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Addressing the Needs of High School English Learners Through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study of a Midwestern Metropolitan Public School District

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Addressing the Needs of High School English Learners Through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study of a Midwestern Metropolitan Public School District

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University of Nebraska, 2019

Adviser: Kent Mann

English Learners (EL) and those students' redesignated language proficient, or more accurately described as emergent bilingual or multilingual learners; make up a significant subset of the student population of high schools throughout the country. ELs may be vulnerable to academic failure in core academic subject areas due to limited language proficiency and potential gaps in formal education. Every school district creates a continuum of services to educate students at various levels of English language acquisition, which more than likely will include inclusion in the general education classroom. The challenge for districts is ensuring that general education teachers have the knowledge, skills, and systemic supports to implement inclusive practices and address the needs of ELs. At the high school level, the impact of English Learners passing their core classes results in whether or not they meet the minimum requirements for high school graduation.

This descriptive case study is designed to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners (ELs) in a high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school

district. What makes this dissertation study unique is that it was completed in tandem by two researchers, one focused on middle schools and one at a high school in the same school district. The experiences and perceptions of general education classroom teachers, EL specialists, and administrators from the middle school campus, grades six through eight and the high school, grades nine through twelve, were collected to describe the current realities of the implementation of inclusive practice to address the needs of ELs.

This study describes the complexity of the issue and guides educational professionals to develop or revise their processes that address meeting the needs of ELs through inclusive practices in the general education classroom. It also identifies themes that support the English Learners' transition from middle school to high school and the prospective alignment of school district EL services.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family for always encouraging me to do more than I believe is possible! Even though you may not have understood the entire dissertation process, your support and positive words kept me going to reach the end.

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I am grateful for every student that passed through Room 217 at Grand Island Senior High. Your successes and challenges motivated me to design this dissertation study to improve programming for current and future students and educators.

Thank you to my colleagues and friends in Grand Island and throughout the state of Nebraska for believing in the power of collaboration to support English learners, immigrants, refugees, and migrant students.

I am incredibly blessed to have completed a tandem study with my colleague and friend, Kris Schneider. What a journey! I am so proud of the work that we accomplished and the impact it will have on future innovative ideas to address the needs of English learners and their families.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

At sixteen years old, Francisco came to the United States with his uncle leaving behind his mother and father in Guatemala. The family decided to send their son north in search of educational opportunities and the chance at a better life. He is fluent in Quiché, a Mayan language spoken in areas of Guatemala, and he knows some Spanish and no English. Francisco attended school in Guatemala through his sixth-grade year. For these reasons, many school districts in the United States, would consider Francisco not only an English learner (EL) or more positively an emergent multilingual but also a student with limited and interrupted formal education (SLIFE).

We crossed paths a few years ago at a family literacy event hosted by the high school EL teachers. He shared that upon his arrival to this new country attending school in the United States was entirely based on complying with immigrant enforcement policies. His priority was on earning money to support himself and his family. While enrolled in EL Newcomer classes at the public high school, Francisco managed to work the third shift at a local meatpacking plant. He misses the life and family he left behind in Guatemala but is happy to be in the community of Abbott.

Fast-forward two years and there is a new sense of passion and enthusiasm as he talks about his future. Francisco turned his attention solely onto his education intending to earn an advanced degree in welding and basic auto mechanics. Through the successful completion of all of his EL coursework, Francisco had accumulated all of the required elective credits to graduate high school. He did earn a few core credits during this

experience, as it is typical at Abbott High School for emerging English Learners to acquire credit for physical education and a math course before fully transitioning to classes that bear the necessary core credits needed to earn a diploma. He did this all in English with limited support in Spanish from a bilingual paraprofessional. For the next two years, Francisco had a full schedule, doubling up on core classes. Taking both freshman and sophomore English in one year is a fete that his native English speaking peers more than likely never have to experience, however, he was able to quickly chip away at the one hundred and forty core credits needed to graduate high school. In May, Francisco and about six hundred other seniors at Abbott High School walked across the stage. He was able to accomplish this before his twenty-first birthday in front of family, peers, and teachers that supported him along the way.

As the coordinator of the district's EL program, I was curious about his experiences in high school and what influenced this drastic change from being in the United States to work to now setting his eyes on graduating high school and planning for his future success. He spoke highly of his EL teachers and the extraordinary help and guidance he received right away in the EL Newcomers Program, but I was interested in the rest of his high school experience. Precisely, how are he and other secondary English learners supported in the general education classroom as they earned the required credits to graduate from high school?

Background

Francisco is not alone as nearly one out of ten public school students is identified as an English Learner (Sanchez 2016). Also referred to as emergent bilinguals or even multilingual children (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008), this student population is defined as individuals who speak a language other than English and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that in the fall of 2015, 9.5% of all public students fall under this category. During this same period, 6.6% of Nebraska students were classified as English Learners, as reported by the Nebraska Department of Education, slightly less than the national statistics. In contrast, the site location for this dissertation study, Abbott Public Schools, was over five percent higher than the national average and over eight percent higher than the state average, reporting 14.92% of students in Grades K-12 as identified as English learners.

English Learners are a significant portion of the student population in many public high schools across the country. Based on the same report from the National Center for Education Statistics in the fall of 2015, nationally, ELs made up 6.7% of 9th graders, 5.6% of 10th graders, 4.5% of 11th graders, and 3.9% of 12th graders. At the Abbott High School within the district chosen for the case study, 8.81% of the student population was served in the EL program, consisting of 17% of 9th graders, 12% of 10th graders, 5% of 11th graders, and 3% of 12th graders. See Table 1

Table 1

Percentage of English Learners by Grade during the fall of 2015

	Percent of ELs Grades K-12	Percent of 9th Grade ELs	Percent of 10th Grade ELs	Percent of 11th Grade ELs	Percent of 12th Grade ELs
United States	9.5%	6.7%	5.6%	4.5%	3.9%
Nebraska	6.6%	5.1%	3.8%	3.1%	2.4%
Abbott	14.92%	17%	12%	5%	3%

Note: Data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Nebraska Department of Education for the fall of 2015

Beyond these percentages, all school districts, whether they have high or low incidents of ELs, need to rise to the challenge to guarantee all English Learners meet requirements for graduation, despite coming to the United States with limited or interrupted formal educational background, minimal English language skills, and starting high school at an older age.

Not only do public school districts need to ensure language acquisition but they also have a legal obligation to provide equal access to content standards and educational opportunities that are defined in the *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents* published by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education in January 2015. Challenged to address the educational needs of EL students, public school districts are provided with guidance, but no specific framework on an individual program or instructional method (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, English Learner programming can vary from highly specialized language instruction in a separate setting to empowering

classroom teachers to provide the necessary language instruction in the general education classroom in addition to delivering grade-level content standards.

ELs have a variety of challenges, needs, and barriers that need to be used as assets when designing highly effective and equitable programs that drive their academic success. “Diversity in their educational backgrounds, expectations of schooling, socioeconomic status, age of arrival, personal experiences while coming to and living in the United States, and parents’ education levels and proficiency in English” (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013, p.4) are additional factors that further define second language learners. Every student brings a unique set of strengths and challenges to school that positively or negatively affect their academic success. Knowing their stories and personal journeys open a window to better understanding the students and families the public school districts serve to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for them to thrive in schools and the community.

Building on student experiences and the perceived barriers to their learning intensify when districts meet expectations to implement services that are “educationally sound in theory and effective in practice” (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p.12). Not only do districts need to meet students where they are at linguistically they also need to ensure ELs are meeting the same graduation expectations as their native English-speaking peers. According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2015-16, the percentage of students that graduated in four years in the nation comprised of 84% of all students and 67% of ELs. In Nebraska, the gap between all students and ELs was even more extensive, with 89% of all students graduating in four

years and 55% of students identified as EL. The difference in the graduation rate at the state level is comparable to reporting at the research study site with graduation rates of 87% of all students and 53% of EL students.

The complexity of programming, the diversity among secondary aged ELs, and gaps in achievement data and graduation rates are the precise reasons the Nebraska Department of Education English Learner program brought together school districts of various sizes and EL populations to form a collaborative workgroup. Initially, the goal of the team was to learn with and from each other about implementation ideas for the required components of an EL program but has expanded beyond this and functions as a professional learning community to address common concerns across the state. The outcomes include identifying research, strategies, and tools to support SLIFE students, content teachers, students in the general education classroom, and the transition from grade level and types of EL services. The collaboration within this group of educators provides another context of the relevance and importance of addressing the needs of secondary ELs through a focused study on the current reality within a school district with a relatively high incidence of ELs.

English Learners are a heterogeneous group of students with diverse backgrounds, languages, and educational needs that need specialized programming and innovative pathways to reaching high expectations of learning content knowledge, gaining English language proficiency, and graduating from high school. All of these variables inform and influence student achievement in learning. Educators can make a positive impact by

focusing on those factors they can control through teacher efficacy and implementing instructional practices that best meet the needs of ELs.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is to determine if high school general education teachers have the knowledge, skills, and systemic supports to implement inclusive practices and address the needs of ELs. ELs are one subgroup of the student population who may be vulnerable to academic failure in core academic subject areas due to limited language proficiency and potential gaps in formal education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study is to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners (ELs) in high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school district. At the beginning stage of the research, inclusive practices for ELs can generally be defined as specific instructional practices and academic supports in the core subject areas for ELs to succeed as learners and achieve the same performance outcomes expected of all students.

Tandem Research

This dissertation study is being completed in tandem by another researcher, colleague, and doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska focused on middle schools at the same Midwestern metropolitan public school district. The middle school campus configuration consists of grades six through eight, and the high school includes grades nine through twelve. The potential impact of this type of study is to identify

themes that support the English Learners' transition from middle school to high school and the prospective alignment of school district's EL services.

This research focused on high school with a potential impact as follows:

1. To proactively prevent students from starting their high school career as credit deficient. ELs in middle school do not want to return to EL services at the high school level due to the stigmatism of labels and segregated classrooms.
2. To identify themes that support ELs and their transition from middle school to high school, and
3. To be a lighthouse for other districts and inform the prospective alignment of school district EL services at the secondary level (grades six through twelve).

Conceptual Framework

The student is at the center of designing personalized learning paths that meet their academic language needs and access to core content standards. For emergent bilingual or multilingual learners, this means a shift from English only instruction and assessment to prioritizing the diverse language resources students bring to the learning experience as they access academic content. Equitable solutions are possible that balance language acquisition and access to grade level core content.

One framework to support student's native language and the language of school is through the use of translanguaging.

> Translanguaging can be defined as a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include *all* the language practices of students in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones,

> communicate appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality. (Garcia & Kano, 2014, p. 261)

Instead of teasing out the two languages, students build upon their abilities in one language to increase their engagement and empower them to own their learning of the content in both languages. Home language use in the classroom validates the identity of the individual students and builds upon their linguistic skills and prior knowledge. It gives the learner the autonomy to switch between languages to learn new content, confirm understanding, express ideas, and to actively develop proficiency in two or more languages. The translanguaging theory shifts educator's beliefs about a student's academic success from a deficit model to an assets-based approach for how emergent bi/multilingual learners will perform in the classroom and how they will be viewed and valued in the global society.

In *Advocating for English Learners: A Guide for Educators,* Diane Staehr Fenner advises that:

> all educators must first share a sense of responsibility for providing an equitable education for ELs so that they will be willing to change the ways in which they work with ELs to recognize ELs' unique strengths as well as address ELs' specific linguistic and cultural needs through instruction. (2014, p.27)

At the heart of this shared responsibility are multiple factors, including identifying educator beliefs, holding students to high expectations through raising awareness, and examining personal biases, increasing collaboration among staff, and building relationships with family.

To expand upon this framework, Diane Staehr and Sydney Snyder, in *Unlocking English Learners' Potential: Strategies for Making Content Accessible,* add a focus on instructional strategies and collaboration among EL specialists and content teachers. Each educator brings their area of expertise and lens on how they view the connection between language and content learning in the classroom. To address the needs of ELs, instructional strategies that teach language at the same time as challenging academic vocabulary and content will maximize the student's learning experience. This careful planning of lessons ensures access to grade level content standards while being responsive to the student's English language proficiency is the premise of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model. Content teachers can use this model, which "brings together *what* to teach by providing a framework for *how* to teach it" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013, p. 20). The overarching strategies and techniques facilitate thinking through practices and processes that highlight the academic and language development of English learners.

