, “Having all students say the language objective after me to help ground them in their learning.” Another participant recorded the following on the universality of EL instructional practices during whole-group planning time: “This [principle] will provide a visual tool for all students to understand their role and expectations.” In response to an exit ticket question asking what resonated most with each participant about the focus principles, one participant commented on the value of utilizing principles to support all students: “I think that EL principles can be used for all students to reinforce learning.”

In response to a follow-up interview question about whether the EL instructional strategies influenced non-EL peers, Participant B answered, “Yeah definitely. I do have a lot of ELs in the class, but I think that those strategies really did help all the other kids too, especially in kindergarten.” Participant D recognized some overlap in the universal benefits of using EL instructional strategies for working specifically with the ECE age group: “I found that a lot of the things that I do for the ELs also just benefit the whole class, especially since they are so young.” Participant B elaborated that particular skills, such as modeling with sentence frames and visual cues, are appropriate scaffolds for all students in kindergarten. Participant D reiterated the value of knowing these strategies and proposed that she may even consider using the strategies outside of an EL presence due to their effectiveness with all children: “It is important to learn strategies specifically for EL students, but it can just benefit everyone in the whole class. So my learnings about this are something I can use even when I'm not working with EL students.” Participant B

and Participant D both predicted that due to the in-classroom successes, they would continue using the EL instructional strategies with all students beyond the duration of the intervention.

**Expert instructional support and teacher self-efficacy.** Exploring the relationship between intervention participation and teacher self-efficacy revealed how professional learning content presentation and subsequent follow-up support sessions influenced overall confidence in employing new learning into individual classrooms. The findings of teacher self-efficacy throughout the intervention answer the following outcome question. RQ6 was the following: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher self-efficacy in EL instructional practices?

For these participants, the pattern in mean scores between the presurvey and postsurvey indicated an increase in self-efficacy in EL instruction (see Table 12). Novice teacher self-efficacy in EL instructional practices was assessed by Items 15 to 21. Regarding teacher self-efficacy, the presurvey overall mean self-efficacy score for all participants was 4.10, and the postsurvey overall mean self-efficacy score was 5.75. The minimum self-efficacy score on the presurvey was 3, and the maximum self-efficacy score was 5. The minimum self-efficacy score on the postsurvey was 5, and the maximum self-efficacy score was 6.

The decrease in score ranges between the presurvey and postsurvey responses indicated that participants increased their self-efficacy of EL instruction during the intervention. For these participants, the pattern in mean scores between the presurvey and postsurvey showed an increase in EL instructional self-efficacy. The qualitative analysis of interview responses, PD session documents, and reflective journal notes showed the role of the expert teacher as an accountable learning partner and how this role guided consistency in connections between new professional learning content and the existing curriculum.

*Expert teacher as accountable learning partner.* The expert teacher's role as an accountable learning partner supported participants' confidence. Participants insisted on exploring each principle in their classrooms with timely and consistent intersession support meetings. During the intersession support meetings, three participants discussed the relationship between opportunities for support and increased confidence in EL instruction. Participant D expressed, "I feel like talking to you helps me stay on track." Participant B claimed, "It is easier to do it when you [expert teacher] are talking about it, especially with you. I always have questions!" Participant A also admitted, "Sometimes, you say you're going to do something, and it doesn't happen. Having that accountability is nice."

After the conclusion of the intervention, Participant D re-emphasized the value of expert-led intersession support: "Checking in between the sessions helped me keep on track with it too, and just kind of held me accountable for it." Participant D also attributed the expert teacher's role in holding teachers accountable for implementation during the intersession support as essential to the successful implementation of EL instructional strategies to her classroom.

Participant D reflected,

She [expert teacher] just helped me focus on one specific thing. Every time, every week, I would get results based on whatever principle we were doing. And then I was kind of able to just like embed those moving forward.

During the global pandemic, this participant recognized the value of PD as a positive influence on EL instruction self-efficacy when teachers and students moved from in-person to online instruction. Participant D said the following:

Definitely the butterfly video was the first big way that we have been able to incorporate that principle. The principal just texted me to share a best practice in the staff meeting.



Honestly, Mrs. C, I wouldn't have done that if I wasn't in the session, and you didn't ask for an example. That is a direct result of the session, and thank you.

By initially communicating high expectations for strategy implementation and providing individual support sessions to reflect and adjust instruction based on successes and challenges, the participants' self-efficacy grew to support teachers in making EL instructional strategies work in their classrooms. Participant D noted the following during the intersession support meetings with the expert teacher: "Your support and instant feedback made it ideal." Participant A elaborated on Participant D's initial comment and explained what made that support integral to her classroom success: "Having you there help(ed) give me ideas, and it helps me enhance my own classroom. It helps me think about what can I do better and how I can do that in my classroom."

Access to expert modeling of expectations regarding what to look for in EL instructional practices set a high standard for each teacher in the classroom. Participant A noted, "So [the expert teacher] provided materials that, like, an example is like here, you can do this, and that kind of helps broaden my ideas. I was like, oh, now I can do this and this." All participants noted in the final intersession support meeting that the expert teacher support provided an element of accountability in exploring and developing confidence in implementing strategies presented in each session.

***Curriculum-embedded context.*** The connection between content and curriculum emerged as a theme in building participant self-efficacy across the duration of professional learning. Participant A noted the value of intervention components that consistently leveraged opportunities to apply PD content to existing grade-level content: "I think what was really

successful what [the expert teacher] is really good at, like, really she would just dive into our curriculum.” Participant A emphasized,

It's [EL instruction] been starting to be really pushed in so like it was really cool kind of seeing the alignment to what [the expert teacher] was saying and like our curriculum. So I was like, okay, so this is exactly what they [curriculum writers] want as well.

During the first half of the intervention, participants shared the ease of implementing principles into their daily instruction from how EL instructional strategies were presented within their curriculum. Participant B proudly exclaimed the following:

Actually, the principle really helped! When the students wrote in their response journal, they were able to look at the pictures to remind them of what was in the book. There was a lot in the book, and they wouldn't have been able to do it as well without it.

Participant D acknowledged that each of the grade-level specific supports provided during the whole group sessions was ready to implement. The intersession support meeting notes and PD session documents indicated that all participants immediately used or intended to use the grade-level resources for exploring EL instructional strategies in their classrooms. During PD Session 5, Participant A shared with the group, “You [expert teacher] talked about sentence frames as multiple ways of getting to the main idea. You mentioned sentence frames, and today in reading we did a sentence frame for Cinderella to support our ELs.”

During planning times within each PD session, the teachers discussed the value of having resources connected to the curriculum as a key component in how they planned to integrate the PD content into their instruction. During the intersession support meeting following Session 5, Participant A provided additional examples of continued EL strategy use in her online instruction:

Just like with the talking, it was a lot of using the rich vocabulary, which is something we are also guided to do in [the curriculum]. Now, with the principle, we are not hindering the vocab, but we are making it more accessible to students.