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching for English Learners: Grades K-12 published by TESOL, an international organization for English language teaching, emphasizes a variety of recommended classroom practices that align to the previously described frameworks. TESOL principles point to designing lessons that differentiate for the needs of ELs by using their unique characteristics as levers to elevate and adjust instruction in strategic ways. Another distinction called to attention by TESOL International is the need for teachers to engage in professional development and

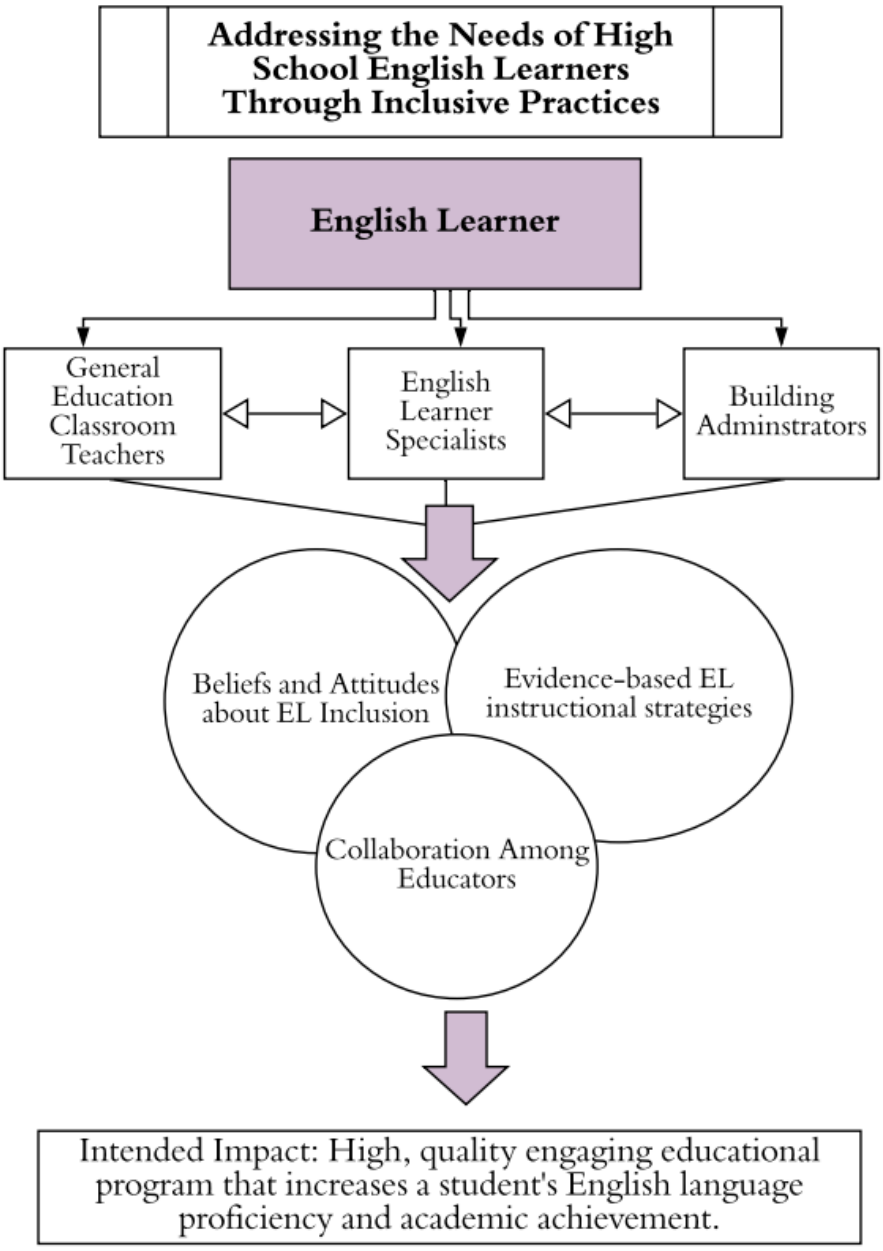
collaborative partnerships with their colleagues to address the content and language demands of their subject areas.

At the high school level, a team of educators that include the classroom teacher, EL specialist, and building administrator work closely with every student identified as an English Learner to ensure they are being supported academically, socially and emotionally throughout their educational journey. Guidance counselors also play a crucial role in a student's support team. Each of these roles has different job expectations that drive their focus on how they support students.

In order to frame their perspectives around serving English Learners, this case study was designed around the conceptual framework that there is more than just one promising practice that impacts improving the quality of educational programs for ELs. Figure 1 shows three areas of impact on the inclusion of ELs in high school core content classrooms. If there are positive beliefs and attitudes about the inclusion of ELs in the general education classroom, implementation of evidence-based EL strategies, and collaboration among educators to address the needs of ELs than districts have set a foundation for academic success. There is a definite overlap in these three overarching areas as they work together to address multiple facets of the student as a learner but also the structures, systems, and people in place to support instruction and staff development.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Statement of Research Questions

The following primary research question guides this study concerning the phenomenon of interest:

> How is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs of high school English Learners?

Seeking to further understand the critical elements of the central question, the following secondary questions were used to examine the implementation of inclusive practices:

- What is inclusion for English Learners in the core subject areas in high school (i.e., English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of high school educators and administrators about English Learners and their inclusion in general education classrooms?
- What strategies do teachers use to support and include English Learners in high school classrooms?
- How are teachers in the high school supported through collaboration and professional learning to meet the needs of English Learners?
- How do educators and administrators perceive the implementation of inclusive practices for English Learners in high school?

Study Design Overview

This descriptive case study was designed to examine the implementation of inclusive practices to address the needs of high school English Learners in a Midwestern metropolitan public school district. By examining current practices, administrators and

teachers can "reflect on their own beliefs and practices and engage in frank conversations about how we can work and learn from one another better in the service of ELLs" (Castellon et al., 2015, p. 5). This research study utilizes qualitative inquiry to examine a real-life problem through conducting interviews, observations, and a document review to understand the current realities on how the needs of ELs are being addressed in an inclusive classroom setting. By including multiple perspectives from the educators and administrators that work with ELs, there is a well-rounded sophisticated understanding of how they make sense of their world (Merriam, 2009) by allowing them to tell stories unencumbered by what we expect to find (Creswell, 2007, p.40). Their lived experiences with the problem of study will guide districts to develop or revise systemic processes that address the language and learning needs among secondary ELs.

Definition of Terms

Emergent Bilingual or Multilingual Learner—"English language learners are in fact *emergent bilinguals*. That is, through school and through acquiring English, these children become bilingual, able to continue to function in their home language as well as in English, their new language and that of school" (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008, p.6). The use of this term recognizes and celebrates the linguistic and cultural backgrounds students bring to the educational setting that need to guide equitable instruction and assessment practices, which appropriately uses the student's home language. Multilingual refers to students who know and use more than two languages. Although there is a call to action for educators and advocates to rally behind the term emergent bilinguals, at the federal, state, or even local level the more common term of

English Learner (EL) is being used to describe the students and the programming provided through public school districts. As the principal investigator for this study, I believe in this assets-based language, however, to align to the language of the state and district chosen for this case study, the term EL has been kept throughout the paper.

English Language Learner (ELL)— English Language Learners, also referred to as ELLs, are students that have indicated a language other than English on the Home Language survey and have demonstrated limited English proficiency on an English language assessment. The screener measures the student's level of English proficiency in the four domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

English Learner (EL)—English Learner, or EL, is used interchangeably with the acronym ELL. Both terms are referring to students whose native language is not English, but they are actively learning the language. According to the Nebraska Department of Education Rule 15, An English Learner is

> A student who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
>
> - Who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
> - Who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and

- Who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- Whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual at least one of the following:
    - The ability to meet the challenging state academic standards;
    - The ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
    - The opportunity to participate fully in society. (Rule 15, 2018)

English as a Second Language (ESL)—English as a Second Language (ESL) is another acronym for English Learner. This terminology is typically used when describing teaching endorsements and certifications to teach English learners.

English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) — Under Rule 15 and Title III, English Learners are required to participate in the statewide summative English language proficiency assessment given each spring. There are four subtests to determine a student's level of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards— In compliance with ESEA, each state must adopt ELP standards that address the four domains of language, proficiency levels, and are aligned with the states academic content standards in language arts, math, and science.

Former ELs—These English learners have achieved proficiency on the ELP standards and are no longer receiving EL services. They are monitored for four years by the school district as part of their language instruction program.

General Education—Sometimes referred to by educators as Gen Ed, this term describes the classroom setting where the general education curriculum and core content standards are delivered to all students by a general education teacher that may or may not be certified in English as a Second Language or special education.

Inclusion—English Learners are in the general education classroom setting learning alongside their native English-speaking peers held to the same grade level content standards and expectations.

Inclusive Practice—Inclusive practices are the specific instructional practices and support for English Learners to succeed as learners and achieve the same performance outcomes expected of all students.

Language Instruction Educational Program—Under Rule 15, districts are required to implement programming for English learners that supports students' development of English in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening and ensures their ability to participate meaningfully in content areas. Demographics, student characteristics, and available resources influence the types of programming a district decides to implement for their ELs.

Levels of English Language Proficiency—Overall proficiency on the state's annual language proficiency assessment, English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), is categorized into three levels: emerging, progressing, and

proficient. As shown in Figure 2, the overall proficiency descriptions of what students can do in reading, writing, speaking, and listening help teachers determine the type of supports and scaffolds to put in place to address the needs of ELs.

Long Term ELs—According to ESEA, long term ELs are classified as English Learners who have not attained English proficiency within five years of initial identification as an EL.

Professional Learning Community—"Teams of educators working collaboratively to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators" (Solution Tree, 2019).

Rule 15: Regulations and Procedures for the Education of Students with Limited English Proficiency in Public Schools. Most recently updated and signed by the governor in May 2018, Rule 15 clarifies the obligations school districts have to serve English Learners in the state of Nebraska. The guidance ensures consistency with identifying, serving, and exiting English learners from EL programming in the public school system.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model—The SIOP model is "an approach for teaching content to English Language Learners in strategic ways that makes the subject matter concepts comprehensible while promoting the students' English language development" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013).

Students with Limited and Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)—A term used to refer to students that have limited or interrupted formal schooling in their home country or native language. They are more than likely performing below grade level

academically because of lack of opportunities for formal education due to migratory lifestyle, fleeing violence, socio-economic status, or other variables.

Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—School districts use Title III funds to provide effective language instruction educational programs. The programs need to address English proficiency and student achievement, prepare classroom teachers, principals, and other personnel with the professional development needed to support instruction and assessment practices for ELs and to implement parent and family engagement opportunities.

Figure 2

English Language Proficiency Levels

ELPA21 Overall Proficiency Level

Emerging	Progressing	Nearly Proficient **does not show on score reports*	Proficient
ELP Standards *Reading, Writing, Listening, & Speaking* **Level 1 & 2** - Level 1: Beginning - Level 2: Early Intermediate	**ELP Standards** *Reading, Writing, Listening, & Speaking* **Level 2 & 3** (possibly some 4s) - Level 2: Early Intermediate - Level 3: Intermediate - Level 4: Early Advanced	**ELP Standards** *Reading, Writing, Listening, & Speaking* **Level 3 & 4** (mostly 4s)	**ELP Standards** *Reading, Writing, Listening, & Speaking* **Level 4 & 5** - Level 4: Early Advanced - Level 5: Advanced
Students are just **beginning to develop** grade-level English language skills.	Students are **developing** grade-level English language skills.	Students are **nearing** grade-level English language skills.	Students are **no longer identified** as an English learner.
- minimal to limited comprehension - words and simple sentences - "silent period"	- fair to good comprehension - produce accurate English with errors - working towards complex structures in writing and speaking	- strong comprehension - produce accurate English with few errors - producing complex academic language skills	- still need support in the content-area classroom with academic language vocabulary and skills

Note: Adapted from the English Language Proficiency Standards, English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century, and NDE High School Work Group support documents

Assumptions

If educators demonstrate an assets-based ideology about English Learners (EL), a positive attitude regarding their inclusion in the general education classroom, use evidence-based EL instructional strategies and collaborate with colleagues, then schools will have a solid foundation to meet the needs of ELs in the general education classroom through inclusive practices.

Delimitations and Limitations

The inclusion of English Learners in the general education classroom has a direct impact on the credits earned towards high school graduation. Creating a path to graduation for the unique needs of ELs is a hurdle facing districts across the United States. Inclusion is not exclusive to secondary education. Inclusion in the general education classroom is an educational practice that spans preschool through grade twelve. The delimitation of this study narrowed the extent of the research to an intra-district focus on one high school in one public school district. Only focusing on general education classrooms in the core academic subject areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), this study did not take into account elective courses in areas like career and technical classes, fine arts, and world languages.

The research was conducted with educators and administrators that chose on their own to participate in the interviews and observations. The study was limited to their knowledge and experience working with ELs in an inclusive setting at the identified high school. It is also important to note, as the primary investigator of this research study, my role in the district is to plan and monitor the implementation of the K-12 EL program.

Though the researcher does not have any supervisory responsibilities of the participants, this reality may limit the participants' responses due to the researcher's breadth of knowledge and connection to the district EL program.

Significance of the Study

English Learners (ELs) currently served in the high school EL program and those students that have been redesignated language proficient makeup a significant subset of the student population, therefore, it is crucial to transform EL services to address their unique strengths and challenges. The access to courses and collaboration among staff open up tremendous opportunities for all students, especially ELs, to personalize their learning and engage in experiences to be career and college ready. This research describes the complexity of the issue to improve EL student outcomes in an inclusive setting and guide districts to revise EL programming and inform professional development plans that address educational needs of high school EL students through the perspective of the targeted group of certified educators and administrators. Inclusion is not merely a setting or place for students to go but is part of daily practice to ensure every student gets what they need to be successful in the classroom. The diversity of the student population cannot serve as a barrier to learning, accessing education opportunities, and providing opportunities to prepare for their futures.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Nearly nine percent of all public school students are identified as English Learners (EL) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Also referred to as limited English proficient by the state, this student population is defined as individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

ELs have a variety of challenges, needs, and barriers that are unique in comparison to their never-EL peers. Not only do they have to meet all requirements for graduation, but many newcomers do this with limited or interrupted formal educational background, minimal English language skills, and by entering high school for the first time at seventeen or eighteen years of age. Educators have a professional obligation to ensure ELs can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs and services. Federal and state guidance does not mandate a particular program of instruction for ELs. School districts can develop and implement a language instruction educational program that best fits their unique needs and student demographics. Under Rule 15, the following requirements need to be met by the program design:

1. A systematic approach to teaching the English language for English learners;
2. Educationally sound in theory and effective in practice as recognized by experts in the field of language acquisition;

3. Help English learners increase English proficiency and meet academic standards; and
4. Allow for meaningful access to programs and activities that are available to all students, including, if appropriate, special education. (NDE Rule 15, 2018)

These four requirements of Rule 15 ensure consistency, compliance, and quality programming across the state of Nebraska. It is up to the district to "re-envision the way in which programs of study are structured and supported. Too frequently schools force ELLs to conform to an existing instructional model, built with a different population in mind" (*Schools to Learn From: How Six High Schools Graduate ELLs College & Career Ready,* 2015). Student first decision-making based on their language and academic needs is what should drive the type of program model a school district chooses and implements each year. Nebraska Department of Education's *Rule 15: A Guide for Implementation* describes a variety of options.

Newcomer Program—Newcomer Programming is a short-term placement designed to meet the needs of recently arrived immigrants and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). Instruction is focused on language acquisition and core academic skills with ELs that are also learning about a new culture and school system.

Sheltered Instruction—In a sheltered instruction classroom, what teachers teach is guided by content and grade level standards, but how they teach is differentiated to meet the language proficiency needs of their students. This model is typically implemented at the secondary level, and classes are made up of

only ELs. ELs receiving instruction using the SIOP model outperform similar students in control classes (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004).

EL Pull-Out Program—English learners are pulled from the general education classroom for a specified amount of time to receive English-language instruction in a smaller group setting.

EL Push-In/In-Class Supports—ELs are served in the general education classroom with their native English-speaking peers. English language instruction is provided either by the classroom teacher, through co-teaching with an EL teacher or through collaboration with an EL specialist.

Dual Language Program—Instruction is provided in two languages and serves English Learners, bilingual students, and native-English speakers. Researchers, Thomas and Collier, state "dual-language programs also provide integrated, inclusive, and unifying education experiences for their students, in contrast to segregated, exclusive, and divisive education characteristics of many traditional English-only and transitional bilingual programs" (2003, p.63). Learning content standards in multiple languages and developing cultural understanding is one of many outcomes of a dual language program. Students who receive more exposure to languages other than English in a dual language program have shown "proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking English that are just as advanced, or more so, than those of ELs in a 50:50 DLE programs or English mainstream programs" (Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

Transitional Bilingual—Instruction is provided in two languages and services English Learners only. Often the goal is to decrease the use of the native language and move to sheltered instruction or English-only courses.

There is no specific formula for success. Public school districts can implement one or multiple of the services described to personalize the learning experience for the characteristics of the EL student body they serve. Decisions regarding a service delivery model are also driven by funding, staffing, and educational philosophy of the school district leadership. It would be easy to focus on addressing the gaps in language proficiency through specialized English language development (ELD) opportunities throughout a student's school day, however, "ELLs also need academic content instruction, just as all students do; although ELD is crucial, it must be in addition to-not instead of-instruction designed to promote content knowledge" (Goldenberg, 2008, p. 42). Schools need to consider access to educational opportunities that not only assist ELs in learning English but also support them in meeting challenging state academic achievement standards.

Inclusion of English Learners in the General Education Classroom

"Research shows that when placed at length in segregated settings, ELs may be at risk for school failure, delayed graduation, and negative academic self-concepts" (Gandara & Orfield, 2010). The language instruction educational program needs to balance inclusion with robust language learning opportunities to avoid unnecessary segregation of ELs. While emerging ELs may best be served in an EL Newcomer Program, at some point, they will need to transition to general education classroom. The transition to an inclusive

classroom setting is especially true if they are on a path towards graduation, as core credit generally is earned through sheltered instruction, EL push-in/in-class supports, and dual language immersion.

Three major themes were represented in the review of literature about the inclusion of high school English Learners in the general education classroom. The themes that will be addressed include educator's beliefs and attitudes about the inclusion of ELs, evidence-based EL strategies to support inclusion, and collaboration among general education teachers and EL specialists.

Beliefs and Attitudes of Educators

Beliefs and attitudes held by educators about ELs and their inclusion in the subject area mainstream classroom is a variable that can positively or negatively affect the influence of inclusion on students academically and socially. In order for inclusion to become part of the school culture, everyone needs to believe that EL students are all of their students and not just the responsibility of the EL teacher and program. If this collective teacher efficacy is not the norm, "then some targeted intervention is needed to transform these limiting beliefs and help mainstream teachers come to see ELLs as capable learners and themselves as responsible for their learning" (Feiman-Nemser, 2018, p. 230).

A culture that values the linguistic and cultural diversity of students is crucial for students to see themselves as part of the school community. Jenelle Reeves concluded in her 2006 study, *Secondary Teacher Attitudes Toward Including English-Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms,* that

> even though teachers welcome ELs in the classroom they still struggle in how to best meet their needs or feel a certain level of English attainment is necessary to be successful; uninterested in training possibly because of a belief that it is the role of the EL specialist. (2006, p.139)

Schools and educators need to view students for their potential and not by their circumstances. The level of language proficiency should not close doors on EL participation in core content classes and specialized programs like Advanced Placement courses. "An EL equity trap allows teachers to equate limited English proficiency with limited intelligence, liberating themselves from the responsibility to engage their students in rigorous academic instruction" (Callahan & Shifrer, 2017, p.4).

The attitudes and beliefs of educators is a critical factor in determining the types of professional learning and collaboration that will support the implementation of inclusive practices for English Learners.

Inclusive Practices for English Learners (ELs)

Inclusion can easily be referred to as sink-or-swim when educators lack the training and support to ensure that they are addressing the needs of every learner. Inclusion is not just a place students go but instead, they are learning in tandem with their peers by being provided the necessary scaffolds and accommodations to support learning.

Intentionally planning accommodations and adaptations to address the needs of English Learners needs to be expected in lesson planning and collaborative conversations. University of Nebraska doctoral graduate, Laura S. Salem, discussed the importance of what is happening in the general education classroom directly impacts the

pre-referral process for ELs to special education services. She stressed the need for continual professional development around research-based instructional strategies. Dr. Salem recommends to further practice:

> By implementing these strategies in their classroom teaching, all teachers will be equipped to provide the most effective supports for those students in their classrooms that are learning English as a new language, as well as those native English speakers that might benefit from these strategies. (2016, p. 80)

Though all students are advantaged, inclusive practices that address the cultural and linguistic needs of ELs is crucial for their success in content area instruction.

Evidence-based EL instructional strategies

Sheltered Instruction is a teaching style or framework founded on the concept of providing meaningful instruction in the content areas (language arts, math, science, and social studies) for transitioning English Learners toward higher academic achievement while they reach English proficiency. SIOP is organized into eight components that include:

1. Lesson Planning and Preparation
2. Building Background
3. Comprehensible Input
4. Strategies
5. Interaction
6. Practice and Application
7. Lesson Delivery

8. Review and Assessment

For optimal results, this model is recommended school-wide and to be used in general education classrooms. Instead of providing watered down curriculum for ELs, sheltered instruction allows the content focus to be equal to that of native English speakers while at the same time improving an ELs grasp of the language. Instructional techniques include "cooperative learning, connections to student experiences, culturally responsive activities, targeted vocabulary development, slower speech and fewer idiomatic expressions for less proficient students, use of visuals and demonstrations, and use of adapted text and supplementary materials" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013, p.15). Providing scaffolded instructional support to ELs is critical to the long-term academic success of students. Teachers need to understand language proficiency levels and the continuum of learning a language in order to provide the most effective scaffolds. There are specific strategies that can be written into a lesson plan including the use of graphic organizers, sentence stems, word banks, visuals, and much more. Teachers also have to consider tactics not included in the textbook like gestures, facial expressions, and wait time.

Students struggle when the comprehensible input of the classroom is beyond their language proficiency. The teacher's rate of speech, the complexity of the vocabulary, sentence structure, and wait time are all factors that affect a student's ability to comprehend the oral language necessary to be successful in the classroom. Besides language proficiency, ELs may lack background knowledge and prior experiences to understand the content. It is not that students do not know anything, but instead, they

have different schemata that they are drawing from to make connections to the learning. This gap is widened by a lack of academic vocabulary and previously learned curriculum content and skills. "Classroom teachers must be prepared to teach ELLs and have an understanding of the linguistic demands of academic tasks and skills to address the role of academic language in their instruction" (Samson & Collins, 2012, p.10). Loaning the students the language of the content models what it sounds like to be an expert in that subject area.

Teachers working with ELs must have an understanding of the value of a student's home language and cultural identity. The use of a student's native language "embodies valuable cultural capital and is an integral part of a child's identity" and is the "primary means through which children make sense of their world" (Nemeth, 2014). Allowing students to clarify understanding in their first language increases their interaction with the content and their peers. The use of bilingual dictionaries, online translators, and discussing with same language peers and adults are all ways teachers can tap into a student's language proficiency in a language other than English.

Ensuring all teachers are adequately prepared to work with ELs with inclusive practices and EL evidence strategies is the next piece to the puzzle. Pair this knowledge with job-embedded professional development and collaboration with their peers and classroom teachers have a structure to discuss and implement ideas to impact EL achievement.

Collaboration Among Educators to Meet the Needs of ELs.

Co-ownership in the education of English Learners needs to exist between the general education classroom teacher and the EL specialists to provide an educational experience through a culturally and linguistically informed perspective.

> When the task of educating ELL pupils is left to specialist ESL or bilingual teachers and no modifications are made in 'mainstream' educational structures to accommodate diversity, the interactions that pupils experience in 'mainstream' classrooms is unlikely to promote either academic growth or affirmation of pupil identity. Mainstream teachers are not prepared (in either sense of the word) to teach them. (Cummins, 2006, p.112)

Learning communities hold teachers accountable to each other through regular collaboration during the workday to professionally learn and improve practice. Teams utilize the continuous improvement cycle through inquiry and data analysis, researching evidence-based practices and planning for implementation, reflecting and evaluating. Learning communities develop transparency as teams share individual and group goals aligned with district vision and goals. Teachers express a collective responsibility towards reaching outcomes and supporting all students. "In addition, the very act of participating in a professional learning community can be a powerful tool for learning collaboration techniques" (Ballantyne, Sanderman, Levy, 2008, p. 23).

EL and general education classrooms and teachers can no longer live in silos. They must work together to provide high-quality educational opportunities for ELs.

Each educator brings his or her own experiences and training to the collaborative process. "Essentially, collaborative learning and practice among teachers with diverse areas of expertise were the means by which instructional coherence to advance student learning was achieved in general education classrooms" (York-Barr, Ghere & Sommerness, 2007, p. 331). By working towards a common goal, engaging to learn together, reflecting on practices, and being thought partners to address student needs, educators are demonstrating the value of collaboration and collective efficacy that they can truly make a difference and support ELs.

Summary

Beliefs and attitudes of educators, the use of evidence-based strategies, and collaboration with peers work together to influence the effectiveness of any language instruction educational program model implemented to address the linguistic and academic needs of ELs. In this particular study, the research is focused on how these themes from the review of literature guide the implementation of inclusive practices in the general education classroom. Without inclusion, school districts would not be able to adequately support the increasing number of ELs and expectations to graduate from high school with all of the required credits in the content areas.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners (ELs) in a high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school district. The study was guided by the following primary research question concerning the phenomenon of interest:

> How is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs of high school English Learners?

The implementation of inclusive practices for ELs encompasses various components highlighted through several secondary research questions.

- What is inclusion for English Learners in the core subject areas in high school (i.e., English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of high school educators and administrators about English Learners and their inclusion in general education classrooms?
- What strategies do teachers use to support and include English Learners in high school classrooms?
- How are teachers in the high school supported through collaboration and professional learning to meet the needs of English Learners?

- How do educators and administrators perceive the implementation of inclusive practices for English Learners in high school?