Two participants reported feeling confident enough in sharing their experiences with using expert-provided resources to embed EL instructional strategies into daily instruction. Participant C mentioned, “I used it [strategy provided during Session 2] all week. I used it today for my formal observation, and it was so wonderful.” Participant D also displayed newfound confidence in EL instructional strategies when asked by the school leader to share in-classroom use of the principle at a school staff meeting. When the expert teacher inquired as to why the participant chose to share this experience with teacher peers, Participant D responded, “It [strategy provided during Session 5] was just honestly the thing I am most proud about this whole time.” Participant D explained that although classroom attendance was low due to the online learning format mandated by global pandemic restrictions, how PD content was presented within the curriculum provided a way to make lessons more meaningful with the limited number of students who could engage in the online learning environment.

## **Conclusions**

This researcher explored the role of expert-led PD sessions and intersession support in changing novice ECE teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. Throughout six group sessions and four intersession meetings, the novice teachers immersed in context-embedded PD content intended to enhance teaching and learning experiences with ECE ELs. Grounded in best practices for PD (Garet et al., 2002), teacher participants could independently and collectively leverage their curriculum as a tool to deepen their knowledge of and explore using EL instructional strategies in their classrooms. Through individually tailored expert

guidance, the participants gained confidence in trying out EL instructional strategies and witnessing the benefits of their efforts to all learners. The participants attributed positive first-hand experiences and collective sharing of successful strategy use to an overall PD format conducive to curriculum connections and active learning opportunities with expert support.

The discussion is organized by the research questions and explores how the findings relate to the theories and literature that guided this study. The discussion themes are grounded in participant intervention experience and participant knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction.

**Participant experience (Research Question 2).** The participant experience findings showed that multiple cycles of group learning sessions, coupled with consistent, personalized support conversations, benefited perceived ECE teacher growth in EL instruction. Much like Lewis's (2015) plan-do-study-act cycles, pairing group sessions with the intersession allowed groups of teachers to plan the implementation of EL instructional strategies collaboratively, efficiently implement plans in individual classrooms, individually and collectively study implementation within a short period, and act based on follow-up support.

The participant responses to interview questions regarding the overall PD experience further illuminate Reeves's (2006) findings that a whole-group-only approach is limited in meeting individual teacher needs and reinforces the value of combining whole group and individualized support sessions within the current intervention. Reeves suggested that experiences with impersonalized, overgeneralized PD workshops contributed to future teacher disinterest in EL professional learning. Self-reported engagement levels and evidence of strategy implementation in this intervention showed how interweaving new content with personalized supports empowered teachers in confidently instructing ELs. Thus, this intervention format may

illuminate a professional learning format to address challenges with teacher interest in EL PD reported by Reeves's findings.

Further, in accessing teacher support as a tool for personal accountability in implementing and adapting PD concepts to their own needs, participants demonstrated the importance of a professional learning experience that allows time and space to actively integrate new practices between workshops as an approach to understand, explore, and receive feedback on EL instruction (F. A. Russell, 2015). Within intersession support conversations and interview responses, consistent references to positive changes in EL instruction due to feedback and accountability from the intersession support conversations showed the value of one-to-one collaboration in pedagogical growth (McIntyre et al., 2010). The participant anecdotes of adapting professional learning content to classroom needs and collaborating with the expert teacher to hold themselves accountable for implementation supported McIntyre et al.'s (2010) findings. The researchers showed the benefits of addressing classroom-specific concerns within one-to-one collaboration time provided by intersession support meetings.

Finally, consistent participant attendance records, PD anecdotal notes indicating exploration of EL instructional strategies in the classroom, and self-described participant instructional growth attributed to the cumulative outcomes of PD engagement reflected Haneda et al.'s (2017) findings. The researchers showed one's ability to understand pedagogical practices through repeated interactions and multiple instructional feedback opportunities. An overall PD format with consistent opportunities to explore EL instructional strategies in context reinforced Cantrell and Callaway's (2008) findings that an apprenticeship approach to PD was essential in getting teachers to implement instructional strategies. Supported by the use of teacher classrooms for intersession meetings, the intervention grounded apprenticeship support in the setting where

strategies were implemented. In line with Cantrell and Callaway's findings that an apprenticeship approach to PD was essential in getting teachers to broaden understanding and use of instructional strategies, participants deepened their knowledge of EL instructional strategies through multiple opportunities for active learning. Given that the EL population will continue to increase and result in increased ECE EL PD, the theme is noteworthy in thinking about how professional learning should be structured moving forward.

#### **Knowledge of English learner instructional strategies (Research Question 4).**

Teacher knowledge findings revealed that, through intentional opportunities to explore PD content in the context of their classrooms, teacher participants deepened and broadened their understanding of EL instructional strategies. Much like Swinnerton's (2007) conclusions regarding the importance of presenting professional learning content within the context of established instructional practices, this study's findings reinforce the importance of presenting new strategies in ways that they can be infused more immediately into existing curriculum and practices. By presenting each principle with resources to support integration at each grade-level, the expert teacher answered the participant questions about how and why content connected to their classroom.

Presenting each principle with an explanation of its importance and discussing why EL instruction was essential to their daily instruction consistently allowed teachers to internalize the value and explore instructional strategies in their classrooms. As described by Garet et al. (2002), the active learning component is essential for long-term instructional change. According to Bandura (1986), internalizing the value of the task is essential to maximizing new professional learning. Throughout this process, teachers evaluated the purpose of EL instructional strategies before and during practical application and reflection. Following individual application of EL

instructional strategies in their classrooms, teachers combined what they learned in PD with their experiences to reveal a deeper understanding of EL instructional principles.

**Use of English learner instructional strategies (Research Question 5).** The findings of teacher use showed that frequent opportunities for collective experiences in sharing the benefits of implementing EL instructional strategies motivated participants to integrate professional learning content into daily instruction continually. As Banks (2015) and Garet et al. (2002) shared in their theories of best practices for effective professional learning, collective participation in multiple PD workshops enhanced teacher participants' abilities to apply learning to their classrooms. In the whole group setting, ongoing collaboration allowed multiple teachers to collectively reflect and adjust practices based on group reflection and implementation highlights. Much like Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) conclusions about the positive influence of teacher collaboration, participants attributed peer-collaboration opportunities as a source of motivation for continued refinement of EL instructional strategy use. As with Lewis et al.'s (2006) findings of the benefits of co-planning lessons, participants valued opportunities to plan and adjust EL instruction collectively based on peer feedback and in-classroom experiences. Multiple opportunities for collaboration among teachers from the same grade-level cluster (Garet et al., 2002) showed universal benefits of EL instructional strategies to both ELs and non-EL peers as an ongoing trend in implementation.

In line with Teemant's (2014) findings on the advantages of expert-led, personalized instructional support, the expert teacher guided participants in multiple reflective conversations around benefits and challenges of EL instruction while providing specific solutions for individual needs. Expert-facilitated intersession support meetings provided what Teemant described as the individualized support essential for teacher instructional growth for diverse learners. The

frequency and number of workshops and intersession meetings, allowing for collaboration, contributed to a deeper understanding and increased use of strategies throughout the intervention (Cooter, 2004). Thus, ongoing sharing of positive experiences among peers and the expert learning partner increased teacher motivation to integrate PD content into daily instruction continuously.

Much like Chester and Beaudin's (1996) conclusions that high levels of collaboration among beginning teachers contributed to increased teacher self-efficacy, multiple opportunities for group learning and reflection in this intervention allowed teachers to see that EL instructional strategies benefit all learners in ECE classrooms. In line with Tschannen-Moran and McMaster's (2009) findings on effective professional learning formats, collaboration with peers and follow-up individualized support provided multiple perspectives highlighting the benefits of EL instruction to all learners. Further, intersession conversations and PD session documents reflected Haneda et al.'s (2017) findings on the ability to build a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices through repeated interactions.

Given a novice teacher's inherent lack of mastery experiences, defined as content with one's past teaching accomplishments (Bandura, 1986), the combined group and individual professional learning format provided two different sources for novice teachers to further understand the value of EL instructional strategies through others' experiences. In line with Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory that individuals learn through collaboration and Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) emphasis on the value of teachers working together, intervention participants continually refined their use of EL instructional strategies within each cycle of sharing their experiences and successes with others.



**Self-efficacy in English learner instructional strategies (Research Question 6).** The teachers' self-efficacy findings showed that expert ability to draw connections between content and curriculum facilitates teacher interest in professional learning content. Professional learning is most successful when aligning content with teacher classroom needs (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet et al., 2002). Moreover, having an expert teacher as a learning partner leverages these connections to hold teachers accountable for implementation—when teachers truly experience the value of integrating EL instructional strategies and subsequent increase in perceived self-efficacy. The intervention findings supported Woolfolk-Hoy and Burke-Spero's (2005) conclusions that perceived instructional support positively influences novice teacher self-efficacy. Regarding this intervention, the EL instructional strategies were presented in the context of the existing curriculum to support novice teachers in visualizing how professional learning can be integrated into ECE classrooms.

As emphasized by Swinnerton (2007) about providing instructional models and examples within PD sessions, “How can they do it if they don't know what it looks like?” (p. 207). The interview responses and intersession support conversations showed that participants valued expert teaching and modeling EL instructional practices within the existing curriculum. The participant interview responses supported Santagata, Kersting, Givvin, and Stigler's (2011) findings of the positive effects of aligning PD content with the teacher curriculum. Coupled with scheduled conversations to evaluate implementation efforts between whole group workshops, the study findings reinforced Swinnerton's conclusions about the value of strategic communication as opportunities for feedback and support throughout professional learning.

In line with Collins et al.'s (1991) conclusions about the benefits of learning new teaching skills within conditions in which those pedagogical practices would be implemented,

the curriculum-embedded context of PD content provided a tangible space for participants to visualize strategy implementation in the whole group session. Combined with continuous follow-up feedback and support necessary for effective professional learning (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005), the expert teacher acted as a “warm demander” (Ross, Bondy, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2008, p. 20) to maintain expectations for implementation. The expert teacher engaged teachers in reflective conversations that helped them recognize the value of integrating EL instructional strategies and build confidence in using them on their own. Therefore, the expert teacher made participants feel confident in taking risks to explore EL instructional strategies in their classrooms.

**Emerging theme: Expert and peer collaboration as motivation.** Designing professional learning experiences with components that allow teachers to collaborate with peers and expert facilitators may influence overall participant engagement and willingness to explore content in their classrooms. This intervention was grounded in an apprenticeship approach (Collins et al., 1988) that allowed teachers to benefit from expert teacher knowledge in a whole group setting and personalized feedback during designated periods for classroom implementation. The whole group sessions allowed for focused collaboration with multiple peers at the same experience level. The intersession support meetings provided opportunities for one-on-one collaboration with a more skilled and knowledgeable educator.

Much like Crawford et al.'s (2008) findings that highly collaborative professional learning was the most effective EL PD model, the intervention format was conducive to frequent and focused conversations between peers and experts that motivated teachers to put learning into practice. Further, the balance between expert-novice collaboration as a trusted tool to receive personalized feedback (F. A. Russell, 2015) and guided peer-to-peer collaboration as an

opportunity to reflect and adjust EL instructional practices collectively (Crawford et al., 2008) was a practical professional learning model. This model leveraged collaboration as motivation with limited expert teacher availability. Positioning the practitioner-researcher as an expert teacher among peer educators in this intervention might provide a strategy to extend intervention outcomes, given Teemant's (2014) warning that teachers struggle to maintain the use of practices beyond the support period with expert teachers. The role of practitioner-researcher as a peer and expert teacher in this study is further explored in the limitation discussion.

The combination of focused collaborative learning during whole group sessions and expert feedback during intersession support allowed teachers to simultaneously benefit from F. A. Russell's (2012) findings on sharing best practices and Crawford et al.'s (2008) conclusions about the importance of learning from each other's instructional challenges with ELs. Within these collaborations, teachers developed a common understanding of EL instruction—an advantage of whole group sessions, according to Hutchinson and Hadjiioannou (2011). The expert teacher guidance presented an opportunity to seek advice for overcoming barriers at the same time easily.

Despite the low EL attendance amidst the transition to online learning, participants reflected a group desire to share positive experiences with smaller numbers of ELs. They reflected a collective eagerness to use resources in both online and in-person learning environments continually. Through guiding questions to facilitate collaboration, participants developed shared feelings similar to those described by Hutchinson and Hadjiioannou's (2011) findings on the benefits of whole-group professional learning for EL instruction. The collective spirit created by peer and expert collaboration empowered teachers to try out practices in their instruction and reflect on those experiences with each other during the intervention.

## Limitations

Although the researcher demonstrated a relationship between the EL professional learning experience and novice ECE teacher participant outcomes, there were multiple limitations. The quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated a positive relationship between intervention participation and knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. Still, the small sample size limited the transferability of findings and subsequent trustworthiness of qualitative data. A larger sample size (McHugh, 2013) would allow the practitioner-researcher to test for statistical significance and increase the reliability of results.

Even though all eligible teachers within the professional context ( $n = 4$ ) volunteered to participate in the study, the results were naturally limited in generalizability due to the small sample size ( $n = 4$ ). Results may differ if the study were conducted in another school district. Further, another researcher cannot conduct interviews with the same participants or transfer findings to another context. Given that this school represents a typical educational institution within the school district, future sample sizes with the same inclusion criteria are likely to mirror the number of participants in this study. However, subsequent studies could triangulate data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to collect quantitative data from a larger sample of teachers across different professional contexts over a longer period to increase trustworthiness.