Qualitative Research Design

For this study, a qualitative methods approach was chosen aimed to uncover and describe how a Language Instruction Educational Program supports the academic needs of high school English Learners through inclusive practices in a Midwestern metropolitan public school district. Utilizing qualitative inquiry allowed the researcher to address real-life information and examine the research problem within a current public school setting (Yin, 2014). Though this project is being carried out on a small scale, the value of using a qualitative approach rested in the diversity of the data collected, and the understanding and meaning attained from the process (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Case study research involves the in-depth inquiry of a phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2014) and as an investigator, I was able to collect and analyze data for the problem of practice which can be transferred to the study on a broader scale. This intrinsic case study also allowed a focus on obtaining an accurate description of what is currently being experienced by the participants in their field, giving validity to the findings (Stake, 1995).

Context of the Study

As one of the largest cities in the state, approximately 50,000 individuals call Abbott home. New residents are moving to this agricultural and manufacturing community as demonstrated by population growth of over five percent between 2010 and 2014. Close to fifteen percent of the population is characterized as foreign-born who

come for Abbott's attractive employment opportunities for individuals with limited English language skills such as meatpacking and manufacturing. The diversity of Abbott is represented in over thirty percent Hispanic or Latino and about three percent Black or African American now living in the community. New generations of immigrants and refugees continue to move to this Midwestern metropolitan city due to family connections, job opportunities, and the lure of a smaller and safer place to live.

The Abbott community strongly supports education as evident by its mission and vision statement to meet the needs of all students every day. They expect every student to graduate with exceptional skills, drive, and understanding to achieve personal goals and responsibly contribute to society. Abbott Public Schools (APS) operates a preschool, fourteen elementary schools, three middle schools, an alternative middle school, one senior high school that includes an alternative high school and a career academy campus. These buildings combined educated close to 10,000 students during the 2018-19 school year. The student population has increased by over twenty percent since 2005; therefore, the district is projecting enrollment growth of about two hundred students per year.

Reflecting the demographic changes in the community, the district is also becoming increasingly diverse. According to 2017-18 enrollment data, APS serves a majority-minority student population comprised of several racial and ethnic groups including almost fifty percent Hispanic and five percent Black or African American students. The student demographics are not reflective of the diversity within the community as there are additional options for students to attend high school in the neighboring public and parochial schools. Most APS students (seventy percent) are

eligible for free and reduced priced meals. The student's socioeconomic status is above the state average of about forty-five percent. The district also serves a higher proportion of EL than the state, over sixteen percent in Abbott in contrast with seven percent in the state. About forty percent of the ELs have been in the United States for less than three years. Abbott Public School's EL population represent thirty three different birth countries including Guatemala, Cuba, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan. They speak over twenty different languages with Spanish being the highest, followed by Somali, Arabic, Quiché, and Q'anjoba'l.

Abbott High School (AHS) serves nearly 2,600 students in Grades 9-12 and is one of the largest high schools in the state. Teachers and staff take pride in their diversity, size, and wide range of opportunities for students of all abilities including core classes, special education, EL services, honors classes, dual college credit, advanced placement, and career and technical pathways. Similar to the district, AHS serves a majority-minority student population. According to 2017-18 enrollment data, almost fifty-five percent of the student population self-reported as Hispanic and close to five percent Black or African American. The high school has a higher percentage of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals (seventy-three percent) as compared to both the district and state averages. Close to twelve percent of the students at Abbott are identified as EL, which is slightly less than the district percentage. They speak over ten languages including Spanish, Somali, Arabic, Quiché, and Q'anjoba'l and represent seventeen different countries including Guatemala, Cuba, Somalia, Mexico, Sudan, and Honduras. For an entire list of birth countries and home languages, see Table 2.

Table 2

Birth Countries and Home Languages of the English Learners at Abbott High School (listed alphabetically)

Percentage of ELs	**Birth Country**	**Percentage of ELs**	**Home Language**
0.3%	China	4.2%	Arabic
0.3%	Costa Rica	0.3%	Chinese
14%	Cuba	0.3%	Gujarati
1%	Ecuador	0.3%	Lao
0.3%	Egypt	0.3%	Maltese
4.8%	El Salvador	0.7%	Nubian languages
1.4%	Ethiopia	.7%	Oromo
39%	**Guatemala**	7%	Somali
3.8%	Honduras	**74.4%**	**Spanish**
1%	Kenya	0.3%	Nuer
0.3%	Lao People's Democratic Republic	4.2%	Q'anjoba'l
4.8%	Mexico	6.6%	Quiché
1%	Puerto Rico	0.3%	Masalit
5.9%	Somalia		
.3%	Spain		
4.8%	Sudan		
16.6%	**United States**		
0.7%	Venezuela		

Note: Data obtained from the Abbott Public Schools Student Information System

To meet the needs of the twelve percent of students that qualify for EL services, Abbott High School offers a range of services, such as newcomer and sheltered instruction courses provided by nine EL certified teachers that address the language and academic content necessary to graduate from high school. Figure 3 shows the continuum of EL services that make Abbott Public School's high school EL programming unique.

Of the approximate 300 EL students, close to seventy students receive a full-day of specialized instruction in the EL Newcomer Program classrooms following the same eight-period day as their high school peers. Specialized instruction focuses on utilizing the sheltered instruction model to develop English language proficiency in the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking through content study. Four EL specialists using current EL instructional resources teach language arts, math, science, and social studies foundational content and skills. Students attend elective courses (i.e., physical education and art) with their general education peers. Bilingual paraprofessionals provide Spanish language support as needed. Support for additional languages such as Arabic and Somali are provided through contracted services with community members based on needs and specifically for parent communication rather than direct services in the classroom. Outside of the access to interpreters, students are provided bilingual dictionaries and laptops for online resources and programs. The typical student will spend one to two years in the Newcomer Program before transitioning to the next appropriate level of EL service.

Approximately 130 students are enrolled in Sheltered Instruction courses that provide a nice transition from Newcomers to earning core credit in the areas of English

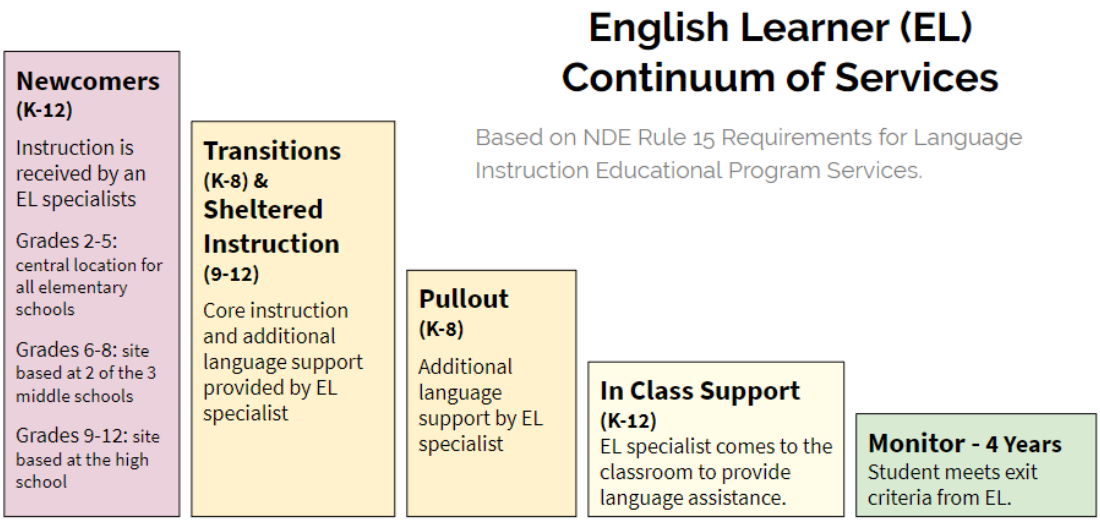
language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These classes are designed to teach core content to EL students in strategic ways that make the subject matter concepts comprehensible while promoting English language development. A teacher endorsed in both the content area and ESL teaches the Sheltered Instruction courses. Abbott High School offers this opportunity for ELs within ninth and tenth grade English, Pre-Algebra and Algebra, American History and World History

About a hundred ELs strictly receive EL support through targeted support in the general education classroom. Students attend all courses with their general education peers. They receive guidance and possibly a limited amount of time in an EL classroom to receive one-on-one or small group instruction by an EL specialist. Supplemental support services are focused on reading and writing instruction to meet grade-level expectations and proficiency levels.

The last part of the continuum is the federal and state mandate to monitor recently exited EL students. Students who are proficient on the state-wide language proficiency exam, ELPA21, will exit from the Abbott Public School EL program and no longer receive active service from an EL specialist. They are monitored for four years to ensure they continue to demonstrate academic progress. The monitoring process is finalized only when the student can demonstrate academic achievement at or above grade level during this four-year monitoring period.

Figure 3

Abbott Public Schools English Learner Continuum of Services



Description of Participants

A criterion based sampling method was used to select the setting in which to do the research and to identify the individuals involved in various aspects of the data collection process. A high school in a Midwestern metropolitan public school district was selected as the research site based on their significant number of qualified EL students in relation to their total enrollment, a fully staffed EL Program, and level of interest in this topic by general education classroom teachers, instructional coaches, and campus administrators.

A specific criterion identified participants for the interview process and Professional Learning Community (PLC) observations in order to ensure those selected "have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived

experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 150). Each chosen for their unique role in the program, participants at the high school site included general education classroom teachers in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, Specialists within the EL and Special Education Programs, instructional coaches, guidance counselors, and high school administrators. See Table 2 for the number of participants by position that consented to be part of this study.

- General education classroom teachers deliver core instruction and are responsible for addressing the needs of all students including those still learning the English language. Classroom instruction is based on state standards for English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. All content areas are evaluated through an annual summative state assessment with the exception of social studies in the state of Nebraska.
- Specialists, like EL and Special Education teachers, are responsible for students qualified in their area of expertise and training. They are part of a team to provide specialized instruction and support services to the students they serve. EL specialists deliver instruction and services based on the state's English language proficiency standards that are assessed annually in the spring in Nebraska. It is important to note that the special education teacher was added to the study's participant list after a number of classroom teachers interviewed described a special education document referred to as a "Student at a Glance" which is created by a special

education case manager to inform general education classroom teachers about the special education students and their identified needs on their individualized learning plan.

- Instructional coaches support teachers by providing job-embedded professional development, conducting instructional coaching cycles, modeling instructional practices, and lesson planning. They are a thought partner and learn alongside teachers and specialists to address the needs of all students.
- Guidance counselors serve multiple roles for a student. At the high school not only do they supporting the student's emotional and social well-being but also guide the courses students select and future planning for post-secondary educational opportunities and careers after high school graduation.
- High school administrators are the instructional leaders and key decision-makers concerning all students and their services. They have a role to play in the evaluation of teachers and specialists and to ensure that district programming is implemented with fidelity.

Table 3

Number of Participants: By Assigned Role and with an ESL Endorsement

Participant's Role	Number of Participants	Participants with an ESL Endorsement
General Education		
Classroom Teachers	18	5
English Language Arts	8	2
Math	3	1
Science	4	1
Social Studies	3	1
Specialists		
English Learner	5	4
Special Education	1	0
Guidance Counselors	2	0
Instructional Coaches	3	1
Administrators	3	0
Total Participants	33	10

Note: Participants self-reported obtaining English as a Second Language (ESL) Endorsement either as an undergraduate or through a master's program.

All necessary permissions and approvals were obtained from the research site and through voluntary consent by participants.

Role of the Researcher

The principal investigator had school district approval to work with the high school's lead principal to identify staff for recruitment, send invitation emails, and post flyers in workrooms. See Appendix B and C. The high school cooperated with every request. The ease of work at the case study site may have been impacted by the close

relationship to the research location due to employment as the English Learner and Migrant Education Program Coordinator. In efforts to not hide my role within the district, I reassured participants that this was a fact-finding research study to examine current practices and inform potential areas of improvement. In no way were they being evaluated or judged for sharing their perspective on the problem of practice.

Data Collection Method and Data Sources

The use of multiple sources of evidence, or data triangulation, strengthened the validity of the case study by measuring the same phenomenon in diverse ways (Yin, 2014). Three types of data sources were utilized for this case study research: interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants that gave signed consent. Interviews were held at times and places convenient and comfortable for each participant. To hold interviews to no longer than one hour, a case study interview protocol was followed to ensure that the content was covered to gather evidence on the research question while still upholding a conversational style approach to the interview (Yin, 2014). A sample of the protocol is included in Appendix D. Each interview was recorded using a digital recording device and notes were taken on the protocol to capture key points and reactions to the questions. The overall time obligation, for each participant, was approximately 90 minutes for the consent process and an interview conducted during off-contract hours.

In order to get a picture of the phenomenon within the real-world setting, a formal observation of collaborative team meetings was also conducted (Yin, 2014). To provide

structure and connect the direct observation back to the research question, a protocol was developed to gather evidence and is included as Appendix E.

Finally, physical artifacts were reviewed about the high school English Learner Program, use of Professional Learning Communities, and lesson planning protocols. This review provided an overview of the program from both the district and school level to further understand the case (Yin, 2014) and develop ideas beyond what was gathered during the interviews and observations.

Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were laid out in the informed consent statement provided to the participants at the time of the interview and through personal conversations. The anonymity of the respondents was protected as the data was collected, analyzed, stored, and described in writing throughout the report. Any reference will be by the pseudonym, including any direct quotes from participant responses. Documents, notes, or recordings that might personally identify participants in this study will be secured in a place that only the researcher has access to under lock and key. It was also understood that the researcher would destroy all records three years after the study is complete.

Data Analysis and Validation

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and organized with additional field notes in computer file folders only accessed by the researcher with a secure password. Data analysis was completed by hand by reading through the transcriptions, observation, and field notes and writing notes in the margins to capture ideas and concepts. Memos were

used to carry out preliminary interpretation of the data (Yin, 2014) within each interview, across interviews and field notes.

The descriptive coding process continued by "aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code" (Creswell, 2013, p.184). Finally, themes were identified by grouping several codes into one similar thought (Creswell, 2013). The interpretation of this data is shared within the discussion of the findings.

Several verification procedures were employed "to document the "accuracy" of the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 250): clarifying researcher bias, triangulation, and member checks. Clarifying researcher bias entails that "the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (Creswell, 2013, p.251). In this case, the researcher's perspective regarding the research question was through the lens as a district level EL administrator where this study was conducted. So, acknowledging roles, diverse backgrounds, and experiences in EL programming further clarified bias. According to Creswell, "this self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers" (2003, p. 196) and creates validity to the study and findings. It was important to reiterate to the participants that the purpose of the study was to describe processes in place, not criticize or judge what is currently occurring in the high school to support English Learners.

A variety of sources of evidence were collected during this qualitative research study through interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). Multiple data points allowed for triangulation and "corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Data was collected from the participants who brought their distinct perspectives and experiences to the discussion of open-ended interview questions. Not only did every participant agree to and appreciate the opportunity to be part of the study, but they were also curious about the outcome of the study and implications for improvements to the program.

By implementing member checks (Creswell, 2013), preliminary analysis and data were shared with the participants to gather feedback on whether or not the themes captured the essence of the interviews and classroom observation. Member checks occurred approximately two weeks after the data collection had taken place to acquire specific comments on the themes. Validity shifted from the researcher to the participants by documenting their reaction to the data and confirming the credibility of the information through these member checks. Appendix F displays the formal email notification that was sent to all participants. No significant modifications were needed concerning the interviews.

Reporting of the Findings

This research study was approved by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB). The identity of the school district and all participants is strictly confidential. Each participant was provided a copy of the entire project, including findings and recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 4

Summary of Findings

Introduction

Thirty three classroom teachers, specialists for English Learners and Special Education, instructional coaches, guidance counselors, and principals took an interest in this study to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English Learners (EL) in a high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school district. This case study addresses the current realities aligned to the main research question:

> How is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs of high school English Learners?

The interviews were a significant contribution to the understanding of educators' beliefs and implementation of strategies to support the inclusion of ELs. Each participant was asked the following questions:

1. What is your name and title? If you teach, what subject area(s) do you teach (if more than one, please list your primary area first)? How long have you been in this position?
2. Tell me about your past and present teaching experiences, especially those experiences that relate to teaching high school ELs.

3. Describe the ELs you work with and what they bring to your school community. For example, describe the cultures represented, levels of prior education, language backgrounds, assets, educational needs.
4. How would you describe the EL instructional models implemented in your school and who is responsible for this implementation?
5. Define inclusion for high school ELs in the core subject areas.
6. What are examples of inclusive practices to address the academic needs of high school ELs? What is the level of implementation of these practices in the core-subject area classroom?
7. Describe evidence-based EL instructional strategies you (or your colleagues) use to support and include ELs in the core-subject area classrooms.
8. What is the perception in your building of including ELs in core-subject area classrooms?
9. How is a student's native language used in core subject area classrooms? What are your thoughts about the dual language model of instruction for ELs?
10. Describe ways that you collaborate with colleagues to address the educational needs of ELs in the core-subject area classroom.
11. How does collaboration, specifically in Professional Learning Communities, support the inclusion of ELs in the core-subject area classroom?
12. What type of professional learning have you received to support the inclusion of ELs in your classroom?

13. Describe the benefits and the barriers of including EL students in subject-area classes.
14. What additional comments do you have concerning the inclusion of EL students in subject-area classes?

The perspectives shared during the interviews were confirmed through the Professional Learning Community (PLC) observations and review of documents. Four themes emerged connected to the review of the literature. The case study revealed themes identified into categories: Cultural Perspectives and Background Experiences; Instructional Practices and Diverse Needs; Collaboration and Support; Transition to the General Education Classroom. Evidence from interviews, direct observations, and document reviews are described in depth for each finding.

Theme 1: Cultural Perspectives and Background Experiences

The first significant theme directly related to this particular case and research question is the attitudes and beliefs among participants about the inclusion of the English Learners (EL) in the general education core content classroom. Pride and respect for diversity stood out during each of the interviews. In a review of the physical artifacts, one document referred to the vision of the EL Program: "Abbott Public Schools will ensure the academic success of our English Learners while respecting diversity and maintaining their cultural and linguistic identities." Additionally, this is evident as you walk into Abbott High School through the main entrance and are greeted by flags representing over fifty different countries. During this research study, I happened to come across a family from Somalia on my way into the building that was all smiles as

they pointed to the flag of their home country. I have passed by these flags for the last sixteen years and was reminded about how something so simple can demonstrate a school culture that welcomes and takes pride in the diversity of the students and families they serve.

Teachers reflected on ways that the diverse perspectives and background experiences enhanced the classroom experience for all students. As it relates to the curriculum, English language arts teacher 4 commented, "the plethora of knowledge that they bring, the worldview to add to conversations and talk about their experiences and their countries." Another English teacher (participant 5) shared that her class was reading the book *Bless Me, Ultima* a novel by Rudolfo Anaya about a Mexican-American boy living in New Mexico in the 1940s. Her lessons opened opportunities for students to share their personal experiences with culture and religion aligned with what they were reading. She found that "it makes it that much more exciting and people enjoy reading it a little bit more." In social studies, teacher 3 identified a benefit as being "different points of view and the way we interpret events." In both examples, the students, ELs, and non-ELs were able to share their stories and add a unique element to the content standards being taught in the core content academic classrooms.

"You will work with all types of people no matter where you are so I think that the more diverse the classroom, the more real life it is," explained science teacher 2. Abbott High School is committed to ensuring every graduate is college, career, and world ready. Every student will be prepared to enter a postsecondary education institution and workforce with the knowledge and skills that can be applied in any location. Every

educator and administrator shared the importance of appreciating the differences in people, and the value culture brings to a school community.

"I love learning from them…In order to get them to respect me, I have got to respect where they are coming from," explained English Language Arts classroom teacher 2. In Nebraska, student membership in race and ethnicities is broken down into the following groups: American Indian/Alaskan Native; Black/African American; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White; Two or More Races (NEP, http://nep.education.ne.gov/). According to the 2017-2018 Profile for the State of Nebraska, approximately 95% of teachers identify as white compared to only about 36% of the student population. Only five percent of teachers represent the rest of the race ethnicities that make up 64% of Abbot High School's total population. Therefore, much of the diverse student population does not come into contact with a teacher that they can identify with based on their race and ethnicity. The educators and administrators interviewed were aware of this statistic by sharing how they continue to learn about their students and their diverse backgrounds. English teacher 1 reflected, "I don't even know what I don't know I feel there may be times where I might be maybe not necessarily offensive but insensitive through my own ignorance."

The attitudes and beliefs of the educators and administrators about the inclusion of ELs at Abbott High School can be summed up with this quote from the special education teacher,

> We need to emphasize the kids and where they come from because I think kids have a little sense of pride at where they come from. I just really enjoy teaching

here, that's why I like [Abbott High School] because it's so diverse and that's why I'll probably never leave here.

Theme 2: Instructional Practices and Diverse Needs

The second theme that surfaced was the types of instructional practices utilized by general education classroom teachers to support the inclusion of English Learners. Referring back to the EL vision, meaningful access to rigorous core curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as specialized instruction that develops English proficiency in the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, were included as stand-alone statements to proclaim what Abbott Public Schools will provide and advocate for their ELs districtwide.

"ELs challenge me to teach in a little different way," said social studies teacher 1. Within the lesson planning template used at the high school, a section is dedicated to possible adaptations and differentiation strategies. It does not explicitly state ELs, which was confirmed through PLC observations. Teacher teams did refer to any student, not just ELs that were struggling with the content when planning potential changes and additions to the initial lesson plan.

Five categories reoccurred in answers to the interview questions focusing on inclusive practices and evidence-based EL instructional strategies and throughout the observations of PLCs. The fundamental approaches used to address the needs of ELs consisted of providing academic vocabulary and sentence stems, referring to and creating visuals, intentionally pairing students together to work on tasks, allowing opportunities

for the use of native language, and implementing strategies from the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model.

Lending students the language. Every subject area discussed the importance of language whether it was in regards to reading, writing, speaking, or explaining understanding of concepts. A focus on vocabulary instruction and pre-teaching academic terms was a common strategy mentioned by participants to bridge the gap for ELs and help them access the core content and instructional materials. The use of visuals and native language translations is typically the way that teachers helped students clarify unknown words. Though teachers did not name it translanguaging, there were glimpses of this pedagogy intentionally or unintentionally at work in classrooms. The special education teacher validated the need to model academic language regularly and for teachers to "use the proper terminology and don't call it something cliché because their next teacher may not use it so being consistent with language." Besides just a list of vocabulary words, every EL specialist talked about the use of and need for general education classroom teachers to use sentence stems to help ELs frame their responses to questions and tasks.

Partners and Group Work. General education classroom teachers interviewed expressed their intentional use of pairs and small groups to support ELs in their classroom. Administrator 3 stated, "I think grouping and peer instruction help slow down learning which I think is an important scaffold for kids that are acquiring the language."

Instructional coach 1 shared:

> Group conversations are really beneficial for ELs because they can listen to their peers, listen to them using native English and the content vocabulary. I always tell the teachers they may have somewhat an idea of how to answer questions but if they can sit and listen to their peers talk about it before they have to orally respond to a question or if they have to write a response on their paper exit slip or share anyway if they can listen to their peers they're going to have a better understanding of what to say. Just borrowing the language from their peers is really good.

Visual and Audio Support. Pictures, drawings, videos, color-coded words, graphic organizers, and the use of manipulatives were a variety of ways that teachers incorporate visuals to aid students during the learning process. For more auditory support, text-to-speech closed captioning, and repetition were commonly shared strategies to support ELs access to content when students struggled with the language demands of the reading or listening task.

The use of home language. Every participant was aware of the importance of a student's home language. Teachers described ways in which they incorporated the use of languages other than English in the classroom. Math and social studies teachers referenced a digital version of the textbook that is available in Spanish. The option for Spanish text was a perk of the instructional resource and not necessarily something the teachers sought out after the adoption of the materials. In an effort not to single out English learners, a math teacher encouraged both the ELs in his classroom and those

native English speakers that were taking high school Spanish classes to utilize the Spanish glossary and text.

In addition to accessing the textbook in their home language, every participant interviewed allowed students to process their learning and clarify understanding of concepts and terms in their home language. Not limited to only Spanish, this practice took a couple of forms including pairing students together that spoke the same language and the use of Google Translate and bilingual dictionaries. Though they valued student's bilingualism, it was not a comfortable practice for all teachers. They worried about the student's staying on task when they could not monitor conversations as they were not fluent in the language themselves. However, the expectation, was always output in English, so teachers could verify student understanding and mastery of the content presented.

In order to advance the conversation about the use of students' home languages, participants were asked to provide their perspective on a dual language model of instruction. Twenty percent of the educators had experience in a dual language setting during their student teaching and practicum opportunities as part of an undergraduate program, or from a previous district where they were employed. They used terms like amazing, cool, fair, extremely appropriate, honored diversity, connected, value, and profound as they described their perspective on dual language as a model of instruction for ELs and non-ELs. Roughly 35% of the interviews shared that they have heard of this model of instruction but had no direct experiences with dual language schools or classrooms. Instructional coach 2 beamed,

> It excites me. If there was a community that it would work well in, I would say Abbott. Abbott would be a place that would have a need for it and having small children of my own I would definitely see a benefit to send my children, but I don't know a lot about it. It excites me, though.

Finally, about 45% of the participants in this case study did not know about the dual language model of instruction and therefore could not provide a perspective outside of a desire to learn more.

The impact of bilingualism is not lost on the educators at Abbott High School. Counselor 1 summed it up by passionately expressing,

> We got to maintain language or you will lose the beauty of being bilingual if you don't keep developing the written language and reading skills. It's terrifying to me how many of these kids that don't speak the language that their parents do that they really can't communicate at a very in-depth level with their very own family at times. And there's the consequences of that are enormous.