Another limitation to this study was the role of the practitioner-researcher as an insider to the intervention explored in this research study. The practitioner-researcher served as the expert teacher leader facilitating whole group sessions and leading intersession support conversations. The practitioner-researcher also held the professional role as an ESOL teacher and cotaught with 50% of participants ( $n = 2$ ) in the study. Much like Laberee's (2002) motivation to explore an educational problem through the dual lens of a researcher and faculty member, the practitioner-

researcher leveraged the insider position to explore “data that extended beyond the traditional framework of understanding and that were unique from the experiences of outsiders” (p. 105). The practitioner-researcher especially relied on “shared experiences” (Laberee, 2002, p. 103) within classrooms in which she co-taught ELs with some participants to facilitate conversations during whole-group sessions and intersession support meetings. Given that the researcher as an instrument presents a potential bias in data analysis, future researchers may consider conducting the study as an outsider to develop a “broader, unbiased understanding” (Merton, 1972, p. 20) of the intervention process and outcomes.

Lastly, the global pandemic, which occurred following Session 4, presented a challenge in delivering professional learning content and providing intersession instructional support across an online learning platform. Although the online professional learning content adhered to the original research plan, the mode in which it was presented to participants changed to an online platform for Sessions 5 and 6. The practitioner-researcher reimagined hands-on activities to explore EL instruction in the online learning classroom through digital tools. Given Neuhauser’s (2002) findings that delivering the same learning content across online or face-to-face learners produces the same learning outcomes, one could expect no differences in the study outcomes due to the shift in PD delivery mode. Future researchers should explore differences in outcomes by delivering the same PD content face-to-face or online for the duration of the study, much like M. Russell, Carey, Kleiman, and Venable’s (2009) exploration of professional learning delivery methods.

However, the disruption in intervention length due to the IRB amendment process and additional consent process caused an extended gap between intersession support for Session 4 and the introduction of new content in Session 5. The unplanned gap in time before Session 5

might have influenced participant outcomes compared to intervention experiences before the global pandemic. Future researchers may consider a longitudinal design to explore teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction over a longer period than the current 17-week study.

### **Implications for Research**

This study presents two implications for future research related to sample size and research design. The sample size was inherently limited by the number of eligible participants in the professional context, and this number of participants was similar in many urban districts of similar size. Therefore, future researchers could consider recruiting participants from multiple professional contexts within the same geographic location to increase the generalizability of study findings. Recruiting participants from the same geographic location would allow the intervention structure to remain the same while increasing the sample size. Future researchers can recruit participants with some PD experiences working with ELs to align teacher outcomes in knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instructional practices with intervention participation.

Along with increasing the number of participants with some knowledge of EL instructional strategies, future researchers should consider a different research design to explore how participant outcomes are linked to participation in the intervention. The study outcomes were linked to collaboration among peer teachers and expert support. Therefore, integrating opportunities to collaborate and observe the implementation of strategies in real-time could further reveal the influence of collaboration on teacher knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instructional strategies. Moreover, isolating peer collaboration as a variable can show the extent to which this intervention component worked in postsurvey outcomes. Adjusting the survey instrument to account for participant satisfaction with various intervention components would

provide a better understanding of what role each intervention component played in participant outcomes. Finally, changing the survey instrument to account for the impact of time between each intervention component as a variable in participant outcomes may illuminate the impact of an unplanned gap between sessions due to unavoidable causes such as school closing due to a global pandemic.

### **Implications for Practice**

The study findings showed that novice ECE teachers working with ELs benefited from professional learning experiences that embedded new content into the existing curriculum with combined whole group learning and personalized, follow-up instructional support. Through active learning with multiple EL instructional strategies, teacher participants increased their knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instruction. School leaders experiencing an increase in ELs may consider seeking expert teachers to offer ongoing professional learning for novice teachers working with this population. Subsequent PD leaders should facilitate the integration of EL instructional strategies by presenting them within the context of the current curriculum. Ideal individual support sessions should consistently occur following the introduction of new content. Intersession support should be facilitated by an expert educator familiar with and confident in EL instructional strategies and ECE classrooms.

Another implication for practice is the participant's willingness to collaborate consistently in whole-group learning activities and engage in transparent reflective conversations as tools to support self and others in knowledge, use, and self-efficacy growth in EL instruction. Peer collaboration in planning and reflecting on the implementation of EL instructional strategies are a major source of satisfaction with the PD experience in this study. Follow-up expert support to group collaboration sessions would be most meaningful if participants felt comfortable openly

reflecting on in-classroom experiences with EL instruction and are willing to integrate expert-provided support.

This intervention served as guidance for how educational institution leaders could best prepare novice ECE teachers for the growing number of ELs in today's public schools. Leaders constructing a prototype for supporting novice teachers in building instructional capacity for teaching and learning with ELs may promote institutional action in developing a focus on instruction for the increasingly diverse student population. Despite the change in the professional learning delivery two-thirds of the way through the intervention, the role of expert guidance within the whole group and personalized learning experiences led to consistent integration and reflection on the use of EL instructional strategies in the early childhood classroom. This research serves as a stepping-stone for beginning the process of engaging novice ECE teachers in professional learning to influence their knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in EL instructional strategies positively.



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## Appendix A

### Needs Assessment Survey Instrument

Q1 What grades do you teach? Check all that apply.

- Prekindergarten
- Kindergarten
- First-Grade
- Second-Grade
- Other

Q2 How many total years have you been teaching? Include this year.

- 1- 3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-12 years
- 13 or more years

Q3 Check all that apply regarding your current preparation in working with English Learners (EL).

- I currently hold a K-12 certification in ESOL.
- I am working towards my K-12 certification in ESOL.
- I have participated in professional development for working with ELs during my teaching career.
- I received training for working with ELs during my pre-service teaching experience and/or alternative teacher certification program.



Q4 The inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classes creates a positive educational atmosphere.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q5 The inclusion of EL students in early-childhood classrooms benefits all students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q6 EL students should not be included in general education classes until they attain a minimum level of English proficiency.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q7 EL students should avoid using their native language while at school.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q8 EL students should be able to acquire English within two years of enrolling in U.S. schools.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q9 Early-childhood teachers do not have enough time to accommodate the needs of EL students.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q10 It is a good practice to adjust assignments for EL students.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Q11 It is a good practice to lessen the quantity of work for EL students.

Strongly Disagree

- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q12 It is a good practice to allow EL students more time to complete assignments.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q13 Teachers should not give EL students a failing grade if the students display effort.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q14 Teachers should not modify assignments for the EL students in early-childhood classrooms.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q15 The modification of curriculum for EL students would be difficult to justify to other early-childhood students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q16 I would welcome the inclusion of EL students in my class.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q17 I am confident in my ability to handle most discipline problems with EL students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q18 I am confident in my ability to teach all EL students to high levels.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree

- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q19 I am confident I am making a difference in the lives of my students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q20 I feel confident in providing a positive learning environment and create a climate characterized by high expectations.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q21 I am confident of my skills to provide alternative/performance assessments to EL students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q22 I feel confident in providing linguistically and cultural appropriate learning experiences for EL students.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Q23 Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview and/or focus group?

- Yes
- No

*Note.* Survey items adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012) and Reeves (2006).

## Appendix B

### Needs Assessment Interview Protocol

*The participants will be asked to sit at a table with the researcher. The participants will be reminded that the interview will not be recorded. The researcher will provide follow-up questions depending on the direction and response of each participant to individual questions. The approximate time frame for each question will be 5 minutes, not to exceed a total of 15 minutes for each interview.*

Q1 What are the benefits of including ELs in general education classrooms?

- What do you consider to be the most beneficial aspect of including ELs in general education classrooms?

Q2 What are the challenges of including ELs in general education classrooms?

- What do you consider to be the most challenging aspect of including ELs and why?

Q3 Based on the beliefs about ELs indicated on your survey, what interactions with ELs support these views?

- How might your beliefs about ELs influence future instructional decisions?

Q4 What have you learned *while* working with students who are acquiring English as a second language?

- What have you learned *about* working with students who are acquiring English as a second language?

*Note.* Interview items adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012) and Reeves (2006).

## Appendix C

### Needs Assessment Semi-Structured Focus Group Protocol

*Teachers will be asked to sit in a group and be reminded that the focus group will not be recorded. Teachers will be asked to answer all questions with complete honesty. The researcher will sit at the same table and ask follow-up questions depending on the direction of the conversations and interactions among participants. The approximate time frame will be 10 minutes for each question, not exceeding a total of 40 minutes for the entire session.*

Q1 What instructional strategies you have used in assisting ELs with learning?

Q2 How do you know which strategy to use at what time?

Q3 How do you adjust your teaching to help second language learners understand your lessons?

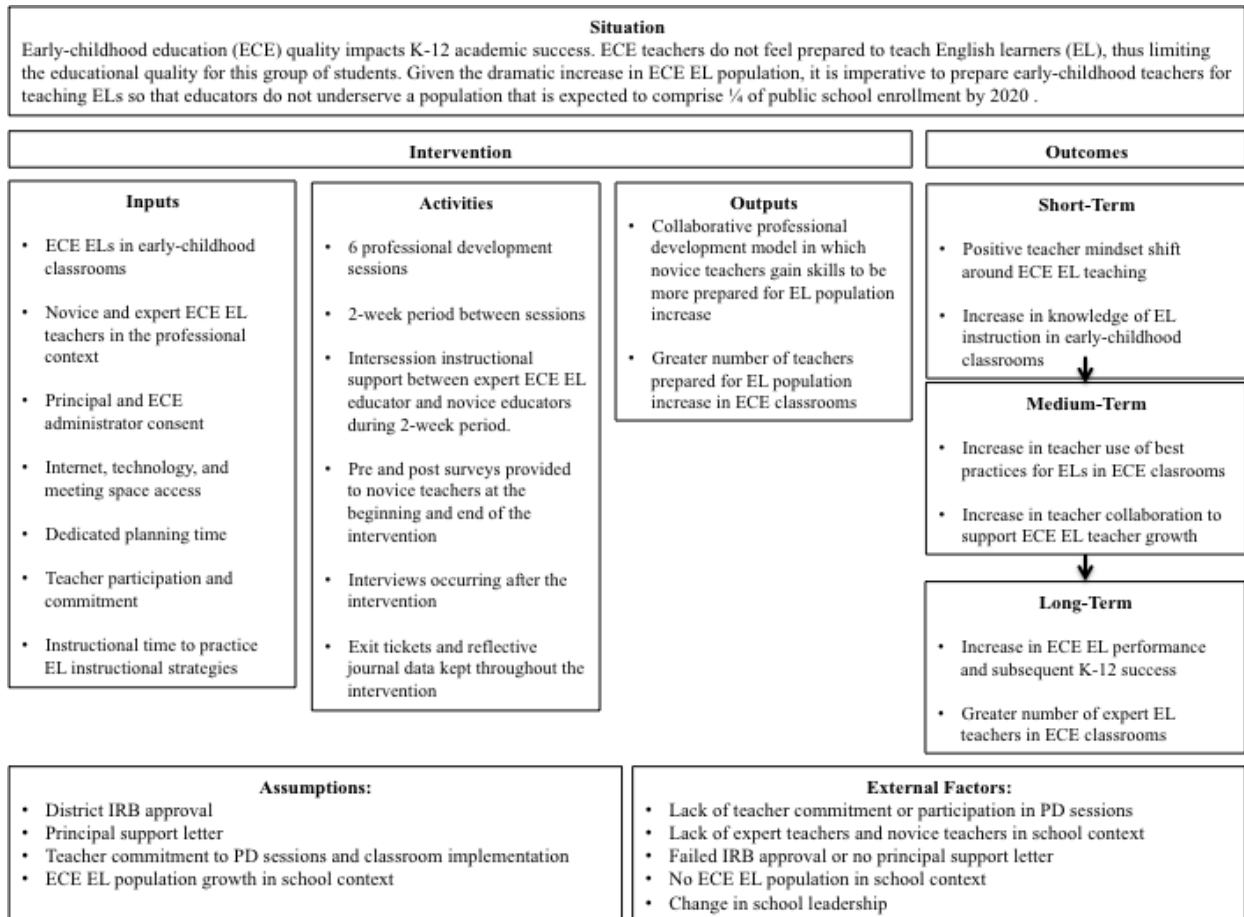
Q4 If your adjustment is in the types of materials you use, do you tend to create your own materials or modify existing curricular materials? Can you give an example?

*Note.* Focus group items adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012).



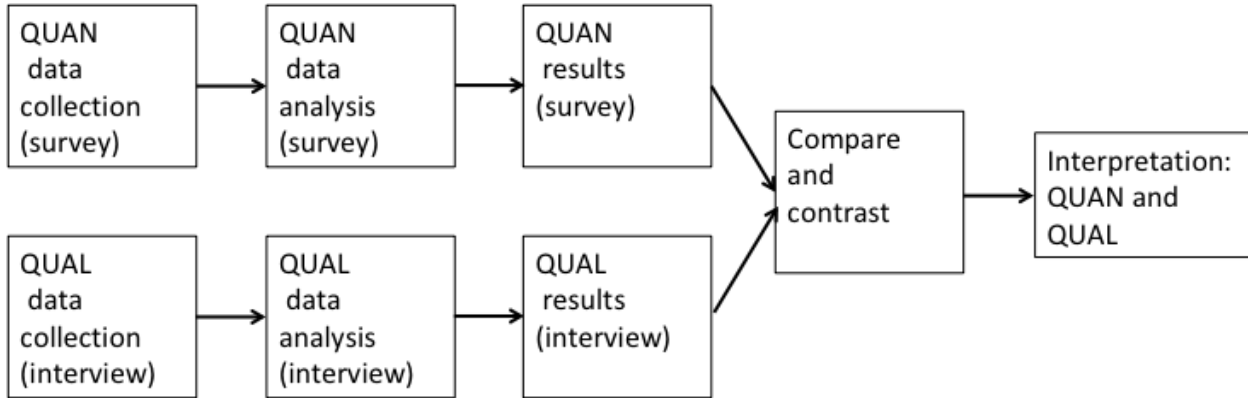
## Appendix D

### Logic Model



## Appendix E

### Visual for Triangulation Mixed-Methods Design



*Note.* Adapted from Creswell et al. (2003).

## Appendix F

### Data Collection Summary Matrix

Research Question	Construct	Data Source(s)	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
RQ1: To what extent did implementation of the PD workshops and instructional support align with the proposed intervention plan?	Fidelity of adherence	Interviews Journal PD sessions	Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis
	Dose delivered	Intersession support notes	Intersession Organizer	
RQ2: How do ECE teachers describe their experiences in EL PD workshops and with instructional support from an expert educator?	Dose received	Interviews Journal PD sessions	Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis
	Participant Satisfaction	Intersession support notes	Intersession Organizer	
RQ3: How has the intervention shaped teacher perceptions about their self-efficacy in working with ELs?	Participant Satisfaction	Interviews Journal PD sessions Intersession support notes	Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal Intersession Organizer	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis
RQ4: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher knowledge of EL instructional practices?	Knowledge of EL instruction	Pre-Post Survey Interviews Journal PD sessions Intersession support notes	Adapted KUSE Scale pre and postsurvey via google docs Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal Intersession Organizer	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics
RQ5: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher use of EL instructional practices?	Use of EL instruction	Pre-Post Survey Interviews Journal PD sessions Intersession support notes	Adapted KUSE Scale pre and postsurvey via Google docs Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal Intersession Organizer	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics
RQ6: In what ways does PD with expert educator instructional support change novice teacher self-efficacy in EL instructional practices?	Self-efficacy in EL instruction	Pre-Post Survey Interviews Journal PD sessions Intersession support notes	Adapted KUSE Scale pre and post survey via Google docs Semi-structured interview questions Reflective Journal Intersession Organizer	Qualitative coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis and quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics

## Appendix G

### Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy Scale

**Time Point:** \_\_\_ Pre \_\_\_ Post

Please rate the concepts from Stanford’s Six Principles of ELL Instruction (2012) listed below using the criteria provided. Decide how knowledgeable you are about each principle. Then, rate how certain you are in your ability to use or implement each concept. Finally, rate how useful each concept is for you. Mark only one oval per row.

#### KNOWLEDGE

I have knowledge about...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Employing EL students’ prior knowledge to build new understandings						
Using EL students’ home language skills to make content comprehensible						
Implementing standards-based instruction, which is appropriately scaffolded for EL students						
Implementing instruction that takes into account EL students’ language proficiency levels						
Incorporating EL students’ language proficiency level when delivering instruction						
Providing strategies to support ELs autonomy in using language across a variety of academic situations						

Developing ELs' independence for learning through strategies that can be used in multiple instructional situations						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

**USE**

<b>In my teaching, I ...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Employ EL students' prior knowledge to build new understandings						
Use EL students' home language skills to make content comprehensible						
Implement standards-based instruction, which is appropriately scaffolded for EL students						
Implement instruction that takes into account EL students' language proficiency levels						
Incorporate EL students' language proficiency level when delivering instruction						
Provide strategies to support ELs autonomy in using language across a variety of academic situations						
Develop ELs' independence for learning through strategies that can be used in multiple instructional situations						

## SELF-EFFICACY

<b>In my teaching, I am certain I can ...</b>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Employ EL students' prior knowledge to build new understandings						
Use EL students' home language skills to make content comprehensible						
Implement standards-based instruction, which is appropriately scaffolded for EL students						
Implement instruction that takes into account EL students' language proficiency levels						
Incorporate EL students' language proficiency level when delivering instruction						
Provide strategies to support ELs autonomy in using language across a variety of academic situations						
Develop ELs' independence for learning through strategies that can be used in multiple instructional situations						

*Note.* Survey items adapted from Thibault (2017).

## Appendix H

### Demographic Questions for Knowledge, Use, and Self-Efficacy Scale

Q1 What grades do you teach? Check all that apply.

- Prekindergarten
- Kindergarten
- First-Grade
- Second-Grade
- Other

Q2 How many total years have you been teaching? Include this year.

- 1- 3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10-12 years
- 13 or more years

Q3 Check all that apply regarding your current preparation in working with ELs.

- I currently hold a K-12 certification in ESOL.
- I am working towards my K-12 certification in ESOL.
- I have participated in professional development for working with ELs during my teaching career.
- I received training for working with ELs during my pre-service teaching experience and/or alternative teacher certification program.

# Appendix I

## Intersession Support Meeting Notes Organizer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Understand the Principle</b> State in your own words the focus principle and what you envision it will look like in your classroom?</p>	<p><b>Make a Plan</b> How can I implement this focus principle into my instruction?</p>
<p><b>Focus Principle:</b> _____</p>	
<p><b>Implement</b> Describe how the focus principle worked in your daily instruction.</p>	<p><b>Reflect and Adjust</b> How did it go? What would you change or do next time? If you did not implement, why not? What do you need?</p>



## Appendix J

### Qualitative Codebook

Table J1

*Qualitative Codebook*

Code	Definition	Sample evidence
Previous EL PD	Description of professional learning experiences prior to engaging in the intervention.	“I had taken some classes in college. I feel like I pretty much always learned simple things to help teach ELs and more general generic strategies to teach them.”
Immediate use	Factors that facilitate strategy implementation in the classroom following introduction of new content.	“She [expert teacher] just helped me focus on one specific thing. Every time, every week, I would get results based on whatever principle we were doing. And then I was kind of able to just like embed those moving forward.”
Accountable	Tracking participant use of EL instruction.	“She [expert teacher] was always reaching out in between sessions to see how things were going from learning about that principle, if I need any help implementing something actually like checking in in between the sessions helped me keep on track with it too, and just kind of held me accountable for it.”
Feedback	Factors facilitating feedback delivery and content.	“So, any question, I would ever have. She [expert teacher] would just, you know, answer right away and I didn't have to wait”.
Design	Intervention components conducive to teacher use and confidence in EL instruction.	“The session, I was able to like go through it and break it down a little and then if I need anything she made herself available.”
Order	Relationship between intervention components	“I love the cycle. Talk about something, do something, implement something.”
Resources	Description of tangible supports provided by the intervention.	“We never walked out of a session empty handed. Always with supports that I could go right into my classroom and just start using them. I just like the focus was something that helps us that same day.”
Connections to context	Factors facilitating link between PD content and instructional setting	“So I really liked the way that was set up, it kind of set us up for success in that [the expert teacher] always had stuff already prepared and we would work on it and then have an end product at the end of every session.”
Learning partner	Evidence of collaboration with expert teacher.	“If I needed any help implementing something, checking in between sessions helped me.”
Transition to online learning	Factors associated with delivery format change due to global pandemic.	“I feel like, with the last sessions online, the switch was like seamless. We were still able to meet.”
Knowledge	Description of change in knowledge within PD learning activities.	“After the sessions, I definitely think that my idea of what it looks like to work with ELs has changed. I definitely feel like I am able to do it like more professionally than I was before.”
Curriculum	Evidence of PD content integration into participant curriculum.	“You know, just the support that she gave us. For example, there was a poem for [literacy]. And we actually wrote down the poem, and we have visuals and I actually have like picture cards with English and