The educators of Abbott High School may be using the student's home language as a support for learning the academic content, but at the time of this case study, the home language was not the core language of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The SIOP model. Teachers and administrators that have been in the district for more than five years keenly talked about the district-level training they received in the SIOP model. Besides Empower Hours, one-hour optional professional development after school, the SIOP training is the only EL focused learning they have had to understand the learner and ways to address their content and language needs throughout the lesson.

To further explain the different use of instructional strategies to support ELs in the classroom, participants paired this to the vast needs of the learners in their classroom explaining how overwhelming it is with the levels of differentiation that is needed. Social studies classroom teacher 1 added:

> Tough to find out the right amount of support that you can push the students to succeed to improve but yet still have them in a comfortable situation to where they fell like they can succeed. It's definitely a very hard balance.

In regards to EL-based instructional strategies, EL specialist 1 shared:

> All these things, we EL teachers that is kind of what we do day in and day out. I think that is something that some of the gen ed teachers may need more training with just to know that our students are capable and that they want to do well, but they do still need those extra supports and that doesn't mean they shouldn't be in a gen ed classroom it just means they are going to have some different needs that will need to be addressed to help them succeed.

Meeting the diverse needs of ELs and identifying instructional strategies to support the differing levels of language acquisition appropriately, leads directly into the next theme concerning collaboration and support between general education teachers and EL specialists.

Theme 3: Collaboration and Support

"[The EL specialist] is really good to work with" and "I rely on her if I have specific EL questions" stated both guidance counselor 2 and math classroom teacher 1. General education teachers, instructional coaches, guidance counselors, and

administrators could identify and give specific examples of how the EL specialists in their building and at the district level have provided the necessary support and guidance to help them when they are struggling with a student in the EL program. Most commonly, teachers would share a worksheet, notetaking guide, or assessment with the EL specialist to provide feedback and ideas on how to improve the document to support ELs. Through this job-embedded support, teachers adapted these documents by adding word banks, timestamps to answer questions in a video, color coding, and sentence frames. General education teachers did not hesitate to make these adjustments and acknowledge that these were simple but impactful ways to help their ELs.

EL specialist 1 shared, "teachers are reaching out for help and they, for the most part, are doing what they feel is best to help those students in their classes." Not only did colleagues reach out via email and in the hallway during passing periods, but in some cases had the opportunity to collaborate with the EL specialist during common plan time for PLCs. Administrators and guidance counselors also mentioned that they would refer general education classroom teachers to the EL team when they knew a teacher was struggling with a student in the class.

Every participant valued the structure that is currently in place at the high school to allow for common plan time to ensure PLCs were occurring regularly. Depending on the subject area within the four core content areas, an EL specialist was a regular part of the PLC for Algebra, English 9, English 10, and Integrated Science. When the EL specialist was at the table, teachers respected their input but either they did not actively involve the EL specialist or the EL specialist did not speak up during the planning

process. Administrators and instructional coaches confirmed this observation as well because everyone is still trying to figure out their role within a PLC. It was evident through observations and answers to interview questions directly addressing ways that teachers collaborate, PLCs were a move in the right direction to support the inclusion of ELs in the core content classroom. Administrator 1 shared, "I think we are moving in the right direction…we are just scratching the surface with PLCs." However, this is the first year of implementation of PLCs at the high school. Social studies teacher 1 further clarified the level of PLC implementation by stating, "I think once we get the norming of PLCs out of the way I definitely can think it has a place in the conversation on how do we plan for accommodations for our ELs."

Knowing who the go-to EL specialists were in their content area and building, EL specialists not hesitating to help when the classroom teacher reached out, and a structure for common plan time and PLCs provides a foundation for collaboration between every educator that works with an EL throughout their school day. Throughout the interviews, I dug a little deeper with participants to find out what they needed to know about ELs and how to better transition students from EL programming to full inclusion. The focused conversations and a real desire to improve EL services led to the final theme of transitioning to the general education classroom.

Theme 4: Transition to the General Education Classroom.

The transition to the general education classroom can be viewed through the lens of the student, general education classroom teacher, and district programming. In order

to support ELs proactively, EL specialist 4 shared “when they do get an EL student can I give them that shining light that compass to guide them in the right direction.”

For the students, multiple general education teachers mentioned ELs “get lost, they’re not ready for the speed of things,” “work so much harder because of the language barrier,” and “some of them are really able to rise to the occasion and some of them kind of struggle.” However, the perspective of EL specialist 1 is as follows:

> You know where they started and where they are when they go into the gen ed classroom is outstanding. Its mind blowing and they are never going to be perfectly fluent in the academic language. They are always going to need some support.

Knowing that students are learning a new language and new content at the same time, classroom teachers and guidance counselors had thoughts on how to support students with the transition to the general education classroom. Ideas included:

1. Teaching self-advocacy skills and strategies as part of the EL Newcomers curriculum;
2. Allowing students to audit a general education class and discuss what they noticed and wondered with the EL specialist;
3. Identifying peer mentors that have lived the experience to support new students ready to transition; and
4. Creating a short introductory video written and filmed by the student to share with the classroom teacher.

There is a mismatch in the perception of general education classroom teachers and EL specialists regarding the student's readiness level to move into an inclusive classroom environment. ELs are flagged in district's student information system, but an overwhelming number of general education teachers and administrators did not exactly understand what that meant and how it reflects the journey this student have been on before being adding to the roster of a general education core content class. So when teachers have students that struggle and realize they are EL, as Administrator 1 stated,

> First response is often is these kids should not be in my classroom or should not be in a gen ed classroom instead of reaching out for some ways to help that kid or understanding why they are where they are.

Social studies teacher 1 further explained,

> Teachers don't have the supports for them to be successful when they have that transition, and it is a lot of times there just in our class at the beginning of the year, and we don't know, and it is never communicated that you are their first gen ed class or core subject class and that would be beneficial for me to know.

Through observations and interviews, general education classroom teachers are doing the best they can. There is no written document to guide the specifics on inclusion and how general education teachers should support literacy and language development in the core content areas. They shared not being clear on the levels of students and how to support them. Administrator 3 aligns to this idea by reflecting that "we haven't given our teachers the skills and strategies they need to be successful." The EL specialists are a wealth of knowledge, and that did not go unnoticed by guidance counselors,

administrators, and classroom teachers. English Language Arts teacher 4 thought "one thing that would be beneficial is like a profile of the student…so that a teacher's expectation for the kid is accurate." Therefore, a follow-up question kept resurfacing that I added to the interview process moving forward: What do you need to know about ELs before them arriving in your classroom on the first day of class?

To be more intentional in supporting the needs of students and general education teachers, elements of the EL programming were pointed out that prevent the smooth transition from EL classes to full inclusion. Curriculum, data to support movement through the program, and a clear transition plan were focused areas of conversations during the interview process. Classroom teachers and guidance counselors were unsure of the overall process to leave EL classes and wanted to know "how do you decide when a kid should be here so we can gauge they are functioning at a level they should be." The document review revealed there was an established process and use of data for moving a student from newcomers to sheltered instruction but lacked data besides earning a passing grade for movement from sheltered instruction to the general education classroom. As English Language Arts teacher 4 pleaded, "There's got to be a better bridge from sheltered to inclusion." Every EL specialist recognized some gaps in the programming but also believed as EL specialist 1 shared, "you don't want to rob a kid of being in the core classroom either, they gain so much from that."

Tandem Study: Implications for Grades 6-12

Once each researcher analyzed the data from their study, we came together to identify areas of alignment for EL services in grades six through twelve. Themes surfaced organically during the process of debriefing and sharing of independent findings. Key concepts and phrases from the middle school and high school site studies were written on a whiteboard as the principal investigator described them. It was then easy to collaboratively draw connections and group ideas together to create a cohesive explanation of the relevant themes for the inclusion of ELs at the secondary level.

Collectively, both researchers concluded three themes that surfaced between the tandem case studies:

1. Addressing the needs of English Learners
2. Focusing on the needs of general education classroom teachers
3. Identifying the role of the EL specialists

Further explanation of each theme is presented in Table 4 with discussion points pertinent to the specific needs of ELs at the middle school and high school levels. Though the majority of the findings were similar, there are slight variances in perspective from each level that need to be taken into consideration when implementing a comprehensive 6-12 EL programming for inclusion in the general education classroom.

Table 4

Implications for the Inclusion of ELs in Grades 6-12

Themes for Alignment of 6-12 EL Programming	**Specific to Middle School Needs**	**Specific to High School Needs**
Addressing the Needs of the English Learner: *Understanding their struggle and creating a transition plan*	* Diverse characteristics and attributes of students * Social Needs * Meeting grade level standards * Students with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education * Language proficiency levels * Supporting the transition to general education classes	* Language proficiency level expectations * Limited and interrupted formal education * Educational background and content knowledge * Pacing and course sequence * Student Strengths * Strategies to support ELs (low prep by content area
Focusing on the Needs of General Education Teachers: *School district guidance to support inclusion of ELs in general education classrooms and plan professional development*	* Teacher efficacy * Lack of knowledge/training * Cultural competence * Stages of Language Learning Explicit EL instructional strategies * Job-embedded & ongoing * Compliance * Curriculum * Program Design * Equitable Access * Collaboration time * Data analysis	* Share Newcomers curriculum * Written process and data used to support placement in courses * Professional Development * Culture & First Language * Language Acquisition (levels and characteristics) * EL instructional strategies by content area
Identifying the Role of EL Specialists: *Utilizing the EL Specialists expertise and ensuring an EL presence in Professional Learning Communities(PLCs)*	* Define EL specialist role * Articulating role to staff * Position in PLCs * Consultant * Schedule implications * Available staff * Time * Variety of collaborative methods	* List of EL staff assigned to the content area * Supporting EL Specialists Role * Bank of ready to use EL strategies and supports * PLC Roles and guiding questions to address the needs of ELs

Within each of these themes, key considerations were discussed to further define the needs of secondary EL programming through inclusive practices in the general education classroom. The continued conversation brought to light actionable steps for a school district to take to improve implementation of inclusive practices to address the needs of ELs through the perspective of various stakeholders. These strategies and ideas are highlighted in Table 5.

Table 5

Considerations for EL Service Design Grades 6-12

Addressing the Needs of English Learners	**Focusing on the Needs of General Education Classroom Teachers**	**Identifying the role of the EL specialists**
* Draw upon the funds of knowledge that individual students bring to school * Create a transition plan to proactively support ELs in the general education classroom	* Create district-level guiding documents to support the inclusion of ELs * Implement EL-specific professional development for teachers and administrators - Culture and Home Language - Language Acquisition Process - Language Instruction Educational Programs - Instructional Strategies Specific to ELs	* Develop EL specialists to collaborate, coach, and consult with general education teachers to address the needs of ELs * Ensure a consistent presence of an EL expert on grade level teams and PLCs * Identify creative methods for collaboration and PLC process

In both studies, participants expressed the need for a transition plan to address the needs of ELs as they move from EL pullout classroom settings to inclusion in the general education classroom. We also deduced that it would be beneficial to have a written process for students moving from the eighth grade to the ninth grade. Part of the focus

for this transition plan is to help answer a common question about EL students that struggle: Is it due to limited language proficiency or a lack of content knowledge and experiences? High priority is placed on content standards and meeting course expectations to pass classes and earn credits at the high school level. Any way we can leverage opportunities to better inform teachers on how to strategically support learners the better.

What should inclusion look like in the general education classroom? A question currently not answered in district EL programming documents. Laying out school district guidance about the inclusion of ELs in the general education classroom will provide the necessary expectations for teachers in planning and look-for practices and strategies for administrators as they evaluate and coach teachers and specialists. Professional development is also crucial to focusing on the needs of general education teachers. Both middle school and high school participants provided multiple topics for consideration including cultural proficiency, levels of language acquisition, EL backgrounds, native language, and home countries, and EL strategies and accommodations.

Lastly, there is a need at both levels to utilize the expertise of the EL specialists. They have the background history and experiences teaching specific students that should be shared in a transition plan and through coaching and consultation with individual teachers and PLCs. EL specialists may not have necessarily gone into the position with the intent to be an EL instructional coach and providing job-embedded professional development; however, their role is changing as the needs of ELs continue to be addressed in schools. The EL specialists need to be continually provided the content

knowledge and skills to both teach in the classroom and be seen as the EL expert by their colleagues and administrators. Because of these competing roles, it is not always possible for the EL specialist to attend every PLC. Therefore, it will be critical to identify alternative methods for EL specialists to be at the PLC table when scheduling does not allow their regular participation. EL support with PLCs could include assigning someone on the team to connect back to the EL specialist to keep them in the loop, utilize district EL instructional coaches, and encourage the use of digital platforms for agendas and planning documents.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

Inclusion of English Learners (EL) in the general education classroom is a critical component of ensuring that students are earning the necessary core credits to graduate high school. However, even more importantly, it provides a window into the diverse world that students will encounter as they prepare for opportunities after high school in postsecondary educational experiences and careers. This research question drove the descriptive case study, how is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices to address the needs of high school English Learners? The targeted participants of general education classroom teachers, EL specialists, and administrators provided insight into the lived realities of inclusion as part of the continuum of services within a district's language education instructional plan. I was especially interested in the perspectives shared by the core content classroom teachers in the areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. They are directly responsible for implementing inclusive practices and rely on the expertise of EL specialists and administrators to support them. Rarely are they consulted in the planning and monitoring of district EL programming, which has been my experience the last few years in my role at the district level and through participation on state-level work. It was evident through the responses received after requesting their review and feedback on the findings. From a science teacher, "Thanks for sharing and including me in on such important research!"