Code	Definition	Sample evidence
Experience	Description of participant interactions with content to further develop understanding of EL instruction.	Spanish and the kids really love that principle we were doing.” “So my knowledge has really increased and it's just getting more experience like this experience helps.”
Strategy importance	Evidence of participant understanding as to why EL strategies are essential to daily instruction.	“I will implement the notice and wonder cards. This will provide a visual tool for all students to understand their role and expectations.”
Internalizing principles	Evidence of participant ability to summarize principles in their own words.	“I feel like this principle means making things developmentally appropriate level so they can talk about it.”
Long-term EL instructional value	Description of sustained EL instruction impact.	“And then, if they actually understand what they are taking about, they can have conversations with each other and teachers.”
Working with other teachers	Description on interactions with participants.	“I liked working with other teachers because I could hear different peoples’ ideas and point of view. If I try one lesson and [Participant A] tries it and then if I do this and she does that we can help each other.”
Expert collaboration	Description of interactions with expert teacher.	“Getting others ideas and hearing what your [expert] thoughts were was helpful during the session.”
Vertical collaboration	Description of interactions with peers in different grade levels or content areas.	“[The intervention] gave me a chance to collaborate with teachers that I normally wouldn’t and it helped me see how the principles apply going upwards.”
Universal benefits	Factors making EL instructional practices helpful to non-EL peers.	“I found that a lot of the things that I do for the ELs also just benefits the whole class, especially since they are so young.”
Alignment to existing instruction	Description of relationship between PD content and current instructional focus and content.	“It's [EL instruction] been starting to be really pushed in so it was cool seeing the alignment to what [the expert teacher] was saying and our curriculum.”
Strategy use	Description of EL instruction implementation.	“You [expert teacher] talked about sentence frames as multiple ways of getting to the main idea. You mentioned sentence frames and today in reading we did a sentence frame to support our ELs.”
Confidence	Factors associated with participant instructional confidence during and after intervention.	“I used it [strategy provided during Session 2] all week. I used it today for my formal observation and it was so wonderful.”

## Appendix K

### Sample Professional Development Workshop Agenda

<p><b>EL ECE Professional Development Session</b>  <b>Key Principle #1: Discipline Specific Practices</b>  <b>Grades: Pre-K, K, 1, 2</b></p>	
<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <p>To increase teacher use, self-efficacy and knowledge of EL instruction, teachers will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Introduce and model discipline specific practices.</li> <li>➤ Collaborate to role-play discipline specific practices.</li> <li>➤ Create a plan to implement discipline specific practices in classroom instruction.</li> <li>➤ Commit to participation in intersession instructional support for discipline specific practices.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Agenda:</b></p>	
5 min.	<p><b><u>Check In/Do Now:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sign In</li> <li>➤ Whip Around: Tell me something good (EL focus).</li> </ul>
10 min.	<p><b><u>I Do: Model Discipline Specific Practices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Introduce discipline specific practices.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do discipline specific practices look like in EL ECE instruction?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why are discipline specific practices important to ECE EL instruction?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do we implement discipline specific practices for ELs in ECE classrooms?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
10 min.	<p><b><u>We Do: Guided Practice with Discipline Specific Practices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collaborate with colleagues to role-play discipline specific practices in an ECE classroom setting.</li> </ul>
10 min.	<p><b><u>You Do: Planning Implementation of Discipline Specific Practices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Plan at least two opportunities for implementation of discipline specific practices in instruction.</li> <li>➤ Select individual times/days for intersession instructional support on discipline specific practices.</li> </ul>
5 min.	<p><b><u>Check Out/Next Steps</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Complete exit ticket.</li> <li>➤ Preview upcoming date/time of next session and commit to time/date for intersession instructional support on discipline specific practices.</li> </ul>

# Appendix L

## Professional Development Activities

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Principles for EL Instruction:  
*Professional Development Series with Intersession Instructional Support*

*planning*

TIME

How will I integrate this week's focus principle into my ECE EL instruction during the next two weeks?

- 1.
- 2.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Principles for EL Instruction:  
*Professional Development Series with Intersession Instructional Support*

Video Note Catcher

Key Takeaways

Ideas to Implement

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Principles for EL Instruction:  
*Professional Development Series with Intersession Instructional Support*

**Directions:** Draw and label a picture of yourself teaching ELs.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Principles for EL Instruction:  
*Professional Development Series with Intersession Instructional Support*

146017

1. What resonated most with you about this week's focus principle in today's session?
2. How can you implement this week's focus principle into your instruction?

EXIT TICKET

## Appendix M

Revised Informed Consent: 4.26.20

# JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY HOMEWOOD INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (HIRB) RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** Early-Childhood Educator Preparedness for English Learners

Application No.: HIRB00008624

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Elizabeth T. Brown, JHU SOE, Visiting Assistant Professor  
522 Evergreen Pl Ct. Louisville, KY 40223  
Phone: (502) 974-9899 Email: ebrow121@jhu.edu

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You are being asked to join a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to join now, you can change your mind later.

### 1. **Research Summary (Key Information):**

The information in this section is intended to be an introduction to the study only.

Complete details of the study are listed in the sections below. If you are considering participation in the study, the entire document should be discussed with you before you make your final decision. You can ask questions about the study now and at any time in the future.

- Six professional development sessions will last 45 minutes over the course of 12 to 16 weeks.
- Sessions 5 and 6 will be online meetings, using Zoom platform. Meetings will not be recorded.
- The participants will complete a pre and post survey for a total of 20 minutes.
- Four intersession meetings with the practitioner-researcher (in person or online) that will last 15-20 minutes between sessions two through six.

- The participants will participate in interviews that will last 30-45 minutes during the week following completion of the intervention. Interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Reflective journal will be kept throughout the intervention.
- Document artifacts will be kept during sessions and intersession meetings.

**2. Why is this research being done?**

- The purpose of this research study is to increase early-childhood educator knowledge, use, and self-efficacy in English learner (EL) instruction.

**3. What will happen if you join this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Attend 6 professional development sessions lasting 45 minutes to be held at Holabird Academy or student researcher’s personal secure Zoom room every other week for 12-16 weeks.
- During each professional development session, you will be asked to complete an exit survey that discusses the content and delivery of the session.
- Participate in a pre and post survey.
- Participate in 4 intersession instructional support sessions lasting 15-20 minutes with the researcher.
- Participate in an interview after the intervention last 30-45 minutes.

**Photographs/Video recordings:**

As part of this research, we are requesting your permission to audio-record interviews. Any audio-recordings will not be used for advertising or non-study related purposes.

You should know that:

- You may request that the audio recording be stopped at any time.
- If you agree to allow the audio recording and then change your mind, you may ask us to destroy that imaging/recording. If the imaging/recording has had all identifiers removed, we may not be able to do this.
- We will only use these audio recordings for the purposes of this research.

Please indicate your decision below by checking the appropriate statement:

\_\_\_\_ I **agree** to allow the study to use audio recordings of me (or the participant I represent) for the purpose of this study.

\_\_\_\_ I **do not agree** to allow the study team to use audio recordings of me (or the participant I represent) for the purpose of this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**How long will you be in the study?**

You will be in this study for approximately 4 months.

**4. What are the risks or discomforts of the study?**

The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life [or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests].

**5. Are there benefits to being in the study?**

This study may benefit society if the results lead to better-prepared teachers and better-educated English learners in early-childhood classrooms.

**6. Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

No

**7. Will you be paid if you join this study?**

No

**8. Can you leave the study early?**

- You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later, without any penalty or loss of benefits.
- If you wish to stop, please tell us right away.
- If you want to withdraw from the study, please email Rebecca Chisholm, student researcher at [rwilsma1@jh.edu](mailto:rwilsma1@jh.edu) to inform her of your withdrawal.

**9. How will the confidentiality of your data be protected?**

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Institutional Review Board. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

To protect confidential information, all study records will be created and maintained by the student investigator and stored in a locked file cabinet. In addition, participant names on data sheets (document artifacts) will be replaced with code numbers to maintain participant confidentiality. All electronic data will be stored and secured in a password-protected computer file. Only the student investigator and PI will have access to the computer files, which will be backed-up regularly to ensure their protection.

**10. What other things should you know about this research study?**

**What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?**

This study has been reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people that reviews human research studies. The IRB can help you if you have questions about your rights as a research participant or if you have other questions, concerns or complaints about this research study. You may contact the IRB at 410-516-6580 or hirb@jhu.edu.

**What should you do if you have questions about the study?**

Call the principal investigator, Elizabeth T. Brown at (502) 974-9899. If you wish, you may contact the principal investigator by letter. The address is on page one of this consent form. If you cannot reach the principal investigator or wish to talk to someone else, call the IRB office at 410-516-5680.

You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to the researcher(s) working with you or by calling Rebecca Chisholm at (410) 533-2418.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the Homewood Institutional Review Board at Johns Hopkins University at (410) 516-6580.

**14. What does your signature on this consent form mean?**

Your signature on this form means that: You understand the information given to you in this form, you accept the provisions in the form, and you agree to join the study. You will not give up any legal rights by signing this consent form.

**WE WILL GIVE YOU A COPY OF THIS SIGNED AND DATED CONSENT FORM**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant (Print Name) Date/Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent (Print Name) Date/Time

**NOTE: A COPY OF THE SIGNED, DATED CONSENT FORM MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR; A COPY MUST BE GIVEN TO THE PARTICIPANT.**



## Appendix N

### English Learners' Professional Development Interview Questions

*The participants will be interviewed online by the student researcher's adviser- as required for approval by the Baltimore City Public Schools research committee. The interview will be recorded. The researcher will provide follow-up questions depending on the direction and response of each participant to individual questions. The approximate time frame for each question will be 5 minutes, not to exceed a total of 20 minutes for each interview.*

Q1 How has your instructional approach to students who are acquiring English as a second language changed during your participation in the EL professional development?

Q2 How does your knowledge about working with students who are acquiring English as a second language influence your use of instructional strategies to support ELs in your ECE classroom?

Q3 What are some instructional strategies that you can employ to support students who are acquiring English as a second language in your classroom?

Q4 Describe your satisfaction with the professional development workshop and intersession instructional support.

- What went well and what did you find challenging?
- What challenges/barriers, if any, did you encounter during the professional development workshops or intersession instructional support?

Q5 Anything else you want to share about what you know about working with students who are acquiring English as a second language?

*Note.* Interview questions adapted from Fitts and Gross (2012).

## Curriculum Vitae

# Rebecca M. Chisholm

### **EDUCATION AND TRAINING:**

#### **Doctor of Education**

Johns Hopkins University

- *Doctor of Education Advisory Committee*

**December 2020 (expected)**

#### **Master of Science (Summa Cum Laude), Educational Studies**

Johns Hopkins University

Overall GPA: 4.00

**December 2011**

#### **Graduate Certificate, Earth and Space Science Education**

Johns Hopkins University

Overall GPA: 4.00

**December 2011**

#### **Bachelor of Science (Magna Cum Laude), Elementary Education**

University of Maryland, College Park

Overall GPA: 3.97

**May 2009**

- *College Park Scholars Program: Media, Self and Society*
- *Primannum Honor Society*
- *Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society: Iota Upsilon Chapter*
- *Mortar Board Honor Society*

### **SIGNIFICANT COURSEWORK:**

Disciplinary Approaches to Education

Research Methods and Systematic Inquiry I and II

Building Strategic School, Educational Organization, and Community Partnerships

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

#### ***Prekindergarten and Kindergarten ESOL Teacher***

**August 2019-Present**

- Collaborate with general educators to plan and implement literacy and mathematics instruction
- Plan and facilitate professional development for ESOL teachers and general educators
- Share best practices and guide school improvement as a member of the instructional leadership team

#### ***Kindergarten and First-Grade Teacher***

**August 2015-June 2018**

- Collaborated with special educators and ESOL teachers to plan and implement literacy instruction
- Planned word study, readers and writers workshop lessons within inclusion setting
- Utilized SMART Board and iPads to create, execute and share blending learning opportunities

#### ***Content Support Specialist***

**August 2014-June 2015**

- Facilitated K-8 collaborative planning sessions and modeled research-based instructional practices

- Facilitated assessment administration and analyzed individual and class student data
- Served as leadership team member, student learning objectives ambassador, and literacy and mathematics representative

***Kindergarten and First-Grade Teacher***

**August 2009-May 2014**

- Taught multiple subject areas to kindergarten and first-grade students
- Promoted reading and writing by using the workshop approach to balanced literacy education
- Served as Literacy Lead for K-5 Teachers during Spring 2014

***Professional Development Facilitator***

**June 2011-Present**

- Collaborate with colleagues to design and implement systematic professional development experiences
- Present grade-level literacy units of study and Common Core Math Initiatives to teachers
- Designed and presented rhyming session for literacy academy to early childhood teachers

**RESEARCH AND INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE:**

***Undergraduate Studies Student Advisory Committee, Dean***

**August 2008-May 2009**

- Advised direction and implementation of undergraduate programs and initiatives

***Senior Summer Scholars Program, Undergraduate Research***

**Summer 2008**

- Studied learner-centered education at an environmental elementary school in Baltimore, Maryland
- Communicated research results to university community

***University of Maryland Unwind! Magazine, Co-Editor in Chief***

**Summer 2007-Spring 2008**

- Managed editorial staff and developed a team of contributing writers
- Initiated and hosted writer workshops to improve overall writing quality of the publication

**ACADEMIC HONORS:**

Johns Hopkins University Merit Scholarship

Jo Ann J. Trow National Scholarship

University of Maryland College of Education Scholarship

University of Maryland Senior Summer Scholars Research Grant

College Park Scholars Outstanding Achievement Award

College Women's Club of Annapolis Scholarship