The research was based around the specific areas explored in the review of literature that addressed the need for inclusion and research-based EL instructional strategies, beliefs, and attitudes of educators about inclusion, and the role of collaboration to address the needs of ELs. The goal of this research was to examine how the combination of the identified areas comes together in a high school setting. The findings of the research provide a first-hand glimpse into current realities and input on improving practices to support inclusion as a critical component of a district's language instruction educational plan.

Discussion

One-on-one interviews, observations of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and review of documents served as the avenue to examine the implementation of inclusive practices ELs in a high school at a selected public school district in a Midwestern metropolitan public school district. With close to 15% of the student population at various levels of language acquisition, the participants had a vested interest in giving input on crucial components that addressed the problem of practice.

Student learning profiles. English Learners come to high school with a plethora of skills and background experiences that may or may not be known to the general education classroom teacher. Todd Rose refers to this as a jagged student learning profile. "Human beings don't line up perfectly. There is no average learner. They have strengths and weaknesses. They all do. Even geniuses do." Student learning profiles describe the uniqueness of every student focusing on their strengths and informing educators of areas of challenge that may require special attention. Through the

interviews, general education teachers were requesting the need for more information about their students including culture and first language experiences, educational background and opportunities to learn core content, English language proficiency level and expectations for performance in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and general strategies that have worked in the classroom. Classroom teachers and administrators have obtained this information easily by reaching out to the EL specialist in the building; however, this happened reactively when a student was struggling in the core content subject arear. There is a sense from both general education teachers and EL specialists that to improve services and to proactively support ELs in an inclusive setting a student learning profile needs to be shared with classroom teachers before the transition into their classroom. See Appendix G for an example of an EL profile that was adapted from the work of the NDE High School Work Group to incorporate the perspective of participants in this study.

Intentional professional development and evidence-based EL instructional strategies. Educators interviewed overwhelmingly understood and admired ELs for having to learn English while simultaneously meeting grade level expectations with content standards. An instructional coach reflected on the students she observes and supports through planning with teachers, “You see that struggle, but I think our kids are really resilient and have a lot of grit, so they bring that hard-working mindset.” Though educators and administrators were able to name and describe instructional strategies to support inclusion and access to the core content, many times it was reactive to when students were struggling with learning vocabulary and concepts. For example, the use of

home language was not built into lesson planning. They relied on this strategy reactively when they could tell through nonverbal cues and refusal to answer questions that English Learners needed more time to process. Even though you cannot prepare for every aspect that may trip up an EL in their learning, it is crucial to prepare the appropriate scaffolds and language a student needs to demonstrate an understanding of the content they are expected to master. There is a structure in place through the lesson planning template and PLC structure with common plan time. General education teachers and instructional coaches need job-embedded professional development and instant access to EL strategies to plan accommodations and adaptations to lesson plans proactively. EL specialists and administrators need support to develop their skill set to serve as a coach and consultant to general education classroom teachers, primarily through the structure of PLCs.

Teachers and administrators need "more support on making sure that I can get what they know when language is a barrier" and "having two or three really strong strategies." Providing professional learning shows a commitment to growing and developing all staff. These opportunities need to be data-driven, collaborative, job-embedded, and research-based. The primary goal is to improve individual effectiveness, resulting in increased student achievement. Goals and action plans are written down and reviewed with the administrator to provide consulting, coaching, and collaboration. Through collecting evidence and self-reflecting, everyone is held accountable to show growth and next steps.

Guidance for PLCs. Peer interactions and collaboration has an impact on improving student achievement. Not only do teachers problem-solve and learn new

skills, but they also develop a collective responsibility for student success. "If no EL specialist is participating in the PLC it would have to be a role of a particular person that would serve special education, EL or other struggling learners," suggested administrator 3. Let us not create barriers and stand in the way of successfully implementing difficult change, but instead provide the appropriate processes and supports to empower individuals to improve educational opportunities for all students.

Recommendations for Future Practice

"This is great! Thank you for the time and energy you have put into this. I especially like the chart at the end, with next steps/ideas for improving our services and helping gen ed teachers support ELs." Table 6 was shared with participants as part of the member checks to summarize the key considerations from conducting interviews, PLC observations, and document reviews.

Table 6

Considerations for Future Practice

Transition to General Education Classrooms	**Professional Learning Needs**	**Collaboration and PLCs**
・EL Profile, Appendix G, to include: ・Student Strengths ・Language Proficiency ・Academic Experiences & Content Knowledge (e.g., course history, assessment data) ・What works ・Student Introduction Video; Appendix H	・Culture & Language ・EL Programming and Curriculum ・Levels of Language Acquisition ・Characteristics of how students should be performing at each level of language acquisition by domain ・EL Instructional Strategies (i.e., vocab)	・List of EL staff assigned to support students and staff by content area and academies ・Bank of ready to use EL strategies and supports ・Identified role and/or guiding questions to address EL needs during PLCs and collaborative planning

These identified elements for future practice can drive next steps for Abbott Public Schools and other school districts that are looking to improve services for emergent bi/multilingual learners. It would be necessary not just to meet educators where they are in readiness level of implementation of these new ideas and professional learning opportunities but to access their willingness to hone strategies and philosophical beliefs already in place. Moreover, districts should be compelled to revisit their vision of programming for English Learners and further define their outcomes. Educators need to expand their thinking and advocacy from solely English language proficiency to a commitment to graduating bilingual or multilingual students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was limited to educators and administrators in a Midwestern metropolitan school district that had an intrinsic interest in participating in the interviews and PLC observations. The general education classroom teachers only represented the core content areas of English Language Arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In order to further the research to all aspects of an ELs experience in high school, it would be valuable to increase the number of participants by grade level content areas and to include representation of educators in the elective courses like career and technical skills, visual arts, vocal and instrumental music, health and physical education.

Former ELs, both graduates, and students that either aged out or dropped out of school, are another missing perspective to the effectiveness of inclusive practices. The lens for which they view their experiences and the supports that helped them achieve high school graduation is a crucial vantage point to consider when evaluating and revising

services for ELs. Referring back to our student Francisco, he may have lacked the same educational experiences, as his English-speaking peers, but it does not mean that he does not have background knowledge or experiences that can be accessed and shared during the learning process.

Connecting student achievement data to high impact strategies that support inclusion and teacher collaboration to address the needs of ELs would be beneficial to isolate when developing a comprehensive professional development plan. It is possible to go in a thousand different directions to better understand how to best meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. By determining fundamental knowledge and skills needed to support ELs, educators can build upon that to ensure ELs get what they need and deserve in the core content classroom.

School districts should consider cultural responsive teaching strategies and bilingual education to build on the assets students bring to our classrooms and school community. Even though educators may value and understand diversity, it does not mean they have the tools and strategies to incorporate culture, language, and diverse perspectives into daily routine practices. Educators also need to consider how this looks for all students, not just the majority of ELs that may speak Spanish. For example, a teacher may assume that Francisco needs a Spanish version of the text when in all reality first language instruction would be better needed in Quiché. Knowing the individual students and their needs should drive decision-making regarding the implementation of various models of language instruction educational programs based on their impact on academic achievement and graduation rates.

Another consideration for research is examining the educational experiences and needs of lifelong ELs. This study did not address the specific demographics of ELs that the participants worked with daily; therefore, they could have been speaking from the perspective of a recently arrived immigrant or a student that has been identified as EL since elementary school. Based on my experiences they are often treated the same, so identify programming and interventions that meet the needs of lifelong ELs is essential because it may look different than for students like Francisco, who started their public education in the United States at the age of sixteen.

Lastly, additional research and support on recognizing when a student's struggle is based on limited experience with the language and content versus being based on an actual learning disability. There are still perceptions that limited language proficiency should be treated the same as a student with a disability and that special education trumps EL, however, students deserve and need support from both programs. A future study could look at the collaboration between EL and special education staff and programs to better serve students that potential qualify for both specialized programs.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study examined the implementation of inclusive practices to address the needs of high school English Learners in the general education classroom from the perspectives of classroom teachers, EL specialists, instructional coaches, guidance counselors, and high school administrators. The primary research question for this study was: How is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs

of high school English Learners? The findings from this study indicate that educators valued the cultural perspectives and background knowledge of ELs and how that enhanced the learning experience for all students. In order to implement EL inclusive practices, the study also concluded that instruction needs to be differentiated to meet the diverse needs of individual students, intentional time and strategies to provide proactive support and collaboration between the general education classroom teacher and EL specialist, and processes to support the ELs transition to the general education classroom.

Every student needs to feel valued and connected. Students with diverse backgrounds based on their race and ethnicity, language proficiency, and socioeconomic status should not be limited with their success in school. Educational leaders, teachers, and support staff need to set high expectations for all students and provide individual support and extension to meet those goals. Students need to be recognized and celebrated for what they bring to the school and classroom community. Let us not create barriers and stand in the way of students from diverse backgrounds working to achieve the American dream. Instead, take ownership in the fact that every student brings their own set of unique strengths and challenges as they walk through the doors of our school buildings. It is the school's responsibility to support the academic success and well-being of each child through equitable educational opportunities designed for emergent bilingual and multilingual learners.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

University of Nebraska Lincoln

ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

IRB #: 20180918664EX

Participant Study Title: Addressing the Needs of High School English Leaners through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms

Formal Study Title: Addressing the Needs of High School English Learners through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study of a Midwestern Metropolitan Public School District

Authorized Study Personnel

Principal Investigator: Amanda Levos	Cell (308) 398-1997
Secondary Investigator: Dr. Kent Mann	Office (402) 472-3459
Project Personnel: Kris Schneider	Office (308) 385-5900

Key Information

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Public school educators (certified staff and principals)
- Procedures will include
  - One in-person interview
  - Two professional learning community meeting observations
  - Submission of documents aligned to the study, if applicable
- These visits will take approximately two hours in total
- There are no risks associated with this study
- You will be provided a copy of this consent form

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you work with English Learners at Grand Island Senior High. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

The purpose of this descriptive case study is to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Education Program for English Learners (ELs) in a high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school district.

ELs currently served in the high school EL program and those that have been redesignated language proficient makeup a significant subset of the student population at Grand Island Senior High, therefore, it is crucial to examine the current EL services provided through inclusive

practices in the general education classroom. This research can describe the complexity of the issue and guide the district to revise EL programming, inform professional learning opportunities and plan for EL support with the upcoming transition to a career academy model that addresses the educational needs of high school ELs from the perspective of the targeted group of certified educators and administrators participating in this research study.

What will be done during this research study?
You will be asked to participate in one in-person interview lasting approximately sixty minutes. You will be observed during two professional learning community meetings and may be asked to share documents aligned to the study (e.g. classroom schedules, district program service documents), if applicable. The entire process will take approximately two hours during a one-month period of time at Grand Island Senior High or the District Administration Office.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?
There are no known risks to you from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to you?
The benefits of the research is to potentially revise current EL programming and guide professional learning to address the academic needs of high school ELs. With the study being completed in tandem with a researcher focused on middle schools in the same district, the potential impact is to identify themes that support the ELs transition from 8th to 9th grade and alignment of district EL services. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?
The benefit to education and society is the potential to add to the existing literature regarding the education of English Learners in public education.

What will being in this research study cost you?
There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?
There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?
Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?
Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and electronically through a password-protected laptop and USB flash drive, and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for one year after the study is complete.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Participant's Initials _____

What are your rights as a research subject?
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1(402)472-6965
- Email: irb@unl.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?
You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (list others as applicable).

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Feedback Survey
The University of Nebraska-Lincoln wants to know about your research experience. This 14 question, multiple-choice survey is anonymous. This survey should be completed after your participation in this research. Please complete this optional online survey at: http://bit.ly/UNLresearchfeedback.

Participant Name:

_____
(Name of Participant: Please print)

Participant Signature:

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant Date

Investigator certification:

My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

_____ _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Participant's Initials _____

Appendix B

Recruitment Email Messages and Scripts for Communication with Research Participants

Initial Email to Building Principal

Dear [Name]:

I am conducting a research study through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on examining the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Education Program for high school English Learners (EL). The study has been approved both by the University of Nebraska- Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the School District. I would like to work with you on a recruitment plan for your staff. The participants being sought for this study include mainstream classroom teachers in ELA, math, science and social studies, EL specialists, instructional coaches, and high school administrators. Each participant is agreeing to approximately two hours over a period of a month for one in-person interview, two professional learning community meeting observations and to submit any documents aligned to the study, if applicable. There are no known risks involved in this research.

Please let me know when you would be available to discuss starting this research study at your high school. I will have copies of the flyer, email communication with participants, and informed consent for your review.

I look forward to the process and the potential impact it will have on students, educators, and EL services as the high school transitions to the career academy model next year.

Amanda Levos, Principal Investigator
Cell (308) 398-1997
Office (308) 385-5900
Email alevos@gips.org

Recruitment Email

Dear [Name]:

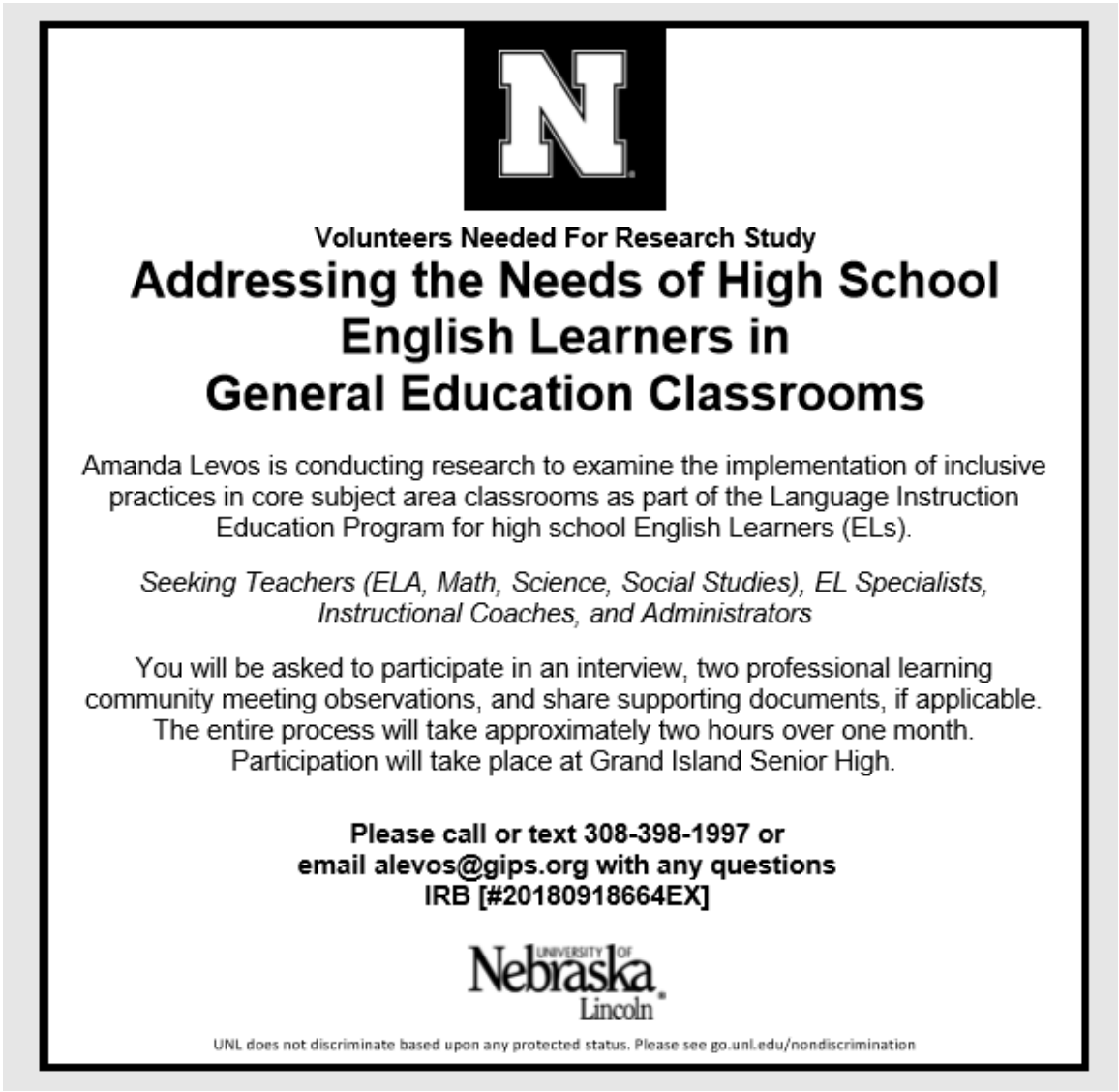
I am conducting a research study through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on examining the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Education Program for high school English Learners. Participation will take approximately two hours over a period of a month. If you are interested you will participate in one in-person interview, be observed during two professional learning community meetings and submit any documents aligned to the study, if applicable. Please contact me expressing your interest in participating in this study and further information including the informed consent will follow in a separate email. There are no known risks involved in this research.

If you have any questions or would like to meet in person, please let me know.

Amanda Levos, Principal Investigator
Cell (308) 398-1997
Office (308) 385-5900
Email alevos@gips.org

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer



Appendix D

Interview Protocol: High School English Learners and Inclusion in General Education Classrooms

Study Title: Addressing the Needs of Middle School English Learners Through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study of a Midwestern Metropolitan Public School District

Institution:

Interviewer: Amanda Levos, Principal Investigator
Interviewee *(Name/Title/Position)*:

Date:
Time of Interview:
Location:

Introduction: The purpose of this descriptive case study is to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) for English Learners (ELs) high school at a selected midwestern metropolitan public school district. At this stage of the research, inclusive practices for ELs can generally be defined as specific instructional practices and academic supports in the core subject areas for ELs to succeed as learners and achieve the same performance outcomes expected of all students.

Central question: How is a midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs of high school English Learners?

Subquestions:

- What is inclusion for high school ELs in the core subject areas (English language arts, math, science, and social studies)?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of high school educators and administrators about ELs and their inclusion in the core subject area mainstream classrooms?
- What strategies do teachers use to support and include ELs in high school classrooms?
- How are high school educators supported through collaboration and professional learning to meet the needs of ELs?
- How do educators and administrators perceive the implementation of inclusive practices for ELs in the high school?

This dissertation study is being completed in tandem by another researcher at UNL, one focused on the middle school level and myself targeting the high school in the same midwestern metropolitan public school district. The potential impact of this type of study is to identify themes that support the ELs transition from middle school to high school and the prospective alignment of school district EL services.

Script
Welcome: "Good morning/afternoon. My name is Amanda Levos. Thank you for your time today. I am conducting research as part of my dissertation study at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The main focus of today's interview is to get your perspective on the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English learners at the high school. I consider you the expert so there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel about all the questions being asked. If at any time you are reluctant to continue the interview, please let me know and we will stop. The interview will take approximately one hour."
Consent Form Directions: "Before we get started, please take a few minutes to read through the informed consent before you are interviewed, I must have your approval in writing." Ask the interviewee if they need any part of the consent form clarified and collect the signed consent form before moving forward.
Audio Recorded Responses: "If it is okay with you, I will be audio recording our conversation. Recording research interviews is a great way to capture the information and ensures descriptive validity. By recording the interview, I am better able to carry on an attentive conversation with you and assure you that all your comments will remain strictly confidential. I will be compiling a report which will contain all of your comments without any reference to who you are. Please keep in mind that at any time during the interview, you may ask that I stop the audio recorder." If the interviewee agrees, turn on the audio recorder. "Do you have any questions before we begin?"
Interview Questions: 1. What is your name and title? If you teach, what subject area(s) do you teach (if more than one, please list your primary area first)? How long have you been in this position? 2. Tell me about your past and present teaching experiences, especially those experiences that relate to teaching high school ELs. 3. Describe the ELs you work with and what they bring to your school community. For example, describe the cultures represented, levels of prior education, language backgrounds, assets, educational needs. 4. How would you describe the EL instructional models implemented in your school and who is responsible for this implementation? 5. Define inclusion for high school ELs in the core subject areas.

6. What are examples of inclusive practices to address the academic needs of high school ELs? What is the level of implementation of these practices in the core-subject area classroom?

7. Describe evidence-based EL instructional strategies you (or your colleagues) use to support and include ELs in the core-subject area classrooms.

8. What is the perception in your building of including ELs in core-subject area classrooms?

9. How is a student's native language used in core subject area classrooms? What are your thoughts about the dual language model of instruction for ELs?

10. Describe ways that you collaborate with colleagues to address the educational needs of ELs in the core-subject area classroom.

11. How does collaboration, specifically in Professional Learning Communities, support the inclusion of ELs in the core-subject area classroom?

12. What type of professional learning have you received to support the inclusion of ELs in your classroom?

13. Describe the benefits and the barriers of including EL students in subject-area classes.

14. What additional comments do you have concerning the inclusion of EL students in subject-area classes?

Closure: "Thank you for sharing your perspective and honest reflection of the implementation of inclusive practices for high school ELs. All of your comments will remain strictly confidential. I am analyzing information gathered through all of the interviews during the next month. I will contact you in a few weeks requesting your feedback on the emerging findings. You will also receive a copy of the final report once it is ready for submission. Any additional questions? I appreciate your time and participation in this research study."

Appendix E

Observation Protocol: High School English Learners and Inclusion in General Education Classrooms

Study Title: Addressing the Needs of Middle School English Learners Through Inclusion in General Education Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study of a Midwestern Metropolitan Public School District

Institution:

Observer:
Professional Learning Community (Grade/Subject Level)**:**

Date:
Start and End Time:
Location:

Introduction: The purpose of this descriptive case study is to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) for English Learners (ELs) high school at a selected Midwestern metropolitan public school district. At this stage of the research, inclusive practices for ELs can generally be defined as specific instructional practices and academic supports in the core subject areas for ELs to succeed as learners and achieve the same performance outcomes expected of all students.

Central question: How is a Midwestern public school district implementing inclusive practices as part of their Language Instruction Educational Program to address the needs of high school English Learners?

Subquestions:

- What is inclusion for high school ELs in the core subject areas (English language arts, math, science, and social studies)?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of high school educators and administrators about ELs and their inclusion in the core subject area mainstream classrooms?
- What strategies do teachers use to support and include ELs in high school classrooms?
- How are high school educators supported through collaboration and professional learning to meet the needs of ELs?
- How do educators and administrators perceive the implementation of inclusive practices for ELs in high school?

This dissertation study is being completed in tandem by another researcher at UNL, one focused on the middle school level and myself targeting the high school in the same Midwestern metropolitan public school district. The potential impact of this type of study is to identify themes that support the ELs transition from middle school to high school and the prospective alignment of school district EL services.

Announcement Script
Good morning/afternoon. My name is Amanda Levos. I am conducting research as part of my dissertation study at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln which has been approved by both the district and your building principal.

I am here as an observer today for research purposes only to examine the implementation of inclusive practices as part of the Language Instruction Educational Program for English learners at the high school. Any statements, quotes, and information collected from this meeting will not be personally identifiable.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Thank you for your time.

Description of PLC Participants	**Description of the Setting**
Total Number of Participants: Male: Female: Ethnicity: Job Titles:	

Description	**Reflection**
Addressing the Needs of ELs: *challenges, academic content knowledge, English proficiency* Beliefs and Attitudes about Inclusion of ELs: *assets vs. deficit thinking* Inclusive Practices and Evidence-based Instructional Strategies for ELs: *approaches to language learning instruction; building background in core content; instructional strategies; assessment; supports* Types of Collaboration: *planning, co-teaching, coaching, professional development*	

Appendix F

Member Check Letter

Follow-up message: Request for feedback on emerging findings

Dear [Name]:

Thank you for participating in the interviews and professional learning community observations as part of the research study I am conducting through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to examine the implementation of inclusive practices for high school English Learners in mainstream classrooms.

After analyzing all of the data collected throughout the study, I have drafted a copy of the emerging findings that I am requesting you review and provide feedback. The purpose of this step in the research is to ensure I have captured your perspectives on the topic and that these findings best represent your experience. You can submit your thoughts by email or we can set a time for you to share your feedback in person.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at (308) 398-1997.

Thank you,

Amanda Levos, Principal Investigator
Cell (308) 398-1997
Office (308) 385-5900
Email alevos@gips.org

Appendix G

English Learner Profile

Transition Plan from Sheltered Instruction to General Education:

Student Name ID: Date of Birth: EL Identified Date: Home Language:
Academic Strengths:
Social:
Other (i.e. family situation, likes, hobbies)**:**
Career Goals/Academy Selection:

Sheltered Instruction Courses	Semester 1	Semester 2
Pre-Algebra **Algebra**	Grade: Evidence:	Grade: Evidence:
English 9 **English 10**	Grade: Evidence:	Grade: Evidence:
Integrated Science I **Integrated Science II**	Grade: Evidence:	Grade: Evidence:
American History **World History**	Grade: Evidence:	Grade: Evidence:

State Assessment	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Language Assessment: **ELPA21**			
District Assessments	Fall	Winter	Spring
MAP: Language			
MAP: Reading			
MAP: Math			
MAP: Science			

Strategies, Scaffolds, and Supports to Address English Language Proficiency

Appendix H

Student Introductory Video

Sample Sentence Frames for an Introductory Video Created by an EL Student:

Greeting:

Body:

My name is _____ and I am _____ years old.

My family is from the country of _____ and we speak _____.

My goals include _____.

I am good at _____.

I know that I am going to need help with _____.

Final words: