Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Celanie Rodene, who has been my number one source of support and encouragement. You were the first person who not only believed in me and encouraged me to be a leader, but who also helped shaped me to become the confident woman and advocate that I have become today. You are strong and full of infinite wisdom. You taught me to always work hard and persevere, even during the times when I may feel like I am at my lowest points. Thank you for teaching me the value of education, Mom. Mwen renmen ou anpil! Je t’aime beaucoup! I love you very much!

This work is also dedicated to my beautiful, intelligent, compassionate, and athletic children Matthew, Celine, and Michael. I am blessed to have all three of you in my life. Thank you for your patience, understanding and for always sharing me with others. You make me proud everyday! You have also made me better and stronger throughout the difficult period of this piece of work. Thank you for being my inspiration to receive greatness everyday. I love all three of you very much!

To English Language Learners and students with special needs everywhere, may you always work to your fullest potential. Dream big and may you never, never, NEVER give up on any of your pursuits in life! Anything is possible!
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for providing me with the opportunity and the power to believe in myself and to complete this research study successfully. Without God’s blessings and will, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

My oldest brother Fritz and I were fortunate to be accepted in one of Cambridge’s finest high school programs at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS). During my four years in the Pilot School Program at CRLS, I met highly qualified educators who truly cared about their students and knew how to foster a love for learning in all of us. Educators like Dr. Ray Shurtleff, Larry Aaronson, Donald Burroughs, Karen Hawthorne, Pauline Demetri, Gary Simon, Helen Jacobson, Maurice Page, Betsy Grady, Gerry Speca, Doug McGlathery, and Kathy Conaty challenged me and made school remarkably fun and interesting. Further, they supported me, guided me, and made themselves available whenever I needed them. Many of these Pilot School faculty members have remained in touch with me and have cheered me on throughout my journey as an educator and doctoral student. I am forever grateful to the Pilot School community. I would not have been the person and student that I am today if it was not for my Pilot School experience at CRLS. I would like to thank each and every one of the Pilot School educators who provided me with the opportunity to be myself and grow as a learner. These Pilot School educators, along with my fifth grade teachers, Ms. Ana Spera and Ms. Mary Grassi, were some of the first educators to inspire me to become a teacher myself.

I would especially like to thank my Pilot School administrator and dissertation committee member, Dr. Ray Shurtleff, for his leadership and ongoing support since my freshman year in high school. Dr. Shurtleff remained in touch with me during my undergraduate studies and throughout my teaching career. During my first year of teaching for instance, Dr. Shurtleff
visited my classroom, met my first grade students and wished me well. Presently, as an educator, I work hard at instilling the same values and principles that I learned from Dr. Shurtleff in my own students. I thank Dr. Shurtleff for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee as the role of a reader and external expert. Dr. Shurtleff not only spent endless hours reading and revising this dissertation, but he provided guidance during several challenges and stumbles I experienced along the way. More importantly, I thank Dr. Shurtleff for his help with some of my research decisions, research contact, and for pushing me to be the best that I can be. Thank you for your insightful feedback and comments, Dr. Shurtleff. I appreciate your enthusiasm and unrelenting faith in me. Thank you to Dr. Shurtleff’s, beautiful wife, Maureen Shurtleff, for also reading and revising my dissertation during her vacation. I am blessed to have both of them in my life!

In addition, I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my advisor, Dr. Kristal Clemons, whom I was blessed to have as a professor for my doctoral coursework, advisor, and mentor. I thank her for her support, guidance, motivation, and patience throughout my doctoral research. I could not have imagined having anyone else as my doctoral advisor. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Lynda Beltz, who also served on my dissertation committee. I was grateful Dr. Beltz was chosen to work closely with Dr. Clemons. I am thankful for her patience, feedback, encouragement, and her kindness. The ideas expressed by her and the committee have opened my mind to endless possibilities in making a difference as an educator in this field.

Thank you to Dr. Audrey Birkett, for spending countless hours reading and revising my dissertation. I appreciate your feedback and for constantly reminding me that I do not have to include everything I have learned about English Language Learners into this one dissertation. Your friendship, guidance, and your belief in me goes beyond any words written on paper.
Many thanks to my brother-in-law, Dr. Anthony Woart, for his guidance, motivation, advice, and ongoing support. Thank you for taking time to read my dissertation and providing me with meaningful feedback. Thank you to my friends, Dr. Nicolle Sisia and Carrie Moonie for reading and revising my dissertation. I am grateful for your time. Special thanks to one of my favorite professors, Dr. Christopher Unger for your honest and sincere feedback. Thank you for your tutorial on APA formatting. I appreciate your time. Thank you to my Northeastern island sisters: Dr. Loy Dakwa, Dr. Annie De Barros, and soon to be Dr. Celeca Aulder for their friendship, sisterhood, and ongoing support. The three of you have been blessings in my life. Thank you for your feedback, Dr. Dakwa.

Thank you Principal Esther Adames-Jiminez and Principal Olga Frechon for their ongoing support and for recommending me for teacher leadership opportunities in Boston Public Schools. To Dr. Denise Patmon, thank you for providing me with opportunities to present at University of Massachusetts Boston. To my colleagues: Kelley McDermott, Anne Slater, Marina Miranda, Myrna (Nina) Promousas, Alicia Carroll, Rosemary Whiting, Whitney Weeder, Candice Martinez, Diana Chow, Sally Ng, Amanda Landing-Leal, Graciela Briceno, and Teresa Torchia, thank you for your encouragement and support.

Many thanks to Judith Richards, and Marie P. Joseph from the Graham Parks Alternative School in Cambridge for allowing me to spend several years co-teaching in their Haitian bilingual (Okay and Okap) classrooms during my undergraduate studies. They were phenomenal educators and mentors to not only me, but to so many aspiring teachers.

Thanks to Catherine Hoffman for her guidance, hard work, and the many discussions we had on critical social issues that affect women and children through our work together in the Cambridge Youth Peace Corps. Thanks to Kathy Abbott for her support. From the time I met
Kathy as a high school student, she has been a blessing in my life. Since high school, Kathy has never missed any of my graduations.

Thank you to my family and friends for all their love and support. I thank my mother for being my greatest supporter. I would also like to thank my husband, Liam Mannion, and my three gorgeous children, Matthew (age 10), Celine (age 9), and Michael (age 5), for their patience during my doctoral and research studies. I appreciate my children’s love, understanding, and patience during the times when I had to miss their gymnastics practices, swimming lessons, baseball, or hockey games. Special thanks to my two oldest children for helping me with my Table of Contents. I would also like to thank my nieces and nephews: Lydia Jean-Louis, Josue Rodene, Joel Jean-Louis, Wahde Woart, Anthony Woart, Rachel Evelyn Jean-Louis, David Jean-Louis, Leah Jean-Louis, Rousseline Rodene, Daniel Jean-Louis, Thaline Rodene, Mariah Rodene Nazaire, Rebecca Jean-Louis, Samuel Woart, Elizabeth Jean-Louis, Layla Rodene, Floyd Rousseau Rodene, Sarah Joseph, Quihanna Nazaire, and Brendon Nazaire for their unconditional love. Thank you to those of you who cared for my children in return, especially during the times I had to study.

Additionally, many thanks to my siblings, Rev. Roland Rodene, Anne Marie Brunette Jean-Louis, Anne Marie Michelle Woart, Drew Rousseau Rodene, and Fritz Rodene, for their love, encouragement, protection, and prayers. Thank you to my soul sisters and best friends, Toi Neely, Monique Brinson, and Maria Ricci for their friendships and ongoing love and support. Thank you to my beautiful cousins, Solange Marson, Sandra Joseph, Rebecca Roseme, Merline Williams, and Geri Charles, for constantly checking in. Thank you to my relatives, the Molin, Charles, and Roseme families for their prayers and ongoing support. I am forever grateful for Auntie Mercia Roseme, Auntie Rose Molin, Auntie May Jean-Claude, Auntie Leonne Youte,
and my cousin and godfather Gerard Charles for their prayers. Thank you to my extended family Marie Nazaire, Blondine Jean Pierre, Charles Zachary, Max Bazelaïs and Minty Bazelaïs, my brother-in-law Philippe Jean-Louis and my babysitter Makayla Fenton for their support and for caring for my children during the times I had to study. Special thanks to Mr. Robert and Mrs. Cathy Riley and Mrs. Danielle Visconti for their help with my children. Many thanks to my friends: Dominique Joseph, Jenda Smith, Keecha Guerrier, Natasha Barthe, Judy Julien, Chaline Thande, Nauzaire Edouazin, Madjeen Lorthe, Eileen Richmond, Miscelaine Bushu, Barbara St. George, Sara Showstack, and Nicole Sammarco, for their love. Thank you to Sheila Borges Foley, the best neighbor in the world. To my church family, thank you for your prayers.

I am grateful to have had the privilege to attend Northeastern University (NEU). My experience as an NEU Husky has afforded me the opportunity to meet and work with some of the most intelligent professors and peers. Thank you to my NEU professors: Dr. Christopher Unger, Dr. Kristal Moore Clemons, Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters, Dr. Carol Young, Dr. Jane Lohmann, Dr. Sara Ewell, Dr. Tova Sanders, and Dr. Margaret Dougherty for helping me achieve success.

Lastly, I must thank the City of Somerville, Somerville Public Schools (SPS), and the department of English Language Learners for providing me with the opportunity to conduct my research in Somerville. Thank you to all thirty-two of my research participants for completing the surveys and speaking with me about their experiences as educators of English Language Learners in SPS. To the Somerville Public School educators who participated in this study, may you continue to find ways to provide opportunities for your students and may your commitment and dedication to your ELL and/ or dually identified students remain stronger than ever. It truly takes a village.
Abstract

The goal of this research study was to analyze the successful teaching methods used most frequently by educators of English Language Learners (ELLs). This study used methodology that included teacher interviews and other data collection methods. In addition, using the qualitative methodology, data was obtained from academic research and interviews of teachers’ experiences. The information gathered was processed through the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) theoretical framework and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory. The IPA methodology was used to organize and then analyze any patterns, disparities, relationships, or trends that advance ELL achievement. Essential findings of this study include:

1. The need to take into consideration students and families’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

2. The need to build meaningful bridges between the home and school cultures.

The significance of these findings are that the findings point to the contribution of this study, not only to the literature concerning pedagogical principles of educating English Language Learners (ELLs), but also the influence of these findings on policies concerning instruction as it pertains particularly to ELL students coming from various cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Keywords: Language Acquisition, Second Language Acquisition, English Language Learning (ELL), English Language Learners (ELLs), English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Development (ELD), cultural diversity, achievement gap, and academic achievement.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Positionality Statement

My family and I left Haiti to come to the U.S. to seek a better life in the early 1980s. Haiti is, and has been for a long time, the poorest country in the western hemisphere (The World Bank, 2016). Many families living there could not afford to send their children to school; however, my family was able to provide my siblings and me with an education. We spoke Haitian Creole at home while learning to speak French as a second language at school in Haiti. As a student in Haiti, I was a second language learner, studying French, and then I continued my ELL student status while learning English in the U.S. Immediately after moving to the U.S. with my family, I enrolled in the Boston Public Schools for three years and later transferred to the Cambridge Public Schools.

As an ELL (English is my third language), learning was challenging. Completing homework and school tasks were extremely difficult, largely because of the language barrier. My parents worked several jobs and when they were home, they did not have the English and academic skills to assist me with any homework. Additionally, my parents were not able to support me in my educational studies or advocate on my behalf for the proper educational services and resources. Due to the language barrier, they were unable to help me and my siblings select the proper school, program, or classes. As my parents were not fluent in English, they were not able to evaluate the challenges that I faced in my academic studies. Moreover, my parents believed that their job was to take care of us in the home while they relied on the school system to educate us. I struggled in school, especially in the area of literacy, mostly because I did not have any academic support or services provided by the school or the district itself.
As a former ELL student who came from Haiti and had to learn a new culture and language, I empathized with ELL students and the challenges they faced as they learned both in a general way, as well as after becoming an educator myself. Since I had struggled with reading, comprehension, and writing in the English language, I understood what it is like to not have full access to the English language arts curriculum and other content areas because of the language barrier. Based on my experience, I realized that there are fundamental problems with the way ELLs are currently being educated.

As an immigrant student who understood my home culture and was proud of being Haitian, upon coming to Boston, I struggled with my identity. During my first years in the Boston Public Schools system, I did not feel included, even though there were other minority children who resembled me. A major reason for this feeling of alienation was that my culture and background were not represented in the curriculum and were not understood or accepted by my non-Haitian peers. I was often teased by my peers for not speaking English properly or for speaking with an accent. My peers were insensitive toward my culture and they often told me to go back to my country. My teachers did not know how to deal with my peers’ ignorance. Instead of having lessons on respecting cultural differences and having a diverse curriculum, my teachers often punished the other students by giving them detention. On several occasions, I endured humiliation, harassment, and bullying because I did not speak English and I was perceived as being the cause of other students’ punishments.

Presently, I am the literacy specialist/coordinator and a Reading Recovery teacher in a Massachusetts urban public school. In the past eighteen years, I taught 3rd grade inclusion, English as a Second Language (ESL), special education, and kindergarten and 1st grade in Massachusetts. A majority of the students I serve are ELLs. In my 20 years of working with
ELLs, I have come to understand the challenges of working with them and the numerous issues of inequality that affect them. I have also observed that there are many qualified ELL teachers, yet most of them are predominately new to the profession and lack the training and experience necessary for effectively teaching ELLs. Furthermore, as was the case when I was in school, most districts do not support families’ cultural and linguistic assets while, at the same time, a harmonious and multi-cultural environment is not fostered in the public school system. As a professional, I have tried to implement an established curriculum for ELL students for my ESL classes, but found those resources lacking to the extent I had to develop my own.

As a licensed ESL and special needs educator who works mainly with ELLs, as an educator who has a strong background teaching literacy to young children, and as a mother of three children, I realized that the responsibility for improving education for ELLs must be shared among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Therefore, there was a crucial need for ESL teachers and classroom teachers who have not received any preparation for teaching ELLs to undergo professional development training that was grounded in the academic achievement of ELLs. In order for all stakeholders to address this problem effectively, I recognize that there was a need for further research in this field. I genuinely believe that my personal experience as a former ELL student and my professional experience as an educator who works closely with ELL students made me uniquely qualified to research this topic.

**Research Gap**

Recent research on educating English Language Learners (ELLs) examined research topics, such as teacher attitudes, teacher beliefs, preparation and practice, and their relationship to student academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pease-Alvarez, et al., 1991; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). However, as immigration increases and the number of ELLs changes so fast, the
research cannot keep up with the reality of immigration and education policies. Policies change rapidly from administration to administration, state to state, and district to district. Thus, there is no comprehensive, overarching view of the challenges faced by educators of ELLs. Nonetheless, there continues to be insufficient research studies on ELL educators and educational practices (Flores, 2001).

**Statement of the Problem**

The United States is the third most populated country in the world. It attracts about 20% of the world’s refugees and is considered a popular destination for immigrants. The immigrant population in the U.S. continues to increase yearly. The Migrant Policy Institute, a non-profit think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide, reported there were 42.4 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2014. The United States Census Bureau (2017) reported that as of February, 2017, there were approximately 325 million people living in the U.S., and 65 million immigrants reported to reside in the U.S. The Center for Immigration Studies (2016) reported that there were a total of 15.7 million immigrants illegally residing in the United Stated, and 5.1 million children had at least one undocumented parent in the U.S.

More than half of immigrant children do not speak English proficiently, and as a result, they are placed into classes to learn English (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011; Deiner, 2012). Native-born U.S. citizens were also included in the ELL population. Van Roekel (2008) reported that 76 percent of elementary school and 56 percent of secondary school ELLs are native-born.

Forty-one percent of U.S. public school teachers have at least one ELL student in their classes (National Education Association, 2015; Cruz & Thornton, 2009). In spite of this, only about 13% of the teachers working with ELL students obtained eight or more hours of
professional development on teaching ELLs during the preceding years (NCES, 2002; Tran, 2011). Nationally, educators have been struggling to ensure that ELLs learn English language skills sufficiently, maintain access to the core curriculum, develop academic knowledge in general subject areas, as well as develop appropriate critical thinking skills for the 21st century. The inadequate numbers of teachers nationwide who lack appropriate professional development to effectively educate ELLs is increasing. Furthermore, it does not appear that there are any benchmarks to indicate the amount of professional development required to address the needs of educators working with ELL students.

The influx of ELL students into U.S. schools has created debates to determine the best way to educate ELL students. For almost two decades, advocates insisted that ELLs receive their education in English-only settings. Others argued ELLs should be taught in Bilingual Education programs. About 20 years ago, states with large ELL populations (California Proposition 227 in 1998; Arizona Proposition 203 in 2000; Massachusetts Question 2 in 2002) voted to restrict Bilingual Education programs (Mitchell, 2016).

On November 8, 2016, California voters reversed the decision to educate more than one million ELL students who do not speak English as their first language in English-only classrooms (Proposition 58). The large number of ELLs in California offers an insight into many of the problems both ELLs and ELL educators face today. By allowing bilingual education, educators in California are better able to reach non-native speakers and better instruct them. California’s decision and support for the use of non-English languages to be spoken during instruction in public educational settings now has policymakers, educators, and researchers thinking about how to best educate ELLs. The problems experienced in California with educating ELLs are similar across the nation, including in Massachusetts. Massachusetts has
always been at the forefront of educational policy development and practice. It is important for Massachusetts educators to look elsewhere to gain insights on how to improve education for ELLs.

In the United States, there has been an increase in the academic enrollment of ELL students. This increase has also occurred in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2014). In 2007, approximately 57,000 ELL students were enrolled in Massachusetts Public Schools (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). In 2013-2014, there were 73,700 ELLs in the U.S. public schools (Migration Policy Institute, 2016). The increased number of ELL students in Massachusetts is affecting the educational standards of the Commonwealth, as mandated by the federal government. Even though educating ELLs is recognized as a national challenge for educators, this research study was limited to examining educators in a small, urban, public school district in Somerville, Massachusetts. Somerville, MA was the location chosen for this study because of the size of Somerville Public Schools (SPS). For the 2016-2017 academic year, SPS had an enrollment of 4,931 students. In 2015-2016, SPS served approximately 2,438 students (49.7%) who came from a home where English was not their first language (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education School and District Profiles, 2017).

Somerville is one of the most densely populated cities in the nation. It has been recognized as, "The Best Run City” in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is located in Massachusetts’ Middlesex County, approximately two miles north of Boston. The city of Somerville was considered part of Boston (Charlestown) from 1630 to 1842. Today, it is categorized as a small urban city, occupying a little over four square miles, with a population of approximately 80,318 (U.S. Census, 2016). Somerville was also chosen as this study’s research
site because of its diversity. It is known as a Sanctuary City, welcoming immigrants from all over the world. There are over 50 languages spoken in Somerville Public Schools (SPS), making it an excellent location to conduct research on language learning in schools and provides a great number of examples and participants to conduct such research.

The importance of education in Somerville extends beyond K-12 learning. Tufts University is located in Somerville (and Medford). One can find a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students, mostly from Tufts University, Harvard University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), as well as working families and young professionals. The 44th U.S. president, former President Barack Obama, resided in the culturally rich city of Somerville during his graduate studies at the Harvard University School of Law.

In addition to culture, Somerville is also known for having historical houses, sites that are intriguing, businesses, and a range of restaurants that represent various cultures. Somerville is known for its historic preservation sites (Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, 2001). On January 1, 1776, the first Grand Union Flag was raised in Prospect Hill, located just outside of Union Square, Somerville under the orders of General George Washington.

The city of Somerville, known for having numerous new mixed-use development projects, has also received national recognition for innovation. Somerville is known as the only community in Massachusetts and the only city in the country to employ a customer helpline (311) and a Connect-CTY mass outreach, which is a reverse 911-program. Somerville prides itself on having the first woman mayor (Dorothy Kelly Gay) who was an immigrant from Ireland. Somerville has grown in the last thirty years (Boston Globe Editorial Staff, 2013). The city is expected to continue to grow with the $1.43 billion Green Line Extension, a project that
will bring new subway stations to major areas of Somerville: Union Square, Washington Street, Gilman Square, Lowell Street, Ball Square, as well as near Tufts University (Rosenberg, 2013).

This qualitative research study analyzed existing data and educational research studies on ELLs, as well as the ELL teaching processes of SPS educators in Somerville, MA. This study further examined the best pedagogical approaches and beneficial methods Somerville educators employed to improve the opportunity gap and academic achievement of their ELL students.

**Significance of the Problem**

In 2014, the U.S. immigrant population represented 13.3% of the U.S. population, totaling more than 42.4 million people (Zong & Batalova, 2015. By 2015, there were 43.3 million immigrants in the U.S. (Zong & Batalova, 2016). In addition, 81 million people (approximately 26% of the population) are first- and second-generation Americans. Twenty-five percent of all children in the U.S. are either foreign-born or first-generation immigrants (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). The first- and second-generation immigrant families are the fastest-growing child population (Urban Institute, 2010; as cited by Zong & Batalova, 2015). First and second generation families and students are often considered English Language Learners, even if they have been here some time. In a densely populated urban area, such as Somerville, immigrants tend to hold on to their cultures and ways of life as there are often pockets of people from their same backgrounds in the community. This allows for them to keep their languages and home cultures alive, but can also impede the learning of English.

The number of ELLs who attend U.S. schools and come from homes where English is not their primary language is increasing at a profound rate. ELLs are the fastest growing diverse population in U.S. pre-K-12 schools. The number of ELLs enrolled in public schools increased by 51%, from 3.5 million to 5.3 million in the decade between 1997-98 and 2008-09. ELL
students now make up about 10% of the U.S. student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data, 2014). Nearly 3 out of 4 classrooms in the U.S include at least one ELL (Sparks, 2016). The number of ELLs continues to increase rapidly; however, the best pedagogical approaches to educating ELLs are unclear, inconsistent, and often lacking.

Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York, North Carolina and Texas are the U.S. states that with the highest population of ELLs. An average of 68% of the student population are ELLs in these seven states (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Five of these states border Mexico, which accounts for the reason for the high influx of ELL students (Boyle et al., 2010). In 2010, Nevada had the highest ELL enrollment at just over 31%. California followed closely behind with 25% ELL enrollment, (Batalova & McHugh, 2011).

Undocumented migrants are attracted to urban areas because of work opportunities and because New York is a sanctuary city that does not enforce immigration laws (Glanton, 2010). Sanctuary Cities are cities in which if a person is questioned by the police in relation to a crime, he or she will not be asked to provide citizenship documentation if it is not in relation to the crime committed. This fosters safety as immigrants without documentation do not need to fear talking to the policy or speaking up when they see crime committed. It also makes them feel like their part of the community. In 2015, The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics confirmed that in 2012-2013, five of the six states with the highest percentages of public school ELLs were located in the West. More than ten percent of public school ELL students reside in the District of Columbia and six states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics further
reported 18 U.S. states with percentages of ELL public school enrollment between 6% and 9%. Twelve states have percentages of ELLs in public schools between 3.0% and 5.9%. Fourteen states had less than 3.0%, with West Virginia having the lowest percentage of ELL students at 0.7% (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). With these numbers increasing yearly, there is a need for a national and comprehensive strategy to effectively educate ELLs.

In many states, school enrollment for ELL students has outpaced the enrollment of native English speakers. States such as Georgia, Mississippi, and Montana had over 50% growth in ELL enrollment from the 1990-1991 school year to the 2000-2001 school year. The percentage of ELL students in public schools increased between 2002-2003, and 2012-2013 in 39 out of 50 states, with Kansas having the highest percentage-point increase (The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

During 2009, ELL student populations grew by 7.2%, which amounts to 49.5 million students (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). In 2014, ELLs comprised 10% (approximately 5 million of the kindergarten-12th grade) of U.S. public school enrollment (Migration Policy Institute, 2016). It was estimated that by the Fiscal Year 2015, ELL student enrollment in U.S. schools would reach 10 million (Van Roekel, 2010). By 2025, almost 1 out of every 4 U.S. public school students will be an ELL (Van Roekel, 2010). By 2030, ELLs will account for about 40% of the complete U.S. school population (Roseberry, et al, 2013). The information presented demonstrates the need to study the amount of professional development required to address the professional needs of educators working with ELL students. The Migration Policy Institute (2016) broke down the numbers of ELLs enrolled, by state, in K-12 for School Year 2013-2014 (Figure 1):
The purpose of this study was to examine SPS ELL educators’ experiences, determine the different methods and best practices Somerville educators are using to educate their ELL students. This study also examined how consistent the teaching methods were across SPS and whether or not the race or cultural background of ELL educators affected the interaction between them and their ELL students.

As this work related to teacher experiences and attitudes, there was a need to understand the attitudes of ELL educators towards ELL students in terms of the students’ abilities to learn English. A recent study (Ingerson, 2011) suggested that there is a need for further research to
investigate these attitudes. Teachers who work with ELL students often work longer hours. They have to plan more in-depth lessons that can reach a variety of learners at a variety of levels. This takes time. Also, they need to develop and use a variety of materials to support their ELLs. There is a need for teachers of ELL students to differentiate instruction for those students who often have various English Language Development (ELD) levels. The additional work adds stress to teachers who work with ELL students. This, in turn, affects their teaching. It was the aim of this study to provide the understanding of teachers’ attitudes and experiences in the instruction of ELLs. fair enough…should that be at least hinted at earlier?

One of the greatest challenges of educating ELL students is that each student comes with his/her own unique background and circumstances. The instructional goal of educators, as it relates to ELL students, is to develop a diverse program that integrates them into the mainstream academic curriculum (Uro & Bario, 2013) while sustaining the academic prerequisites and testing scores mandated by school districts. There are various programs, methodologies, and strategies employed to educate and support the process of English language learning. ELL students use a variety of alternative instructional programs, such as:

- ESL Pull-out, in which ELL students are removed from mainstream classrooms for a portion of the day in order to give them specialized instruction in English (McKeon, 1987, Reigle, 2007).
- Content Based ESL (CBI), in which the learner is exposed to a large amount of language through content areas.
- Sheltered English Instruction (SEI), in which only Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are included. Teachers utilize visuals, physical activities, music, and the
environment to teach vocabulary and concept development in mathematics, science, history, and other subjects (National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education, 1987).

- Transitional Bilingual (TB), which involves educating the ELL in his or her native language, generally for no more than three years. The goal in TB is for students to keep up in content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies while they are learning English.

- Two-way Bilingual, in which both instructors teach classes in both the primary language and English in order for the ELL student to achieve academically.

- Dual Language, which includes both native and non-native speakers. ELL students in dual language programs learn content in the target, or non-English language, as well as in English. The time spent teaching and learning in both languages is split evenly, with the goal of getting all students proficient in both languages by the time they complete the program (Christian, 1996; Soltero, 2004; Gomez et al, 2005). Many school districts, such as the Somerville Public Schools, used the terms Two-way bilingual and Dual Language interchangeably.

- Maintenance Bilingual (MB) is used with newly arrived ELL students who do not speak or understand any English. This method allows the teacher to instruct the ELL students in mathematics and English Language Arts skills in their primary language at first, then eventually in English, while using the native language to fall back on for support.

The different needs of ELL students and the different programs, methodologies, and strategies to educate them suggest that there is a need for educators of ELLs to be cognizant and sensitive to the factors that can affect ELL students and how they learn. How educators instruct
ELL students and implement English language instruction is key because the achievement gaps between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers continue to widen (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). The successes of programs for ELL students are contingent upon closing these achievement gaps. Many ELL students start school at a disadvantage relative to their non-ELL peers. In addition, many do not have adequate English language exposure or English-speaking models. The Vocabulary, Oral Language and Academic Readiness (VOLAR) program was created for preschooler Dual Language learners with language impairments (Simon-Cereijido & Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2014). Other socioeconomic factors, such as poverty, health status, parent resources, as well as inadequate support at school, including limited language services and inadequately trained teachers, affect ELL students’ progress (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Samson & Collins, 2012). How well educators are able to adjust their educational plans to address these factors could have an impact on closing the achievement gap.

Using qualitative approaches, this study highlighted the experiences of Massachusetts urban public school educators of ELL students. The educators interviewed provided data and indicators that were used to assess ELL teaching methodologies currently being used in schools, as well as the critical success factors necessary to effectively educate ELLs. This study also provided an overview of the challenges and obstacles Somerville ELL educators faced in trying to close the achievement gap between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers.

The opportunity and achievement gap between ELLs and Native English Speakers (NES) often starts at an early age for learners. There are problems with some of the programs for elementary school age ELL students, where quality instruction is lacking in ESL and appropriate grade-level academic content. Furthermore, many ELLs are not properly identified at the
elementary level and do not receive adequate ESL services with appropriate language support. Newly arrived ELLs and long-term ELLs have different needs (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2010). Newly arrived ELLs need support acquiring Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), while long term ELL students tend to need support acquiring academic literacy skills. Some ELLs may have high proficiency when speaking English; however, this does not always translate into an ELL student’s academic success. ELLs can reach a point of diminished learning when they are left in their programs too long or the programs are ineffective. Programs that are effective for ELL students must provide an education that continually moves learners forward and continually develops their English language skills. ELL students are expected to perform cognitively demanding tasks that require high levels of academic vocabulary, discourse, and inquiry in order to become academically successful. ELL programs are often inconsistent across districts and not all curricula consider the ELLs own cultural and linguistic contexts. It is important for English Language Learning programs to take a holistic view on the ELL students’ backgrounds and experiences in order to close the achievement gap.

A review of the literature suggests that there are several complications relating to ELL educators. Some of these deficiencies include:

1) A shortage of highly qualified, trained teachers serving ELL students. Unqualified ELL teachers who are not certified in the specific content areas and are unable to provide additional language support to their students (Harper, et al., 2008). Additionally, teacher effectiveness and quality (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Kane & Staiger, 2012; Loeb, Soland & Fox, 2014) has decreased as the number of ELL students has risen.
2) Teachers of ELL students are often unable to relate to their students. Ninety percent of pre-service teachers in teacher training programs in the U.S. are White, middle class, and come from non-urban environments (Nieto, 2000; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Why is this so? Many teachers are monolingual in English and some are unable to relate to their students.

3) ELL teachers often have biased or misconstrued attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their ELL students (de Oliveria, 2011).

4) Teaching conditions and resources affect ELL teachers’ abilities to teach ELL students, as well as their interest to remain in the teaching field (Brooks et al., 2010). Here again, as in the case of previous findings on the nature of ELL students, gaps still remain to be filled in the literature concerning the nature of ELLs. There continues to be insufficient research studies on mainly ELL teachers (Flores, 2001). This study may work to fill such gaps. Furthermore, the findings of this study are may be useful to practitioners, researchers, and policy makers.

It is important to gain an understanding of teachers’ experiences and ways to create the best teaching and learning opportunities for ELL students and their educators. Recent research in this field has examined the following research topics: teacher attitudes, teacher beliefs, teacher preparation and practice, and teachers’ relationships to student academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Pease-Alvarez, et al., 1991; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). The research demonstrated in this project works to identify educators’ attitudes, beliefs, and any potential lack of understanding or preconceived notions they may have about their English Language Learning students.
Academic achievement of ELL students and their educators’ abilities to effectively help these students meet challenges becomes more pressing as the number of ELL students increase, and statistics on their academic development continue to demonstrate a continued lagging behind native English-speaking students (Solis, 1999). Measuring ELL teachers’ attitudes and experiences was thought to be significant because it had received limited attention. By evaluating Somerville educators’ attitudes and experiences, school districts are able to identify and determine the necessity of professional development training that uncovers unconscious biases.

The researcher’s goal was to learn how ELL educators work in the field and learn about suggested recommendations for educational policy, schools, and school districts working with ELL students based on these findings. Another purpose was to contribute to the existing scholarly literature on the factors that influence the success and challenges of ELL students. The implications and recommendations of this research study were designed to improve existing policies and promote better policies, as well as shed light on existing teaching and learning models for ELL students and their educators not just in Somerville, Massachusetts, but everywhere. Through research that was presented, policy makers, school leaders, and educators that serve ELLs may have a better understanding of the nature of ELL students and ELL teachers’ and specialists’ experiences. With this understanding, researchers, districts with high populations of ELLs, schools, educators of ELLs, ESL teachers, ELL families, other stakeholders, and ELL students are able to identify and develop methods to better support their educational development.

This study examined reoccurring themes that ELL instructors share. Any themes that have been identified were listed along with developing subthemes. Time was spent analyzing
and looking for connections between the themes. This research study specifically examined the experiences of ELL teachers and the correlation of how ELL teachers are trained (i.e. education, certification, professional development) and prepared (i.e. how they developed curriculum, lessons plans, delivered instruction, provided support, faced challenges, success, etc.) to work with ELLs.

**Research Questions**

This study was designed to examine ELL educators’ experiences in Somerville Public Schools because it has a large, ethnically-diverse student population, comprised of immigrants, first and second generation, as well as native populations. The study proposed to address the following central research questions:

1. What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?
2. Does race or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?

**Additional Considerations**

As the researcher conducted the interviews and gathered data, the attitudes and beliefs of ELL educators became an important element in understanding the educational landscape for ELL students. Therefore, it was critical to add a sub-question that was related to the perceptions, attitudes, and experience of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools.

**Definitions and Terms**

There are numerous terms used to discuss ELLs (Wesley-Nero, 2007). Within the body of this research paper, the term ELL will be used to refer to English Language Learners and English Language Learning. English Language Learners (ELLs) are students who speak languages other than English. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education (2016), defines an ELL student as “a student whose first language is a language other than English and who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.” If the term ELL was defined in a citation by a different author, then the term will be applied as the author used the term in the reference. The following are key terms used in this study:

- **English Language Learners (ELL) -** Students who do not speak English as their first language. Their primary language is one other than English.

- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students -** Non-white and non-native English speaking students of color and who speak other languages besides English.

- **Language Minority Students (LMS) -** Students who speak other languages exclusively or in addition to English.

- **Limited English Proficient (LEP) -** Students who speak a language other than English and are not proficient in English (Capps, et al. 2005).

- **English Language Proficiency (ELP) -** The ability to speak, read, write, and understand the English language.

- **Academic English Proficiency (AEP) -** The ability to speak, read, write, and understand academic English. Academic English is was used in academic and content specific vocabulary, complex sentence structure, and during academic discourse (i.e. interpretation and analysis of data or text) (Center for Public Education, 2015).

• Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Process - The process in which an individual learns a second language.

• Social Language - Language that develops from conversational exchanges and/or from social activities (i.e. play, television, radio, etc.).

• Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) - BICS refers to the proficiency of the ELL students' social language.

• Academic Language – Higher-level discourse found in formal settings such as a classroom. Academic language is more cognitively demanding in comparison to social language.

• Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) - CALP refers to academic language (Cummins, 2000).

• Pull-Out/Push-In Model - This is when ELL students attend core, academic classes in English, while an ELL or ESL specialist provides separate instructional support in English during class or outside of class. This method is used for ELLs with at least some proficiency in the English language.

• Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) - When ELLs are taught in a classroom where the teacher focuses on direct language instruction and academic content. Students’ English proficiency and English Language Development (ELD) levels are usually used to group ELL students. The most common version of the SEI model is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). Arizona, California, and Massachusetts are three states that have laws requiring SEI (Sparks, 2016).

• Dual Language - Dual-language bilingual immersion programs include both native and non-native speakers. ELL students in dual language programs learn content in the
target, or non-English language as well as in English (Müller & Markowitz, 2004; Gomez et al, 2005; Hamayan, et al, 2007)).

- Dually Identified - ELL students with identified disabilities. These ELL students have Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) (Park et al, 2016).
- Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) – ELL students who have immigrated to the U.S. and had their educational tracts interrupted due to various circumstances (Calderon, 2008; Robertson, et al., 2010).

Understanding how ELL students were identified, classified, and reclassified could be confusing. When ELL students first enrolled in SPS, parents completed a language survey at the Parent Information Center. If parents responded that they spoke a language other than English, the student’s proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing in English were tested. There were different kinds of ELL students: long-term ELLs, recent arrivals with limited or interrupted formal schooling, recent arrivals with adequate schooling, ELLs with special needs, etc. SIFE and Dually Identified students were also ELLs. The implications to why there were many ELL classifications had to do with how ELL students’ academic needs were met. ELL students were generally placed in classroom settings with qualified teachers who had appropriate credentials to meet the student’s academic needs. In some cases, students were pulled out of their classrooms to work with a licensed teacher who had ESL certification. Many ELL students were educated in dual language, bilingual programs. Dually Identified students were qualified to receive services for ELL and special education students.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study on the experiences of ELL educators in a Massachusetts urban, public school utilized the SLA theoretical framework. The reason for using this framework was because
English Language Learning curricula is developed from an educational and linguistic framework. In order to develop policies that effectively teach ELLs, stakeholders need to implement the theories developed from experts in the field. Stakeholders may want to consider the educational context of SLA as they develop the strategies for educating ELLs.

**Second Language Acquisition (SLA).** SLA is the process of individuals acquiring a second or additional language. ELL students who are learning a second, or in some cases a third language, progress through five predictable stages: 1) Preproduction, 2) Early Production, 3) Speech Emergence, 4) Intermediate Fluency, and 5) Advanced Fluency (Krashen & Terell, 1983; Hill & Flynn, 2006). There are numerous theories and hypotheses in the field of SLA. SLA is a combination of different schools of thought from various researchers. Two of the most recognized experts within the field of SLA are Professor Stephen Krashen and Professor James Cummins. Cummins’ (1981) Conversational and Academic Language Proficiency theories appear to be widely used in studies concerning ELLs. SLA theory focuses on factors relating to the stages of language development, environment, and cultural factors that influence an individual’s ability to develop and master the nuances used to internalize a second language. In the SLA theory, academic instruction includes developing skills in the four domains of English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The need to understand SLA theory was critical to better designing effective curricula for English Language Learners. Moses (2015) proposes a set of implications for literacy instruction, according to the language proficiency levels/stages. The Stages of Language Proficiency are identified as: Stage 1: Preproduction Silent Period (Starting); Stage 2: Early Production (Emerging); Stage 3: Speech Emergence (Developing); Stage 4: Intermediate Fluency (Expanding); Stage 5: Advanced Fluency (Bridging). Each stage has a set
of criteria that identifies and describes benchmarks at the particular phase of the ELL language development:

- **Stage 1: Preproduction Silent Period (Starting).** During this stage, Moses (2015) suggests that students in the silent period should not be forced to speak, but should be allowed opportunities to participate in group activities without being singled out. At this stage, it was strongly recommended that the teacher and other students model oral reading for the ELL student.

- **Stage 2: Early Production (Emerging).** Students should be encouraged to begin to take risks with simple, rehearsed reading and discussion in non-threatening situations. The teacher and other students should continue to model oral reading for the ELL student.

- **Stage 3: Speech Emergence (Developing).** The ELL student continues to learn through modeling. There is more participation at this stage. Additionally, the ELL student should be participating with partners, in small groups, and in entire classes to engage in rehearsed literacy activities. Even though there is more participation at this stage, ELL students require support and ample opportunities to practice with appropriate feedback when engaged in independent, paired sharing, and/or reading for an audience.

- **Stage 4: Intermediate Fluency (Expanding).** This stage requires scaffolding, whereby students increasingly participate in most literacy activities with native speakers. Appropriate open-ended questions allow students to develop academic language and comprehension, as well as opportunities to build on their prior knowledge.
• Stage 5: Advanced Fluency (Bridging). ELL students are encouraged to use higher-level reading comprehension, listening, and thinking skills during oral reading. At this stage, ELL students possess near native-like proficiency in oral reading. However, they may still need support with cognitively demanding tasks such as analyzing, inferring, and evaluating.

As an ELL student progresses through the stages of language proficiency, he or she becomes more proficient in the English language. In the classroom, effective academic and English language instruction for ELLs should occur simultaneously. The development and progression of the language proficiency levels should reflect ELL students’ stages of language acquisition. Instruction for ELL students should allow for differentiated instruction and should engage students in higher-level thinking and cognitively demanding activities.

Dr. James Cummins is a professor and researcher on Language Development, SLA, and Literacy Development of English language learners who are acquiring English as an additional language. Cummins is one of the world’s leading experts on SLA and Bilingual Education. He is known for introducing the acronyms BICS and CALP in 1979. BICS refers to the proficiency of ELL students’ everyday social language, which is needed for basic communication. CALP refers to academic language, which is needed to comprehend abstract concepts (Cummins, 2000; Cummins, 2008). ELL students generally attain BICS in a shorter period of time and often take longer to acquire CALP. In Cummins’ Quadrant Model, he makes a connection between language to learning and defines the two types of language: BICS and CALP (Cummins, 1984).

Understanding Cummins’ BICS and CALP’s distinction in social and academic language will help ELL educators distinguish between the stages of their students’ English proficiency. Furthermore, ELL educators’ ability to make the distinction between BICS and CALP was
crucial because there are some ELL students who may be able to comprehend and/or speak conversational English well and still have challenges with academic text and higher-level cognitively demanding tasks.

Cummins proposed the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) (while learning one language a student could also acquire a set of metalinguistic knowledge and skills drawn when learning and working in English). The skills and knowledge are referred to as CUP. When ELL students have developed knowledge in their primary language, it helps them to make input in a second or third language comprehensible. For example, when the child already understands a concept in the primary language, he/she simply needs to acquire the label in English. The task, however, becomes challenging when he/she has to learn both the label and the concept in his/her second or third language (Cummins, 2000). Cummins also developed the Task Difficulty (TD) model. TD refers to various tasks we expect our students to engage in and how they are categorized from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding and from context-embedded to context-reduced. In context-embedded tasks, students have access to various visuals and oral cues. In texted-reduced tasks, students are expected to listen to lectures or read dense text without any visual or other sources of help besides the language in the lecture or text itself. When teachers are aware of Cummins’ difficulty tasks, they may be able to better plan effective, less frustrating lessons and activities for their ELL students. Cummins developed a two-dimensional model where the horizontal axis signifies a degree of context and the vertical axis stands for level of cognitive demand (Cummins, 2000) (Figure 2, Cummins’ Four Quadrant Model).
Figure 2. Cummins’ Four Quadrant Model (Adapted from Cummins’s Framework for Evaluating Language Demand in Content Activities- Modified Format, From Language, Learning, and Content Instruction, Reiss, 2004).

Context-Embedded learning was found on the left side of Cummins’ model. Context-Embedded refers to communication that was provided in a context with cues that help disclose the important parts of a text in order for ELL students to understand effectively. Thus, Context-Embedded was crucial for ELL students (Cummins, 2000). Educators of ELL students should keep Cummins’ model in mind while instructing their students. As demonstrated in this model, the best way to instruct ELL students was to ensure they are challenged cognitively and participate in cognitively demanding tasks, while at the same time, they are afforded with appropriate contextual and linguistic support. Learning without contextual cues (Context-Reduced) placed ELL students at a disadvantage. Examples of Context-Reduced tasks included:
memorizing number facts or timetables without fully understanding what it means to add or
group numbers, or listening to a presentation without any visual representation.

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model (Echevarria et al, 20007 &
2013) was an effective pedagogical approach found in Cummins’ Quadrant B. Lessons that used
the SIOP model were both cognitively demanding and Context-Embedded. The SIOP model
was a research-based instructional model that has its theoretical roots in the zone of proximal
development (Vygotsky 1978). Researchers at California State University and the Center for
Applied Linguistics created SIOP through a national research project sponsored by the Center for
Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE), a national research center funded by
the U.S. Department of Education from 1996 through 2003. The goal of the SIOP model was to
make content knowledge comprehensible to ELL students. The outcome of the SIOP model
derived from the work of Jana Echevarria, Mary Ellen Vogt, and Deborah J. Short (2012). The
eight components of the SIOP model included: 1) lesson preparation, 2) building background, 3)
comprehensible input, 4) strategies, 5) interaction, 6) practice and application, 7) lesson delivery,
and 8) review and assessment. Therefore, SIOP included teacher preparation and instructional
indicators such as comprehensible input and the building of background knowledge. It was
comprised of strategies for classroom organization and delivery of instruction. Teachers using
the SIOP model worked hard to develop their students’ academic language skills in the four
domains of literacy: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Short et al., 2012). SIOP
encouraged cooperative learning and reading comprehension strategies in the lessons.
Additionally, in SIOP lessons, teachers included language objectives, opportunities for students
to practice oral language skills, and the development of background knowledge and academic
vocabulary. Thus far, SIOP has proven to be successful in addressing the academic needs of many ELL students (Echevarria et al, 2011; Short et al, 2011; Short et al, 2012).

Cummins also makes a distinction between Additive and Subtractive Bilingualism. Cummins suggests Additive Bilingualism occurred when an ELL student or a group learned a second language without compromising their knowledge and use of their first language. He proposed that a second language should add to, instead of substituting for, the first language. In Additive Bilingualism, teachers worked hard at incorporating the ELL’s primary language into their instructional practices. ELL students learn the curriculum through their primary language while they develop English language skills simultaneously. Subtractive Bilingualism, on the other hand, is when acquiring a second language interferes with the learning of a first language. The second language supersedes the primary language. This is often common among ELL students who emigrate to the U.S. at a young age. It is also common among orphans who have divested of their primary language input (May, 2011; Roberts, 1995). Cummins’ distinction between Additive Bilingualism and Subtractive Bilingualism calls attention to the need for educators to understand that their ELL students’ cultures and languages are as equally relevant as American culture and English. It also suggests the need for educators of ELL students to use their students’ primary languages and cultures as strengths in their daily instruction and curricula (May, 2011).

Cummins’ (2000) Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (DIH) proposes that Second Language Development relies on the development of the primary language. The hypothesis also clearly describes the difference between surface fluency and the academic language skills that are needed to benefit from the educational process (Vrooman, 2000; Lindsey, Manis, and Bailey, 2003; Hill & Miller, 2013).
Stephen Krashen is another known expert in the field of linguistics and SLA. Krashen's theory has had a large impact in SLA research and instruction since the 1980s. Krashen's theory of SLA includes five main hypotheses:

1) Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. One of the most important, widely known, and influential among linguists and language practitioners. It requires ELL students to have meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language.

2) Monitor Hypothesis. The relationship between acquisition and learning. The ELL student thinks about planning, editing, and correcting.

3) Input Hypothesis. This is Krashen’s explanation of how ELL students acquire a second language. ELL students improve and progress when they receive second language 'input' that is one step beyond their current stage of linguistic competence.

4) Natural Order Hypothesis. The acquisition of grammatical structures follows a "natural order" which is predictable.

5) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen's view that a number of "affective variables" play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in SLA.

Merrill Swain’s Comprehensible Output (CO) Hypothesis is another SLA theory. CO suggests that learning occurs when the student finds a gap in his or her linguistic knowledge of the second language. Krashen’s Monitor Model Hypothesis of SLA and Swain’s Comprehensible Output Theory will assist educators, researchers, and policymakers to think of ways to design and schedule programs and curricula for ELLs. Clearly, ELLs need sufficient time to learn and process information, in addition to ample opportunities to practice and produce the natural language processing systems (phonological, morphological syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic), especially as they develop their expressive and receptive English language skills.
Additionally, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) as proposed by Lenneberg (1967) suggests that acquiring a language is biologically linked to age, usually from early infancy until puberty. This hypothesis is important to our understanding of whether or not it extends as well to SLA. CPH will also aid educators, researchers, and policymakers in making appropriate decisions to offer ELLs with the time and tools needed to ensure progress in English.

SLA theory is relevant in understanding the nature of ELL students and their teachers’ experiences. SLA theories have consistently been successful in predicting and explaining effective ways to teach ELL students. Pioneering authors of SLA theory have been around since the 1930’s. These men and women have helped shape SLA theory into one of the most concrete and practiced theories of ELL instruction today.

**Conclusion.** ELL students have difficulties mastering content and language instruction simultaneously and it is as difficult for educators of ELLs to ensure that their students learn English effectively and demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge and skills (Wesley-Nero, 2007). This research thesis is a grassroots study of how ELL educators are using their resources and personal teaching methods to satisfy the federal requirements to fully and effectively educate ELL students. This research study is designed to gauge the realities of the programs to determine if they are actually implemented as they are written and publicized. In addition, this study will seek to discover whether ELL educators have biases and attitudes that affect the delivery of services to ELL students. This research is significant because there appears to be a “disconnect” between the application and actual delivery that occurs in educating ELL students versus the goals, policies, and mandates that are publicly reported.

SLA is a relevant theoretical framework used in this study to understand the nature of ELL students and ELL educators’ experiences. Using the SLA theory, this research study will
provide school districts with knowledge about ways educators are able to educate ELLs successfully. It will also support effective collaborative efforts, mandates, and best practices educators and policy makers require in understanding and educating English Language Learners.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The research presented in Chapter Two highlights the existing literature on English Language Learners. This literature review is organized into two main sections: 1) understanding the nature of ELLs and 2) understanding the experiences of ELL teachers. It is important for educators of ELLs to put a greater amount of effort into learning more about the students they are teaching. The literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on the nature of ELLs, who they are, their backgrounds, academic experiences, English language proficiency levels, cultural and linguistic beliefs and traditions, family circumstance, and any other learning needs are important factors to consider for educators working with ELLs. Understanding the nature of ELLs allows opportunities to support them, while also working to provide a welcoming and comfortable learning environment.

Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners (ELLs)

The U.S. education system refers to ELLs as students for whom English is not the first language spoken within their homes. ELLs are students who acquire a second or additional language and culture (Haynes & Zacarian 2010; Navarette et al., 2015; McCable, 2017). One of the limitations of the term English as a Second Language (ESL) is there are some students who already speak multiple languages, thus making English a third, fourth, or even beyond language. Haynes and Zacarian (2010) define English Language Learners as students who have acquired a language or languages other than English during their early years (preschool years) and are now learning English as an additional language. The term ELL is mainly used in the U.S. to describe a student who is an active learner of the English language and who may benefit from a variety of language support programs (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).
Most states’ elementary schools have procedures to establish whether or not a student is proficient in English when entering elementary school. For example, most school districts administer the Home Language Survey at Family Resource Centers (FRC) where parents are assessed regarding their home native language use (Samson & Collins, 2012). Once a language, aside from English or in addition to English, is noted on the home language survey, or when an interviewer has indicated a student as an ELL, the student is then assessed. The school is responsible for administering a valid and dependable Language Proficiency Assessment to the potential ELL student. Parents are notified immediately when a student is identified as an ELL (Haynes & Zacarian, 2010).

**Background Data on ELLs.** ELLs are the fastest growing diverse population in U.S. pre-K-12 schools. The number of ELLs who attend U.S. schools and come from homes where English is not their primary language is increasing at a profound rate. According to a 2016 study published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES):

The percentage of public school students in the United States who were English Language Learners was higher in the school year 2013-14 (9.3 percent, or an estimated 4.5 million students) than in 2003-04 (8.8 percent, or an estimated 4.2 million students) and 2012-13 (9.2 percent, or an estimated 4.4 million students). The 2016 report from the NCES went on to show the majority of ELL students were found in lower grades:

In 2013–14, a greater percentage of public school students in lower grades than in upper grades were identified as ELL students. For example, 17.4 percent of kindergarteners were identified as ELL students, compared to 8.0 percent of 6th-graders and 6.4 percent of
8th-graders. Among 12th-graders, only 4.6 percent of students were identified as ELL students.

The NCES 2016 report also showed the percentage of ELL students to be higher in urbanized areas when compared to less urbanized areas.

To make sense of the nature of ELLs, one must understand the diversity of ELLs and the challenges educators face in instructing them. The ELL student population is culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse. Half of all culturally and linguistically diverse Pre-K-12 students in the U.S. have limited English proficiency and are categorized and labeled as ELLs (Goldenberg, et al, 2011). As suggested in this study, socioeconomic status and education level affect the academic success of students. Forty-eight percent of all ELLs in elementary school (grades Pre-K-5) have parents who did not complete high school and 66% of ELL students come from low-income families (Capps, et al., 2005). ELL students who come from families with high levels of income and education, appear to be more likely to achieve overall academic success faster than their less “affluent” counterparts.

There are roughly 400 different languages and dialects spoken by ELLs in U.S. public schools (Broom, 2011). Slavin & Cheung (2005) and Kohler (2007) confirm Latino students constitute the largest group of ELL students in the US. More than three out of four (76.5%) ELL students speak Spanish as their primary language (NCES, 2016). The Hispanic population is predicted to increase by 166%, or 28 million people, from 2005 to 2050 (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). After English and Spanish, the top languages spoken in U.S. homes include: Arabic 2.2%, Chinese 2.2%, Vietnamese 1.8%, Hmong 0.8%, Haitian Creole 0.9%, Arabic 0.8%, Somali 0.8%, Russian 0.7%, and Korean 0.7% (NCES, 2016).
The table below shows the top home languages spoken by ELLs in the U.S (Table 1).

Table 1

*ELLs’ Primary Home Languages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Number of ELL Students</th>
<th>Percentage Distribution of ELL Students</th>
<th>Number of ELL Students as a Percentage of Total Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish, Castilian</td>
<td>3,770,816</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>109,170</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>107,825</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English(^2)</td>
<td>91,669</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>89,705</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>39,860</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haitian, Haitian Creole</td>
<td>37,371</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>34,472</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>33,821</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>32,445</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Latinos have the lowest levels of education and the highest dropout rates (Tellez & Manthey, 2013). In 2014, the dropout rate for Latinos and Latinas aged 16 to 24 was at an all-time low of 10.6% (NCES, 2016). This rate is more than double the national average of dropout rates for White students (5.2%) and still significantly higher than the rate of Black students (74%) (NCES, 2016). Studies on the education of ELLs are often focused on Hispanic students, although not all Hispanic students are ELLs. Likewise, studies on the educational experiences of Hispanic students sometimes include the experiences of ELLs. Within some studies, little effort is made to separate the two populations.
Background information on ELLs. Grooms (2012) suggested circumstances consisting of legal and illegal immigration, as well as the admission of refugees into the United States from their native countries, are some contributing factors to the success of ELLs. Most commonly, immigrants come to the US to find better lives, a big part of this is education. ELLs regularly immigrate to this country, both legally and illegally, with family members or guardians. The circumstances in which these students come to the US vary widely. Some are students who have been internationally adopted, migrant students, refugee students, students with interrupted formal education (SIFEs), or unaccompanied children. Most ELLs who come from different countries require support when adjusting to their new (American) culture. It is important for ELLs to feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging in the U.S.; however, it is also as important to sustain some connection with their native cultures.

ELL students and their families communicate in the language they know best (Colorado, 2007). Colorado confirms Spanish, for example, is a language many Latinos speak at home, even though there may be different regional and social variations. The more Spanish an ELL teacher knows, the more the he/she will be able to assist the students and their Spanish-speaking families. This goes for other cultures and languages as well. Colorado, therefore, suggested that ELL teachers study a foreign language in order to better understand their students’ challenges and also to learn and use new teaching strategies to aid their students.

There is also a crucial need for ELL educators to become familiar with their students’ histories, cultures, and religious backgrounds, beliefs, and customs (Colorado, 2007). Inviting the families into the classroom to share art, stories, food, dance, history, and information about themselves, will benefit both ELL students and teachers. This information will particularly be helpful because ELLs attend school with diverse backgrounds, language and literacy skills. This,
for the most part, promotes ELL students with a better self-image and allows for respect from their classmates (Colorado, 2007).

**ELLs and educational policies.** There have been numerous U.S. Supreme Court rulings that have impacted the education of ELL students in the United States. For example, the well-known 1974 U.S. Supreme Court Case, “Lau V. Nichols” is a landmark suit brought by Chinese parents in San Francisco, CA. The “Lau V. Nichols” case ruled identical education did not constitute equal education under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Supreme Court of the United States, 1974). Because of “Lau V. Nichols”, U.S. school districts took affirmative steps to overcome educational barriers for ELLs (Sparks, 2016). In 1982, a similar U.S. Supreme Court case, “Plyler v. Doe,” used the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as a basis for a ruling to rule that the state should not deny a free public education to undocumented immigrant children (Kohli, 2008).

Since “Lau V. Nichols” and “Plyler v. Doe” there have been numerous other U.S. Federal Court cases relating to the discrimination of ELL students. Recently in 2015, the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights updated ways school districts should educate ELLs. School districts are required to use instructional practices and ELL programs that are supported by scientific evidence and empirically proven to be effective in helping ELL students learn English in all four domains: speaking, listening, reading and writing English while meeting the state content standards (Sparks, 2016). These court decisions have impacted constitutional law and public school experiences for ELL students.

Federal policy has evolved and impacted ELLs in the U.S. on so many levels. During the 1920s-1960s, English immersion policies were the main instruction methods used to educate ELLs. Since there were little remedial services available to support ELLs, it was common for
ELLs to be held back until they mastered enough English to advance in their subject areas (Texas Education Agency, 2010). In 1963, Dade County, Florida had a successful two-way bilingual program for Cuban refugee children, which inspired the implementation of Bilingual Education and similar programs in the U.S. By 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act forbade discrimination in all federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, or national origin. From 1968-2000, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Title VII Bilingual Education Act (BEA) implemented Bilingual Education programs for ELLs. From 2001 to present, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: No Child Left Behind affected ways ELLs were being educated in U.S. public schools.

The Bilingual Education Act (BEA). BEA was a significant piece of legislation in the timeline of ELLs in the U.S. It is important to have a good understanding of the BEA, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968, the first real federal intervention in regards to the education of ELLs. BEA introduced federal policy for Bilingual Education for economically disadvantaged ELL students, allocated funds for innovative programs, and recognized the academic challenges and educational disadvantages these students experienced. In 1968, BEA was introduced by Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough, who noticed the achievement gap between Spanish-speaking students in Texas and their English-speaking peers. Senator Yarborough advocated and demanded resources and trained personnel to support the ELLs in his state. He further proposed bilingual education as a remedial program for ELLs and as a solution to the problem of English proficiency. It, however, was not until the re-authorization of the BEA in 1974, that Bilingual Education was finally defined as a program with an emphasis on instruction in English for ELLs and where they were also provided with opportunities for them to progress in the educational system. The history and several
modifications of the re-authorizations of the BEA demonstrated changes in politics and views on linguistic diversity the U.S. (Cubillos, 1988; Osorio-O'Dea, 2001; Gandara, Moran, & Garcia 2004; Wiese & Garcia, 1988).

In a seminal article by Gloria Stewner-Manzanares (1988), she discusses the impact of BEA and its amendments up through 1988. In 1978, an amendment was added to Title VII, which focused on transitions of native language instruction, the eligibility of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, and the enrollment of English-speaking students in bilingual programs. In 1982, amendments to Title VII allowed for the use of native-language program funding for LEP students with special needs. The amendment also provided additional support for family English literacy programs, as well as stressed the need for teacher training. In 1988, amendments to Title VII included increased funding to state education agencies and the expansion of funding for “special alternative” programs where only English was being utilized. This amendment also proposed a three-year limit on participation in most Title VII programs and established fellowship programs for professional development. Colorin Colorado picked up from Stewner-Manzanares when he commented on the most recent amendments to Title VII (2011). In 1994, educational reforms included the reconfiguration of Title VII programs, which strengthened professional development programs, increased attention to language maintenance and foreign language instruction, expanded research and evaluation at the state and local levels, supplied additional funding for immigrant education, and allowed participation for the education of some private schools. Most recently, in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): In 2007, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 dispersed funds to states to improve teaching and learning for ELLs by helping them to learn English and meet challenging state academic standards.
The table below provides a brief description of the federal laws from 1964 to present, as well as their impacts on ELLs (Table 2):

Table 2

**Federal Education Acts and Laws 1964-Present**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act and Law</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964).</strong></td>
<td>&quot;No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.&quot; In general, programs should not be discriminatory in intent or effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1968-2000): Title VII Bilingual Education Act.</strong></td>
<td>Federal law that provides funds to states that decide to implement Bilingual Education programs, provide bilingual teacher preparation, and engage in bilingual program development. The provision ended with the 2000 reauthorization of the ESEA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equal Educational Opportunity Act, section 1703 (f) (1974).</strong></td>
<td>No educational agency &quot;shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her … national origin&quot; by failing to &quot;take appropriate action to overcome language barriers.&quot; This law extended the “Lau v. Nichols” decision to all districts, not only those receiving federal funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elementary and Secondary Education Act (2001-present): No Child Left Behind.</strong></td>
<td>Latest reauthorization of the ESEA, stresses accountability for all learners by setting annual targets for the percentage of students achieving proficiency on state achievement test.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below demonstrates major changes and mandates that occurred in BEA between 1968-2001 (Table 3):
Table 3

*Changes to the Bilingual Education Act 1968-2001*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major Changes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1968 | • First Bilingual Education Act  
• Focused on students who were low-income, nonspeaking and limited-English. |
| 1974 | • Mandates promoted educational opportunity through bilingual education.  
• States: "There is instruction given in, and study of, English and, to the extent necessary to allow a child progress effectively through the educational system, the native language of the children of limited English-speaking ability."  
• Low-income criterion is dropped and the eligibility criteria changes to limited English proficient (LEP). Native Americans are included as a target group, as are native English speakers. Funds are made available for professional development and dissemination of instructional materials. |
| 1978 | • Declared that instruction in English should "allow a child to achieve competence in the English language" and that increased parental involvement in planning programs and stated that school districts must have a plan for institutionalization of the program after the grant has ended. |
| 1984 | • Declared that transitional Bilingual Education programs were to provide "structured English-language instruction, and, to the extent necessary to allow a child to achieve competence in the English language, instruction in the child's native language."  
• Three-quarters of the funding allocated to transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs. An unspecified amount was allocated for developmental bilingual education.  
• Funding was also provided for special alternative instructional programs (SAIPs), which do not use the native language (4%). |
| 1988 | Defined grant categories similar to those provided in 1984. SAIPs now receive 25% of the funds. Participation in TBE or SAIPs may be up to 3 years. |
| 1994 | Goals: "to ensure that limited English proficiency students master English as they develop high levels of academic attainment in content areas." Further, "the use of a "child's native language and culture in classroom instruction can (A) promote self-esteem and contribute to academic achievement and learning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>BEA was discontinued in 2001. No Child Left Behind provided for indigenous language maintenance only through Title VII. For ELLs, Title III specifies that the goal was to &quot;attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging … achievement standards as all children are expected to meet.&quot; Further, districts should &quot;develop high-quality language instruction educational programs … to prepare limited English proficiency students … to enter all-English instruction settings.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELL and Common Core State Standards (CCSS).** Governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia introduced the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative in 2009 (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010a; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010b). The CCSS initiative was launched to ensure all students, regardless of special needs, language needs, or where they lived, would succeed in high school and develop college, career, and life readiness skills. Thus, the new CCSS standards have rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing for all students, including ELLs to be college and career equipped. Students are required to profoundly engage with text complexity and language, particularly content and academic vocabulary and function across all subject areas. Students are expected to build knowledge from informational texts while producing and using evidence in the text to defend their viewpoints. The adopted standards offer opportunities to expand and implement an excellent education for all students, including ELLs, across the United States (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). There are Common Core challenges for ELLs. In applying the CCSS and in supporting
ELLs, school leaders and teachers must find creative ways to make the challenging work accessible to ELL students who have to learn rigorous academic content while they simultaneously develop their English language skills. For example, Hakuta (as cited in Migdol, 2011) suggests ELLs should first learn mainstream academic content that other students are learning in order to help ELLs develop proficiency in English (both academic English and conversational oral and written language). In order for ELLs to become educated, productive citizens, educators must use best practices that involve a variety of strategies that allows the content to be accessible, as well as provide opportunities for ELLs to practice academic English (Echevarria, et al, 2007; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

While there have been federal battles over teaching ELLs, there have also been conflicts at the state levels. In 1998, Ron Keeva Unz promoted California Proposition 227, also referred to as the Unz Amendment to change Bilingual Education to an “opt-in structured English language educational” model. Voters approved Unz’s California Proposition 227 regardless of disagreement from language researchers and education experts. Unz California Proposition 227 resulted in consequent ballot initiatives to end bilingual education: Arizona Proposition 203, Colorado Amendment 31(2000), and Massachusetts Question 2 (2002). Unlike Arizona, California, and Massachusetts, Colorado was the first state to reject an anti-Bilingual Education initiative (Escamilla et al, 2003; Fitchtenbaum, 2004; Benz, 2005).

**Educational policies in Massachusetts.** U.S. public schools have attempted to implement several regulations in order to measure child achievement. For example, NCLB required school districts to identify ELLs and assess their English proficiency (Menken, 2010). In Massachusetts, the Assessing Communication and Comprehension in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) has replaced the Massachusetts English Proficiency
Assessment (MEPA), which was used from 2004 to 2012. Most recently, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) set rigorous standards for speaking, listening, reading, and writing that are designed to prepare all students, including ELLs, for college and career advancement. Since January 2013, all documented ELL students were required, annually, to take the WIDA: ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Summative Assessment, developed by the World Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA Consortium). The Massachusetts Department of Education uses ACCESS to identify ELL students’ progress in the English language: 1) reading, 2) writing, 3) listening, and, 4) speaking. ACCESS also measures: 5) mathematics, 6) science, and, 7) social studies to identify problem areas. The ACCESS for ELL Assessment gets administered to all publicly funded kindergarten to 12th grade ELL students every January or February. The following table shows the four domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in which students in grades 1-12 are tested, as well as the key differences between the paper and online formats (Figure 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 - Online</th>
<th>ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 - Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Students play pre-recorded listening passages on the computer</td>
<td>Test Administrator plays pre-recorded listening passages with a CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students select a response from multiple choice options on the computer screen</td>
<td>Students select a response from multiple choice options on a paper test form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The test platform captures and scores student responses</td>
<td>Test booklets are returned to DRC to be scanned and scored centrally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Students read passages on the computer screen</td>
<td>Students read passages on a paper test form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students select a response from multiple choice options on the computer screen</td>
<td>Students select a response from multiple choice options on a paper test form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The test platform captures and scores student responses</td>
<td>Test booklets are returned to DRC to be scanned and scored centrally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Students play pre-recorded speaking prompts on the computer</td>
<td>Test Administrator plays pre-recorded speaking prompts with a CD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students speak into headsets to record their answers</td>
<td>Students speak their responses to Test Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students’ responses are automatically sent to DRC for rating and scoring</td>
<td>Test Administrators score student speech during administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Grades 1-3 students complete the full Writing test (prompts and responses) on paper</td>
<td>Students read prompts on a paper test form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grades 4-12 students read prompts on the computer screen</td>
<td>Students handwrite responses on a paper test form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grades 4-5 students keyboard or handwrite responses based on each state’s guidelines (WIDA AMS default setting) and individual students’ comfort keyboarding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grades 6-12 students keyboard responses (WIDA AMS default setting) unless unable to keyboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keyboarded responses are automatically sent to DRC; handwritten responses will need to be mailed</td>
<td>Test booklets are returned to DRC and then scored centrally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Summative Assessment (Massachusetts Department and Secondary Education, 2016 [https://www.wida.us/assessment/ACCESS20.aspx#tests]).

**SEI endorsement/ rethinking equity and teaching for English language learners (RETEL)**. Massachusetts education policy extends beyond the students and their assessments to the teachers and their qualifications. In 2011, the federal government charged Massachusetts with failing to mandate ELL training for classroom teachers. The Department of Justice (DOJ) claimed the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) constituted a violation of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act since only about 68 percent of
Massachusetts’ classroom teachers had not begun receiving any training to adequately teach their ELL students. As a result, the DOJ mandated all MA teachers take up to 45 hours of training prior to renewing their educators’ licenses. DESE developed an initiative called Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL), which revised the ELL training program and set deadlines for teachers to complete the RETELL training (Ruppenthal & Shanahan, 2014). As of 2012, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education identified about 26,000 Massachusetts core academic teachers who were responsible to educate at least one ELL student and needed to meet this requirement. Early childhood and elementary teachers, teachers of students with moderate and severe disabilities and English, and content teachers of reading or language arts, mathematics, science, civics, and government, economics, history, and geography of all grade levels were required to obtain a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teacher Endorsement under the state’s Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative.

**Educational Needs of English Language Learners.** ELLs need a safe and nurturing educational setting to learn. Many scholars have conducted research on the determinants of an effective school climate and effective instruction for ELLs (Garcia, 1991; Pease-Alvarez, et al, 1991; Malave 1993; Thomas & Collier; 1997; Collier, 1997, Waxman & Tellez, 2002; Hill & Flynn, 2006). Identification of important elements of a successful school climate helps to efficiently target the factors leading to weaknesses experienced by ELL students. The school climate can be intricate and challenging for ELL academic achievement when there has been a poor early education environment. Conceptually, the school climate consists of the physical, social, and academic dimensions of the school itself. The personality, shared values, culture, and the physical environment of the school all impact school climate. Patterns of an individual’s
academic experiences reflect the values, goals, interpersonal relationships, and teaching practices within the organizational structure (Cohen et al., 2009). An effective school climate required a group effort that promotes youth development, and adequate learning needed for a “productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society” (Cohen et al., 2009).

Students excel when they are connected to a positive climate, free from bullying and discrimination (Blum, 2005). Particularly, how well ELL students perceive and contribute to society is largely a reflection of their school’s climate. Therefore, educators must work harder to enrich the environment and culture of the school to improve teaching and learning for all. A successful school climate results in academic achievement, violence prevention, healthy development, and the retention of key faculty members (Cohen et al., 2009). The solution to a defective or hostile school climate lies with sustainable staff and a progressive infrastructure that supports both teachers and students.

Instruction for ELLs are adapted in order to meet the needs of the ELL. Instruction for the elementary school ELL students can vary. One method of ELL instruction that has proven to be effective is Dual Language or Bilingual Education, where both the ELL students’ native languages and English are utilized and modified for the learner. Dual Language or Bilingual Education instruction can happen either in a structured/sheltered English immersion classroom or a mainstream classroom. ELL students receiving Dual Language or Bilingual Education are either allocated learning time with an ESL teacher in an ESL classroom (Pull-out Model) or receive ESL instruction by an ESL teacher within the classroom (Push-in Model). ELL students are required to have appropriate English language development support services and be assessed annually until they meet the state’s criteria for English language development proficiency. (Genesee, et al, 2005).
**ELLs’ Primary Language (L1)**

The difference between ELLs and Native English Speakers (NES) is that ELLs have to acquire English whereas NESs grow up speaking English as their primary language (August, 2014). When ELL students use their primary language, it becomes a huge asset in helping them to develop English skills. ELL students’ primary languages should be used as a tool to help build English language skills. The use of ELL students’ primary language can help develop their literacy skills in the second language (Francis et al. 2006; Dressier & Kamil 2006). Using students’ primary language to support learning includes some of the following instructional practices:

- Previewing and reviewing stories in students’ primary language (Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999; Conroy, 2005; Liang et al., 2005)
- Utilizing bilingual dictionaries to teach vocabulary (Carlo et al., 2004)
- Using direct instruction on the transfer of cognate knowledge from the primary language to the second language (Carlo et al., 2004)
- Holding instructional conversations to encourage interpretation and use of primary language (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999)

The skills necessary to master a primary language are the same used to master an additional language, which is why building English skills on top of a native language foundation is so productive.

Cummins (2001) reports that ELL students who attend school with a strong foundation in their primary language develop powerful literacy abilities in the academic language they are acquiring. In the article, “Bilingual Children’s Mother Tongue: Why Is It Important for Education?” Cummins suggests that when parents, grandparents, and other family members
share stories or discuss important issues in their primary language, ELLs develop their vocabularies and learn to understand and analyze important concepts using in their primary language. As Cummins believes, when ELLs have developed content vocabulary and important concepts in their primary language, they are able to attend school well prepared to learn the academic language and achieve.

Yazici (1999) found a positive connection between the ELLs who were competent in their primary language and their reading-readiness. Her research found that five six-year-old Turkish students living in Germany and Turkey who performed higher on an assessment of the mother tongue also possessed a higher level of reading-readiness. She explained that the reading-readiness of bilingual students is greater if they have a higher level of competence in their primary language.

There are benefits of being bilingual and learning in bilingual academic settings. Yazici et al. (2010) found bilingualism fosters communication and thinking skills that support education, at the same time enhancing students’ performance of spatial tasks, cognitive flexibility, analytical strategies, and creative thinking. Thomas and Collier’s (1997) results also showed that ELLs who receive academic instruction in their primary language along with instruction in English for at least five to six years were able to perform as well as their native English-speaking peers and sustain their achievements and gains. Therefore, ELLs should be encouraged to develop their linguistic and cognitive skills in their primary language while learning an additional language.

Academic and cognitive support in a student’s primary language is an advantage for students’ academic achievement in the second language (Collier, 1997). Goldenberg (2008) found that primary language reading instruction promotes reading achievement in English in
addition to the ELL student’s primary language. Going further, Garcia (1994), Thomas and Collier (1995), Collier (1997), and Groom, (2011) suggest that academic development in an ELL’s primary language has a positive effect on acquiring a second language and learning in the second language. According to Collier (1995), when an ELL student develops academic skills in his or her primary language, such as literacy development, concept formation, and subject knowledge, all of these skills are able to transfer to the second language easily. Collier writes the following on the role of first language in ELLs:

As students expand their vocabulary and their oral and written communication skills in the second language, they can increasingly demonstrate their knowledge base developed in the primary language. Furthermore, some studies indicate that if students do not reach a certain threshold in their primary language, including literacy, they may experience cognitive difficulties in the second language. (p. 6)

The ELL students’ abilities to develop literacy skills in their primary languages will have a direct effect on how quickly and accurately they will develop those same skills in English.

Cummins found when an ELL student’s primary language is spoken and supported in school, the concepts learned are transferrable from the primary to the second language. Thomas and Collier (1995), Krashen (1999), Cummins, (1998) and Baker (2003) all believe the use of the student’s primary language in the classroom is beneficial among ELLs when acquiring a second language.

Thomas and Collier (2005) developed a conceptual model that outlined how ELLs learn a new language. They claimed there were four components to language learning: sociocultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic, all of which are interdependent on each other.
• Sociocultural - Acquisition of language is social and cultural. The development of language occurs through everyday life within the learners home, school, community, and the larger world. In SLA, it may include individual factors such as self-esteem, anxiety, or other affective factors. Social patterns such as discrimination and prejudice that are created in a learning environment can influence students' language development and school achievement. Students require a socioculturally supportive environment that will influence their learning a new language, and their overall achievement.

• Language Development - Linguistic processes and the subconscious aspects of language development (acquisition of oral and written systems of the student's first and second languages across all language domains:
  o phonology (pronunciation)
  o vocabulary
  o morphology and syntax (grammar)
  o semantics (meaning)
  o pragmatics (language context)
  o paralinguistics (nonverbal and other extralinguistic features)
  o discourse (formal thought patterns).

• Academic - Schoolwork in language arts, mathematics, the sciences, and social studies for each grade level (K-12 and beyond). Academic and concepts that are developed are transferred from the primary language to the second language. It is better to develop academic work through ELLs’ primary language, while teaching the
second language. ELLs’ first language system (both oral and written) should be developed to assure cognitive and academic success in a second language.

- Cognitive - This has been neglected by U.S. ELL educators until the past decade. In the 1970s, ELL educators simplified, structured, and sequenced language curricula for their ELLs. In the 1980s, academic content was added into language lessons. Academics were simplified (watered down) into cognitively simple tasks. Cognitive development was often neglected in ELLs’ primary language.

The four components are equally important in successfully developing academic proficiency in a second or additional language. Below is a representation of Thomas and Collier’s (1995) four components of language development (Figure 4).

![Diagram of Four Components of Language Development](image)

*Figure 4. Four Components of Language Development (Thomas & Collier, 1995).*

Later, Thomas and Collier (1997) introduced the Language Acquisition for School: The Prism Model, which was expanded out of the four components of language development and a conversation with a group of Hispanic families who were concerned with their students’ education (Figure 5).
Krashen is a key figure in ELL studies. The following is a brief description of Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition, which consists of five main hypotheses:

- The acquisition-learning hypothesis – passive de facto learning of something (in this case language/English. Think of native English speakers) v formal, conscious learning. Learning is less important than acquisition.

- The monitor hypothesis – about monitor the self – the learning system is the monitor/editor. Learning “corrects” what has been acquired in a passive manner. Should be minor, only used for “polishing.” Lack of self-confidence leads to an over-reliance on the “monitor.”

- The natural order hypothesis – based on research (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 cited in Krashen, 1987). That grammatical structures are
acquired naturally, but the order of them is based on complexity. Rejects sequencing when the aim is to teach ELLs English.

- The input hypothesis - only concerned with acquisition and not learning. The theory is \( i+1 = i \) represents the knowledge base the student already possesses, 1 represents knowledge that is just beyond the threshold of what the student already knows. 1 is what the student needs to acquire. \( i+1 \) is using knowledge already posses and knowledge of the situation (context) to figured out the meaning of something one step further.

- The affective filter hypothesis – variables that belong to the student – motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety – impact the ability to learn. High motivation and self-confidence with low anxiety = better learning/low motivation and self-confident with high anxiety = mental block/worse learning.

Cummins, a major person in SLA theory who discussed ELLs’ English language proficiency and how it relates to academic achievement. Cummins pointed out that there are differences in acquisition and developmental patterns in conversational and academic language. His Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) are mostly used to discuss language proficiency levels of ELLs when learning a new language. BICS and CALP were discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.

- BICS and CALP – previous covered in Chap. 1, BICS and CALP demonstrate a distinction between conversational language and academic language.

- CUP – skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge need to build on language learning.
• Baker – Communicative Proficiency Model (2011) – focused on classroom learning specifically – linguistic and contextual challenges in the classroom activities and rooted in scaffolding.

Smith (2009) disclosed relevant research and theories of SLA in schools and suggested that ELL students are able to learn language based on the skills they have already acquired through the learning of their primary language. For example, she reviewed Krashen’s Monitor Model Hypothesis and the Comprehensible Output Theory and Cummins’s Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis. Smith discussed Krashen’s Monitor Model Hypothesis of SLA and its support for learning English naturally for a real purpose similar to the way infants acquire language. She also discusses the Comprehensible Output Theory, which suggests that when ELL students learn a second or third language, they should be provided with opportunities to produce and practice the language they learned. Smith’s explanation of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) has to do with readiness during a particular period to guarantee the mastery of a second language. She provided further clarifications and definitions in Cummins’ Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (2000) distinction between academic language skills and social language skills: BICS and CALP.

Smith also talked about the CPH, which is connected to age. The CPH argues that an individual is able to acquire a primary language during his/her first few years of life. Psycholinguistics and cognitive scientists have had debates over the critical period and have suggested a “sensitive” or “optimal” period instead of a critical one. Penfield & Roberts’ study, published in 1959, proposes the theory that younger students have the ability to learn a second or third language easier than adults, because children’s brains tend to be more flexible. Singleton
extended the theory to SLA (Singleton, 2005). He partially agrees that it is better to learn when one is younger, but notes that there are exceptions, such as adult ELLs who master English.

Yazici et al (2010) found that ELLs learn a range of social cultural and family values through the development and usage of their primary languages. Yazici et al. (2010), Baker (2000), Cummins (2000), and Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000) research findings propose that when ELL students work on developing their abilities in two or more languages, in their elementary school years, they end up having great understanding of language and how to employ it efficiently. Yazici et al (2010) discussed the importance of self-esteem for bilingual and multicultural students and stated that children who are able to value their home cultures and are bilingual and bicultural are able to develop confidence and feelings of inclusion and acceptance in the American culture. ELL students who have the confidence and feel accepted are better able to take risks when learning a new language.

Having proficiency in one’s primary language relates directly to academic achievement in English. Research studies suggest language skills and conceptual knowledge in the ELL student’s primary language are able to transfer to English (Collier 1995; García-Vázquez, et al. 1997; Genesee et al. 2006). August, Shanahan, and Escamilla (2009)’s report on cross-language suggests that there is a relationship between ELL students’ primary language and second-language oral development in domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) relating to literacy. Their studies also depended primarily on theories of transfer as their foundation. The findings they reported included the following:

1) There is clear evidence that tapping into first-language literacy can confer advantages to English Language Learners.
2) First-language oral proficiency also influences developmental patterns in second language speech discrimination and production.

3) First language literacy is related to literacy development in English, including word and pseudo word reading, reading comprehension, reading strategies spelling and writing.

4) Language minority students who are literate in their first language are likely to be advantaged in the acquisition of English literacy.

5) Instructional programs work when they provide opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their first language.

6) Studies that compare bilingual instruction with English-only instruction demonstrate that language-minority students instructed in their native language as well as in English perform better, on average, on measures of English reading proficiency than language minority students instructed only in English. This is the case at both elementary and secondary levels (p. 436-37).

Chueng and Slavin’s 2005 study supports the use of bilingual approaches, especially the ones that encourage the teaching of reading in both English and the ELL students’ primary language. Mays (2008) discussed the role of bilingual instruction in fostering the growth of English language and literacy skills. She proposed to use object definition through labeling in the primary language, as well as English in the classrooms. She further explained that when ELLs are in between lessons, teachers should speak the ELL student’s primary language and/or allow the student to do so. In addition, several of the participants in the Hite and Evans' (2006) study recommended that ELLs share their primary languages with their classes. For example, it was suggested that ELLs should count in their primary language. Hite and Evans (2006)
promote the idea that ELLs who have mastered numeration and seriating skills in their primary language have the capability to master similar skills in English.

On an average, it takes ELLs at least five to seven years to master academic English (Center for Public Education, 2007; Ferlazzo, 2014). Thomas and Collier’s (1997) longitudinal study of 700,000 ELLs suggested the amount of formal schooling they receive in their primary language is the most important variable in how long it takes them to master English. Thomas and Collier found Asian and Hispanic ELL students from an affluent suburban community who obtained 1-3 hours of language support per day in an ESL study, performed on or above grade level in native English literacy and generally exited from ESL successfully. In that same study, they found ELL students who were between eight and eleven years-old and who received English language instruction took five to seven years to perform at grade level in English. Their study further suggested ELLs with little or no formal schooling and who arrived in the United States prior to age eight, took about seven to ten years to perform at grade level in English language literacy.

Collins (2010) reminded readers that many ELL students do not have exposure to the English language until they begin school. According to Collins (2010), ELLs without prior school experience must develop English at a faster rate than their NES peers if they are to comprehend academic English and be facile users of it. Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) suggest that when children enter school with limited exposure to English, they are at risk of having reading problems. According to the researchers, about 50% of ELL students who are lagging behind in their reading abilities do not end up learning English at proficiency levels, even if they attend school for several years. In order to meet the educational needs of English learners,
certain language and reading skills relating to reading comprehension must be developed prior to formal schooling.

**Vocabulary acquisition and development.** Research found that vocabulary acquisition plays a significant role in ELL students’ English language acquisition and overall school achievement. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) argues that increasing vocabulary knowledge intensifies the number of texts both NES and ELLs are able to read and comprehend. Instruction in vocabulary development for ELLs should be emphasized, especially because it focuses on teaching the meaning and structure of words, such as prefixes and suffixes (August, 2014).

Menken’s (2010) findings reveal that academic content assessments are linguistically difficult for ELLs because the words are most likely unknown to them. Menken (2002) suggests this is why tests, such as the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment (MCAS), cause challenges for ELLs. Standardized assessments do not accurately assess ELL students’ content knowledge and the assessment results often reflect their English language proficiency (Menken, 2002). In “Research-Based Vocabulary Instruction for English Language Learners,” Chung (2012) presented the importance of vocabulary development for ELL students’ learning. He found that there is an important need for ELL students to pay special attention to the development of their vocabularies, because they frequently make errors. According to Chung (2012), ELL students commit vocabulary errors three times more often than grammatical errors. Since mistakes relating to vocabulary most often result in semantic interference (when ELLs make vocabulary errors), they tend to lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Chung writes the following example concerning vocabulary errors:
Consider the following sentence: "Can you with me come?" Although this sentence is grammatically incorrect, the listener is likely to understand its intended meaning. Now consider this sentence: "I don't like the silence." The speaker has erroneously substituted "silence" for "sirens," leading the listener to think the exact opposite of the intended meaning. (p. 2)

Additionally, according to Chung (2012), there is an urgency to improve ELL students’ vocabulary acquisition because of the large discrepancy between ELL students and NES in the size of their English vocabularies. Overall, Chung’s research found ELL students’ vocabulary size to be much smaller than that of English speakers. Chung (2012) discussed the discrepancy in NES’ vocabulary and the work of the following researchers in this area:

- Biemiller and Slonim (2001) examined root word vocabulary attainment among three groups (two normative, one advantaged). The two groups of normative made greater gains in vocabulary attainment, but were ultimately unable to reach the level of the advantage at any stage. Conclusion of the study suggested that achievement group, rather than grade level, is a stronger indicator of word knowledge.

- Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, and Watts-Taffe (2006) conducted a pedagogical examination on the importance of vocabulary acquisition to ELLs, the manner and methods of vocabulary teaching in the classroom over the past several decades.

- Graves (2006) introduced the idea of “word consciousness.” His study suggested that academic and specialized vocabularies present the biggest challenge to ELL’s language acquisition and development.

As Chung (2012) discussed the researchers’ findings on vocabulary development, he revealed that it is estimated that NES’ receptive vocabulary size ranges from 5,000 to about
10,000 words prior to formal schooling. Chung further shared that Graves suggested an estimation of 3,000 to 6,000 English words is plausible for ELLs' vocabulary size. ELLs who are considered newcomers to the U.S. do not always have any knowledge of English words at all upon entering school (Carlo et al., 2008; Graves, 2007 in Chung 2012). Research found that the native English native speakers might know as many as 6,000 more words than ELLs at school entry (Carlo et al. in Chung 2012). Chung 2012 writes the following about vocabulary acquisition:

Unfortunately, this disparity in breadth of vocabulary knowledge increases with time (Blachowicz et al., 2006; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). The average minimum number of root-word meanings acquired by average primary school children in a year is 840, whereas 25% of primary children (which includes ELLs) gain an average of only 570 root-word meanings (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). It is clear that such differences over the years contribute to a widening vocabulary gap between ELLs and EOs. According to Laufer and Yano (2001), high school ELL graduates and ELL college students know less than 25% of the vocabulary of their native-speaking counterparts (p. 106).

This research indicates that there continues to be a gap in the breadth and depth of English vocabulary knowledge between ELL students and native English speakers.

Researchers have found vocabulary development to be extremely significant for ELL students as they acquire English and reading skills and comprehension. Collins (2010), Dickinson et al. (2003), and Snow et al. (2007) found that vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of reading achievement in NES students. They further found that robust early vocabulary in the preschool years predicts reading comprehension in 3rd and 4th grades. As Hart and Risley (1995) put it, rates at which students acquire vocabulary differ, but such learning
starts in the early years and, once established, is difficult to alter. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) used a longitudinal study and found that grade one students’ vocabularies are a significant predictor of reading comprehension ten years later. August and Snow (2005) claim an association between vocabulary and comprehension for ELL students. Thus, several studies by Blackchowicz et al. (2006) and Garcia (1991) showed a disparity in reading performance of ELLs and NES. The National Reading Panel (2000) proved that growth in vocabulary development supports reading comprehension as well as oral language. According to Chung (2012), vocabulary knowledge helps listeners to locate syntactic relationships, which is necessary for sentence comprehension.

Chung (2012) discussed the multiple research studies Biemiller and Boote (2006) conducted. Their study demonstrated that three to ten year-old students learned the meanings of 26% of vocabulary words that were explained. In further studies of kindergarteners to 2nd graders, of which many were ELLs, Beimiller and Boote found word meaning gains of 12% when repeated readings were conducted. They further found an additional gain of 10% when explanations of words were provided to the students. In seeking ways to improve vocabulary development in ELLs, Graves (2007) recommended that ELLs be provided with rich language and word experiences while, at the same time, be exposed to a variety of reading materials of diverse genres, interests, topics, and appropriate reading levels. It was suggested that repeatedly reading aloud combined with word explanation activities would help ELL students develop vocabulary.

Peregoy and Boyle (2000) made recommendations that educators should provide students with first hand experiences such as attending field trips, conducting science experiments, performing in art shows, and attending programs in the arts to help foster vocabulary and
facilitate accomplishment in reading for ELLs. Most U.S. public schools are committed to helping ELLs experience field trips and art programs at the school and/or in the community, although there may be some schools that may not have the necessary resources (Markham & Gordon, 2008 (in Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). Families are encouraged to help their children find enriching opportunities by accessing English literacy resources through visiting museums and the local libraries, using the community resources and facilities, and connecting their children with other immigration families, as well as English-speaking families. Peregoy and Boyle (2000) supported the belief that having rich experiences are significant in helping improve students’ reading proficiency.

Teaching and learning vocabulary through read-aloud activities is another great way to help ELLs develop both receptive and expressive language skills (Lombardi, 2008). Hickman, Poland-Durodola, and Vaughn (2004) discussed how read-aloud practices were designed to address and promote vocabulary development and comprehension skills for 1st grade ELLs who have reading challenges. In addition to using read aloud activities to foster vocabulary development in ELLs, researchers proposed that creating interactive activities - using graphic organizers such as KWL (Know/Want to Know/Learn) charts, tapping into prior knowledge, and encouraging student participation - can also motivate ELLs in SLA (Lombardi, 2008).

According to Tinajero & Munter (2004), ELL students’ educational achievement depend not only on what their schools do to assist them, but also on the effective and vital roles played by families and communities in the development of the student (Tinajero, 2001). Family engagement should be viewed as an asset to the school community. Families should be allowed and encouraged to share their talents, cultures, and experiences (Tinajero, 2001). Families should be able to show support while integrating home life with school life by reading books in
the ELL students’ primary language. They could also share stories from their oral traditions (Tinajero, 2001).

There is a clear link between parental education levels and ELL students’ English academic achievements (Tinajero & Munter 2004; Ardasheva & Tretter, 2012). Parents with prior schooling in their countries are encouraging predictors of ELLs' language academic achievement Ardasheva and Tretter, (2012). Carhill et al.’s (2008) study, had 274 ELLs (122 Spanish-speaking) who were randomly selected in 1st, 3rd, and 5th grades. Researchers in this study concluded that there was a correlation between maternal education and English proficiency. In similar study, Hakuta et al. (2000) made comparisons with the time it took students to become proficient in English to their parents' self-reported educational levels (for example, less than high school, some high school, high school diploma, and beyond high school). The study found that by 5th grade, ELL students who had parents with an education that was beyond the high school level did much better than students in all the other categories on measures of L2 proficiency and achievement in literacy.

**Family involvement.** Recent research proves that effective family involvement is necessary in schools and that it improves ELL school readiness and school achievement. The researchers found that parental involvement promotes effective communication that is critically important in helping parents learn about the school culture and understand school expectations. Furthermore, communication between teachers and parents provides the teacher with opportunities to interview the parents and learn about their personal and cultural backgrounds, as well as both family and student needs, which teachers can then use to effectively instruct ELL students (Hite & Evans, 2006, p.101). According to Panferov (2010), parent involvement also allows parents the opportunity to advocate for their children’s schooling and literacy.
development. When schools successfully assist ELL parents in navigating school challenges by offering two-way communications and assistance, ELL students perform better.

According to research, home visits establish mutual respect for both the ELL students home and school cultures. Active and open communication between the ELL student’s school and home is vital to the ELL student’s academic success. Personal interviews with the parents give teachers an insight into the best ways for families to stay actively engaged with the school community. Many school districts are now relying on text messages, e-mails, television, and radio broadcasts for information. Some outreach strategies teachers may use to engage the families and wider community in what is happening at school are telephone call trees, e-mail list serves, texting, or internet web-communication systems, these are effective in reaching numerous parents, provided they have these technologies available. Additionally, parents who are new to U.S. schools might be paired with a “buddy parent,” another parent who may help navigate school information, news, expectations, contracts, etc. Using multilingual media outlets through the bilingual community, as well as multicultural centers, may also reach ELL parents.

Communicating with families through school-based workshops and events like fields trips (to art galleries and museums), school events (literacy/math/science nights or multicultural appreciation days), and community outreach (school fairs and holiday festivals) are ways to bring the home culture into the school culture. It is crucial that the scheduling of such events consider parents’ work schedules, as well as child care needs, thereby creating equality between school and home life.

It is also recommended that schools offer parents books in both their primary language and English, access to libraries, labs, and other resources. Schools should also encourage ELL parents to volunteer in classes or at whole school events, where families are able to provide
information about home culture and language. Engaging families will foster support in a student’s primary language literacy development and reduce Subtractive Bilingualism. It is vital to have resources in multiple languages for ELL families, which encourages acceptance of all languages and creates a more inclusive learning environment. Educating ELL families with how to best help their children with schoolwork supports a bridge between home and school culture. When parents are able to have opportunities to participate in sharing their home cultures and their own expertise, this transfers a positive attitude to ELL students about their primary language and learning experiences.

**Understanding the achievement gap between ELLs and native English speakers.**

Despite the evolution of ELL curricula and policies in the U.S. education system and the long fight to have equal educational opportunities, recent data from standardized testing in U.S. schools showed ELLs are among those farthest behind, due to a lack of best practice, effective resources, and properly trained teaching personnel (Fry, 2007). Research has continually shown that ELL students entered school with lower levels of math and English proficiency and these gaps continued to grow throughout their schooling (Rumberger & Gandara, 2004; Parrish et al., 2006; Reardon & Galindo, 2009). The analysis of national standardized testing scores reported that approximately 51% of 8th grade ELLs are behind White native speakers of English in reading and math. It was also reported that 35% of 4th grade ELLs are behind in math and 47% of 4th grade ELLs are behind in reading when compared with their White NES counterparts (Fry 2007). According to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 71% of ELLs remain below the basic level in math and Language Arts in 8th grade compared with roughly 20% for non-ELL students (Fry, 2007). Kao and Thompson, (2003) argues that ELLs are less likely to advance and progress in school than their native English speaking peers. Therefore,
closing the achievement gap for ELLs is a monumental task for ELL educators and should be a priority for many U.S. districts.

There is a clear achievement gap between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers (Ruis-de-Velasco, et al, 2000; Wesley-Nero, 2007; Fry 2008; Jenzan, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) reported the achievement gaps between ELL and non-ELL peers in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points for 4th grade and 44 points for 8th grade in 2011. According to a compilation of reports from 41 state education agencies, only 18.7% of students classified as ELLs met state norms for reading in English (Kindler, 2002). ELL students are more likely to be placed in lower ability groups when compared to NES (Kindler, 2002).

Abedi (2001) further dissected the achievement gap between ELLs and NES by conducting a study on ELL and non-ELL students. Data was collected and analyzed from seven different sites in the nation. Abedi (2001) found that ELL students in general performed lower when compared to their non-ELL peers. According to Abedi (2001), 3rd grade and 4th grade ELLs’ test scores were lower than those of non-ELLs. In a 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study, a huge number of ELLs performed below the basic level in reading, writing, history, science, and mathematics. Moreover, they performed poorly for all grades tested: 4th, 8th, and 12th (NCES, 2005). In a five-year study examining the efficacy of different types of school programs offered to ELLs, Thomas and Collier (2001) found that most academic programs failed ELLs. Fry (2007) discussed the Pew Hispanic center analyses of standardized testing data for U.S. public schools and he disclosed a huge achievement gap between ELLs and other students in both mathematics and reading proficiency. Lazarin (2006) argued that the overall student achievement in U.S. schools would soon depend on the academic
achievement of ELLs, due to the increase in the number of ELLs and increasingly modified curricula. Although this research was performed and published in the first decade of the 21st century, little progress has been made in closing this achievement gap. In an article published in January 2017 by the Stanford Graduate School of Education, Miriam Wasserman talked about the academic advances made by minority students, but says this closing of the achievement gap does not extend to ELLs (Wasserman, 2017).

Reading and writing in English proficiently continues to be challenging for elementary school ELLs (The U.S. Department of Education, 2005; August and Shanahan, 2006). Abedi (2001) found that the largest achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs was in the area of literacy. Abedi claims that the difference between the mean NCE scores of ELLs and non-ELLs was generally small for 3rd grade students, except in reading (where there was over a seven-point difference) and favored the non-ELL group. In 4th grade, the reading gap between ELL and non-ELL students was even larger (Abedi, 2001). For example, reading, understanding, and interpreting texts, a requirement for educational achievement in all school subject matters for all students, remains exceptionally challenging for many ELL students (Schleppegrell, 2004; Wong, Fillmore & Snow, 2005). Geva (2011) examined theoretical issues concerning the development of reading fluency, as well as language proficiency when she studied 390 ELLs and 149 non-ELLs, NES, and English-as-a-first language (EL1) students. In the study, Geva examined 2nd and 5th grade students’ cognitive, language, word reading, and reading fluency skills. She found that in decoding words, the ELL and EL1 groups functioned within the normal range. Additionally, she found that ELLs performed two to three years below age norms on the standardized language measures and one year below grade norms on reading comprehension.
measures. ELLs performed two to three years below age norms on the standardized measure of syntax.

**ELLs and Equity**

ELL students are often placed in programs that are not suitable for them. Although ESL placement may benefit students most in need and for a limited time after arrival, considerable caution is advised in students’ continued retention in ESL. Tracking is when students are grouped or attend classes based on ability. ELLs tend to get tracked by their teachers. ELLs generally are tracked according to their linguistic proficiency rather than content ability. Sadly, there are ELL students in U.S. schools who do well in mathematics, but are placed in lower level math classes based on their English Language Development (ELD) scores and their English language ability. It appears that ELLs with limited English proficiency may lack self-confidence and self-assurance in science and mathematics. Many argue that by tracking ELLs, educators may leave students who could achieve further behind, particularly in specific subject matters.

Many of the programs that serve ELL students have challenges focusing on and supporting ELLs in their oral and academic language development. There are inequities that exist for ELL students when they are placed with teachers who are not qualified to work with them. Inaccurate placement, inadequate course content, assessment, and grading affect ELL students (Harper, et al., 2008). Further inequities for ELLs include: attending poor school facilities that have terribly designed programs with limited educational resources, learning with inadequate instructional materials and lack of adequate instructional materials.

Many school districts do not have an adequate ESL curriculum to teach their ELL students effectively. The school districts that have a specific ESL curriculum often have the ones that are not interesting and do not reflect the students’ diverse cultural needs. Some of the ELL
programs and curricula do not usually consider the fact that ELLs speak a language other than English, which indicates that ELLs need to acquire high levels of academic vocabulary, discourse, and inquiry in order to do well in learning English. Such programs and curricula often do not consider the ELLs’ own cultural and linguistic contexts, which are in developing key understanding of academic concepts.

The ELL students in Han and Bridglall’s 2009 study began kindergarten with significantly lower reading and math scores compared to their NES peers. However, some ELL students improved their math scores fast enough that they were able to narrow the initial gap with their native English-speaking peers by the 5th grade. In contrast, ELL students still had lower reading scores by 5th grade compared to their native English-speaking peers.

For successful advancement of ELLs, at some point integration with the general student curriculum ensures much higher academic and societal success rates for them. Students who are connected with the core curriculum and extracurricular school activities are less likely to become emotionally distressed or get involved with mischief such as skipping school, gangs, bullying, or drugs (Cohen et al, 2009). The McNeely et al. (2002) study provided additional insight on the behavior of adolescents who feel cared for by teachers and staff. Older students were found to have been more likely to involve themselves in violence and intimate sexual activity at an earlier age if they felt alienated from school culture. This study incorporated data from 75,000 students in 127 schools to identify methods to include students to be connected to their schools. Extracurricular activities, modified disciplinary policies, and small classrooms were key factors for a positive classroom management. Proper assessments of teacher–child interactions, the Classroom Assessment Scoring Systemized (CLASS) with classroom organization and instructional support allow ELL children to excel in math and literacy.
Even though ELLs have difficulties in SLA, there are also equity issues in educating that make learning challenging for them. For example, many ELLs have difficulty understanding the tasks on assessments since most assessments are not generally available in their native languages. If other-language assessments are available, they are usually not aligned with the district and state standards. Assessment tools for testing ELL students’ academic achievement are not always reliable and cannot be counted as meaningful sources of information for accountability purposes (Crawford, 2004; Menken, 2006; Solórzano, 2008; Pandya, 2011; Lin & Zhang, 2013; Marin 2015). Sadly, NCLB and other state initiatives rely on such assessment tools. NCLB’s accountability system and other state initiatives should not hold schools accountable for ELL students’ results on state assessments. Problems, such as linguistic complexity and cultural bias, may shape the outcome of traditional statewide assessments for ELL students. Therefore, current assessments are not always a valid measure of what ELL students know, understand, and can perform (Solano-Flores & Li, 2006; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003; Solano-Flores, 2008). Crawford (2004) posits that an assessment that is incomprehensible to many ELLs should not be allowed to measure what ELLs know and understand. Abedi (2010) confirms that some assessment outcomes have significant impact on ELL students’ academic career, as they are designed to influence ELL students’ classification, promotion, and graduation. Assessments outcomes are often used for accountability, which sometimes influence academic performance (Abedi, 2010). Solórzano (2008) also concludes that high-stakes standardized tests, those that determine important decisions about the student’s academic future, as currently constructed are inappropriate for ELLs. The continued use of standardized assessments for high-stakes decisions that have adverse consequences remains disturbing. This is unfair for ELL students, especially because they were not put in situations in
which they were prepared to take the assessment successfully. Abedi (2010) promotes performance assessments as an alternative to the traditional standardized achievement testing for ELL students. Performance assessments are able to engage ELL students and show what they understand content-based learning (Abedi, 2010).

There are additional equity issues with ELL accommodation policies, especially since such policies vary substantially among states (Van Roekel, 2010). About 43 states allow ELL students to use bilingual dictionaries, whereas 18 states offer simplified directions to ELL students during the assessments (Van Roekel, 2010). According to Van Roekel (2010), most of those 43 states do not have procedures to monitor accommodations at the school or district and have little guidance on when ELL students are allowed to use a bilingual dictionary or when they are allowed to have test directions read to them. Schools in the same state tend to have different accommodation policies that often result in validity and reliability problems. Likewise, accommodation policies differ from state to state (Van Roekel, 2010). Without any consistency in such policies, it is unfair to administer a single standardized test to a variety of students much less rely on that test to give an accurate picture of ELL achievement and learning.

**ELL Accommodations as an Equity Issue.** ELL students, especially those who are new to the U.S. education system, need to have accommodations. When the language demands are great, ELL students often perform poorly. For example, ELLs being asked to solve multiple-step math problems often struggle. The language of math is often complex and not what these students might learn in a traditional ELA setting. Therefore, although they may be good at math and able to solve the problem, because they do not understand the specific language, they may fail the lesson because of this lack of understanding. Linguistic complexity often makes assessments challenging. To address linguistic complexity, it is important for the educator to
simplify the text for ELLs. Linguistic simplification and oral translations are forms of accommodations that can offer support for all students, especially those who are still learning the English language. Other forms of accommodations offered to ELL students include: extended time, use of glossaries, use of English dictionaries, and use of bilingual dictionaries. Translating test questions and story problems into ELL students’ primary language or using simplified English language skills ensure understanding, success, and/or higher test scores (Abedi, 2004; Van Roekel, 2010) and are examples of accommodations.

The goal of accommodations is to provide a reasonable and fair chance for ELL students to show what they know, understand, and can achieve (Abedi, et al., 2004). Accommodations, such as scheduling, test setting, how the assessments are presented to the learner, and what students use to respond while taking the assessments are provided to ELL students and are, in most cases, similar to those provided to students with disabilities. Accommodations for ELLs yield have mixed results, thus, some accommodations appear to be more effective than others.

Translation, for example, is a common accommodation for ELL students. Examples of assessments that have been translated include: IQ and personality tests, international achievement tests, international credentialing exams are translated, high school graduation required tests, and “quality of life” measures (Bergason, 2008). However, not all tests are translated for all students in all areas, largely owing to the expense. The costs of translations per language can be expensive. Translating achievement tests per language, grade level and content area can range from $20,000 to $40,000 (Bergason, 2008). There are procedures in place for translations. The purpose of these procedures is to guarantee that translated assessments have testing scales that are similar across multiple languages. The guidelines for establishing evidence for the validity of scores from translated tests can be found in the Standards for
Robinson (2010) used a nationally representative sample of kindergarteners and 1st graders to examine whether native-language test translations help ELLs demonstrate their mathematics skills. Robinson’s study used a rigorous quasi-experimental design and found that kindergarten and 1st grade Spanish-speaking ELLs achieved significantly higher scores on mathematics assessments when tested in Spanish as opposed to English. Robinson’s findings suggest that test translations offer ELLs opportunities to exhibit their mathematics skills. Thus, this study suggested that policy makers should add translations to the list of accessible accommodations for ELLs.

**Absence from Instruction**

Another example of inequity for ELLs is their absence from instruction in various content areas because they are usually removed from the classroom to receive ESL instruction during important whole group lessons. Despite the fact that teachers often change their schedules to accommodate the ELLs, they still manage to miss a lot during their ESL instructional time. Usually ELLs with English Language Development (ELD) levels 1 and 2 end up missing the most instruction in content areas because they receive 2 to 2½ hours of direct ESL instruction. According to Saunders (2013), these types of scenarios invent a “no-win situation” or “catch-22” for schools that remove ELLs from their classes to receive extra support and, simultaneously, hold them accountable on state assessment.

There continues to be an achievement gap in language arts between elementary school ELLs and their native English-speaking peers, which puts ELLs at a disadvantage. Language
socialization patterns of poor students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse
groups often differ from the majority of other students in the mainstream school setting
(Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006). Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (1999) acknowledge the
achievement gap in English language arts and state that the differences can exist in the form of
pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and the use of cultural specific language forms
in their social interaction. Research continues to demonstrate differences in the functional use of
language used at home and at school interferes with academic achievement among poor children
and children of color: particularly African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans
(Foster, 1992; Gay 2000; Harris, 2006).

**External Cultural Factors Facing ELL Learning**

Individuals living in the United States have to learn English in order to succeed. The pace
and method at which ELLs learn English varies. Furthermore, there are language differences
between ELL students who come from various middle and lower income socioeconomic and
ethnic groups (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966; Fairtar, 2011). There are many poor children with
various diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who attend U.S. schools and who continue to
face challenges in learning to speak Standard English. In this context, “standard English” is
typically defined as the form of English language that is widely accepted as the national normal
way of speaking. These poorer students, those from diverse backgrounds, and those who are not
native English speakers are not learning to read and write in standardized English effectively.
ELLs continue to have difficulties adapting to what Delpit (1988) refers to as the “culture of
power,” a set of unspoken and unwritten rules of speech and behavior that determine what is
normal and accepted in a given society.
According to Delpit (1988), the “culture of power” refers to the perception of Standard English, which carries more symbolic power and prestige than nonstandard English. ELL students who are poor and come from culturally and linguistically diverse cultures, without access to Standard English, are more likely to fail in school and beyond (Rodriguez & Reis, 2012). Therefore, it is important that educators work to not only find ways to help poor, linguistic, and culturally diverse children accept their own culture and language, but also learn Standard English and how to adapt to the “culture of power” in American society. The linguistic forms, communicative strategies, presentation of self (the way one talks, write, dress, and interact), and the ability to “switch codes” are important skills that poor, culturally, and linguistically diverse children must learn in order to succeed in American society (Delpit, 1988).

In attempting to understand the issue of ELLs, it is critical that educators first understand the individuals struggling to learn English. This includes considering how social, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic status play a role in the way ELL students learn the English language and progress in school, and how educators of ELLs work to provide access to the language and the “codes of power.” Bourdieu (1991) support the idea that language has symbolic power and that there is a relationship with owning Standard English (SE) literacy with social, political, and material benefits (Gee, 1996).

Reaching language proficiency also requires attention to ELL students’ linguistic, cultural, and academic needs (Cook et al., 2011). Cummins (2003 & 2009) noted that ELLs have two types of English proficiency: Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS English is mainly used in social settings and it often takes ELLs at least two to three years to master. On the other hand, CALP English is academic language that usually requires five to seven years of intensive practice.
before ELLs can be considered proficient (Hakuta et al., 2000; Moore & Zainuddin 2003; Saunders & Christian 2006; NCELA, 2007). Research on ELL students’ academic achievement has encouraged and supported a shift from supporting social English to having an emphasis on academic English (Cook et al., 2011). Teachers should offer ESL students content-rich instruction with high expectations (Cohen et. al., 2009). Academic and cultural proficiencies in English are crucial to forming a well-rounded, successful ELL student.

There are a number of cultural variables that have a significant impact on how ELLs behave and interact in various settings. Undoubtedly, the cultural community ELL students reside in and belong to influence these variables. Certain cultures socialize their children in ways that are similar with the values and norms of American schools (Kagan & Garcia, 1991), however many do not. There is also a cultural difference in the way language is used pragmatically in different cultures. Certain cultures teach new skills through verbal instruction while other cultures teach new skills through nonverbal observation. Many ELLs come from cultures that promote independent learning, while some come from cultures that promote cooperative learning (Slobin, 1999; McLeod, 1994; Tharp 1994). Social interaction patterns vary, such as competitive vs. collaborative/cooperative learning, as well as “courtesies and conventions of conversations” between school and home affect learning for the ELL student (Tharp, 1994).

Berstein’s early research on language differentiations in social groups also demonstrated differences in school achievement between students from low and middle-income families. Berstein (1971) states that students who come from low-income families tend to use “restricted code” or language that is highly contextualized to communicate, while students from middle-income families tend to use “elaborated code” or language that is decontextualized to
communicate. His research argues that there is a cause-effect relationship between students’ language use and school success; thus, the “verbal deficiency” in low-income students ultimately is accountable for their low achievement in school (Winch, 1990). The “socialization mismatch hypothesis,” which has been applied to students who speak nonstandard English as well as to students who are acquiring a second or third language, suggested that when students home language and literacy socialization patterns are similar to what is used and valued in school, they are more likely to succeed in school and advance in higher education (Hart & Risley, 1995; & Faltis, 1998).

**Summary**

In this section of the literature review, a clear definition of English Language Learners (ELLs) was provided. ELLs are students who acquire a second or additional language and culture (Haynes & Zacarian 2010; Navarette & Watson, 2015). As discussed earlier, one of the limitations of the term English as a Second Language (ESL) is that there are some students who already speak multiple languages, thus making English a third or fourth language. Given the increased number of ELL students in the U.S., almost all teachers can anticipate having ELL students in their classrooms. Therefore, educators of ELLs must work hard at learning more about the students they are teaching. Recognizing and understanding ELL students, their backgrounds, academic experiences, and English language development proficiency levels, various programs for ELLs, and how best to educate them provide opportunities to support ELLs effectively.

In this section of the literature review, existing research on understanding the nature of ELL students was presented. In understanding ELL students, one must take into consideration many things about ELL students, their experiences, and the way they best learn. There are many
different programs that exist to educate ELL students: English as a Second Language (ESL), High Intensity Language Training, Dual Language, and Bilingual Education are some of the most commonly used. ELL students need a safe and nurturing educational setting to learn. Another important finding has to do with the need and importance of ELL students using their primary language (L1). When ELL students use their primary language, it becomes a huge asset in helping them to develop English skills (Garcia, 1994; Thomas & Collier, 1995; Collier, 1997; Krashen, 1999; Ulanoff & Pucci, 1999; Cummins, 2001; Baker 2003; Conroy, 2005; Liang et al., 2005; Genesee et al. 2006; Hite and Evans, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Mays 2008; Yazici, 2010; Groom 2011). Academic content assessments are linguistically difficult for ELLs (Menken, 2010; Chung 2012), which is why standardized assessments remains challenging for some ELL students. ELLs, especially those who are new to the U.S. education system, need to have accommodations. Accommodations, such as translating test questions and story problems into ELL students’ primary language or using simplified English language skills, ensure understanding, success, and/or higher test scores (Abedi, 2004; Van Roekel, 2010; Robinson, 2010).

As pointed out earlier, it is also important to understand the diversity of the ELL student population, which is culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse. It is also crucial to understand the needs of ELLs and the challenges educators of ELLs face in educating their students.

The Experiences of Educators of English Language Learners

Educators’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of ELL students. The influx of ELL students into U.S. schools has created new pedagogical attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions that are shaped from teachers’ experiences, observation, sociopolitical, and contextual factors
(Richardson, 2003). Unfortunately, often these attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are negative, which can have a significant impact on minority student underachievement. Some ELL teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their ELL students are often influenced by teachers’ lack of understanding and empathy (de Oliveria, 2011). Negative attitudes of teachers have been linked to a lack of opportunities to use diverse students’ linguistic and cultural background knowledge as a way of enhancing educational success (Cummins, 2005; August & Shanahan, 2006). Some common and persistent misconceptions about ELLs are: they are lazy, they lack a fundamental inability to learn, they are immigrants, they all share a similar socioeconomic background, amongst numerous other falsehoods. Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs towards their students have often interfered with instructional practices, and that idea is widely accepted in educational research (Borg, 2003; Farrel & Kun, 2008). Pettit (2011) argued it is possible to change teachers’ beliefs with professional development or training for ELLs to have success in mainstream classroom settings. His review concluded with a discussion on the need to instill new ideas and beliefs on how to best include and teach ELLs through professional development.

Reeves’ (2012) research study on a high school community's perception of educational opportunity and its approach to equalizing the differences between native and non-native English speakers revealed a policy of “difference blindness,” which was found to produce inequities for ELLs in inaccurate assessment and grading, as well as in access to course content. Teachers who were participants in this study were aware of the inequities, and yet believed that they were momentary and acceptable. Ultimately, the findings of the study suggested that in order for ELL students to succeed, they had to be normalized through linguistic assimilation.

Many ELL students are perceived by teachers as less likely to assimilate into American culture, at the same time, they have been stigmatized as being less able and motivated to learn
(Ardasheva & Brown, 2011). Many teachers lack confidence when teaching ELLs (Tellez & Manthey, 2012). They often do not feel comfortable and doubt their individual skills. Some teachers, particularly teachers who teach specific content subjects, believe that educating ELLs is the job of an ELL or ESL specific teacher and prefer not to be held responsible for educating them. In addition, some teachers believe that they do not have enough time to educate ELLs and meet their needs (Reeves, 2006). Many teachers believe ELLs should acquire English in two years and should quit using their primary language, despite researchers’ evidence that ELLs need seven to ten years to master literacy skills in a second language to those of average native speakers (Cummins, 2000; Hakuta, et al., 2000; Thomas & Collier 2002). The rapidly increasing population of ELLs in U.S. schools and the changes in U.S. classrooms place pressure on educators of ELLs to be properly trained.

**Educators’ qualifications, trainings, and effectiveness.** ELL teachers’ effectiveness relies on their qualifications, proper training, as well as the school’s working conditions (Abraham & Chumley, 2000). Education programs must be prepared to train all teachers to work with ELL students (Jong, Harper, 2005; Pettit, 2011; Athanases & de Oliveria, 2011). Research demonstrates that having a high quality professional development program for ELL specific educators can have a significant effect on ELL student progress and achievement. Thus, providing proper training and professional development for educators of ELLs and improving the quality of teachers and ELL programs are two ways to improve the educational outcomes for ELL students. Teachers’ misconceptions, poor beliefs, and low expectations for their ELL students indicate the need for professional development (Pettit, 2011).

There is a clear requirement for teachers’ professional development in schools to focus on ELL students’ needs and academic learning (Mora, 2000). Professional development serves
the purpose of promoting teachers’ continuous learning of integrating new knowledge about teaching and learning within the social contexts in which teaching takes place. Pettit (2011) suggests that schools should increase professional development for their teachers in order for them to adopt new beliefs for the successful inclusion of their ELL students. Teachers who had more training in teaching ELLs had better exposure to language diversity (Pettit, 2011) and held more positive beliefs for ELLs (Walker, et al., 2004; Pettit, 2011). Teacher efficacy and organizational support are the most important variables that impact professional development (Gomez, 2011). Schools and school districts have worked hard to develop professional development strategies to improve the English Language Development (ELD) of ELLs, particularly ELLs who are Latinos (Tellez & Waxman, 2006; Manthey, 2015).

Recently, researchers have shown interest in studying teacher quality (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010; Kane & Staiger, 2012) and ways to improve teacher effectiveness (Hill, 2007). In fact, teacher effectiveness and quality have been the center of current education reform, such as the federal Race to the Top program and the Teacher Incentive Fund (Loeb, et al. 2014). Loeb, Soland, and Fox (2014) studied ways teachers’ effectiveness improves ELL and non-ELL student performance in mathematics and reading. Gomez (2011) studied self-efficacy of ELL teachers’ perceptions of effective development. He proposes that increasing a better understanding of teachers’ explicit professional development needs will enhance and prepare ELL teachers and maintain high value for the ELL teacher, which may ultimately affect their ELLs’ academic success.

NCLB made it clear that improving instruction for ELLs depended on having highly qualified teachers. For example, in 2006, NCLB called for all students to be educated by a “highly qualified” teacher. A “highly qualified” teacher must have earned at least a Bachelor’s
degree and appropriate state certification (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2017). Additionally, “highly qualified” educators must have proven competency in the content area subjects he/she teaches, which in most cases is measured by passing a standardized exam in the content area. A “highly qualified” teacher who works with ELLs would have to pass the educators licensure exam in the area of ESL. Bush (2001) debated that teacher excellence is important to achieving success in student achievement. Former Secretary of Education Ron Paige emphasized teacher quality is the highest force for change and effective student achievement (Fletcher, 2002).

Without a doubt, there is a shortage of “highly qualified” trained teachers serving ELL students. Gomez (2011) reveals that a qualified and effective teacher is most crucial for improving student achievement. Based on the NCLB, ELLs are required to be given quality instruction in both English and grade-level academic content: English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies/history. Many educators of ELLs tussle with this policy and find teaching ELLs and keeping up with the ESL mandates to be challenging. ELLs continue to struggle to learn English and academic content, therefore it is doubly important to have an ELL teacher who cannot only relate to his or her students, but who is also an expert in the specific field of study.

Sadly, many classrooms with ELLs do not always have certified teachers (Baker, et al., 2010). Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2003) stressed regions that serve low-income students and have a teacher shortage often hire teachers who are not certified. ELLs who attend urban school districts find it to be more common for teachers who do not hold certifications to be employed (Schoon & Sandoval, 2000). Non-certified ELL teachers may struggle to teach ELLs. They may also lack effective strategies that would benefit ELLs. An additional study developed by
Laczko-Kerr and Berliner (2002) found that a great majority of ELL students who had unlicensed teachers, including Teach For America (TFA) teachers, suffered academically.

There are many inexperienced ELL teachers who do not properly identify their ELL students. As a result, their ELL students transition out of ELL classes, programs, and services prematurely and/or are placed in mainstream classrooms with teachers who have not been properly trained to work with them. Thus, these “mainstream” teachers who work with ELLs are unable to provide additional language support to their students. Many teachers do not have the proper experience and training to work with ELL students and as a result feel frustrated.

Recent research shows evidence that teachers are often assigned to teach in specific schools and classrooms according to their experience and ability (Kalogrides, et al., 2013). However, there are many cases in which teachers who are not qualified to teach ELL students are placed to work with them. Many teachers of ELL students are not what Garcia (2010) describes as “culturally competent” and do not have proper training to teach these students effectively. Cultural and linguistic contexts are important in developing ELL students’ understanding of academic concepts. ELLs need to acquire high levels of academic vocabulary, discourse, and inquiry in English in order for them to succeed in content areas (Garcia & Jensen, 2007). It is crucial that ELL students are placed with competent ELL teachers who understand their students’ struggles. De Oliveira and Shoffner (2009) suggest that ELL teachers should have experiences where they feel they are language learners.

ELLs also tend to learn more in schools that have qualified teachers who are able to support the ELL’s cultural and linguistic contexts and schools that have practices to increase the effectiveness of ELL teachers. It is reported that many ELL teachers frequently ignore the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students (Osborn, 2007). For example, more than 90% of
pre-service teachers in teacher training programs in the U.S. are white, middle-class teachers who come from non-urban environments (Nieto, 2000; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004) and who are monolingual in English (Gay, et al., 2003; National Education Association, 2003). Rodriguez and Reis (2012) reported that scholars found these demographics crucial to consider because disparities between K-12 students and their teachers have an effect on their learning experiences and may hinder the academic achievement of minority students (Sleeter, 2008).

Important factors contributing to a teachers' effectiveness have to do with school organizational climate (Bai, 2014). Organizational climate remains a key factor for educators, particularly, as they grow professionally. A healthy teaching and learning environment is not just for students, but for educators as well. Bai (2014) states that school climate can either be a positive factor or a roadblock to learning in the lives of educators. Obviously, a positive school climate is beneficial for ELL students, but it is equally important for teachers (Brooks et al. 2010). Through frequent group meetings with ESL teachers and administrators, there can be a positive coordinated effort with school leaders and ELL students.

Brooks and his collaborators focused their study in the Midwest, which has the fastest growing number of immigrants and a student-teacher ratio of 143 students to each licensed ESL teacher. Due to frustration and failure to communicate, administrators became discouraged when trying to engage ELL students and their families (Brooks, et al., 2010). The ESL teachers failed to connect with mainstream teachers and administrators because they did not share discussions and were not in close proximity to one another. Isolated ESL staff wrongly accept sole responsibility for ELL students’ academic and social problems without administrators identifying the core ELL student problems.
Collaboration among educators. Collaboration among ELL teachers and other educators has become important considering the increasing number of ELL students in U.S. public schools (Pawan & Craig, 2011). Interaction among ELL teachers, school leaders, ESL staff, and ELL students support positive relationships and effective communication that targets the integration and achievement of the ELL students (Brooks et al., 2010). Research in the past decade suggests ELL students do not receive adequate support because many teachers lack the ELL understanding of how their roles and teaching practices most effectively support student needs. Sustainable school climate fosters a positive and productive student development environment that supports all aspects of student growth. This environment also incorporates the values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. The educators work together with the students and families to develop and implement a joint vision to contribute and help students achieve their academic goals. School staff members contribute to the operational achievement goals of the school environment.

Heck and Hallinger (2009) reviewed the effects of collaboration on school improvement and academic achievement in 195 different elementary schools within one state over a four-year period. Their research found the noticeable effects collaborative leadership had on a schools' academic capacity and indirect effects on student growth rates in math supporting a positive distributed leadership model directly affecting the school climate. Collaborative steps between school administrators and teachers working with large enrollments of bilingual students were identified.

The promotion of social, cultural, and family interaction with school faculty can improve the academic achievement of bilingual students (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). The study endorsed researched-based recommendations to help build support from the teachers, community
members, counselors and administrators. Shared leadership is conducive to an atmosphere where children feel understood. Leadership confidence and honesty come to the forefront as essential qualities for positive school climate (Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

ELL teachers are in a great position to support ELLs, particularly ELLs who are new to the U.S. Hunt’s 2011 research on collaboration in education and school leadership structures supporting ELL programs over time in New York City examined the role of teachers and principals promoting dual language education. Hunt reviewed three different elementary school programs. Data was collected to investigate how one principal worked with her staff in negotiating, envisioning, and supporting the goals in each of the dual language programs. These school programs were in existence for over 10 years, which makes the data reliable (Hunt, 2011). By examining three different programs in depth, this research identified elements of leadership in a dual language program that exposed the various ways that leaders react and adapt to the individual community of their particular school. A strong mission with collaboration, shared leadership, trust, and flexibility among administration and teachers were crucial factors in creating an ELL community that was sustainable over time. Commitment to bilingualism and multicultural understandings help bring the ELL students into the curriculum. Strong leadership and rigorous training is recommended for teachers and school leaders.

The review of the literature, combined with government data, supports the majority of the authors’ findings that ELLs are positively impacted by an effective school climate. Proper academic evaluation and placement of ELL students at the earliest possible opportunity typically result in accelerated academic achievement. Strong school connections result in: (1) high academic standards; (2) students being more positive and respectful; (3) school success (4) teacher retention, and (5) an emotionally stable and safe school environment. Future research is
needed on the changing demographics and inequities that exist among ELLs and NES. Comparative analysis of ACCESS data must be used to identify the targeted improvement areas. The responsibility for improving education for all students, particularly ELLs, must be shared among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. ESL teachers and classroom teachers who have not received any preparation for teaching ELLs need continuous professional development in the academic achievement of ELLs.

Conclusion

The research presented in Chapter Two highlights the existing literature on ELLs. This literature review is organized into two main sections: 1) understanding the nature of ELLs and 2) understanding the experiences of ELL teachers. It is significant for educators of ELLs to put a greater amount of effort into learning more about the students they are teaching. The literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on the nature of ELLs, who they are, their backgrounds, academic experiences, English language proficiency levels, cultural and linguistic beliefs and traditions, family circumstances, and any other learning needs are important factors for educators to consider when working with ELLs. Understanding the nature of ELLs allows opportunities to support them, while also working to provide a welcoming and comfortable learning environment.
Chapter III: Methods

An IPA Methodology Approach

Choosing an appropriate research methodology is an important part of the research process, as the approach helps to frame the sources of data, research questions, analysis tools, emerging themes, and findings. This study used qualitative research, specifically Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as the methodology to explore the experiences of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools. The purpose of this IPA study was to explore how ELL educators made sense of their experiences working with ELL students.

Overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Qualitative research has become popular in the health sciences over the past few decades (Malterud, 2005). IPA, a methodology derived from phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, is one of the newest and most popular methods of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Phenomenology is the lived experiences of an individual. Symbolic interactionism, as originally conceived by George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley, is a theory of development based on the idea that meaning is derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation (The Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, 2017). Jonathan Smith introduced IPA in the mid-1990s. Smith, Flowers, and Osborn (1997) provided further historical and theoretical perspective of IPA.

IPA studies focus on investigating how participants make sense of their life experiences, as well as their personal and social worlds (Conklin, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2013; Pietkiwicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA involves a process of engagement and interpretation by the researcher (Smith, 2011) and is affiliated with the interpretive or hermeneutic tradition (Shinebourne & Smith, 2009). According to Smith and
Osborn (1999), IPA is a dynamic process that allows the researcher to get close to the participants’ personal worlds. IPA research requires both the researchers and participants to find relevant meanings in the work being investigated. Furthermore, it provides an insider’s perspectives on the topic that is under investigation, as the analyst brings his/her own ideas to the study (Smith, et al. 1999). Researchers find IPA to be effective when they are passionate about the topic (Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

IPA is a newer interpretive or hermeneutic branch of phenomenology that provides information and guidance in helping researchers to understand and make sense of participants’ life experiences and their own reflections on the importance of the meaning (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith, 2011). It has theoretical obligation to a person’s cognitive, linguistic, affective, and physical being. Its theoretical focus includes the following: 1) It is a qualitative approach which focuses on individual lived experiences; 2) It involves an interactive process between the researcher and the participant, which Smith (1996; 2004; 2011) refers to as double hermeneutic in nature; and 3) It is idiographic, meaning it allows the researcher to focus on the specific, instead of the general. IPA researchers understand that participants often have challenges expressing their feelings and ideas. As a result, the researcher had to interpret participants’ mental and emotional conditions from the information they shared. (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

**Methodological Approach**

**IPA and Philosophy.** Phenomenology describes the study of experience. Edmund Husserl and G.W.F. Hegel developed phenomenology in the early 20th century as a descriptive science used to explain consciousness and how we understand the world (Dowling, 2005). At its most basic level, phenomenology takes experience, attitude, perception, and emotion – all of which are subjective – and tries to make them objective. It tries to quantify and qualify
experience, in a scientific manner. Through the investigation of an individual’s experiences and behaviors, a more complete picture of collective human nature can be seen.

The term phenomenology is not only a research method, but it is also a philosophy. Spiegelberg (1982) and Dowling (2005) imply that there are many styles of phenomenology. It is also known hermeneutics (Dowling, 2005; Kakkori, 2010). Immanuel Kant, a central figure in the study of human experience, posed the idea that there is no such thing as reality, but only personal perception to the wider world. Therefore, judgment about the world must take into account the analysis of experience, a practice called “phenomenological reduction,” or “bracketing” (Creswell, 2007). Martin Heidegger, however, later reversed Kant’s idea of order of influence saying that the world shapes our experiences, rather than our experiences defining the wider world. Maurice Merleau-Ponty reinvented the theory, as “existential phenomenology,” which puts being before knowledge. Hubert Dreyfus is the most recent philosopher to put his mark on the theory of phenomenology. He looks at how technology defines us and provides meaning.

IPA is born out of phenomenology and hermeneutics. The methodology in qualitative research in general, and IPA specifically, have grown immensely over the past decades, and the philosophical, historical, and contextual backgrounds are now more explicit (Langdridge, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). The phrases “lived world” or “lived experience,” or as Husserl (1970) refers to it, as “lifeworld” applies to the lived experiences that different individuals may have, go through, or participate in. Carter and Little (2009) report that much research has been done in an effort to discuss and explain the philosophical and theoretical backgrounds of IPA and its implications. When applying qualitative research methods, the information was analyzed using
philosophical concepts to examine the findings and the development of theoretical analysis (Davidsen, 2013).

**Research Design and Methodology**

Generally, IPA research involves intensive and detailed analysis of information produced by a small sample size of participants (Larkin, et al., 2008). Typically, the population size of an IPA study varies, but there is no rule regarding how many participants should be included. Participants generally share some sort of common background that makes their experiences useful to the research being conducted. The shared experiences of the small number of participants in an IPA study provide a greater perspective on the problem of practice being studied.

The main goal of this phenomenological study was to explain the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of each individual ELL educator. As a study, it is based on discovery, and phenomenologists use less restrictive research gathering methods to gain insight and meaning. Phenomenologists believe that all perceptions and constructions are grounded in a particular perspective in time and space. Participants in phenomenological studies can use narratives, art, or poetry to describe their lived phenomenal experiences. The researcher attempted to understand best practices for educating ELL students, challenges, needs and the best way to address the needs of ELLs through narrative. The researcher in this phenomenological study sought to study and understand ELL educators’ experiences, behaviors, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes.

This study was focused specifically on 32 ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools (SPS) and their experiences. The researcher investigated their best pedagogical practices to educating ELL students, whether or not they believed race or the cultural background of ELL
educators affected their interaction with their students, and whether or not similar ideas and experiences in reference to teaching ELL students existed across the district. As this study was focused on the thoughts and experiences of ELL educators, the IPA method was the most practical for analyzing this specific data. Finally, the focus on a very specific group of educators unveiled very particular processes, as opposed to more general pedagogical practices.

**Population.** A population is referred to a group of people in whom the researcher was interested in studying. In typical IPA studies, the population size is relatively small. This is because it is important to fully and completely understand what the participants are saying when relating their experiences. Detailed data collection is time consuming and a case-by-case analysis take a considerable amount of effort in order to extract relevant meaning. The depth of analysis in a single case study, the amount of information gathered from the individual cases, the comparing or contrasting of experiences, and the practical restrictions of interviewing participants are limiting factors to population size. The framework for IPA itself also looks to derive a larger meaning from a small group.

IPA studies tend to carry with them a certain level of specificity (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009). Therefore, the small-scale nature of a basic IPA study shows how something is understood in a given context and from a shared perspective, a method sometimes called homogeneous sampling (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Pringle et al., 2011). The sample size in IPA studies is contingent on the degree of commitment to the study, richness of individual case, and the constraints of the study (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

The initial goal for the sample size of this study was to have 20 research participants, which is a common number for studies of this type. However, the goal of the study was to find differences in teaching practices among educators in a single environment, in this case a school
district, so the population was increased to 32. With over 420 educators working in the Somerville school district, 32 participants represent roughly 7% of the instructional population (Massachusetts Elementary and Secondary Education Schools and Districts Profiles, 2017). Likewise, getting a sample population that varied in cultural background, experience, and viewpoint was integral to the research questions being asked. Therefore, it was necessary to include more teachers in order to catch a more diverse point-of-view, however because there were not that many educators of color or those who did reflect their student body, widening the scope did not provide as many diverse educators as the interviewer would have hoped. There remains a lack of diversity represented in this population, which was contingent on the demographic makeup of the district and the willingness to participate.

**Study participants.** Typically, IPA researchers prefer to use the experiences and narratives of a relatively homogeneous group. Similarities and differences within the group are based on key factors. Therefore, participants are selected purposefully based on certain defining characteristics that are fundamental to the study itself. The homogeneity of the group depends upon the amount participants vary or are similar, as well as the accessibility of a specific population. The subject matter can prohibit the participating population.

For this study, the requirements for participation were: work with ELLs in some sort of educational capacity and work in the school district of Somerville. Beyond that, desired characteristics were diversities in ethnicities, cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, educational experiences, teaching experiences, and other factors that would reflect the student population of Somerville. All 32 participants in the study included ELL educators from all of SPS’ ten schools, grades Pre-K-12 (from the early childhood center to Somerville High School) as well as administrators and school leaders. Participation in the study afforded teachers the opportunity to
assess their work with ELLs and to reflect on best practices, challenges, needs of ELLs, as well as assesses Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and level of ELL support in their schools.

**Sampling strategy.** Sampling in qualitative studies was not always a specific planning decision made by the researcher, but was due to a variety of decisions made throughout the research process. In a research study, purposive sampling depended on the researcher’s judgment when it came to carefully choosing participants, organizations, events, cases, and other data. The aim of purposive sampling was to exclusively select participants who are of interest, meet the criteria of the study, and who would best answer the research questions and objectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Working within the framework of IPA data collection methodology as described above, the use of purposive sampling was common in IPA in order to find participants for whom the research questions would be meaningful. However, the specific populations researchers are interested in studying are not always easy to reach. Snowball sampling was a technique that was frequently used to gain access to populations that were hard to reach. Snowball sampling, chair-referral sampling, or referral sampling, occurs when existing participants of a study refer another participant. This IPA study used purposive and snowball sampling to select the participating SPS public school educators.

**Data collection.** When collecting data, the researcher does not have a hypothesis already in mind which will be tested based on the information collected. While there is a central question or thesis idea, the information gathered is used to draw conclusions not already known or assumed. While the researcher does use her own experience and background information on the subject, it is important to suspend any preconceptions in order to fully comprehend what the participants are saying. While each individual participant brings his/her own unique experiences
and insights, from which they draw their own meanings and conclusions, it is the job of the researcher to find a larger collective meaning from the individual meanings provided.

The most common means of data collection in a phenomenological study is through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). Such interviews are designed to collect and understand the participants' descriptions of their experiences, written or oral self-reports, their aesthetic expressions, and interpretive responses (Creswell, 2002; Simon 2006). Interviews are set up to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations of each individual participant. Furthermore, a phenomenological research study attempted to understand individual participants’ perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular phenomenon.

Interview questions are described as open-ended and non-direct in IPA studies. The questions are generally designed to facilitate and encourage participants to share their own stories (Brocki & Wearden, 2010; Smith et. al., 1997). This creates a more rounded picture and proves a more specific and focused insight into the very complex question of how best to educate ELL students. Open-ended questions helped the researcher collect data that led to a “textural description and a structural description” of participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007). Smith and Osborn (2003) suggested that the participant is given a strong role throughout the interview process. It is recommended to ask leading questions during the interview and to record the effect the interview has on the participant.

Since the main goal in phenomenological studies is to understand the participant’s lived experiences (Creswell, 2007), in this study, data was collected using semi-structured interviews to accumulate rich and meaningful information from the participant’s experiences with ELLs and the implementation of planning and teaching their ELLs. Research questions in IPA projects are usually broad and open (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Participants’ verbal responses are usually
captured from semi-structured interviews focus groups, journals, and/or diaries (Larkin et al., 2008; Davidsen, 2013). Questions in this study focused on the participant’s personal and professional experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about their work with ELL students in SPS. A semi-structured interview uses open-ended questions that come from the central question and sub-questions in the research study (Creswell, 2007, p. 133). Semi-structured interviews are useful for providing data and understanding, especially because the researcher can ask clarifying, follow-up questions while the interviewer can explain responses (Creswell, 2007). A set of 36 pre-determined interview questions were used to collect data regarding the overall experiences of ELL educators in SPS. Participants’ responses provided opportunities for the researcher to ask follow-up questions that were not on the list or initially anticipated.

The researcher intended on determining the participants’ beliefs and attitudes regarding ELL students in SPS. Participants’ personal and professional experiences and the challenges they drew upon when dealing with ELLs were examined. The researcher investigated specific needs of ELLs, how their needs should be addressed, and their individual beliefs on ELLs. The researcher asked questions to learn about participants’ experiences and their relationships with their colleagues, administrators, and families. Questions about administration support were also asked. The researcher wanted to learn what these ELL educators most enjoyed about working with ELLs, what the models of instruction, curricula, and assessment tools these ELL educators used to educate and assess their students. The researcher was particularly interested in learning how ELL educators supported SLA, specifically ELL students’ development of oral fluency and cognitive academic language proficiency in English. Questions were asked regarding whether the school administration supported their work with ELLs and how closely the curriculum they used was aligned with the Common Core standards. There was also interest in the availability of
curricula and resources in ELL programs that affected ELL students’ performance. Follow-up questions were also asked to clarify or obtain further information based on participants’ responses. Overall, the interview with these ELL educators provided the researcher with an understanding of how ELLs are educated in the Somerville Public School system. The research questions guiding this study included the following:

• What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?

• Does racial or the cultural backgrounds of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?

• A third question on the attitude and beliefs of ELL educators became an important element in understanding the educational landscape for ELL students. Therefore, it was important to add a sub-question that was related to the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools.

Transcription and Data Mining

While transcribing the data, in order to extract meaning from it, the researcher works closely and intensively with the material. It is essential to look for patterns and repetitions in what the participants say, as this will lead to common ideas across the interviewees. Common ideas are sometimes referred to as “codes,” which, when recorded, show emergent themes. Themes are reoccurring patterns of meaning that then provide implications, which lead the researcher to draw a clear conclusion to the research questions being asked.

Conducting and transcribing an IPA interview is usually done at the semantic level. In IPA studies, the researcher decides whether or not to record the interview. Recording interviews, however, is a valuable practice as it is impossible to write down everything the participant says during the interview. One would most likely document the “gist” and may miss important
nuances. Face-to-face interaction allows the researcher to notice nonverbal cues that contribute to meaning. There is a need for the interviewer to examine all of the words spoken, including false starts, pauses, laughs, and other features. The interviews conducted in this IPA study were recorded, transcribed, coded, analyzed, and reviewed by interviewees to confirm accuracy.

Participants of this study were asked to take an online, web-based survey to see whether or not they met the qualifications needed to be included. They were asked to answer questions relating to their current teaching position, whether or not they work with ELL students, if they held English as an English as a Second Language (ESL) license in MA, and if they had necessary resources, access to curriculum, and assessments to effectively teach ELLs. They also needed to explain if they had conversations about the most effective way to educate their ELLs, conversations about their personal or professional experience with ELLs, conversations with colleagues about differentiating instruction for ELL students, and conversations about the challenges and/or success in teaching ELLs.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face, tape recorded with permission on a professional voice recorder, and then transcribed word for word. Interviews lasted between 30 to 90 minutes, depending on the participants’ responses. All 32 transcripts were e-mailed to each participant for a final review. Participants had an opportunity to edit any errors and/or clarify their responses. Several interviewees made clarifications by revising their responses. The participants submitted their revised transcripts to the researcher via e-mail. Several participants acknowledged, through email, that they read the transcripts and were in agreement with everything that was transcribed. The transcribed interviews were analyzed, coded, categorized into themes, and data was abstracted as outlined in research for conducting qualitative, interpretive research (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Transcripts were read
and coded at both an individual level and at a level of comparison. Conclusions were shared with participants for their validation and contributions.

**Research Site**

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological studies have detailed descriptions of the research site. Creswell (2007) posits that in a phenomenological study, the research site is important, as it is a significant element that helps the researcher describe the essence of the phenomenon being experienced.

In this study, participants chose interview sites that were accessible and where they felt comfortable talking and answering questions honestly and openly. A large number of the interviews were conducted in three different Somerville Public Schools (two elementary school and one high school). A number of the interviews were held at Somerville school libraries, one interview was held at a local public library, 1 at the Somerville Parent Information Center, four at a local coffee shop and 2 at a nearby park and schoolyard in the city of Somerville.

**Data Analysis**

In IPA studies, the researcher does not begin with a hypothesis, but rather one develops from the research findings. Codes emerge from the data gathered, instead of testing existing theories that are already developed; however they do use and are often aligned with ideas that are already known within the framework in which the study is being conducted. Through open-ended questioning, IPA studies encourage an examination of a problem in new ways. Common ideas that emerge from interviews can be grouped as themes and subthemes. In an IPA study, themes are summarized, categorized, and then grouped into a table, a web, or another visualization of the evidence that comes out of the interviews.
IPA researchers analyze, in detail, how participants viewed and made sense of their world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It was appropriate for IPA researchers to collect data for IPA analysis in numerous ways: diaries, journals, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews. This study on the experiences of ELL educators used semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher and participants opportunities to engage in conversations where initial questions were modified, depending of the participants’ responses (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The researcher used Smith and Osborn’s (2007) step-by-step approach to the analysis in IPA: 1) Looking for Themes in the First Case, 2) Connecting the Themes, 3) Continuing the Analysis with Other Cases, and 4) Writing Up. The five key steps to analyzing data by Creswell (2007) were used in analyzing this study: “Reading through written transcripts, identifying significant phrases, formulating meaning and clustering them into themes, integrating the results into an in-depth, exhaustive description of the phenomenon and evaluating the findings” (p. 89).

The process of IPA research analysis commences with reading and re-reading the transcript of the first interview and noting anything the participant says that is striking and important for summarizing, making connections, and early interpretations (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Davidsen, 2013). Nonverbal cues are just as important as these often help the researcher to better notice key ideas that may become themes or subthemes. As the clustering of themes emerged, the researcher checked the transcripts and drew on interpretative resources to make sense of what the participant was sharing. There are no rules about what the researcher decides to comment on (Smith & Osborn, 2007). A table of themes (ordered comprehensibly and coherently) was then produced. The researcher continued the analysis with other participants and developed a master table of themes for the group. Time was spent moving from the final themes to outlining the meanings that developed from the participants’ experiences and writing
the analysis of the information gathered. The researcher worked on translating the themes into narratives. The themes were explained and illustrated in detail and each participant’s transcript was written as a narrative case study. The result section included emergent thematic analysis and discussion. For this study, emerging themes that were identified were listed while developing subthemes. Time was spent analyzing and looking for connections between these themes. To be specific, the emergent themes were listed, while the researcher searched for connections between them.

**Interview Protocol: Ethical Considerations and Protection of Human Participants**

Ethical considerations are important in any research study. The researcher’s ethical obligation was to protect all research participants’ privacy (Creswell, 2009). IPA studies rely on first-hand accounts of people who are actively involved in the field of study, whether as professionals, patients, students, or another group affected by the subject matter. Because of this, it is important to be sensitive to the participants’ potential vulnerability. IPA research is conducted in healthcare, sociology, and psychology studies (among others), and as these disciplines involve populations that can be considered “at-risk,” it is important to protect them from any increased discomfort or jeopardy that may come from recognition. Therefore, it is the researcher’s job to protect the health and safety of the participants, whether physical or emotional.

The purpose of this research study was to understand, develop, and describe ways to improve instruction for ELLs using the experiences of ELL educators practicing in the field. All participants of this study were adults. Children did not participate in this research study. Any participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. These educators were working with vulnerable student populations. ELLs come from extremely diverse backgrounds and
experiences: some experience trauma, some are undocumented students, some are the victims of negative stereotypes, all of which add to the vulnerable nature of these learners. As a result, ELL educators need to be careful when dealing with these potentially at-risk students. When being interviewed in a study such as this, it is important for educators to not disclose information that may be harmful to themselves and ELLs. When studying a sensitive topic, Creswell (2007) suggests masking the names of the research participants and places confidential. Therefore, it was crucial that the researcher protect identities of educators and students, but also to ensure specific identifiers could not be discerned from the information provided. Therefore, names, school affiliations, and any other information that may lead to direct identification has been removed as much as the study parameters would allow.

**Consent.** Along with the idea of protecting the identities of the participants in an IPA study, consent and trust-building are equally important in the researcher’s ability to gain insight. Patton (1990) refers to consent as a negotiation of trust, and it involves ongoing renegotiation. Because participants are often vulnerable themselves or working directly with vulnerable populations, it is important for the researcher to build a foundation of trust and comfort.

Specific details of the study and the purpose of the study were explained in a meeting to all qualified, participating adults. All eligible participants were provided information concerning the research study: its purpose, their role as participants, and information on an informed consent form. All participants were required to sign a consent form prior to participating in the study. Additionally, participants answered a short, web-based survey and were informed of their rights orally and in writing.

Information on this study, as well as consent forms were emailed to participants who showed interest and submitted their initial web-based survey. Individual interviews were
scheduled with participants who completed their surveys. Participants were also notified orally and in writing of their rights to withdraw at any time and without any risks or negative circumstances. They were told that they did not need to share information that would make them feel uncomfortable. They were provided the goals of the study orally and in writing. More importantly, efforts were made to help participants understand ways they would be contributing to improving education for ELL students in various school districts across the country. Once the participants signed the consent forms, individual interviews began.

**Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are important elements in any research study. In order for an IPA study to be reliable and valid, the findings should be accurate, consistent, stable, clear, and honest (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In IPA studies, because the data comes from interviews, it is necessary for participants to know about the topic being researched. Vetting participants is the first step in the interviewing process. The researcher must know that those people being interviewed are qualified to discuss the subject matter. Conversely, it is important for the researcher to verify the accuracy of the data with the participants, to ensure the ideas, themes, and subthemes that emerged were not taken out of the context in which the individual participants intended.

In this study, the researcher recorded the interviews, listened and transcribed them, and then provided them to the study participants to ensure validity. Submitting the transcripts to all participants was a great way to ensure the accuracy of the data and minimize any possible researcher bias (Creswell, 2007). All participants of this study were provided copies of the findings and conclusions of the study. This was done to validate all participants’ perspectives concerning their professional experiences working with ELL students. Participants were asked
whether they felt the description of their experiences were represented fairly, truthfully, and whether the themes and interpretations that came up were accurate.

**Trustworthiness**

In addition to reliability and validity, trustworthiness of the data is an important component of the IPA process. Trustworthiness is important in evaluating a study’s significance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Guba’s (1981) article on assessing trustworthiness discusses four criteria for building trustworthiness: Credibility; Transferability; Dependability; and Confirmability. Credibility relates to the researcher’s ability to validate that the data collected is relevant to the subject being studied. Transferability is applying the findings to other situations. Dependability refers to the repeatability of the study methodology, in that if the same work were repeated under the same circumstances, the findings would be similar. Confirmability refers to the researcher’s own bias and the removal of it as much as possible, so that the findings are based on the experiences of the participants, rather than the researcher’s own ideas.

This qualitative research study raised several issues and ethical consideration related trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007). In terms of credibility, the researcher was careful in selecting educators who worked directly with ELLs and ELL families. In relation to transferability, although this study was specific to one school district in Massachusetts, the findings of how to best educate ELLs can be applied in other districts and states in the United States. The manner in which the data was collected, the analysis conducted, and the findings reported suggests that similar outcomes would occur in a parallel study, thus supporting the study’s dependability. Finally, as it relates to confirmability, the researchers’ own experiences with ELLs enabled her to gain the trust of the participants in this study, but also recognize her own biases and avoid allowing them to interfere with reporting on the data.
Bias

It is possible and natural for researchers to bring biases to their studies. However, it was important for the researcher to try to be as objective as possible during the course of the research study. Creswell (2009) suggests that remaining objective is a crucial part of the inquiry. Thus, Creswell posits that researchers should examine their research methods and conclusions for any biases. One way to avoid bias is through careful attention to sampling, to ensure a broad range of participants. Another way to avoid bias is through triangulation. Triangulation occurs when the researcher uses literature, studies, and other sources to validate the findings and foster understanding of the data being presented (Denzin, 1978; Patton 1999, 2001).

Since the researcher was a former ELL student and a certified ESL teacher, her personal and professional experiences could easily bring biases to the study. Through purposive sampling, the researcher chose ELL educators without prior knowledge of their cultural backgrounds, experiences, or attitudes. Additionally, snowball sampling further removed bias as the participants themselves acted as recruiters for the study, without any interference by the researcher. In Chapter Two, the researcher discussed her positionality and clarified biases she may have brought to this study. Also, in Chapter Two, the researcher presented findings from a number of studies relating to educating ELLs in order to show commonality.

Methodology for Coding Individual Participant Data

Data display was an important step in coding individual participant’s data, especially during the data analysis stage (Burke et al., 2005; Verdinelly & Scagnoli, 2013). Visual display provided the researcher with space to organize the information she collected and “show connections between different pieces of relevant data” (Dey, 1993 in Verdinelly & Scagnoli, 2013). Thus, the researcher developed and shared graphs and other diagrams to represent and
provide specific data on the research participants. She succinctly and efficiently used visual representation in Microsoft Excel to present the data and provide relevant information in graphs and other diagrams about each individual participant. The visual representation was developed to demonstrate a detailed description of all participants’ demographics, such as their gender, educational roles, gender, race, educational background, and ELL teaching experience. The graphic representations allowed the researcher and the readers to “acquire insights, develop an elaborate understanding or appreciate new knowledge” (Verdinelly, & Scagnoli, 2013).

Emerging themes and findings from the study were reported in text and tables. A table of the correlational matrix was included, as well as an interpretational section of the results as they pertained to the research question.

**Using the Theoretical Lens to Analyze the Data**

After reviewing the literature and the researchers’ findings, it appeared most logical to use the SLA theory to support this study. SLA includes various theories and hypotheses about how individuals acquire a second language. SLA is closely tied to education and linguistics, which is why this methodology was chosen to support this study. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are numerous theories and hypotheses in the field of SLA. SLA is a combination of different schools of thought from researchers from pre-20th century to present. In the last century, theories of SLA represented various ideas, theories, methods, and hypotheses about the way individuals learn a second or an additional language.

It was crucial and useful for the researcher to investigate SLA theories, especially since SLA theories are widely used in studies concerning English Language Learners. SLA theories are beneficial in this study because they focus on factors that relate to the stages of language development, environment, and cultural factors that influence an individual’s ability to develop
and master the nuances used to internalize a second language. The need to understand SLA theory was critical in better understanding ELL educators’ pedagogical approaches and best practices to teaching ELL elementary students and overall ELL educators’ experiences. It was important to have a comprehensible knowledge of SLA theories for understanding educators’ professional experiences, instructional decisions and ideas they made for ELLs. For example, instructional practice for ELLs required an understanding of The Stages of Language Proficiency (pre-production, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency) and the criteria of each stage that identifies and describes benchmarks at each particular phase of the ELL language development.

Effective academic and English language instruction for ELLs should occur simultaneously. Having an understanding of the stages of SLA and the development and progression of the language proficiency levels helped to develop appropriate essential interview questions specifically related to instructing ELL students. Interview questions were asked about ELL students’ development of oral fluency in English, their cognitive academic language proficiency, the model(s) of instruction educators are using to teach ELL students, the ways ELL educators are supporting SLA, and overall best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students. The specific questions asked in relation to SLA were:

- What model of instruction are you using to teach your ELL students (native language instruction and/or support with ESL certified teacher, ESL instruction embedded, content based, sheltered instruction, dual language/bilingual, purposeful interaction with English-speaking peers, etc.)?
- How do you support SLA among your ELL students?
- How do you support your ELL students’ development of oral fluency in English?
• How do you support your ELL students’ cognitive academic language proficiency?
• What are the curriculum and assessment tools you are currently using to educate and assess your ELL students?
• What do you consider fair and appropriate assessment procedures for ELL students?
• What are the challenges with working with ELL students?
• What are the specific needs of ELLs and how should their needs be addressed?
• What do you believe are the best pedagogical approaches/best practices to teaching ELL elementary students?

When ELLs are acquiring a second or an additional language, it is important for teachers to use their knowledge of SLA strategies and studies in finding and using best pedagogical practices that cultivates their students’ learning. Teachers should think about the effective teaching strategies that support students’ active learning affective factors in their SLA process.

Summary

The goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences, behaviors, and perceptions, of ELL urban public school educators from SPS. Efforts were made to understand best pedagogical approaches for educating ELL students, the challenges ELL educators face, the needs of ELLs themselves, and the best way to address these needs. The study used purposive and snowball sampling to select the participants and held in-depth interviews to interview all participants.

Interviews were transcribed, a search for emerging themes and subthemes took place, and then connections between the themes were made prior to the documentation of the results. The result section included emergent thematic analysis and discussion. For this study, emerging themes that were identified were listed alongside subthemes. Time was spent analyzing and
looking for connections between these themes. To be specific, the emergent themes were listed, while the researcher searched for connections between them. A table of themes (ordered comprehensibly and coherently) was then produced.

The goal of the study was to learn and understand ELL educators’ experience and to make suggested recommendations to ELL educational policy and programs based on these findings. The purpose was also to contribute to the existing scholarly literature on the factors that influence the success and challenges of ELL students. Overall, the implications and recommendations of this research study can work to improve existing ELL policies, as well as teaching and learning models and programs for ELL students and their educators.
Chapter IV: Report of Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings, including the significance of ELL educators’ background in the Somerville Public Schools (SPS). This includes the participants’ gender, race, cultural background, educational level, general teaching experience, work experience in SPS, and their beliefs about teaching ELLs. This study was designed to answer the following:

1. What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?
2. Does race or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?
3. A third question on the attitude and beliefs of ELL educators became an important element in understanding the educational landscape for ELL students. Therefore, it was important to add a sub-question that was related to the perceptions, attitudes, and experience of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools.

Findings of this study have filled several research gaps that had been previously underdeveloped. The basis of this study was designed to help understand pedagogical issues related to teaching ELL students. To this end, the findings of this study identified that an ELL educators’ background contributed to the pedagogy of teaching ELL students. In addition, the findings show the need to be sensitive to students and families’ cultural and linguistic needs, building meaningful bridges between the home and school cultures. The findings of this study have made a significant contribution not only to the literature concerning pedagogical principles of educating ELL students, but also to influence policies concerning instruction as it pertains particularly to immigrant students of various cultures and ethnic backgrounds. This author
believes that these findings will not only be useful in improving ELL instruction in public schools, (such as Somerville Public Schools), but also for all educational stakeholders.

**Background**

This chapter presents the findings of qualitative data concerning 32 ELL educators’ beliefs, attitudes, and experiences from the SPS District in Massachusetts. The backgrounds of ELL students were presented in Chapter One. To put the findings into perspective, it is important to give a background of the ELL educators in Somerville who participated in this study.

**Background of ELL education in Somerville, Massachusetts.** As indicated earlier in chapter one, SPS is a small, but diverse urban public school district in Massachusetts that had an enrollment of 4,931 students in school year (SY) 2016-2017. In SY 2015-2016, SPS served about 2,438 students (49.7%) who came from a home where English was not their first language. During SY 2015-16, there were 903 documented ELL students, which did not include Former Limited English Proficient (FLEP) or those who were Dually Identified in SPS. In SY 2016-2017, the number of SPS’ students who spoke a first language that was not English (about 50%) remained the same compared to the state’s 20.1%. ELL students in SPS made up about 20% of the population, compared to the state’s 9.5% ELL population. SPS served 21.7% of students with disabilities, 60.2% with high needs, and 39.4% who are considered to be economically disadvantaged (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education School and District Profiles, 2017). Table 4 below shows information on students in SPS compared to students in the state for school year 2016-2017 (Table 4).
Table 4

Selected Populations of SPS Students Compared to State 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>% of District</th>
<th>% of State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Language Not English</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learner</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Needs</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education School and District Profiles, 2017 http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=02740000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=305&).

In 2016-2017, SPS was responsible for serving students in 13 schools. The Massachusetts Elementary and Secondary Education School and District Profiles reported the following on SPS’ 13 schools for SY 2016-2017:

- The Capuano Early Childhood Center, an early childhood center serving only preschool and kindergarten students. The Capuano educated 332 students. At the Capuano, 51.2% of the students’ first languages were not English and 40.7%. Of the student population were ELLs, 23.2% were students with disabilities, 68.1% had high needs, and 31.9% were considered economically disadvantaged. There were 25 teachers teaching at the Capuano. One hundred percent of the teachers held licenses in their teaching assignments and 100% of core academic classes were taught by teachers who were highly qualified. The student-to-teacher ratio was 13.6 to 1.
• Benjamin G. Brown School, an elementary school that served kindergarten to 6th grade students. Nearly 13% of the student population at the Brown School spoke a first language that was not English. About 2% of their students were ELLs, 8.5% were students with disabilities, 20.8% had high needs and 13.1% were economically disadvantaged. About 20 teachers taught at the Brown School and 100% of them held teaching licenses in their teaching assignments. Additionally, 100% of the core academic classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio was 13.8 to 1.

• East Somerville Community School (ESCS), an elementary school that served kindergarten to 8th grade students. ESCS educated 332 students, of which 71.2% of the student population spoke a first language other than English: 28.6% were ELLs, 17% had disabilities, 68% were considered high needs, and 46.1% were economically disadvantaged. The ESCS had 50 teachers and 98% of them held licenses in their teaching assignments, with 97.5% of core academic classes were taught by teachers who were highly qualified. The student-to-teacher ratio was 14.0 to 1.

• Albert F. Argenziano School at Lincoln Park, an elementary school that served preschool to eight grade students. The Argenziano educated 564 students, 50.2% of which spoke a first language that was not English. ELLs made up 26.6% of the population, 14.9% were students with disabilities, 55.7% had high needs, and 32.6% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged. The Argenziano School had about 40 teachers and 99.7% of them held licenses in their teaching assignments. All of the teachers of core academic classes taught were considered “highly qualified.” The student-to-teacher ratio was 14.6 to 1.
• Arthur D. Healey School, an elementary school that served pre-K to 8th grade students. The Healy educated 428 students. Students whose first language was not English represented 49.8% of the population. ELLs made up 21.5% of the student body, 24.3% were students with disabilities, 72.2% had high needs, and 53.5% were economically disadvantaged. The Healy had about 43 teachers and 100% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments, with 100% of the core academic classes also being taught by teachers who were highly qualified. The student-to-teacher ratio was 11.2 to 1.

• West Somerville Neighborhood School (WSNS), an elementary school that served pre-school to 8th grade students. WSNS educated 377 students. Students whose first language is not English comprised 26.5% of the population, while ELLs made up only 4.5% of the student body. Students with disabilities made up 17.5% of the student population, of which, 48.8% were considered high needs and 36.3% were economically disadvantaged. WSNS had a total of 25 teachers and 100% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments, with 86.6% of the core classes being taught by highly qualified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio was 14.3 to 1.

• Winter Hill Community School (WHCS), an elementary school that served pre-K to 8th grade students. WHCS educated 462 students and 26.5% of the student population spoke a first language other than English. WHCS had an ELL student population of 4.5%, 48.8% of the students had high needs, and 36.3% were economically disadvantaged. There were 40 teachers at WHCS and 100% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments and 100% of the core academic classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio was 10.7 to 1.
• John F. Kennedy School served pre-K, to 8th grade. The Kennedy educated 471 students, 18% of which spoke a first language that was not English, but only 2% of their student population were classified as ELLs. Students with disabilities made up 28.9% of the student population, 43.9% had high needs, and 29.3% were considered economically disadvantaged. There were about 39 teachers at the Kennedy School, of which 97.8% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments, while 100% of the core academic classes at the Kennedy were taught by teachers who were highly qualified. The student-to-teacher ratio was 11.3 to 1.

• Next Wave Junior High, a middle school that served 6th to 8th grade students, educated 16 students, none of which were listed as ELLs. However, 62.5% of them spoke a first language that was not English. This is the same percentage of students (62.5%) who were considered students with disabilities. A high percentage of the student body, 93.8%, were classified as having high needs, and 62.5% of them were considered economically disadvantaged. Next Wave had about 9 teachers and 99.4% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments. All of the core classes were taught by highly qualified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio was 3 to 1.

• Somerville High School, a high school that served 9th to 12th grade students, educated 1,259 students, of which 57.4% of the population spoke a first language that was not English. ELLs made up 15.4% of the student body, 16.9% were students with disabilities, 58% had high needs, and 39.6% were economically disadvantaged. Out of about 117 teachers, 96.7% of them were licensed in their teaching assignments and 98.2% of Somerville High School teachers were highly qualified in the core academic classes they taught. The student-to-teacher ratio was 10.5 to 1.
• Full Circle High School, an alternative high school that served students in 9th to 12th grade, had a student population of 61 students, 34.4% of which spoke a first language that was not English. About 2% of the students at Full Circle were considered ELLs, 67.2% were students with disabilities, 88.5% had high needs, and 73.8% were economically disadvantaged. Nearly all, 99.8%, of the teachers at Full Circle were licensed and 93.5% of the teachers who taught core academic classes were considered as highly qualified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio was 3.7 to 1.

**Background of ELL educators in the study.** There were a total of 32 educators who participated in this research study, all of whom held various educational positions and had different experiences working with ELLs. Participants of this study included five general education teachers, who taught subjects such as mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA), science, history, and social studies. General education teachers are not required to have special education or ESL certifications, although they may have some training in these fields. ELLs and students with special needs could also be found in the general education program.

Seven English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and specialists participated in this study. These seven ESL-certified teachers and specialists instruct ELLs whose first language is not English. Four bilingual teachers who taught in SPS’s only dual language program also participated in this study. These bilingual teachers taught literacy and academic content in both English and Spanish. Three special education teachers who participated in this study taught dually identified students. Dually identified students are special education students (those with a wide range of learning, emotional, and physical disabilities). One of the participants was a “redirect teacher.” A redirect teacher in Somerville worked as a liaison between students, families, and the school and redirected students who required additional academic and social
support. One of the participants of the study was an ELL guidance counselor who provided ELL support and resources, offered ELL students advice on problems, and assisted ELLs with course selection, career, and college plans. A content specialist who had many roles and responsibilities including teaching, program administration, and instructional partnership participated in this study. One of the participants in this study was a department head. She worked directly with teachers and students. Many of her students were current and former ELL students.

Additionally, administrators, such as one assistant program director and three program directors, participated in this study. These administrators were leaders in early childhood, SPS’ ELL program, and the Unidos Dual Language Bilingual Program. As shown in Figure 6, the researcher used a comprehensive graph to demonstrate various participants’ roles.
Gender. In 2015-2016, Somerville teachers were 78.5% female and 21.5% male. Twenty-eight of the study participants were females (87% of study participants) and four (13% of study participants) were males (Figure 7).
Racial and cultural backgrounds. Research participants of this study were asked to discuss their racial and cultural backgrounds. The researcher paid close attention to the best way to word the question relating to racial and cultural backgrounds of the participants in order to gain true, honest, objective, or subjective responses. The question posed to participants was: “Does race or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?”

In this study, some of the participants did not make any specific distinction between race (defined in this context as one’s skin color) and ethnicity (defined in this context as one’s cultural heritage and background) when responding. Three percent of the research participants considered themselves “Asian.” In this study, Asian can be defined as an individual having origins from the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent (including Cambodia), China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, or Vietnam. Of the research
participants in this study, 6% stated they were Black. These participants had origins from various racial groups of African descent and they used terms like “Black” and “African-American” to describe their race. One Black participant discussed her cultural background as Cape-Verdean since she was born and raised in Cape Verde. Of the participants, 13% referred to themselves as Hispanic or Latino/Latina and did not make a distinction as to whether they were Black or White Hispanic or Latino/Latina. Hispanics or Latino/Latinas, regardless of race are individuals of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish cultural origin. However, these 13% of Hispanic/Latino participants mainly had origins from Puerto-Rico and Argentina. In this study, individuals who had origins of European, the Middle Eastern, or North African descent referred to themselves as White because of their skin tone. Overall, 78% of the participants stated they were White. Many of these White participants classified their cultural backgrounds as American, Irish, Eastern European, German, Welsh, Russian, Italian, Canadian, Jewish, Cuban, and Argentinian. One of the participants, who considered herself White, expressed how she considered herself truly bicultural in terms of her ethnicity, because she had White skin, but was born of German parents, and was raised in Jamaica. The chart below shows the racial and cultural background of all participants in this research study (Figure 8).
The goal of this study was to obtain research samples of racially and ethnically diverse teachers to reflect the diversity of the ELL student population. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website, in 2015-2016, SPS had 5.3% African-Americans, 2.3% Asians, 9.1% Hispanics, 82.6% Whites, and 7% Multirace/Non-Hispanic. Even though efforts were made to talk to SPS educators from various racial and cultural backgrounds, the researcher was not always successful. Two Haitian educators who had experiences working with ELLs were referred to the researcher for participation in this study. They, however, were not interested in participating.
**Fields of Study.** Participants in this study were asked to discuss their educational backgrounds. Some of their fields of study were unsurprisingly related to education (early childhood education, child development, elementary education, ESL, bilingual education, education, and curriculum instruction). There were, however, fields of study in the Humanities, Liberal Arts, and soft sciences, as well as a few in the mathematics and science arenas. Figure 9 below shows a breakdown of the participants’ areas of study.
Figure 9. Participants’ Fields of Study

Educational backgrounds. Along with diverse fields of study, participants’ education levels also varied. As shown in Figure 10, 22% of the participants had their Bachelor’s, 63% had their Master’s, 3% had a Certificate of Advance Graduate Degrees (CAGS), 6% were
Doctoral candidates at local universities, and 6% of the participants had earned Doctoral degrees.

The chart below shows the educational background of all participants in this research study (Figure 10).

![Pie chart showing educational backgrounds]

**Figure 10.** Participants’ Educational Backgrounds

**Type of ELL training.** Outside of structured academic courses and earned degrees, many participants also received additional training specific to working with ELL students.

Participants of this study were asked to discuss the type of training they received to work with ELL students. Seven participants received Professional Development (PD) from SPS on how to work with ELLs. Many of the PDs included some information on the immigration experience, training on effective ELL strategies, and on new ELL curriculum (The Reach Program) and assessments, such as the MELA-O and ACCESS 2.0 for ELLs. Four participants took ESL classes that covered effective ELL strategies as part of their coursework in their teacher training.
programs in undergraduate and/or graduate schools. Twelve of the participants earned their ESL certifications. Six of the participants received SEI endorsement training. Thirteen of the participants were trained in two or more areas. For example, many of the participants who received training in teacher training programs were also certified in ESL. Some participants attended Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) training and district PD, had ESL certifications, and took college courses (Figure 11).

![Bar Chart](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 11.** Participants’ ELL Qualifications/Training

**Findings**

The findings relating to the pedagogical approaches of educating ELLs, as well as the overall experience of educators, and their perception and attitudes among the 32 ELL educators in the study are presented as follows.
Best pedagogical practices of ELL educators. All 32 educators were asked to discuss what they believed the best pedagogical approaches/best practices to teaching ELL students were. Study participants found numerous ways to support their students’ SLA, oral language fluency, and overall teaching and learning experience. When participants of this study were asked to discuss what they believed were the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, a variety of ideas came up. Research participants discussed the importance of schematic building and finding what ELLs know, activating their prior knowledge, and bridging what students already know from their experiences. Educators spoke about the importance of using visuals, kinesthetic learning or total physical response (TRP), and technology to support student learning. They discussed peer interaction, in which students were provided with ample opportunities to engage in language development and small group work. Educators participating in this study also discussed providing ELLs with opportunities to make more choices in their learning, engaging students in topics they were interested in, providing opportunities for students to relate and connect to what they are learning, and making learning relevant and visible for them.

Educators in this study also discussed the need for differentiated instruction, in which teachers adjust lesson plans to accommodate the diverse learning and language levels and styles of the students in their classes. Many participants pointed out that ELL and FLEP students used the same curricula and assessments; however, teachers needed to work hard at differentiating instruction to support learning for their ELL students. Best pedagogical approaches, best practices, and differentiated instruction for ELL students came up:

- Plan with colleagues and being intentional
- Use students’ prior knowledge and background information/ schematic building
• Create scaffolded lessons and instruction
• Introduce pre-teaching vocabulary with visuals
• Send writing prompts home
• Incorporate everyday-life concepts (i.e. economics, employment, consumer habits, of various ethnic groups)
• Differentiate instruction and teach to students’ different learning styles
• Provide comprehensible input for students and connect any new learning to the learner’s prior knowledge
• Use visual supports
• Simplify language for English Language Learners
• Use sentence stems/ sentence starters
• Use project based and cooperative learning models to help ELLs learn content (science, math, social studies) information
• Use activities that reflect a variety of sensory opportunities: visual, auditory, and tactile
• Use exit tickets
• Incorporate kinesthetic learning and Total Physical Response (TPR) in lessons
• Introduce bank words with pictures
• Provide sentence frames
• Provide opportunities for partnered reading, multiple read-aloud, and shared reading
• Engage in open response, *Turn-and-Talk*, and Reader’s Response
• Promote journal writing, interactive writing, model writing as part of the classroom routine
• Keep vocabulary journals
• Teach specific-tiered vocabulary
• Use songs, poetry, tongue twisters
• Reward students with positive reinforcement
• Provide extra tutoring before and after school
• Provide summer programs (SPELL Summer Enrichment Program)
• Use realia
• Use technology (Smartboards, computers, iPads, etc.)
• Check-in frequently with students
• Organize and utilize Listening and Media Centers
• Provide wait time to process information and answer questions
• Test for comprehension through the use of various strategies (self-to-text, text-to-text)

In each of these strategies and practices, flexibility, motivation, and explicit instruction are key to effective teaching of ELLs.

Experiences of ELL educators. Participants’ teaching experience varied from none to over four decades. Of the participants, 11 had over 20 years of teaching experience. The table (Figure 12) below shows participants’ educational and teaching experience.
Figure 12: Participants’ Work Experience

Educators’ Experience in SPS. Although some of the participants taught in other urban school districts, many of the participants started their teaching careers in Somerville and have continued to work in SPS. Teaching experience in SPS is shown in Figure 13.
Figure 13. Participants’ Experience in SPS

**Former ELL Students.** Participants were asked whether or not they, themselves, were former ELL students. As seen in Figure 14, 7 participants considered themselves to be former ELL students, while 25 of them did not. Many of the participants who did not consider themselves former ELLs spoke different languages as children and learned English as a second or an additional language, either as child or an adult. The chart below shows whether or not participants of this research study were former ELL students.
Figure 14. Participants As Former ELL Students

Educators’ Perceptions, Attitudes, and Experiences

In this section, the researcher provided findings on the educators’ overall perceptions and attitudes towards their ELL students and families, as well as brief contextual information on the participants’ backgrounds and experiences.

Perception. During the interviews, the researcher collected qualitative data from all 32 participants on their perceptions and attitudes, and how these impacted their teaching practices. Generally speaking, all of the educators in this study believed that the world was changing and a more multicultural understanding of our world was needed in the classroom. They believed that Somerville had changed racially and culturally. For many of the teachers who taught for over 20 years, that changed occurred over the course of their teaching careers and that change was
reflected in the SPS student population. The educators generally believed that all ELL students were capable of learning.

Educators believed that it was important to honor diversity and differences among all students. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) or Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) (Gay, 2000) are teaching practices that take into account the individual student’s cultural background and use it to create a more holistic learning environment for all the students. Through teaching students from a vast array of backgrounds, the need to teach about tolerance towards other nations, other cultures, and other students, and to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity, has become part of the ELL pedagogical approach. ELL educators believed that the diverse ELL student population in SPS brought multiculturalism and enrichment to the learning community for all. The participants of this study found CRT and CRP to be meaningful and relevant in educating ELL students.

Many educators believed that everyone was capable of acquiring a second or additional language (although not at the same rate), and that students as well as educators should be given the opportunity to acquire an additional language. One participant discussed how the learner’s natural and innate ability to learn language, or Chomsky’s theory of Language Acquisition Device (LAD), is accessible to all. She, among other participants, expressed that it did not matter where a student came from, but only that he or she had access to language learning curriculum in order to successfully develop English language skills. This is why providing various opportunities to learn and develop SLA through vocabulary and oral language development were crucial.

Some educators interviewed for the study felt that cultural background and/or country of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which ELL students learned, while others in the
study did not. Some educators pointed out that all students were different, with various learning needs and learning styles, and that students should not be labeled according to what specific countries they or their families come from. In other words, assumptions on specific learning needs should not be made based on country or culture of origin. Those educators who did not wholly believe background formed a student’s learning ability, found the need to use differentiated instruction - visuals, technology, kinesthetic learning - for vocabulary comprehension and understanding in all subject areas were more important than ever. The educators generally found ELL students’ experiences to be unique. Many teachers discussed the need to find out students’ proficiency levels, pay attention to language objectives while teaching ELLs, and to explicitly teach and think about all four domains (speaking, listening, reading and writing) when teaching any content.

Although some educators in this study believed that it was an easier experience for younger children to acquire a new language, many of the participants felt that grade level and age did not necessarily play a role in developing SLA. One teacher suggested that younger children tend to be more comfortable with learning a second or additional language because they were often learning and interacting with the same group of children all day, as opposed to constantly switching classes in the upper grades. Conversely, some teachers articulated that students’ prior educational experiences, educational backgrounds, and countries of origin, played a critical role in SLA.

Many of the participants of the study believed that educators who came from another culture and/or spoke another language were able to better relate to their ELL students and identify with them. Many discussed that they were able to better relate to and understand the challenges ELL students and their families faced. Many believed that their own cultural
backgrounds helped them to understand their ELL students’ overall needs. Even though there were mixed responses among the participants, when they were asked whether or not cultural background and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on ways in which students learned, overall, the educators in this study found their cultural backgrounds made them more effective in teaching ELL students.

Many believed that ELL students were eager to learn English and succeed academically. One teacher discussed the fact that she did not want to buy into the idea ELLs did not want to learn English. There is a misconception among some people both in and out of schools that believe that ELLs have no desire to standardized English. She, among a number of other participants, strongly disagreed with this idea. Overall, the educators in this study felt that ELL students wanted to do well. They believed that the families of ELL students who immigrated to the U.S. came to improve their lives. In addition, the educators believed that ELL families wanted the best for their children and wanted their children to succeed. In terms of parent and family engagement, educators in this study felt that it was important to be flexible and find ways to accommodate the families, particularly those who were not able to engage in school events due to long working hours and/or because they had limited English speaking skills.

**Attitudes.** The 32 educators who participated in this study had a positive attitude about teaching ELL students and working with ELL families. The educators who were born in Somerville and/or lived in Somerville for an extended period of time expressed particular pride in their city and school district. Furthermore, they all demonstrated pride in their profession, their school, their ELL students, and their work with ELL students and families.

Overall, the educators found the ELL students and the families were committed to learning. Several educators elaborated on the fact that they saw the strongest commitment to
learning and educational development among their ELL students. The educators in this study also discussed a variety of things they enjoyed about their ELL students. Some of the things they enjoyed included: learning from ELL students and their families, learning about new cultures and languages, learning about different perspectives and values, helping students learn, seeing their progress and development in learning the English language, and helping students relate to the curriculum.

Many of the participants brought up the need for all educators of ELLs to understand the many challenges these students and families face. Many of these challenges included the often daunting struggle of being in a new country and adapting to a new culture. Some of the participants also discussed other external obstacles to learning commonly faced by ELLs:

- Living with extended family or non-relatives
- Experiencing trauma and tragic experiences
- Traveling to a new country alone or with strangers,
- Families working extensive hours a week
- Families not feeling comfortable or safe
- Families being fearful (perhaps due to their immigration status)
- Homelessness
- Residing in overcrowded living situations
- Children caring for siblings and not having time to complete homework
- Families not attending school events or meetings
- Students struggling with new academic models or structures

Many educators brought up the challenge of educating ELLs with interrupted learning, as well as dually identified students.
Summary of Educators’ Perceptions and Attitudes

It was relevant and important for the researcher to study the perception and attitudes of the educators who participated in this study. ELL educators have a critical role in ELL students’ academic achievement and success. Therefore, understanding and contextualizing educators’ perceptions and attitudes towards ELLs and their families was critical in this study. Educators’ perceptions and attitudes can affect the quality and type of instruction ELLs receive, as well as their overall progress and achievement. All of the educators who participated in this study had a positive attitude toward and perception of their ELL students and families, as well as in their own work with ELL students.

Experiences of Participants

Participants were provided with a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. One goes into as much detail as possible, but often, specific identifiers (such as subjects taught or unique background details) are left out to ensure anonymity.

“Mrs. Hughes”. The first interviewee was a general education elementary school teacher who had been teaching in SPS for 30 years; 20 years at one school and 10 years at her current school. Mrs. Hughes, a Somerville resident who grew up and attended school in Somerville, was as proud and passionate about her work with all of her students as she was about the city where she was raised. Mrs. Hughes had been teaching ELL students for her entire career. Mrs. Hughes’ professional experience working with ELLs in SPS included working with newcomers with English Language Development (ELD) level 1, as well as ELL students with ELD levels 2, 3, and 4. Throughout the interview, Mrs. Hughes was comfortable and answered all of the questions asked by the researcher. Mrs. Hughes had a positive attitude about her ELL students. She believed her ELL students were an asset to her school and her classroom. She
explained that her ELL students were wonderful, and that they enriched her classroom, encouraged differences, and provided diversity.

Well, my personal beliefs and attitudes about ELL students is only that they enrich and broaden all of our horizons and all of our issues. When you teach in a multicultural school in a very urban district I think it's important that other boys and girls understand that ELL students are just part of our class and part of our school and that all students have strengths and all students... all of us need help and modifications, whether it's in ELL, math, reading, so I think if you develop that culture in your classroom that we are different. We encourage differences, and that ELL students can bring something different to our classroom, which some other students may not be able to.

Mrs. Hughes discussed the differences in background and experience that her diverse student population brought into the classroom. This is the aspect of her job that she enjoyed the most.

It's - you know, anyone who comes from a different cultural background or a different - even a different background or family dynamic, it always is interesting because it's sort of like in one way a challenge as a teacher because you want to understand, and this is just another channel of getting the student to learn, but also when they're sharing their experiences. This little boy in my room this year was from Peru and he was telling us about Peru and how he rode this bus to see his cousins and the things that he saw in Peru and other children talk about their experiences, going to Ireland and seeing their cousins but then she has a family in Haiti and then the other children- It broadens the whole class' horizons.

She provided ample information on the racial and cultural backgrounds of her current and former students and her overall teaching experience with ELLs in SPS. According to Mrs. Hughes, the
racial and cultural backgrounds of her ELL students varied each year, as did her attitudes and beliefs about them.

Each year it varies. The particular student that I had this year, who was ELL identified, is from Peru. Basically, a lot of our students are from Portugal-Portuguese, Spanish kinds of backgrounds, Haitian Creole kind of backgrounds. Every year it changes. We've also had some European immigrant children from Russia. Each year it changes. Basically that's kind of the basic cultural backgrounds we have here at this building.

As a White female with a French-Canadian and Irish background, Mrs. Hughes did not feel that her racial and cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students.

Because my family has been ingrained in the United States multi generations before my generation, so there wasn't a strong cultural background from my mom or my dad's side that significantly influenced my ability to teach ELLs.

When Mrs. Hughes was asked if she felt the students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which ELL students learn, she answered that it depended on the country of origin.

Depending on the country of origin, one particular Russian student had some very... the parents had a very defined way of how their culture and how their educational experience was different from that of the United States. Other cultural backgrounds, it didn't have an impact on it. Depending on... I did have one student in particular from Australia 3 years ago that all of the Australian education system was based on pre and post-tests, and a child moves along when you pass a test. A child would never stay in any particular grade. It's when you pass a unit and then they move on. It was... their experience was different than their experience here in the United States.
Mrs. Hughes did not believe that grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English based on her experiences as an elementary school teacher.

No, because whether a student comes into the 2nd grade or coming into high school as an ELL student, I think their experiences are unique to them, meaning their language acquisition, we approach it sort of the same way, finding out where are they proficient, teaching them tier 2 words, how we assess their conversational speech, how much language they've acquired. Because I only taught elementary, I believe the younger they are- because of the amount of experience, limited experience in school, meaning maybe only kindergarten and 1st grade, that it might make a little bit of difference in the fact that I could maybe get them caught up. The time isn't as crucial for young children as it would be for maybe somebody who comes into high school and is having difficulty learning the language and then needs to learn and become adapted in reading and comprehension and vocabulary. I'm not sure if that's true in a high school, but definitely for the younger kids it seems like it's an easier- an easy experience for them.

Mrs. Hughes compared younger elementary ELL students’ abilities to learn to those of high school ELL students. Mrs. Hughes found elementary ELL students acquired language at a faster pace than those students in high school. When asked to explain if there was a social aspect to learning, Mrs. Hughes replied:

Absolutely. Because the student is with me all day long and I really get to know the student, I know from middle school and up they switch teachers for specific subjects. I'm able to get to know the student better. I'm able to get to know the family better. The student becomes more comfortable, they're with the same group of children all day, so I can match up children with partners or cooperative learning a little bit better because I'm
with that student all day long, where as I'm not being... another teacher isn't seeing that student, four other teachers aren't seeing that student during the day, so that's why I think us elementary people have that advantage of just getting a little bit closer in understanding them better.

When Mrs. Hughes was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching, she discussed bridging and scaffolding as optimum methods for helping students to make connections when learning English.

Again, finding - schematic building. Finding out what they know. Scaffolding, bridging, making that important bridge to what they already know from their experiences. A lot of peer interaction, oral interaction with peers, a lot of speaking opportunities, a lot of small group work because they may not be comfortable with large group work. Again, in all children, I believe that if you can connect something to something that they already know and bridge it and scaffolding it then it makes more sense. For ELL students though, you have that language piece, that speaking, that listening, that making sure they understand. The word power to us can mean many things. ELL student, that has to be specific instruction to what that means in that particular situation.

“Mrs. Adams”. Mrs. Adams, a White female who has taught for a total of 19 years was the second interviewee. Seventeen years ago, she taught in a different urban public school district, before moving to SPS, where she has taught for the past 16 years. Her professional experience working with ELL students included teaching ELLs and former ELLs who came from sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classes. She taught them specific content curriculum. At the time of the interview, Mrs. Adams was teaching honors social studies and history classes
at the high school level. Mrs. Adams discussed her students’ racial and cultural backgrounds as being very diverse.

In Somerville, we have everything. We have students from about forty-three different countries. This year alone in my classes I had students of Irish background, Scottish background, students coming from Honduras, from Panama, one kid whose parents were Nepalese, and Filipino, Haitian. I'm trying to think where else. You name it. Indian, Chinese, Nepal. You name it. We have students from everywhere.

Mrs. Adams, however, pointed out that in her honors history class, there were fewer ELL students compared to her other general classes, highlighting some of the additional obstacles to success faced by these learners.

Like I said, I teach the Honors, and so there'd be fewer of them, fewer kids willing to make that jump right from SEI up into Honors, but this year I had one from Nepal, and last year I had one from Haiti, and they did need extra support, especially with the sentence... Actually the kid this year is a really fluent writer, but the one last year needed more with the sentence stems and some structure.

She also discussed the types of support ELL students in her own classes and her department required.

In the Sheltered English classes in my department they use the WIDA rubrics and they use the Measured Performance Index - MPIs to do different assessments depending on- I actually had the SEI teacher do a training with my teachers on how to differentiate assessment, so based on their English level, their ACCESS level, they might have the same question…and the ones who are getting close to transitioning are writing a full essay, and then there's this little template you use, and then maybe the ones who are at
level two and three are writing a paragraph, and the level ones are doing either sentence completion or a picture collage, answering the same question trying to demonstrate the same concepts, but using the language that's appropriate to theirs.

Mrs. Adams felt that the students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which ELL students learn.

Yes, and I wish I understood more about that, because kids are different. You can't just say all kids from Haiti, or all kids from Nepal, learn this way, but it definitely has an impact, and it also matters how long they've been in this country, and how long they've been in our school system. If a kid has been in our school system since Kindergarten, there might be some impact but it's less than the kid who moved here in 5th grade and had already been brought up in a different school system. I think you can see it more clearly when a kid has been to school in a different country, but then I still think there's different ways to interact with the material. I wish I had a better handle of that based on their family background.

Mrs. Adams spoke comfortably about both her and her student’s cultural backgrounds. She explained that she was a White woman from the middle of the country with English and German ancestry. She stated that her cultural background made her less effective in teaching her ELL students. She discussed how the student teachers in her department came from various countries and spoke other languages and that they were more effective in teaching ELL students.

We have a couple of student teachers in my department who are from different countries and have learned English, and I think it really helps them connect with the students, and understand what the kids might be going through, and how they'd be seeing things.
Mrs. Adams had a positive attitude about teaching ELL students and their families. She discussed how there is a group of ELL students and their families who are committed to educational development and came to the United States to learn and seek an education.

We have such a range of ELL students. I don't think I can narrow that down. There's a group of ELL students that I described who's families have come to this country, or they've come to this country to learn and for education, and I think sometimes you see the strongest commitment of any student I've ever seen in those students. Then there are kids for whom just being here is a struggle. Their background, they might be here by themselves, they might be working sixty hours a week, they might be taking care of siblings, and so I think that everybody wants to learn. I don't buy into that that nobody wants to learn English. I think everybody here wants to, and everybody came here to do better. I think it's just the setup of people's lives and attitudes that how far they can actually go with that.

When she was asked to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students, she stated the following:

I teach World History, and so the ELL students are coming from different countries, so talk about different perspective, different values. You can talk about any part of the history and they can relate it to something. They have something to share from their own background and their own country, or their own culture.

She believed that grade level and/or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English as a second or additional language.
I don't know enough in my experiences, and I haven't taught elementary schools, so I couldn't really speak to that, but I'm sure it does, as does how much school they had in their home country before they came here.

Mrs. Adams brought up the idea of Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) or Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). Many of the ELLs she worked with experienced interruption in their learning due to war, migration, and/or other factors prior to starting school in SPS. Many of the ELLs also may have never attended school prior to SPS due to a variety of reasons: lack of resources, teachers, and/or financial challenges (Decapua & Marshall, 2010). Ms. Adams spoke about the challenges with working with SLIFE or SIFE students. She pointed out that ELL students who did attend school in their native countries tend to learn English rapidly and do well in school, while those whose learning is interrupted often suffer academically.

At the high school, our big challenge is kids with interrupted learning. So a kid who's moved here in 9th grade but they've been a top student in El Salvador, they're going to be a top student in the United States, and study and pick up English pretty quickly. That doesn't mean the kid who has had interrupted school can't do that, but it's a lot more likely if they've been in a school system in that country they're from, or a kid who's been in and out of school, they're still going to be struggling a little more. Not everyone, but in general, I would say.

When the researcher asked her why she thought SLIFE or SIFE students face educational challenges, she continued:

It's almost like school is its own culture, so showing up everyday and doing the homework, thinking of yourself as a learner, I think all of those have a very big impact,
like learning how to learn. Even language, there's a concept in even language. You can see the kids who were top students in Brazil or El Salvador come and they apply themselves and they know how to be a student, and they see themselves as a top student, and they can end up in AP classes by their junior, senior year if they show up in ninth grade.

The researcher asked if she thought the success of certain students had to do with the fact that the students already mastered content in their native languages.

They're literate in their own language, and we have kids, who are barely literate in their own language, and then they're coming, trying to learn English and they're also trying to teach them to read in their own language, and then that makes it a lot more difficult.

When Mrs. Adams was asked to describe her school’s ELL teaching policies, she answered that there was a big push for educators to think of ELL students’ access to language. Thus, language objectives became an important part of planning, teaching, and developing vocabulary for ELLs.

As a school, many years ago we had a huge push that tried to distill parts of the ELL teaching. I think the big push that we first got was about language objectives and trying to show that every time you do content you could also do a language objective. That's one way to hit approaching to ELL, and then the more training we get, everybody's had the Sheltered English training now, the RETELL training, we can expand on how to support ELL on different scaffolds, and our department, I think our biggest scaffold for ELLs is a real emphasis on Tier 2 vocabulary instruction, explicit Tier 2 vocabulary.

Words like controversy. I can't remember all the words off the top of my head.

I think our other most common strategy we use for ELL is differentiated reading, so you might all be doing a reading on something in history and you might find one that you
either heavily annotate or excerpt. Like there's a great news website called Newsela. Are you familiar with Newsela? You can get the same article on several different levels, and so we'll use things like that to help our kids who maybe don't read as… vocabulary, but again, it's Somerville. It's not just ELLs who have that. There's just kids who have limited vocabulary for whatever reason.

She pointed out that at the high school level, other students beside ELLs also have limited vocabularies.

The thing is, it's not just ELL students that don't have them, it's kids from a background that don't have as much language in their background. We do a lot of sentence stems. We can add sentence stems for students and we do a lot of Sentence starters, yeah. Especially when you're trying to switch into academic language, giving them models of sentence starters. Not every kid will get those but they're options for the ELL kids.

The researcher asked Mrs. Adams to discuss the model of instruction that was being used to teach ELL students. According to her, ELL students receive some support in their native languages (Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish). She discussed using the students’ native language to support instruction and to help them transition into learning in English only.

The way it works at the high school, students come in and they're getting some support in their native language. We really only have, we have Portuguese, Spanish, and a little Haitian-Creole, so they're mostly just getting straight English instruction with content, with a little bit of the native language, just for one year, and then when they're ready for the content, things like History, they move into the Sheltered English, with somebody who's trained, and everybody in the class is learning English at the same time as the
content, and then they move out for History into just the non-support classes, but every teacher's expected to be able to give English Language Learners support.

Mrs. Adams found many ways to support her ELL students’ SLA. She explicitly taught tier-2 academic vocabulary, used sentence stems or starters, previewed vocabulary, used more visuals, and differentiated instruction by using various reading levels or annotated readings.

There's the explicit instruction in Tier 2 academic vocabulary, sentence stems or sentence starters, different reading levels or annotated readings, but also trying to do those four principles, where in every classroom students are reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and being very deliberate about what it means to be a good listener, and deliberate about how you have class discussions, so I think those are the most, I feel like that's the surface level ELL instruction, but... Actually, you know what else I've employed for my ELL training is, and I've employed it with not all students, but it's very effective, is to preview the content before reading, it's huge. I think that's the one that I didn't realize how impactful it could be, but it works actually. I team taught Special Ed for a long time, and it worked really well with the... Anybody who had trouble reading and they're not going to get it the first time, to do just like a mini lecture of the basic points and key, and then have them read, just is a lot more effective. I find that helps a lot too. Maybe I use more visuals as well, too.

Mrs. Adams was asked how she supported her ELL students’ development of oral fluency in English. She was asked to explain students’ cognitive academic language proficiency, academic content, and content vocabulary.

This is something that I've actually been trained in and probably don't do as well recently because I've been in an Honors class. I'm trying to think back when I taught struggling
learners in general. I used to have them do a lot of visuals. Maybe you would explicitly teach the vocabulary, and have them do a fill-in-the-blank or matching. Actually I do this in my Honors too. Once you've learned content, I'll, like, a word sort, where they have to take these words and sort them, but sometimes you take four words and just have the students come up with a connection between the words. I think it's just paying explicit attention to the words. You can't just mention the words briefly and move on. The kids have to actually do something with the words several times in the unit or it doesn't stick. Again that's not just for ELL, that's for all students. A lot of ELL strategies are great for everybody.

When asked what strategy she favored in teaching ELL students, she responded:

I tried a word wall for a while. One or two people, I think, have a journal. I think it's more we do it by a unit as sort of a lot of people. The whole tenth grade team starts their units with that Tier 2 vocabulary, here's what you're going to need to know, and they do that before they start the reading, but again not just ELL students, kids don't have an academic vocabulary at all. You'd be shocked at what they don't know.

Mrs. Adams was asked whether or not she believed grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English.

Definitely. I don't know enough in my experiences, and I haven't taught elementary schools, so I couldn't really speak to that, but I'm sure it does, as does how much school they had in their home country before they came here.

When Mr. Adams was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:
We have such a range of ELL students; I don't think I can narrow that down. There's a group of ELL students that I described whose families have come to this country, or they've come to this country to learn and for education, and I think sometimes you see the strongest commitment of any student I've ever seen in those students. Then there are kids for whom just being here is a struggle. Their background, they might be here by themselves, they might be working sixty hours a week, they might be taking care of siblings, and so I think that everybody wants to learn. I don't buy into that that nobody wants to learn English. I think everybody here wants to, and everybody came here to do better. I think it's just the setup of people's lives and attitudes that how far they can actually go with that.

The researcher asked Mr. Adams to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and he answered:

- Just the different perspective… the ELL students are coming from different countries, so talk about different perspective, different values. You can talk about any part of the history and they can relate it to something. They have something to share from their own background and their own country or their own culture.

When Mrs. Adams was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches and best practices to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

- The piece I haven't said, that I also learned from my ELL training, is putting more choice into the curriculum, and we've actually been very deliberate about that, particularly in the World History curriculum, so that kids can learn about what they're interested in. For example, World History every time we do a unit, there's an independent research project, and a lot of times kids will choose, like they have to research a dictator of their choosing,
so kids from the Dominican Republic might choose the Dominican Republic, but they don't have to, so trying to put more choice, trying to make sure they connect. World History is easy because kids connect to the curriculum, but putting more choice in there, so even if it was US History, and it might seem foreign, having more choice where they can research something they're interested in.

“Mr. Smith”. Mr. Smith was a White, male teacher in his second year of teaching in SPS. His professional teaching experience included teaching a specific subject to elementary and middle school students. Some of his prior teaching experience included leading an after-school program and literacy work in two different, urban, public schools. He also worked with kindergarten emergent readers for a year in an urban, public school district. Due to the participant’s role as a specialist who taught and serviced students from two (K-8) schools in SPS, the racial and cultural backgrounds of his students varied. Mr. Smith worked with SPS students who came from different parts of the world: Vietnam, Nepal, Haiti, Italy, Brazil, and other Portuguese speaking countries. He expressed that a majority of his students had mixed cultural backgrounds. In contrast, Mr. Smith spoke openly about his lack of preparation and training prior to working with ELL students, particularly about his own cultural heritage. When he was asked how he felt his background influenced his teaching, he answered:

It's influenced my teaching in a way that I have a large curiosity for the different cultures of my student body, and I like to encourage that within the students. Coming from a household that spoke mostly English and that's what I was taught growing up through my schooling, most of the schools before college were not very diverse. I feel like I either didn't learn along ELL students, or wasn't aware of it as a young student. But the idea of culture and the second language was introduced through my
mom being a Spanish teacher. Then when I had the opportunity in middle school to take a language, I took Spanish as my second language and found that very interesting. Some of the Spanish has stuck with me and that's helped me communicate with some of the ELL students.

The researcher asked Mr. Smith if he felt his cultural background had made him more effective in teaching ELL students.

A little bit with the knowledge of Hispanic culture and their language, but definitely a great deal with my openness and curiosity and acceptance of other cultures. I feel it's also helpful in teaching that openness and acceptance to other students, and taking that... Or at least starting to take that into account when developing lessons and materials for teaching. That it considers different cultures and different languages.

The researcher asked Mr. Smith if he believed grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English.

Yeah, I do believe that can affect the learning of another language. This is sort of based on opinion, I don't have any specific sources to site. But it does seem that it's easier for maybe... I would think it would be easier for younger students to pick up and learn a new language while they are learning the first one, and maybe be a little more challenging for say, a teenager who is already accustomed to one language and learning the whole language system. A different grammar, a completely new vocabulary.

Especially if they are an ELL student who also has other learning disabilities. If they are having trouble learning their own language, I can only imagine it would be extra hard to learn a new language and rise up to the level that is expected of them at that grade and at that age level for their other peers?
When the researcher asked why he thought younger students were better at picking up new languages and language skills, he answered:

I loosely base that theory on the fact that the brain is still forming at that age, and a little bit more malleable. It also may be... I guess a lot of it would depend on how the teacher approaches it. That if a teacher is open to taking their ELL students into account, they could teach that vocabulary alongside of new English vocabulary.

I don't know, I guess that's just a loose theory. I'm not sure, because I guess it could also be a little bit overwhelming for a young student who is trying to take in all this new vocabulary.

When Mr. Smith was asked to discuss his beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, he placed emphasis on mutual respect between himself and his students. He gauged his own respect for the students through close attention to his communication style.

Yeah, and I think I had started that off by saying that my beliefs are the same for ELL students as any other student. As I thought about it more, I think I'd like to see ELL students treated with the same amount of respect, and I am to treat them with the same amount of respect as all other students.

But I guess my belief or my true attitude is that sometimes they need extra instruction. Or another check in. At least I feel that way because for the students who don't seem to know much English, I need to make sure that I'm communicating in some way what the lesson is and use some more questioning and different techniques to assess whether they are learning.

The researcher asked Mr. Smith to discuss what he most enjoyed about working with ELL students and he answered:
The different cultures and the different beliefs, and sometimes the different attitudes that come along with that. Yeah, just a different way of thinking and feeling and acting that I see in those students, that's what I like.

When Mr. Smith was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, he stated that he did not quite know and he was still hoping to find out.

“Mr. Francis”. Mr. Francis, the researcher’s fourth interviewee was a Latino male who was fluent in Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. Originally from Puerto Rico, Mr. Francis earned Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in English as a Second Language (ESL), and a second Master’s degree in science education. At the time of the interview, Mr. Francis was currently working on a third Master’s degree in school administration. He had been teaching for a total of 17 years, eight of which he taught ESL in Puerto Rico and then nine years in SPS’ dual language bilingual program. Mr. Francis explained that he dedicated his entire educational career to being an ELL teacher. He spoke openly about his teaching experiences both in Puerto Rico and the U.S. When he was asked how his background had influenced his teaching, he discussed being able to relate to his students.

Only because I can relate to the students. I know I can relate to the families as well. I know what they’re going through. Sometimes I can understand the way parents see education, which might be a slightly different from what is typical in the U.S. That course for background helps me understand that sometimes it's not like the parents don't care, but there's some cultures that depends, expect the school to step up on some things. Sometimes here we expect the family to do that. Sometimes their parents are expecting those things to be done by the school. By knowing those things in advance, I can know how to clarify to the parents like so and so is supposed to be happening at home. You
should try take them to a museum, stuff like that that helps kids. Sometimes they expect all those things should happen in school. For example, when I was here in summer, those are things the parents should be doing. They don't see that as part of their duty, their principal duties like provide food and shelter to their kids. I know those things in advance, so I tell them what are some of the expectations here so they can ask as far as it's possible to provide those things to their kids.

Mr. Francis believed his cultural background made him more effective in teaching his ELL students (who are mostly from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico).

I think so because being a learner of other languages as well, I can relate to different aspects of the language that are easier to acquire. I try to target those first, like basic vocabulary and vocabulary related to specific favorite things that they have. I think that is an example of how my own background helps me to teach other kids.

The researcher asked Mr. Francis if he believed grade level or age affect ELL students’ progress in learning English.

Yeah. It is scientifically. The younger kids tend to acquire languages faster.

And age. I think the earliest we can provide that, it would be better. It's like the program that I'm working right now, which maybe we could talk about that later. The program starts since kindergarten. In that way, they start acquiring the language by the time they're in eighth grade, they're fluently bilingual.

Mr. Francis further elaborated that age and grade level were so critical in ELL’s learning because of an increasing awareness in the learner.
I think it's because as you get older, you're more aware of things. You dare less to make mistakes. You're more aware that somebody will tell something or somebody's going to laugh at me. When you're a little kid, you try new things. You're almost adventurous in a way, in a language learning perspective. As people get older, it's not that they cannot learn the language; they definitely can because I learned Portuguese as an adult. People are not so willing to take risks in terms of experimenting, using the language, whereas kids, they just do it as a natural thing.

When Mr. Francis was asked to discuss his positive and inclusive beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, he answered:

I think that everybody can learn a second language, of course. I think everyone needs...

Not everybody is going to rather learn at the same rate because as humans, we're all different, but everybody with the proper tools, if they're provided, everybody can be successful with language. That's what I think about that.

Mr. Francis discussed what he most enjoyed about working with ELL students, which was the contextualized learning environment they create in the classroom.

It's just a learning experience for all because then you get to know all these other countries, which I didn't know when I started here. I can tell you stuff about every country. I do a lot of activities where they get to research people from their own countries, like important musicians or politicians, and then they give oral reports to the classroom. I think that's a good way for everyone to me do the multi-cultural learning in addition to just the second language.
When Mr. Francis was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students. He highlighted the need to make teaching engaging and relevant, as well as provide context to the subjects being taught.

Teaching has to be alive for kids to relate. Teaching has to be alive. For example, if we're talking about Egypt, I cannot just stand over there and say, "Okay, so Egypt and the Nile." Those are words that fly, but if they're watching a documentary that they're... like all the ways that people from Egypt they depend on the Nile and they hear what they watch. Those are ways... I think that's very powerful to provide life to what they're teaching. That way, we're also addressing the different types of learning.

Because of the diverse learning needs and styles of the ELL students, he felt the need to differentiate instruction through different teaching methods.

Not everybody's auditory; some people are visual. Most of our kids are visual learners. I think that the best strategies are related to how we provide like stuff in different strategies in the different areas. For example, if they're working on the parts of a volcano, not just talk about the volcano. We can have them build a model of a volcano and label the parts. They're practicing their writing. They're learning those and they're also working with their hands. That's a kinesthetic kind of learning. Whatever things you do with ELL learning is you have to try to address all the types of learning that there are so they can be able to access the knowledge in a way.

“Ms. Hernandez”. The fifth interviewee, Ms. Hernandez was also an ESL teacher. Ms. Hernandez was born in the U.S., but raised in Puerto Rico. Although she attended 2nd grade in the U.S., she spent most of her life in Puerto Rico, where she studied elementary education as an undergraduate and ESL in graduate school. She had been teaching a total of 11 years, two years
in SPS and nine years in Puerto Rico. Her teaching experiences include teaching in bilingual programs in Puerto Rico and in SPS’s only bilingual dual language program. Mrs. Hernandez’s students are native English speakers (NES) as well as ELLs. Her students come from various cultural backgrounds, but are mostly from the U.S., El Salvador, and Brazil.

When Mrs. Hernandez was asked what training she received to become an ELL teacher, she stated that in Puerto Rico, she did not have much training for her work with ELLs. However, at SPS, she received a considerable amount of professional development. Ms. Hernandez had mentors, as well as opportunities to attend professional development to help support her work with ELLs.

As I said before, I studied in Puerto Rico so over there they don't give you a lot of training, you just go to the classroom and that's it. Then over here I had mentors and I've gone to different PDs, professional development. That has helped me get used to educating ELLs over here.

Ms. Hernandez discussed how her background made her more relatable to the students and thus influenced her teaching. She believed that her cultural background made her more effective in teaching her ELL students.

I think I relate a lot to the students because when I was growing up my first language was Spanish and then I started in Puerto Rico 1st grade, kindergarten first and then I moved to North Carolina and it was very hard learning a new language. I relate a lot to the students. Right now, I had an experience in the classroom this year. This girl came and she didn't want to be in the classroom because she said, "They didn't understand me." I saw her as me because that happened to me when I was at school learning English. I can relate to students who are ELLs.
You're like more sensitive towards them because you know that they need that support, so they can learn a new language and sometimes they also come from... They've been here for not a long time and I try to be more caring and give them support. I tell them like, "Oh, you're going to be fine. You're going to learn," and all that. They need that support, that positive support.

The researcher asked if Ms. Hernandez believed that grade level or age affected ELLs’ progress in learning English.

Yeah, I think if they start learning at a younger age, say five years old, six, seven, I think they are like sponges and they learn faster what we're teaching them. As the grade goes on I think it's a little bit harder for them because... I just think in the lower grades they're like sponges and they're learning everything. Then when they get to higher grades I think it's harder and I say it because when I was teaching in Puerto Rico English it was, for the higher kids, 5th grade, sixth grade, even in 10th grade they struggle a lot learning English.

The researcher asked why she thought her students struggled in learning a second language.

I think they always said it was hard for them. They didn't understand. They didn't get it. Also, maybe they didn't have the motivation that they needed to learn a second language.

When Ms. Hernandez was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she brought up a belief in the need for positive support and motivation.

I think we need to be very supportive and very positive and always give them positive reinforcement. If not, they will get unmotivated and they won't want to do their work or they won't try to talk. We need to be very supportive and very caring and very understanding so they can progress in the new language that they're learning.
The researcher asked Ms. Hernandez to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered watching them grow and develop over the course of a school year.

I really like when you get a student who doesn't know a language and then by the end of the year you see that they have learned to read, to write and they're talking and they're just involved in learning the second language. It's very... I like just seeing them at the beginning and then at the end when you can actually see that they've accomplished a lot of things throughout the year.

When Mrs. Hernandez was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she praised kinesthetic learning and “Buddy Reading.”

I think TPR, as I mentioned before. Total Physical Response (TPR), small group instruction is also very helpful for all of the students, not only English Language Learners. Small group, I also use and students like a lot and they benefit a lot is buddy reading.

When they read with a buddy or their friend.

The researcher asked a clarifying question about “Buddy Reading,” “Now the buddy reading, do you pair the students in the same classroom or do you do multi-age and multi-grade? How does Buddy Reading help English Language Learners?” “Mrs. Hernandez responded:

I've done it with kindergartens and 1st graders and I've also done it with my classroom, only the students in my classroom… I pair a student who's a high reader with a lower reader. Then the higher reader will help the student who's struggling. If the lower reader does not know a word, then the higher reader can help him understand. The lower reader will listen to the higher reader and higher-level reader help... They both benefit from it. I also pair, for example, strong Spanish reader with a lower Spanish reader or a Spanish student who's learning Spanish and it also helps them a lot to understand. It helps with
fluency and comprehension, depending on what we're doing in the classroom, what
lesson we're teaching but usually more for fluency. They don't have to do independent
reading as much. I try to do it one or two times a week so the other days they do reading
independently.

“Mrs. Matthews”. Mrs. Matthews, the sixth interviewee, received her Bachelor’s
degree in Bilingual Education and Spanish. She taught ELL students for the past 23 years in
three different MA urban public schools: Lynn, Chelsea Public Schools, and now SPS. Mrs.
Matthews preferred to be referred to as Latina because she identified with Latin culture.
However, she did not consider herself a former ELL student, but spoke numerous languages:
English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Arabic. When she was asked to discuss her cultural
background, she stated:

That's a very interesting question because I consider myself to be Latina, because my
father was born in Latin America, and identify with the Latin culture. I don't like to say
that I am White or Caucasian because I believe that you are what you feel inside, and
inside, I feel as though I am a Latina, because of my proximity to the culture, and the
language, and the music, and the appreciation of the culture and the feelings of the
people.

She believed that her cultural background influenced her teaching in a positive way and helped
her to be effective with teaching her ELL students.

I feel as though my background has influenced my teaching in a very positive way,
because I grew up poor, and I consider myself to be in a minority because of that. I
wanted to make things better for my students that are from the same background that I
come from, because being poor, I feel as though I went to Lynn Public Schools, I feel as
though I did not get a good education unfortunately. The best education that I received was from my mom. During the 23 years that I've been teaching, I've always been thinking about, how do I make it better? How do I make it better for my students that were like me that were poor? How do I give them an education that a child would have, someone that went, per se, to Newton Public Schools or Brookline Public Schools? How can I give them justice? Because I feel as though it's an injustice to be poor and therefore not receive, not a good education.

When asked about the cultural demographics of her students, Mrs. Matthews’ stated that they came from various racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

I've been fortunate enough to work with children of many different races and backgrounds. In Somerville I've worked with a Haitian Bilingual Education program. I've worked with the UNIDOS program, which is a dual language, English and Spanish. I've worked with the Brazilian population, which speaks Portuguese. In the past, I've worked with the Arabic population that's generally from Morocco, and I guess that's about it.

She believed that her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned as well as experienced their new surrounding cultures, communities, and schools. She recommended that teachers of ELL students visit their students’ native countries.

Yes, absolutely, because the teachers that are graduating today, the first thing that they should do is take a trip to the countries of where their students come from. I say that because you do not understand how immigrant children suffer when they come to the United States. It's not like they get a ticket and they fly on a plane. Some children come
in the trunk of a car. Some children come in a wheel that floats down the Rio Grande.

Some children come on a boat. That's a very traumatic experience, and unless you've actually experienced something similar, there are no way you can understand the suffering that these children go through. I feel as though my experience of being from a first generation immigrant family. My grandfather took a boat from Italy. He actually had a better experience. Today, some of our kids have a horrible experience getting to the land of freedom.

Based on her own experiences, as well as those of her family, Mrs. Matthews also strongly believed that there was a need for teachers to be culturally sensitive and responsive to their ELL students’ needs.

Once again, teachers have to be savvy of their students' culture, because in order to connect with them, you have to have that connection. Culture is a very important thing. It's who you are, and the teachers really have to understand, what is their audience? What children are they teaching? Even if they can make the effort to learn a little bit about culture, they are going to see much more success in their results.

Mrs. Matthews stressed the need for teachers to build trust with their students, which then fosters respect, and then allows for more connections to be made and learning opportunities to happen in a safe and nurturing environment.

I've been working with English Language Learners for the past 23 years, and I feel as though when they know that you respect them, where they come from, you respect their parents, you make references to their culture, you select literature that represents the color of their skin, you select literature that might have a few words from their language,
you make that cultural connection, and you have them. You have their confidence, and you will see excellent results.

Throughout the interview, Mrs. Matthews discussed how, as a product of an urban school environment herself, she was able to identify with her students. Her ability to relate to her students formed her attitude and drove her to teach exclusively in an urban environment.

I chose from the very instant that I graduated from school to work in only urban school districts. My whole life has been dedicated to children in urban schools, which I am a product of myself. I grew up in the city of Lynn, which is an urban district, and I only choose to work in urban districts. That's my mission, is to make it a better experience for all children.

The researcher asked if Mrs. Matthews believed that grade level or age affected English Language Learners’ progress in learning English. She responded:

I think there could be some variables about that as far as how old the child is when they come to the United States... A lot of children that come, they don't have any experience, like my students from El Salvador. Their public school where they would attend in El Salvador, sometimes it was 20 miles away, and they had no way to get there, so they came to Somerville public schools as a newcomer, without any experience at all. There might be variable to that question. I think that we'd like to put children on grade level as far as their age, and just give them the services that they need so that they can remain with their peers.

In terms of how age affected the learning abilities of ELLs, Mrs. Matthews responded:

I've seen many success stories; particularly in the dual language immersion program that, as far as age group that they should remain on the grade level, with extra support.
When Mrs. Matthews was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I think that we have to always put the bar as high as we can. The sky is the limit, and if you expect a little, you will get a little. If you expect superstars, then you will get superstars. It's all about what you as the teacher put into it, as far as the planning, and as far as differentiation of proofing and levels... Instruction, your pedagogy, keeping in mind that not all of these children have had the language, have had the experiences and the enrichment that other children have had. They haven't been to museums when they're little. They haven't had those experiences that produce language and give them the background knowledge that they build their reading skills on.

The researcher asked Mrs. Matthews to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

I only choose to work with English Language Learners, just because I feel as though I see results so quickly with the types of lessons that I plan, and I myself enjoy revisiting all my cultural experiences.

When Mrs. Matthews was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

Once again, I think that the more that the teacher can bring alive the curriculum, the better success that she will have, whether that's doing a science project on how worms grow and bring the worms in and let them touch them and feel them, and then start to build vocabulary from there, and connecting to previous knowledge, letting the children have time to talk to one another. The more opportunities that children have to talk to one
another and converse with their teacher, the more experience and the more literate they will become.

“Mrs. Hamilton”. Mrs. Hamilton is a White, Irish-American, bilingual teacher and the seventh interviewee. Her Bachelors and Masters were both in Spanish. Mrs. Hamilton, who studied Spanish in high school and college, spent time studying in Spain, and then taught ELLs in two different Massachusetts urban public schools for the past 36 years. She spent over 20 years teaching in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) in Lawrence Public Schools and 14 years in the dual language bilingual program in SPS.

At that time, it was transitional bilingual education. I taught in the TBE program. The population up there is mainly Dominican and Puerto Rican. Because I taught in a TBE classroom, my whole class was kids from the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico.

Mrs. Hamilton’s teaching experience includes working in schools that have large ELL student populations.

During a regular school year, the dominant English speakers are generally Caucasian, American, different ethnic backgrounds. The Latino kids are basically from El Salvador. There'll be an occasional child from South America, from a Spanish-speaking country in South America or from another Central American country, but primarily, our kids are Colombian, from Ecuador. I've had kids from Guatemala, from Honduras. A smattering of other countries, primarily El Salvador. I have had kids who have been in the program who are actually multi-lingual. One kid, the mother was Russian, spoke fluent Russian. His dad was Brazilian, and he spoke Portuguese. He spoke English fluently, and he wanted to learn Spanish, which he, within a year, had acquired competency in Spanish.
We do get some kids coming with other language backgrounds. That's not the norm. That's not typical. We do get kids with other language backgrounds.

During the time of the interview, she discussed working in a two-way dual language bilingual program where many of her students, mostly El Salvadorian, were brought up in bilingual households speaking at least one other language besides English. Mrs. Hamilton discussed her bilingual program and student population:

I think we're about 70 something percent students whose first language is not English. In my program, I'm in the 2-way bilingual program. My population is a mixture of native English speakers, native Spanish speakers and kids who have been brought up in a bilingual home. Primarily, El Salvadorian kids.

Our program is a 50-50 program. We actually do a week of English. My homeroom would be with me for a week in English. Then, the next week, they'd be with the Spanish side for a week, and I would have Nancy, my partner's homeroom, for a week. Within the other classrooms that aren't part of the Unidos Program, there's Sheltered English going on.

Mrs. Hamilton spoke about the popularity of the program, which was due, in part, to the changing diversity of Somerville and the program’s ability to change with it. As Somerville became more culturally and linguistically diverse, her dual language bilingual program met the needs of this changing population of learners.

Things are changing, because we're getting more kids who were born here and whose experience has been Spanish in the home. Then, they come to us with Spanish from the home, but they've also been exposed to English outside the home. I think that compared to 10 years ago, when we had a lot more kids who are recently arrived, we have fewer
kids who are recently arrived. They're coming in with some level of English. They're coming into kindergarten with some level of English. I know that the parents want them to be proficient in English. If they're in this program, the parents also want them to maintain their Spanish. The kids we get... This is a choice program. Parents choose to put their kids in this program. Their parents want their children to be bilingual and biliterate.

The kids who are coming in, who have been born here, who are coming in with some English, it's more exposure to lots of times to their brothers and sisters. The older brothers and sisters are bringing English into the home. They have quite a bit of social English coming in. Not all the kids, but much more so than 10 years ago.

Mrs. Hamilton was asked whether or not she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English. She replied:

I do think that that age, I think that the brain is more fluid. The younger they are, the more receptive, the more open. They're also not afraid. They dive in, for our Spanish speaking second language learners. Now, our English-dominant kids who are learning Spanish are not always at risk... will take the risk. I think part of that is because the dominant culture is still English.

When Mrs. Hamilton was asked how her own cultural background influenced her teaching, she responded:

Personally, I've always felt that I want to treat kids the way I would want my own kids to be treated in a classroom. Professionally and as a second language learner of Spanish, that gives directives of being in a situation where I'm clueless and not understanding what people are saying to me, and that kind of frustration. I think that my experience studying
in Spain, and when I went there, although I could read and write and have limited speaking skills. I could understand academic Spanish, the conversational Spanish; the social Spanish was much more challenging to... Idioms and things like that. I think it gives me a better appreciation for what kids are going through when they're trying to acquire a second language.

Mrs. Hamilton, when prompted, then went on to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students.

I think it's wonderful and really truly my goal as being part of the Unidos Program, is to help create bilingual, bi-literate children and bicultural children who are respectful of the differences between us. I think it provides them a much greater opportunity for a successful life, for career success, for educational success. I think that being bilingual, bi-literate, bicultural is a huge asset. I really try to promote that and make sure that the kids are proud of who they are and what they can do. I think that our kids, in the Unidos Program have a tremendous benefit in being able to read, write, speak Spanish, and understand other cultures.

The researcher asked Mrs. Hamilton to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students.

Watching kids learn, watching kids acquire the language, become more proficient readers and writers, besides the oral part of it. That's for both sides. That's for the kids learning Spanish, watching them acquire, and the kids learning English, just seeing what they're able to accomplish. That, to me, is an essential part of everything we do.

When Mrs. Hamilton was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:
I think visuals, I think TPR and anything that is going to keep the kids engaged and interested in language. I think that is a big part of what we do.

The researcher asked Mrs. Hamilton to provide examples of the TPR approach and she stated the following:

Songs, poetry, movement, and anything that's going to leave a bigger imprint on them.

I'm cautious about technology. I'm totally against it... Like, for instance, cool math, that half the games are just popping a balloon, there's no thinking involved in it whatsoever. I found some good reading sites that the kids can hear the story, read the story, hear the story and follow along. I use technology that way. We have River Deep, which is a program that I like that has really good visual lessons that teach the concepts.

“Dr. Douglas”. Dr. Douglas, the eighth interviewee, was a White, Jewish woman who worked in urban public schools for the past 25 years. Aside from earning a doctoral degree on assessment and placement, she worked for many years in various teaching and administrative roles. She was a director of an urban ELL program, as well as a district administrator for programs that included English learner education and Family and Community Partnerships. Her past experiences with ELL students also included working to support family literacy in various consultancy, administrative, and directorial roles. Her primary role was to help the families understand early literacy practices and for them to support their children in early literacy. When Dr. Douglas was asked to discuss ways her background has influenced her work, she began by focusing on multicultural education. She provided explicit examples of her own background and how that helped her to think of issues relating to equity, justice, fairness, inequity, social inequities, and economics:
I think very much so. I think my background, my own growing up experiences has oriented me towards equity and justice and fairness. My early work experience out of education I think really influenced my interest in multicultural education especially. When I was in high school and in college, I worked in hospitals. I became really interested in how families of different backgrounds responded to medical issues and medical emergencies. They're from Portugal, not Brazil, but Portuguese families who would come in and the whole family would arrive and would be focused on the family member as oppose to maybe what we would think a non-immigrant family, there would be people in the hospital alone. I just got really interested from very early on and cultural differences. What's that all about and the ways that people do things and how does their background influenced the way that they do things.

Then I think layered with a sense of fairness and justice, I really started to be interested in how schools either present opportunities or present barriers. I think schools can do one or the other. I believe we, as people, teachers, educators who work in schools have to make sure that we are removing barriers and providing quality opportunities for everybody. Then I really started to realize that it's not just culture. Culture is very interesting and can mask the actual inequity, social inequities. It's about basic needs and jobs and housing and all those kinds of things. Culture could be fun, but it can be a window dressing where we don't see the real issues. I think that's what really motivated me in my work in the Parent Information Center around having systems in place so that people can have equal access. Then that really motivated me in my doctoral studies to be in a position where I could be at the table when we're making decisions about systems and access.
Totally it's about economics. We have to be really, really thoughtful and purposeful about how we think about removing those barriers so that they really are removed.

Dr. Douglas believed that there was a need to look at the child’s wider world outside the classroom to see how it impacted learning abilities in the classroom. The culture in which a child was raised and currently lives follows him or her into the classroom. Dr. Douglas pointed out that concepts that normally have a greater meaning outside of a learning environment do, in fact, have a profound influence on their learning.

When she was asked if her cultural background made her more effective in working with English Language Learners, she answered that the family she married into had a lot to do with it.

It's not my cultural background so much as the family that I married into. I think that being married to a Salvadorian immigrant, my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law lived with us, so I've had family experiences. I've also spent time in El Salvador and really being made very aware of the white privilege that I have and being a non-immigrant here in the States as well as in El Salvador. That's one of the most shocking things is when I go to El Salvador I treated differently because I'm white. It's like, "Well, I'm treated differently here because I'm white." It's pervasive.

It's universal, it's pervasive. There are a lot of things that being in an interracial marriage has informed me about. I think one of the most important things is how my husband is typical in a way as being a Latino man. Our kids were taught explicitly about race and being white and growing up in an immigrant family, but a family of European immigrants.

Based on her own experiences as both an educator and a mother, Dr. Douglas believed that it is necessary to teach different behaviors based on race and culture, as well as social and communal
placement, which she called “explicit teaching.” When she was asked to say more about explicit teaching, in terms of race and racial issues, she added:

Yeah. As it relates to school for instance, I think I'm very aware that my home and school experience when I was little was cohesive. My mom was president of the PTA. We actually went home for lunch. We would come home and at the dinner table, we would talk about what did you learn in school today. It was just this totally cohesive, home and school is the same. There's no real shifting that I as a child needed to make from home to school.

With my husband and with my kids who look brown. They are brown. They have that color like my husband more than me. My husband made a distinction between home and school. Home was primary. The people you trust are at home in my husband's mind. You go to school, you do what you need to do, but there is a separation and the home is valued more.

That was surprising to me until... Then I started having experiences with brown children where I started to understand how home becomes the protective place and school isn't necessarily protective. I have experiences with my son for instance where I'm positive because I experienced it. That he was not assumed to be as smart as he is because of the way he looks.

That made sense than that home is the safe place. That was a huge learning experience for me is home is where you're loved, where you're understood to be intelligent. School is maybe but you can't count on it. That has definitely influenced my work with students and my work with families for sure.
The researcher shifted focus to discuss Dr. Douglas’s students and her attitudes toward them over the course of her long and diverse career. She described the largest SPS ELL student population group as being Latino. Within the Spanish speaking population, SPS had many different nationalities, however it was primarily Central Americans from El Salvador. The second largest group was Brazilian, and the third most common group was what she called “low incidence” group. She discussed how the, “low incidence” group included ELLs from the Indian continent, Nepali, Bangladeshi, and Albania. She expressed that Haitians were the third highest ELL group when she first began working in SPS, but went on to say that the Haitian population in Somerville decreased after the earthquake. Dr. Douglas confirmed that there were 52 different languages represented in SPS’s international student body. She, however, found the El Salvadorian student population to be at the highest risk. She explained that one of the many reasons is the fact that many of them are unaccompanied minors. She discussed the situation and then described her action plan with the high school headmaster for the ELLs who comes from El Salvador:

Mostly Latino, mostly Salvadorian which is really... That was kind of a surprise and I think growing up and working in Somerville and then marrying a Salvadorian man and then getting a job in Somerville and going, "Oh my God, here's El Salvador." It was really neat mostly, but we're very international as well. We've got 52 languages in the district.

Unfortunately, among our 52 different languages in our international student body, for a host of reasons, our Salvadorian kids are at the highest risk. They tend to be unaccompanied minors and are coming from El Salvador, being reunited with Salvadoran families here.
I just had a meeting with a high school headmaster where we're building some new pathways and we’re talking about, “Is this universal? Is it not universal? Are we targeting the Salvadorian high risk population?” We're always thinking through this lens. Primarily Spanish speaking, primarily Salvadorian. Those are highest needs students and then we're very multicultural.

When the researcher asked if she found student's cultural background and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the way in which they learn, she responded:

Yes and no. I think the situations and the economics as we were talking about in those barriers have an impact on their achievement levels. I think that the ways people learn or kids learn has to do partly with cultural perspective, but also there's a whole host of temperamental things. Are you a visual learner, are you a linear thinker, which cross cultural difference.

Everybody has their own unique ways of doing things in learning and that has nothing to do with my cultural background. I think it has an impact on their achievement. I think I would venture to say it doesn't have to do with the learning style.

The researcher asked Dr. Douglas whether she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English and she replied:

Yes. In fact, this is something that we've been working on for the last 10 years since I've been director and it takes a long time to make change. I know. I believe the statistics that I see that one of the highest drop out predictors is being overage and grade. Knowing that that's a strong predictor, I worked really hard to shift our culture and our institutional thinking about grade level entry. Past practice that students would be put in
at grade level. Current practice is we match students to age level. If students have a gap in schooling, so be it, it is our job.

To differentiate. It's a big shift and it takes years and a lot of support to teachers who have to actually do the differentiated instruction.

When she was asked to say more about differentiated instruction for ELLs and how and why it works better than other methods of teaching, she continued:

I think in terms of school success, we sometimes make a false assumption that younger immigrant kids learning English more quickly. I have not seen that in reality and I know that there's a lot of research that nobody believes, but there's one research that says the opposite.

What we found specifically is most of our kindergarten-aged students who are ELLs are US-born. They're born here in Cambridge Hospital- the large majority. They're learning English and they've grown up in the community. They are English learners. Many have some oral proficiencies, but in terms of school-based literacy practices... They have home-based literacy practices, but school-based literacy practices, they've got a long way to go.

We really need to support their full language acquisition across the language domains. I think this is my early childhood background that drives me even though a lot of my work is now in the high school, my early childhood. There are good early childhood practices and then there are specific early childhood practices that support English learners and we need to make sure that we're doing the latter.

Truly making the connection from oral language to literacy. Teachers have to really, really need to support their early writing process for instance. Really need to support
early reading processes drawing from kids' oral languages as strength, and also from their native proficiencies.

When Dr. Douglas was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

ELL students are fabulous. I think in lots of ways they're model students. They've got two things to learn, the language and the content. It's double hard. It's double the work. For the most part, they're up for the task if they're supported well. I'm sure you've heard it, the immigrant paradox that newcomers have the attributes to be successful. Carry the attributes to be successful in a way that kids who've been here longer don't. That paradox makes me very sad.

We as systems haven't been able to figure out how to sustain that newcomer, "Yeah, here I am. Excitement." We were actually just talking about it at the high school. Speaking of it in terms of dropout prevention. If we could hook them in, keep that positive attitude of the first months for the long term. We have to figure out how. We're thinking about the other cohorts that we have to more specifically build cohorts to sustain that.

The researcher asked Dr. Douglas to discuss what she enjoyed most about working with ELL students:

Everything. It's part of all of this. It's the fun and it's a challenge and it's all that you can learn and all that I do learn. It's just fun and exciting.

When Dr. Douglas was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

I think the best practices include opportunities for interaction. Maintaining rigor and high-level critical thinking. Linking oral language proficiencies to the four literacy
domains. Linking listening and speaking to reading and writing. Knowing your students.
I think is a critical best practice and then responding to those needs. Explicitly using the RETELL strategies, which I think are research-based and they should be present.
Clearly, distinguishing in terms of learning goals and supports the language demands.
That would be the language objectives. That is critical. In assessment, separating out language from content.

“Mrs. Robinson”. Mrs. Robinson, the ninth interviewee, studied drama and English in college and was a beginning teacher. Her teaching experience included working in two public school systems, one of which was where she attended college in Ithaca, NY and the other was in a different urban public school in Revere, MA. She discussed Ithaca as having a very different student body population as compared to Somerville’s diversity:

I worked in the Ithaca city school district in a kindergarten room... I would say that Ithaca was very different from what I've been doing here. Ithaca was predominantly Caucasian. There were maybe a few Hispanic students and a few African-American students, but certainly, the majority was Caucasian. It was a new experience when I started graduate school and working.

Mrs. Robinson’s students in SPS were primarily Spanish and Portuguese-speaking, mostly from El Salvador and Brazil. When she was asked if her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she responded:

I wouldn't say necessarily their country, where they're from. I would say the... it's the language barrier has the impact on how they learn, specifically with needing the kind of needing support in- additional support basically in addition to just regular teaching.
Her dad was Cuban and her mom was American of European-descent. Even though she grew up bicultural, she only spoke basic Spanish. When she was asked to discuss if her cultural background had influenced her teaching, she expressed compassion for her ELL students. She was reminded of the conversations she used to have with her dad regarding his learning experiences as a new ELL from Cuba studying in the U.S.:

Speaking specifically about ELLs, conversations with my dad about being an English language learner I think have provided me with a lot of compassion for what the children experience, especially back when my dad was a student, having just come from Cuba. ELLs didn't have the same support that they do now. It was sort of like throw the kid into the general education classroom and it was sink or swim basically. That's what my dad described. I think that has given me a lot of compassion for English Language Learners. I think I was also raised in two different ways. My mother was very strict, if we're speaking not specifically about English Language Learners. My mother was very strict, whereas with my dad it was a much more forgiving kind of environment with my grandparents, too, which you sometimes tend to find with Latin families. There's a lot more forgiveness towards children's behavior. I found that that was an interesting paradox there. I think that I often find myself conflicted between the two styles when I bring my own upbringing to how I teach. It's hard to be... it's hard to really reconcile those two things.

Mrs. Robinson found that her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELLs.

I think so, because what I said earlier with the having compassion for them and understanding the hardships. I think it's sort of hard to know whether I know what I know and feel what I feel because of my experience, or because of my upbringing and
my cultural background. Again, my dad had a lot to do with it. Just understanding... He was raised very poor. When they came to America they had very little, so that is another thing that affects me when working in urban areas, understanding the poverty that a lot of these children come from, and the family situations that a lot of these children come from. That might be the hardest thing for me to identify and empathize with them, because no matter how poor my dad's family ever was, it was a very close family, a very supportive family. I grew up the same way.

The researcher asked Mrs. Robinson whether she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English, and she replied:

Yes, I think that younger children... younger ELLs are better off than the older children in terms of they will pick up English quicker and they will also stay proficient in their native language better because young children learn language so well. They absorb it really, really quickly, and the goal with ELLs is for them to be proficient in both languages. Their native language and English. If that native language is enforced at home, which is a whole other issue that I'm sure we'll approach later on the interview, if their native language is reinforced at home and then they are immersed in English at school, I think those younger kids like the ones I work with, five and six years old, are going to be a lot more successful in getting proficiency in both languages than the older students who are maybe fourteen and just learning English.

When Mrs. Robinson was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I think certainly what I'm learning here is that more patience than I've ever given is required. A lot of patience, and understanding with the struggles that they have
navigating the social culture of the school and the academic culture of the school, of
going to school. I think also a lot of... I think just having a positive attitude, they really
can surprise you. There are times where I've said, "Oh my gosh, they're not going to get
this. I don't know what I'm doing," but then they surprise me. I think it's a lot of
positivity, too.

The researcher asked Mrs. Robinson to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL
students.

I think what I just mentioned, the surprises. I think after a while maybe you tend to
expect a barrier to appear when you're teaching or when you're trying to get something
done with them, but they overcome it. Then of course you have the opposite though
sometimes too where you think you're going to get this, this isn't going to be a problem,
then there's like a road block and you have to reevaluate there.

When Mrs. Robinson was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL
students, she stated the following:

I think that reinforcement, the one on one, I think the.... I've always been a fan of
constructivist teaching for any student, not just ELLs because I think constructivist
teaching is much more child guided and so that involves a lot of them. Unfortunately,
this is sort of leaving the public schools. You find it more in the private schools where
there's more autonomy, but a lot more child guided work and talking, which is sort of
what I touched upon earlier, trying to get the student sometimes to guide the
conversation, to initiate conversations with partners.

“Mr. Lawrence”. Mr. Lawrence, a White male teacher was the tenth interviewee. He
had a total of five years of teaching experience in suburban and urban public schools. His
suburban public school experience included teaching at the high school level south of Boston. He also taught Social Emotional Instruction and Civics Engagement through AmeriCorps. He taught Pre-K to 2nd graders in Boston Public Schools. Mr. Lawrence described many of his students as special needs students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), as well as ELLs who needed support with their language acquisition in English. He expressed that he worked with ELLs during all five years of his teaching career. His experience also included working at the Rafael Hernandez School, a dual language bilingual program in the Boston Public Schools. He shared the following about his experience at the Hernandez School:

One of the schools I worked in, the Rafael Hernandez School outside of Egleston Square was bilingual and they would have full immersion for 2 or 3 days depending on the age level. I think one of them they did a week on and a week off and the other ones did like half a week or they cut the day in half and the first half was English and the 2nd half was Spanish…

During the time of the interview, Mr. Lawrence was planning to run an intervention program for at-risk high school students, many of whom were ELLs

I’ll be working with high schoolers next year running intervention with students that are at risk for dropout. A lot of those students will probably also be English Language Learners.

When Mr. Lawrence was asked to discuss how his background had influenced his teaching, he brought up how his parents taught him about respect and the need to treat others the same. He discussed what it was like to grow up with his biracial cousin. Mr. Lawrence was open and honest about growing up in a town that was full of cultural stereotypes. He admitted to the fact
that he was a passive observer who never spoke up about it. According to him, he was certain that he said things that were culturally insensitive, as that was the norm of where he was raised.

Yet still growing up in my town, it was full of cultural stereotypes and I’m sure that I didn’t speak up and I was a passive observer in many cases and I’m sure that I’ve said things that were racist or culturally insensitive growing up in that place because that was the norm.

That’s outside of socialization, that’s outside of the social aspect of race. Yet I can have this other side of me like when I’m around people and I’m immersed in this really sheltered environment and almost see myself as a racist in that moment and that experience. It’s interesting that that duality can exist in somebody’s brain.

My cultural understanding growing up I think was very skewed, it was almost like these 2 different parts of me existed, these 2 different versions of my identity. Now, looking back on it, there are things that you regret and there are things that I wish I could change or take back and you can’t do that so you just have to recognize that and try and change your actions as you move forward and your thinking which is sometimes a little bit harder than the actions themselves.

Mr. Lawrence’s perspective on race has changed significantly since he became a teacher. Not only did he develop more self-awareness and cultural understanding, but he was also better able to notice such understanding, or a lack thereof, in others around him.

It’s been wonderful for me in that prospect, working in this environment and forcing myself to change my habits and my understandings and my initial assumptions or presumptions. I see it in other people now, people that still, and despite being here have not really changed in that way. I won’t say the person, but yesterday there was a woman
here who was giving a student a direction who she didn’t interact with during the day normally. She was not yelling but very aggressive with this student, repeating the same phrase over again, “Take her home.” Talking about this boy’s sister who he was supposed to take home. One of the teachers came over and she took her aside and said, “Yeah, he doesn’t speak any English, he only speaks Spanish and you keep repeating this phrase over to him aggressively over and over again as if he’s supposed to understand that.”

There are people who are still here in this environment surrounded by English Language Learners and making the same sort of mistakes that you would expect of somebody who had never met an ESL student before in their life. Yeah, I guess that’s as much as I can really say.

Mr. Lawrence thought it was difficult to tell whether or not he felt that his cultural background and his understanding of his own cultural and racial privilege made him more effective in teaching ELLs and/or working with ELL families. When he was asked a question about his privilege, he answered:

It’s hard to say because in a lot of ways privilege is ignorance, like I was saying before, it’s a lack of knowledge about something.

Recognizing your own privilege, I guess can be an asset in some ways in understanding where students are coming from. People have privileges all the time regardless of what race they’re from or what background they’re from economically or culturally. There are privileges of all different kinds and I think maybe recognizing your own allows you to be aware that that scenario exists. Somebody is… you can’t necessarily pity someone because they grew up in a neighborhood that has crime in it sometimes where they have
to worry about things. You can feel bad and you can want to fix that problem and you can recognize that in somebody and in a moment where it’s applicable, cut them slack maybe that you wouldn’t have otherwise. Try and tailor your response to a certain situation.

I think in that way privilege has been at least in some way helpful to that understanding because it allowed me to search for those things in everyone. Like I was saying before with some of these students, if they can get to the point where they’re not being set back by some of the content and they’re not being set back by somebody speaking English to them all the time and they can actually gain fluency in 2 languages, that’s a huge asset. That’s a great advantage that they already have going into their adult lives. That I guess could be looked at as a privilege, getting that experience that somebody else doesn’t get. It’s hard to say, I think of actual instruction as more than just looking… It’s important to be aware of the cultural aspects but I find the experience of teaching literacy to these students to be more about understanding what aspects of language they really need to gain and less about how somebody’s cultural experiences are reflected or alter their perception of the content that they’re receiving or the words that I’m using.

When he was asked if he felt that his students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, Mr. Lawrence discussed, at length, a situation in which he believed one of his students may have been on the autism spectrum. Although this is not necessarily related to race or culture, issues of special education do come up often with ELL students.

I have one student in here who I’m worried may have undiagnosed autism. What would typically on the spectrum be considered something that’s close to Asperger’s where they
have some social skills and are typically very intelligent to the point where they far exceed many students their own age in just very narrow fields of understanding of cognitive thought. He comes from Vietnam and I know that there are certain Asian cultures that eye contact is something that you’re not really supposed to engage in eye contact with somebody like an authority figure such as myself where there’s a teacher-student relationship.

Catching those things, I wonder if maybe part of that could be that his people assumed the cultural aspect and didn’t necessarily think that there was anything wrong with his social skills or with his ability to form real connections with other students. Maybe they just assumed that that was a cultural aspect and not something that’s actually a psychological condition. That was an interesting experience and I’m sure that that manifests itself in other ways too where somebody who doesn’t know a particular cultural impact or the symptom of a particular condition, where to draw the line between those things especially when somebody is brought into a new culture and a new classroom and a new country and they’re speaking a new language and they’re bombarded with all these changes that they have to make to their behavior being there.

The researcher asked Mr. Lawrence whether or not he believed that grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English in the elementary schools. He responded that he definitely believed both grade level and age had an impact on learning.

There are many nuances to the situation but say you take somebody in kindergarten or 1st grade, that student starting that young, what you’re doing when you’re in kindergarten or 1st grade in Massachusetts and in the United States from my understanding is that that is you’re really learning the fundamentals of language and writing. I’ve heard from
linguistics and stuff that I’ve learned about English Language Learners is that it’s helpful for students to have already learnt how to write in their primary language beforehand in order to become decent writers in a 2nd language. Honestly, those kids who are in kindergarten or 1st grade, they’re going to get however many more years in this sheltered environment to catch up socially, to have more experiences and gain more vocabulary in English before they’re expected to learn really deep content like analytical thinking, the stuff that you’re getting in late middle school and high school which is what you really need in order to function in college or to get a career.

I would say arguably that is even insufficient in order for doing those things but that’s a whole other conversation. Those students are going to get more experiences that are going to help them eventually if they stay in that country, be able to get back up to the level of their peers. That’s essentially the opposite of what they’re telling you when you’re teaching English Language Learners because their writing skills are supposedly going to be better if they’ve already learned how to write in their primary language which kindergartners and 1st graders have not learned how to do. My experience is not extensive, I’ve only been working with these students for about 5 years and again, I’m not a classroom teacher so I don’t get as much of an understanding about seeing a student progress from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in just one content area.

When Mr. Lawrence was asked to discuss his beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, he again spoke of how his students changed his attitudes about race and culture, as well as how he looked at the wider world.

I think they’re fantastic for me to get to teach because it gives me a new perspective on education that I do not normally get or at least that I assume that I wouldn’t normally get
based on my experience growing up in a very sheltered area, a very sheltered town and school. I think that sometimes we work so hard to get them to the content or to the same level of understanding that their English peers are at, their native English-speaking peers speaking peers are at. I think the way that we try to do that is with academics. I think that the best ways for those students to do that sometimes is to learn the language first in social context like I was saying earlier and having them be forced to interact with somebody in a moment and come up with a word in that few seconds that they have to do that rather than to have to sit down and think and read something on paper and translate that and then try to put something out in writing before they’ve even learned how to do all that other stuff. With my students in here, I’m lucky that most of them have done that but next-door where there are levels 1 and 2, I haven’t seen them teaching this far this summer. I imagine that’s a much difficult experience having them trying to write in English before they can even really speak in English.

The researcher asked Mr. Lawrence to discuss what he most enjoyed about working with ELL students and he answered:

That they make me critical of my own experiences and my own understanding of what education is. Their cultural differences, the level of diversity that I see in this classroom, each one of those students brings a different experience for me, they’re not the same students that are regurgitating the norms and the typical narrative of American classrooms, United States classrooms.

When Mr. Lawrence was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, he stated the following:
With any students, I think, not just ELLs but anybody it’s including again their voice, their perspective, having them have some autonomy over the experience. That’s why I think later in life, people struggle with high school and college more so than they did in other grade levels and they’re not capable of just getting by because they’re actually asked to have some autonomy at that point. We haven’t prepared them for that scenario, we haven’t prepared them for a class where they are required to choose something and to use their prior experience as an understanding to direct that into something else and to produce something. At these younger levels, we’re giving them directions and we’re asking them to follow the directions and that’s not what the real world is about.

“Mrs. Marshals”. Mrs. Marshals, the eleventh interviewee, was a White female with Italian, Irish, and Scottish backgrounds. During the time of the interview, she was a redirect teacher who had been working in SPS for twenty years. When the researcher asked her to describe the role of a redirect teacher, she explained that the role was that of a problem-solver and varied from school to school, based on specific needs. She furthered clarified by stating that in her most recent role, her duties as a redirect teacher included dealing with students’ attendance, discipline, and behavior for the entire K-8 school. She held a Bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a Master’s degree in mathematics. Mrs. Marshals’ teaching experience included teaching 6th grade for six years, where she worked with ELL students. Shortly after teaching 6th grade, she became a guidance counselor and counselor educator where she continued to work with ELL students. She worked with ELLs in her most recent role as a redirect teacher.

It's used differently actually in the school. Each school pretty much... It's really it's based on what the principal may need, but I deal with attendance, discipline, behavior contracts
for the whole building, K through eight... I did that... I taught sixth grade nine years, that was six years and then I get bored, I need challenges. I stayed in the same school though, but guidance counselor, counselor educator, I've done that now for five years.

Mrs. Marshals also worked as a counselor educator in SPS’ Summer Program for ELLs (SPELL) and she discussed the primary aims of this program.

Previously it was the main goal was enrichment, language acquisition; just being exposed to language. Going to Boston, going on field trips, discussing it and then writing about it, so just language. I sometimes do think, yes, you need to learn the grammar and the proper way of saying things, but I do think the best way to be exposed to it is just experiencing it, just being flooded with the language.

Over the years, the cultural background of Mrs. Marshals’ students changed. Many of her students (during the school year and in the SPELL program) were Brazilians who spoke Portuguese, Central Americans, particularly El Salvadorans who spoke Spanish and Haitians who spoke Kreyol (Haitian Creole) and/or French. She also discussed working with many Asians from Nepal, Vietnam, and other Asian countries.

Mrs. Marshals said she had spent her entire teaching career working with ELL students. She went on to describe how her school, as well as Somerville as a whole, is diverse, and how the methods of teaching these students have changed over the years.

Back when I was in the classroom we had what was called a bilingual program, so any real beginners were in, say, whichever... We had one class that was Haitian Creole, they'd be in that class, but still in the classroom we had many ELLs, because Somerville is such a diverse population and we have many people that are immigrating into the country.
Mrs. Marshals believed the students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned.

I think every culture views education, first of all, differently. I think they view the teacher's role, the school's role, staff's role very differently and naturally those belief systems are going to be instilled in the child and also the importance they hold for an education. I do. I also, though, think economics plays a role in that, not even just culture. Culture definitely, but then I think you also have the economic component to it. I find many parents coming from other countries they want, like I think most parents, whether they come from another country or born here, they want their child to do better than they have done, you know?

There was a family, and I always remember it, the father was from Algeria and the child was having some issues behaviorally and the child, he lived in the Mystic Housing Projects and he was embarrassed by that and his father tried to explain, "That's why I brought you here, that's why I want you to get a good education. You can do better than me. This is what we can afford right now, but you see my language sometimes is a barrier and jobs can be scarce and hard to get when language is... I want you to get an education." They try to instill that. I find many cultures hold it in... Actually I find more, I'll be honest, I find immigrant parents sometimes more than even parents here, they have more respect for the schools, for the staff and wanting their child to do well in school, more than, say, sometimes people that are born here.

Mrs. Marshals discussed the fact that she wished she spoke another language. She also discussed the changes in educator’s beliefs on SLA. For example, she described how her grandparents
spoke Italian at home when they first immigrated to Somerville from Italy, but the school discouraged this practice.

You see, and you talk about changes, when my grandparents first came here, my grandfather was from Italy, they used to speak in the home Italian and my mother's brother was the first born and the schools in Somerville actually, the schools said, "You need to stop speaking Italian in the home." because back then they believed you were confusing the child and the child was, I don't know... My grandparents stopped speaking it in the home, so through the years then they lost it. My mother could understand it, but couldn't speak it.

When the researcher asked how her background has influenced her teaching, she responded:

I was born and raised in Somerville, so I think it's helped me to understand many of the children in this population. I think that's how, that component of my background has helped me with teaching… to relate to the children.

Mrs. Marshals was asked to reflect on her childhood, growing up with her mom and grandparents who were Italian discuss how that had influenced her teaching. She expressed that she did not see race or nationalities, but only saw children.

I don't see race, I don't see nationalities. I just see children. That's a tough question for me, because I've never thought about how being Italian or my grandparents coming from another country, I don't ever think of that. That's a very interesting question, because I don't correlate that. I think more of my background as in growing up in a city as opposed to a suburban, an urban area, so I don't... That's interesting you asked me that.

The researcher asked Mrs. Marshals whether she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English.
I think it becomes much more difficult. It can be done, but in this country we give second language start in eighth grade and high school, where I believe in many other countries they start it from early on in the early grades. I do think it becomes a little more difficult, not impossible at all, but I do think it's a bit, in my own opinion, I don't know if I'm accurate, but it's that for the younger ones it can be a bit easier to acquire the language faster.

When Mrs. Marshals was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I sometimes find those children more engaging. They want to learn. They're interesting. Sometimes they're much more respectful, I find, than children that are actually born in the United States.

She went on to discuss how her beliefs and attitudes toward ELL students were directly connected to the attitudes of the students toward both her as teacher and learning as a whole.

I think in many cultures you're taught to respect teachers. I also find them to be humble and many of the parents are humble. They express themselves more of wanting what's best for their child and a better life and some of them are such hard workers, you know? It breaks my heart, you'll have many parents that are immigrant parents, language is a barrier, so some of the jobs they get have to... Home health aide, 5:00 in the morning you need to be there, you know? You'll hear people say, "Oh, his parent never comes to the meetings."

Well that's probably because it's either put food on the table or come to a PTA meeting and I think putting food on a table wins out, you know? That's what they're doing and they're struggling and it's much harder for anyone that's an immigrant to this country and language, if they come speaking English, no, not such a barrier, but we have many that in
their own country they haven't gone to many years of formal schooling. They come here and they'll work whatever they can and I think they instill that sometimes in their children and I think that's what makes them more appreciative or respectful. I just I love learning about different background, different cultures.

The researcher asked Mrs. Marshalls to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she repeated that their attitudes toward teaching were what she enjoyed most.

Like I said, I do find them quite humble. You can actually have conversations with them and I enjoyed learning about their culture and then learning about mine. I also find that many of them have a great sense of humor.

When Mrs. Marshalls was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

One, exposure. I've said that all along, exposure. I really, especially young ones, I just inundating with just language, you know? Providing picture books, providing a lot of visuals. I really feel those are the two bigger…

We have the Chromebooks for sixth grade. Oh technology, yes. Oh without a doubt, because the smartboards, forget even the one on one computers, one to one computers, the smart boards, it's amazing when I go into a class now, and every class has a smart board, and if it's a transition time sometimes the teachers will have on the songs about the states and it's, oh, I think songs and memory games like that is also great for ELLs. The children are so engaged in watching anything video, technology, they are so engaged listening to the song and they'll be singing the song, I think that is, honestly... I have my own issues with kids being exposed to too much videos and things after school and games, but it's amazing. I always said if we could videotape our self and put our self on
the smart board they'd listen to us more, because to watch them, anything you put on that smart board visually, they're so engaged.

“Mrs. Richards”. Mrs. Richards, the twelfth interviewee whose educational background, consisted of an undergraduate degree in Spanish Language Education and English, as well as a Master’s in Curriculum Instruction. She referred to herself as a White European-American.

I'm European American. I don't like any of the terms, so I'll just use the least offensive one. I'm European American. I would say culturally very traditional what has been labeled WASP, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. I grew up in a Protestant church and I'm sort of the typical, multigenerational American. One side of family came here on the Mayflower. The other side of family came as... My grandfather came here at 16 from Sweden. I sort of have half Nordic immigrant blood and half, sort of, English-French. I don't relate to it too much like that because I don't really have a connection to England or France.

Mrs. Richards grew up in an almost entirely White community in Connecticut and considered herself a second language student, Spanish as a Second Language (SSL). She remembered feeling silly when learning Spanish:

When I went to kindergarten, a new program had just started and so I spent two hours in Spanish in kindergarten. All the way through until high school, I was two hours a day in Spanish. That's the reason I'm fluent in Spanish. It was through school and then of course through travel.

When she was asked if she considered herself an ELL, she brought up being a second language student and the difference between her own experiences as a second language learner compared
to most of the experiences of ELLs. She expressed that her experience was not as scary as it was for her ELLs.

I was never an ELL, but I was a Spanish as a second language student. The difference is that I was surrounded by people who were of my culture who were learning Spanish. I didn't have that component of being the child who didn't understand the language that everyone else understood. We were all learning it together, so there weren't Spanish speakers in my class when I was a kid. I think that's significant because it wasn't as scary. Everybody was in it in the same sort of boat. We were all progressing pretty much similarly and that's very different for ELL.

When she was asked if she was comfortable taking risks speaking Spanish as a learner, she responded:

Well, because it wasn't that risky of an environment. Not for like our kids. Our kids come and if they're a level one, they're in a class with WIDA level one. They're in a class with WIDA level threes or fours or whatever. It's riskier. They have to admit where they're at more. I could just go with the group. It isn't the same. Remember, I was also learning a second language. The majority culture language was there. I had that, so it's very different.

The researcher asked Mrs. Richards how she felt her background had influenced her teaching.

Culturally, I think I have a number of American values that affect how I look at things. One is a real value of hard work. Another is I tend to be very direct, which I've had to learn to temper from my Latino kids and Latino families most particularly because it can come off as rude. Cross-culturally, it can come off as rude. I don't mean it that way, but I've had to really remember, oh... Like my friend from Mexico. I'd kiss her on both
cheeks. Say hello. Talk about her family. I had to learn to do that in a work setting, so
culture. That's one thing that I think about a lot, about how I had to learn to do that.
The researcher wanted to know if her cultural background and experience as a second language
learner made her more effective in teaching ELL students, and if so, how? Mrs. Richards did not
believe her cultural background and experience made her more effective in teaching ELLs.
I don't know that I would say more effective. My cultural background doesn't translate to
every other cultural background. What's made me sensitive is not my cultural
background but my students. Starting with my students and their families and watching
and paying attention and being critical, you know, self-critical about am I relating well. Is
this going well?
Even asking. I've spent a lot of my life asking very direct cultural questions. I was just
thinking that I haven't worked with the Haitian population very much, so I have all these
questions for you.

When she was asked to discuss her professional experience working with English Language
Learners, she stated that all of her teaching experience had been with ELLs and Spanish
Language Learners (SLLs), since 1979, and she has taught in SPS for 22 years.
I've taught every grade K to 6. I've spent four years as a science specialist, bilingual
science specialist. All my experience has been in urban environments, except for one
year in New Mexico. All my experience has been with English Language Learners and
Spanish language learners. I taught half time in Spanish to the bilingual classes and then
to the standard, typical classrooms I taught in English. Most of my experience is with
children learning a second language. Actually, all of it and urban students learning a
second language.
When she was asked to discuss the racial and cultural backgrounds of her students, she responded:

Most of my students were Salvadoran, some Mexican students. We had a number of South American students, depending on... One year, we might have two Argentinians and a Colombian or whatever. That's the majority of my students.

Then, on the English side of the program, long-term residents of New England and then some immigrants from... We had immigrants from Iran. We've had a number of different... That's more culturally mixed on that side of the program. The Latino side of the program is much more heavily El Salvadorian. Some Puerto Ricans, some Dominicans, but the other group is a mix. We do have Brazilians, but... Usually we have two per year. One or two per year. Parents would love to have a Portuguese program, of course, but there isn't one. They want their children to learn another language.

Academically, learn another language as well.

She believed her students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned.

Since Mrs. Richards had been teaching since 1979, the researcher wanted to know how education for ELLs had changed since then.

I was recruited to Somerville. We spent a couple of years in development and opened the program in 2000, I think. Yeah, 2000. I went from transitional bilingual to dual language.

Initially it was the Transitional Bilingual model, which said that, "Okay, we have these students. While they're learning English, we're going to give them their content area material in their native language, so that they don't lose ground in science, social studies,
and math, for example, while they're learning English." Then, of course, through a lot of political gymnastics, we had the Unz amendment, which basically outlawed in a lot of ways... It didn't actually outlaw, but it made it very difficult to use Spanish in the classroom.

Suddenly we went from supporting students... Now the thing about Transitional Bilingual Education, it's subtractive by nature, so the intent was as soon as the kids' English is good enough to do the work in English, you abandon the Spanish. It wasn't maintenance. There was the value for Spanish was a crutch. It was considered a crutch. The attitude towards Spanish was different than it is, for instance, in a two-way bilingual program. I was recruited to come to Somerville to start the two-way bilingual program when it came. I had worked with Dr. Argenziano and Dr. Argenziano, the former superintendent, was the principal of a dual language school in Mexico and his kids were bilingual. He understood the model and he understood what it was trying to do.

The researcher asked Mrs. Richards whether she believed that grade level or age affect ELL students' progress in learning English.

Well, the wisdom of the day often says, "Oh, if they're younger, it goes faster." I don't find that. I don't believe that. I think it's just different and I think people often overestimate 1st graders' knowledge because they're 1st graders. If they're six and they say, "I am happy," that's a full sentence. If a 6th grader learning English said, "I am happy," you're not as impressed. I think people often think that it's just so much easier when they're younger and that just hasn't been true in the research that I've read. It isn't true and so we have to be careful to really be looking at their levels, their reader levels,
and saying, "This child is a level one 1st grader," and a level one needs these supports. I find this to be common wisdom that is incorrect.

When Mrs. Richards was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

Every kid walks into your classroom wanting to succeed. In some way or another, they come in ready to learn. They have capabilities and sometimes you have to work harder to find them because they're masked by the fact that they can't speak English at that moment. They're capable. I want to make sure that every teacher has rigorous expectations for our kids and offers ample support to reach those. Not just say, "Well, I want them up here." No, we need to really be looking at that. Our kids walk in and they come with their parents' hopes and expectations. They come with their families' expectations, their community's expectations, and we have to embrace them and have those same expectations and be really good at our jobs so they learn. It's a multi-year process. It does not happen in two years and I'm not going to participate in perpetuating that particular misconception. It takes years. I'm still learning and I've been at this since I was five.

The researcher asked Mrs. Richards to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

After all these years, working... What would be sort of outside my native culture because I've spent more of my professional time with Latinos than with my own culture. There are so many things I respect about culturally about my kids and intellectually about my kids. I love the balance. I love the fact that you have to be with your family and you
have this love of your family, this way in which you conduct yourself your community, and that's just as important as learning things or being great at school or whatever.

The fact that the family is so strong and so important in the lives of kids is just really beautiful. It's a really beautiful thing. I love the balance. I love that it's not all work-driven. I love the celebratory part of it and the yeah, let's have a party, kind of, that feel for let's celebrate. You know, we're here and everything's okay today, so let's celebrate. I like that.

When Mrs. Richards was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

The approach is communicative competence. I mean, start there. What we're looking for are practices that increase oral language production, decrease the affective filter, increase writing development, increase reading comprehension, and how do we do all that? Well, first thing is building background and go back to the SIOP model and you can look at all of those practices. Pretty similar and have been in good use for a lot of years, so a lot of it involves a certain kind of present planning.

I need to plan for each of the ELD levels of my students. The WIDA provides a framework to do that and I think when people do that, they're very aware of how they offer supports to each of the groups. The first best practice would be really present and planning with an understanding that you have these levels in your classroom. Making sure that you're specific with your language objectives. That over the course of a year you have covered a lot of different language areas. Making sure that your kids are orally... Their oral language is being developed, whether it's turn and talk, turn and talk and report. Whether it's cooperative learning, whether it's reciprocal teaching. Whether
it's peer-assisted learning. All of those are kind of best practices that have to do with
language and language arts.

She also felt it was important to put learning into a wider context, both in terms of the student’s
family as well as the student’s experiences outside of the classroom. Drawing connections
between experiences and learning was an important approach to her teaching.

You want to also involve families. The social component, the familial component where
families feel included and valued is a help pedagogically. It's a help with that. As far as
math talk. Basically math talks are really, really helpful for ELLs. You want to have
culturally relevant examples, which is something that people often don't take for granted
and don't do, which is, for example, let's say we're studying maps. Well, why wouldn't
we study the map of El Salvador? Why is the map that we pick the United States? Why
is that? Why can't we pick something else?

What about your examples of different plant life or animal life and when you're
discussing that in science, why isn't it just plucked from the different experiences of kids
in your classroom? Make sure your examples are culturally relevant. If you're asking
them to do something, at least put something familiar in front of them. Also all of the
things like sentence frames and partially completed, differentiated, leveled experiences
for the kids are really helpful. Lots of visuals and making sure that you give them access
to computer resources that they might be able to deal with at home or in the library. A lot
of our kids go to the Somerville Library and they have a bank of computers there. If the
program is a visual presentation to get their mind ready, build that background
knowledge in their native language through a website. They come to school the next day,
do the experiment, but they already know a lot of the content. Those are... Is that helpful?

“Ms. Martinez”. Ms. Martinez, the thirteenth interviewee, was born and raised in the city of Somerville. She holds a Bachelor’s in Education and Mathematics at Marymount College. Ms. Martinez began her career as a teacher in 2013 at SPS. She came from a family where there were both Spanish and Italian speakers. While her father was also originally from Somerville, her mother was born and raised in Argentina and her grandparents were originally from Italy. Ms. Martinez identified herself as White. Ms. Martinez explained that her mother was an ELL in school. When the researcher asked her to discuss if her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students, Ms. Martinez responded with the following response:

Yes, I think it has, just because my mom, being ELL, I know the struggles she had as a student, specifically with language, and how it was really hard for her to be in school not speaking any English, so knowing how, she's told me how she's felt, and I want to try and be aware that, sometimes that kids do know a lot more than they are expressing. For them, it's just this scary thing because it's not their first language. They don't know if they're right, so just being able to understand them, and give them the confidence, I think, that my background has helped me to provide that for them.

After learning about her mother’s experience in school, she was mindful of the challenges that ELL students face, more so now than ever. Ms. Martinez served in an SPS school where 43% of her school's population was Hispanic. The majority of Ms. Martinez’s students were from Central America and the Caribbean, specifically El Salvador and Haiti. With students from different countries, Ms. Martinez had ample opportunities to learn about her students’ cultural
differences and why these differences were important in the classroom. One of the things she
became aware of was the behavioral expectations that her students brought with them from their
native countries. Ms. Martinez shared the importance of learning about a student's cultural
background.

Just being aware of their cultural background makes them feel more comfortable. It's not
that they might be doing something that you perceive as rude, but that was something that
was expected of them in their country so, being aware of that, I think you really need to
know that, sometimes, it's just their cultural background, and not them not listening, or
not being able to do something.

The researcher asked Ms. Martinez whether she believed that grade level or age affect ELL
students' progress in learning English.

I think younger kids have an easier time learning English than a lot of the older kids. I've
seen in the schools more so, just because they don't have a lot of their, the younger kids
don't have a lot of their first language anyway. They're still learning it as well, so I think
they have an easier time learning English.

I think that. Also, in Somerville, what I've noticed for the older kids, too, is that why
they have a difficult time is they tend to gravitate towards the kids who speak their same
language, so they're not really practicing the English as well.

They're still speaking their native language at school a lot, so I think they have a harder
time getting out of it because they feel so comfortable, whereas the little kids just are a
little bit more open to it.

When Ms. Martinez was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she
answered:
I think they're just like everyone else. They deserve the same education that everyone else has, but we need to give them the tools in order to access the curriculum, so if it's a word bank, a scaffold, picture cues, things like that.

Gestures work, giving them the tools that they need to succeed, and knowing that they're different than a regular Ed student, or any student who speaks English, so just giving them the same opportunities.

The researcher asked Ms. Martinez to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

The thing that I enjoy most about English Language Learners, and also, dually identified students, is that this ability to never give up. They're always willing to try. Even though they don't know the language, they're still trying to speak in English, or they're still trying their best.

There's no giving up. I've never seen a kid really give up. They want to learn, and I think, that's something really special about them.

Ms. Martinez worked with students who were currently ELLs. She also worked with students who were Former ELLs - Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP), students who had passed the ACCESS exam as level 5 learners. Ms. Martinez played a role in helping many of her students to transition to becoming FLEP students. When Ms. Martinez was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

I think you have to have a language objective with every lesson, so providing language support, no matter what, and just decide which domain it's going to be in beforehand, so today, am I going to focus speaking. Are they going to have to speak what they, or talk about what they learned, or is, today is going to be writing.
Allowing kids to experience all those, I really think that, having a language objective along with your regular learning objectives, is really important because it takes into account that one thing you really want to work on that day, and it's different everyday,
“Ms. Mendez”. Ms. Mendez, the fourteenth interviewee, was born in El Salvador and identified herself as Latina. Her mom was originally from Panama and raised her in a bicultural home. She studied theater in Mexico and then moved to the U.S. at 27 to obtain her Master’s degree in multicultural studies.

Well, I come from a very unusual career path. I was born in El Salvador, my mom is from Panama, so at the very early age I was bicultural, but then I went to study in Cuba and then I finished college there. Then, I went to Mexico and pursued advanced studies in theater. Then I moved to the U.S. and I wanted to continue study.

During the time of the interview, Ms. Mendez had been working in SPS for three years and held multiple roles at her school. She was a parent liaison and, at the same time, she taught three music classes to young preschool and kindergarten students. Additionally, she developed and conducted workshops for ELL families.

Ms. Mendez began her work with ELLs and their families when she began translating her musical songs and teaching various musical workshops in Spanish, Portuguese, and English to ELL families at her school.

I had to teach three classes, music classes. I teach classes for adults as well, I work with parents here, so we constantly do workshops and develop leadership among the ELL community.

Well, since I did an artistic path, so when I started to translate all this musical songs, I do my musical workshop in Spanish/Portuguese and English as well, so I guess I have a lot of ELLs.

Ms. Mendez tried to keep the families engaged and informed of what was going at the school and with the students. She translated student-related documents, such as newsletters and notices for
her colleagues and the school principal. She explained the importance of sending everything home in multiple languages for better communication with families. Ms. Mendez was very supportive of family engagement in the learning process and tried everything possibly to include families. She was also aware that not all the parents of her students knew how to be involved in the children’s education. She took time to meet with them and explain the role of an active parent and even, in some cases, modeled the role of what parent engagement should look like.

Exactly, so whatever has to be done for the child to be at school, I am an educator, I'm going to do it, but I know for different teachers and grades, it's different as well. This is an early childhood facility, so parents, some of them are fresh in parenting let's say, but it doesn't happen the same with a high schooler, for example. In a high school, teachers say, "I will never do that because sometimes they call me and the kid is saying he's going to kill himself, so how am I going to react on that?" Say, “Well, you are the only one that he trusts to say that kind of statement, that he's going to take his life.”

According to Ms. Mendez, 43% of her students from the previous year were ELLs and came from non-English speaking households. During the time of the interview, more than half of her students were ELLs and came from non-English speaking households, but the cultural makeup of her classes was quite varied.

Last year 43% were Latinos and the rest was mixed non-white, but those are in the Department of Education website for this academic year, you can check it out there. They come from mostly El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. We have a lot of parents from Nepal and India. They come from Haiti and they speak Haitian Creole.
Ms. Mendez spoke about the challenges many of her students and their families faced prior to coming to the US and even after they arrived. She shared the following example of what many of the families and children she worked with experienced:

Two or three years ago the U.S. almost had an exodus from these countries to the U.S. They called it undocumented minors. We have to understand the social conditions in El Salvador and Central America about the civil war, at least in El Salvador. So, parents immigrate when they were little back in the '80s. They were not little, they were already adults, but they leave their child behind with Grandma, so you go in the countryside in El Salvador you see grandparents raising their grandchildren because parents are here in the U.S. working whenever and whatever they can, and sending money back, but guess what? The children grow up and they are asking for their parents. Where are they? You have a situation of violence back there, so what do you do as parents? You want your child to come to the U.S. with you, to be protected, so they arrange that, they pay for somebody to bring the kid. That exodus was called, and I think it's still going on because we receive families every day that come, but children, they come by themselves, but they call unaccompanied minors, but they don't come by themselves, there's always an adult bringing them.

I have a couple of moms that came with their two children, so when a woman cross the border and you have your child with you, you're not protected, but if somebody is going to hurt you they're going to think it twice because you are with two children. Those are the circumstances.

Ms. Mendez pointed out that many of her students’ traumatic experiences, such as witnessing disturbing acts of violence, could and often did affect their learning and psychological
development. She felt it was important to bear in mind that a child may have been the victim of or witnessed extremely troubling events may have then impacted their behaviors in the classroom.

By the border, so they're risking their lives. Many of them get hurt, they get injured. Just that experience in itself is traumatic. They get raped. They get raped as well. They’re vulnerable.

Ms. Mendez strongly believed that in order to be really effective in teaching ELL students, it is important to understand the whole child and all of their experiences.

The researcher asked Ms. Mendez if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL student's progress in learning English.

Absolutely because somebody who comes from El Salvador 5th grade maybe has 2nd grade level here in the US or visa versa. When I came to study, I came for exchange when I was a teenager to the US and I was in seventh grade. Everything that I was learning, it was something that I learned two grades ago in the past, so for me it was very easy and maybe for some of the students could be easy, but if you don't speak the language, how will you tell your teacher it's easy for you?

The researcher asked whether or not a student’s English language development depended on the child, their education, or backgrounds, or if they have had prior learning experience. Ms. Mendez answered that all of these factors play a part in ELL’s Second Language Acquisition. When Ms. Mendez was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

Oh, my god. I think they bring so much to the community. I think there's so much richness where they come from. I think it's necessary. It's where you learn how to live in
tolerance and acceptance with their otherness. We just learned a song that it's called “Hola”, we say hello to the neighbor and we say Hola in all the languages. Every time I sing it I say “marhabaan” in Arabic, the girl from Jordan, her eyes lit up. When I say “Nǐ hǎo” a child from China, so I try and they know I'm trying to acknowledge where they come from. Those are my beliefs.

Honoring, celebrating, yeah, that's my thesis is all about. It's called Songs Around the World, so I've been doing family engagement activities to gather songs from all the countries and cultures that are represented at Capuano. The idea is to provide teachers with tools to send them back in the classrooms or any event at Capuano.

The researcher asked Ms. Mendez to say more about why it is so important to acknowledge other cultures.

Songs Around the World? Well, it's family engagement practices by collecting songs from around the world and at the end; it's an outcome of a city album with a collection of the song. For me, it's an advocacy piece. For any teacher it's super fun and for the school supports all this, but I believe art is a Trojan horse to talk about all these things because it's not the same if I tell you we have to be tolerant, we have to respect. If I say to you, "This album contains all the songs from all the countries that are represented at Capuano," and you have Nepali, you have Ponjava, you have Spanish, you have Haitian Creole, you have Arabic, Chinese. It's just more fun, right?

The researcher asked Ms. Mendez to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students.

That I can speak Spanish with them and I can learn. Yeah, and Portuguese, and the connection that we can develop with a family from Jordan, for example, from Nepal. We
really don't speak any common language, but it's just the human connection of looking in her eyes and acknowledge that yes, in the exterior we come from a different place, but we're human beings, so that's why I do this job.

Ms. Mendez was asked to say more about the human connection. She answered:

Yeah, I have a mom from Bangladesh. She comes with her mom as well, that is the grandmother of the child that's at Capuano. The mom speaks a little bit English, grandma doesn't speak any English, but every time she sees me, she kiss me, she hug me, she give me blessing in her own beliefs, and she is so loving. How wouldn't you connect with that, but because I come from a culture that it's similar, I said to my friend we're tribal, like we grew up like a tribe, you know?

I am used to that. I'm used to the physical contact, I'm used to looking in the eyes, I'm used to you respect the elderly people, and I can relate to that, so our cultures are very similar actually.

Even though we don't look different or I don't wear any scarf. We do look different, but in invisible realm, we have a lot of things in common and we meet outside the Capuano as well, we go to community meals together, so it's great and we don't speak the same language. I don't know how we communicate.

When Ms. Mendez was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

To love them. To love them, to hug them, to be with them. A lot of kids have gone through trauma because of the reasons that I just talked, like crossing the border and what they have seen back in their country, so not focus too much on the academics, but for the kids to be loved and to be nourished.
“Mrs. Romano”. Mrs. Romano, the fifteenth interviewee, was a White woman who was born in the United States. She identified herself as embracing both American and Italian culture. Many of her family members, as well as her grandparents, came from Italy. She also married a man from Italy. She began her teaching career in 1974, shortly after receiving her Bachelor’s of Arts and Master’s in ESL from Boston State Teachers College, a teacher-training program that was part of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. She obtained her Master’s degree in ESL because of Somerville’s immigration population. After substituting for a year, she was able to secure a teaching position in SPS where she has worked for the past 42 years.

Back in those days, teachers didn't have to have a Master’s degree to get a job. I got a job when I was right out of college. Actually, my first year out, I had to substitute because I didn't get a position. I had put out applications into Boston and then Somerville called me that second year and I was thrilled.

I got my Master’s in ESL. Back in those days, ESL was becoming popular because we were getting a big immigrant population into the area. Somerville used to be mostly... We had Portuguese students. That was our biggest population, but they were from the Azores Islands, off the coast of Europe, Atlantic Ocean. That was our main population, back when I started. There was a bilingual Portuguese program and most of the children were Portuguese. Over the years, it's changed, but when I was finishing college, back in 1973, ESL was just becoming very much in vogue at the time because there was a need.

When Mrs. Romano was asked if she taught in SPS’ bilingual program, she began discussing SPS’ Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Program and the changes that occurred in the way ELLs were educated over the past four decades.
Our program that we have today once was called Transitional Bilingual Education. In the Transitional Bilingual Education, TBE it was called, we had both components. We had ESL and Portuguese speakers. At one time there were six teachers and we had bilingual Portuguese. We had bilingual Haitian Creole, and then we had what we call low incidence, everybody else. Then in this building, they had the Spanish program, the Spanish bilingual program. The students that just started coming to the United States, their very first school experience, 75% of their day would be in the native language. They would be getting their content in their native language. Then 25% would be ESL. Little by little, the second year it would be 50/50. 50% in their native language, 50% in ESL. The third year is 75/25. By the end of three years... Some children take longer... They would be progressing more and more and more to English. Sometimes we'd keep children four years; it depends upon the need of the child and their academic background, where they came from.

Mrs. Romano did not consider herself an ELL student. When she was asked how her background influenced her teaching, she stated the following:

Especially growing up as a kid, I was always around people who English was not their first language. My grandparents included. The whole neighborhood was Italian. I was going to church with Italians. I'm Catholic and the masses were always, it was the Catholic Church we went to, but it was made for immigrants, so it was all Italian priests. I always heard two languages going at the same time. In the neighborhood, it was mostly all Italian people- immigrants. So, again, you would hear Italian all the time. At the meat market, at the fruit market, wherever you went.
When she was asked if her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students, she explained:

I think I have a sense of what it feels like to be different. Especially when you speak orally and people look at you a little, they give you a funny look. I think it's much more accepted today than it was back when I was a little girl. When I was a child, I didn't realize it at all because I was looking at it through children's eyes, and say, "I don't understand what they're saying." As I got older, especially through my husband, because he came here when he was about 18, and I certainly could feel empathy for all the difficulties that he suffered, trying to learn the second language, to be able to read and write in it. The older you are, the more difficult it is. That's why we always tell the children, "Try and learn everything you possibly can now because this is the time. Your head is like a sponge. Your brain is picking up everything." It's a wonderful opportunity for the students that we have here.

Mrs. Romano’s students were of all races and came from various parts of the world.

We have students from all over the world. I've had all races. I have Chinese students. I should say Asian students, because they come from many different countries of Asia. We have students from South America, so I guess, students from South America, they could be White, and they could be Black. We have students from Haiti, who are Black. Did I say Africa? We have students from Africa.

Oh, you name it. Over the years, we've had some students from Russia, not many.

We've had students from Greece. We've had Albanian students, not many. Few and far between, but we have had them. I'm trying to think. We usually get students from every continent except Australia.
When she was asked if she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the way in which they learned, she stated:

Yes and no. We have students from all over the world. They come from a wide variety of places and the ways students are taught in different countries are different, compared especially to the way we teach today. A lot of our students... I have a boy who comes to my mind, from Vietnam. He is not used to working in groups. Today, students are supposed to be able to work in groups, work as a team, do team projects, and work together. That is very foreign to him and to many other students.

The other thing is, we have students who come from very poor, rural districts, who have not been able to use a computer. They don't have access to all the technology that we have today, and some of them have been in classrooms where there might be 30, 40, 50 kids, and they're very rural, very basic educations. Depending upon where they come from, I do believe that.

So many of our students, what comes to my mind with that question is, we have a lot of students who are undocumented. They come from South America, Central America, and their journey here is full of trauma. In that respect, I do think it certainly impacts them.

We've had children who are very traumatized and they need a lot of time to adjust to the new country, they need ways to feel comfortable. We don't even know some of the experiences we have, but we can pretty much guess by their behaviors, they've been traumatized. In that respect, yes.

Mrs. Romano elaborated on how past traumatic experiences could affect students’ learning, but also how these experiences of coming to America differed over time and place.
I didn't see that in the beginning of my career, except back then we had a lot of students from Laos and Cambodia, right after the Vietnam War, and that was very difficult. They struggled because of all the war and what they had seen. I guess I would say yes, a child who has come from El Salvador and has traveled, undocumented citizens up through Mexico, into the United States, their experience is very different than, say, somebody I've had from Russia, who came on a plane, good parents, good academic background, strong parents, parents who might be here at the university. It's very different.

Mrs. Romano went on to explain how not only are students affected by the experiences that have brought them to the US and even the classroom, they are affected by their family’s circumstances.

Some parents are wonderful. Unfortunately, just like a lot of Americans, too, but they work night and day to make their ends meet, to pay the rent, to put food on the table, to clothe the children. Not that they don't want to help their children, but there just aren't enough hours in the day for them to sit down and be able to do the things that, say, my mother was able to do when I was a little girl. She was a stay-at-home mom in those days. Compared to what, in spite of all the disabilities and all the challenges they have, I should say... Disabilities is not a good word... Challenges they face. It's amazing how they are able to overcome them.

The researcher asked Mrs. Romano whether grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress of learning English in school.

What we do at the middle school, where I teach, and we also do it at the high school, we group children in grades 6, 7, and 8 according to English language ability for English. We have students who are just learning English grouped together. We have students who
are a little bit further along grouped together, and then a more advanced group grouped together. We're able to do that. In the content area, we have to put them by grade level because they all have to take MCAS, our Common Core, whatever the state decides to adopt, and so they have to hit the standards - Right now, for us, it's not the PARCC. He had PARCC-ish type questions last year, but we have not been told officially that is changing. Maybe it will. The students have to have the content area of the grade in the content because it shows up on the science test and the math test. And social studies. We have math and science MCAS, we don't have social studies.

When Mrs. Romano was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I say it all the time. Given the challenges that they are faced with and the obstacles, what they are able to overcome is absolutely amazing. I see it year after year after year and it just gives you such inspiration. These children come to school with so many issues, so many problems, and they come to class and they're eager to learn, they're delightful children. I have been blessed having children in front of me who come from all over, all parts of the world, and we're together as a family. We look out for each other. If a kid leaves his cell phone in the desk, I never have to worry that a kid is going to steal it because a child brings it up to me and says, "Oh, Miss. So and so left his phone. Can we go give it to him?" They look out for each other. It's just wonderful. I hope it continues, because it's just a wonderful feeling that we're able to create that sense of community and that it doesn't matter where we're from, we're here together. Being an American, I do keep on telling them, "You know, boys and girls, there's nothing here that you can't
accomplish. I love to show them this wonderful, inspirational movie that I show at the end of the year every year and every year we're all crying.

To Mrs. Romano, one of the greatest strengths of America is that it is full of immigrants. To her, the students she taught are Americans and contribute to what makes this country special. She stressed this idea when teaching her students.

We do this thing on immigration, it's part of the 8th grade course, the last semester. I have them do a PowerPoint. They could choose their famous immigrant to the United States. They heard the song God Bless America, but they had no idea an immigrant may have wrote that song. They chose a whole bunch of different people. Some are actors, some are movie stars, some are politicians, a lot of singers who come from other countries and have contributed greatly to the United States. We always make that point, too. The United States has always had immigrants. We're a melting pot. That's what makes us so special. We say it over and over and over again because we're here to help each other. If I can do math and you can't, then I'll help you. If I can't do something else, you help me. That sense of community is phenomenal.

The researcher asked Mrs. Romano to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students. Her students' status as culturally and linguistically diverse Americans from different backgrounds was one of the major reasons she enjoyed teaching.

I love my middle school students. Everybody looks at me, when I go to weddings or something, they'll say to me, "Oh, you're a teacher. What grade do you teach?" When I say 6th through 8th, they say, "Oh, you poor thing." I say, "I love it." The kids, they're old enough that you can talk to them at a... You can talk about adult things. There have been a lot of things going on in the news, because part of our program is current events,
so there have been a lot of current events going on. You have a captive audience and it's the first time, you're seeing things because it's the first time that they've ever heard about things, especially the civil rights movement, which we studied in grade 8. They hear about the government in the United States. They're always telling me, "Well, in my country..." They make the comparisons.

The researcher asked Mrs. Romano to clarify what exactly students were comparing. She asked, “So, you’ve asked students to compare and contrast their native countries with this country?”

It happens automatically because especially when we start talking about, in the beginning, 1st quarter, we do the Constitution of the American Government. This year, with the election, it's going to be fascinating. We went over all the different primaries. We went through the, on the map, showed the United States and who voted for what and all this, but they just lap it up. The topic of human rights and the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, they just love it. To hear about freedom of speech, freedom of petition. Very shortly after that we go into Martin Luther King, so it all makes sense to them. We talk a lot about the Civil War Amendments, so it all connects. Then they say, "In our country, we can't do that."

We study what's going on in different parts of the world. In Africa there are countries where people don't have freedom. They don't have any rights. The government can just come over and just kill you. We have children from Bangladesh. Like I said, we have children from the far corners of the world and they share with us and especially, maybe not in the beginning, but as time goes on they feel more comfortable and they share. Sometimes, in small group and then big group.
We always say that we're all the same. We're all shades of brown. Some of us might be lighter and darker, but we're all shades of brown and our blood is the same. We're people. People are people.

When Mrs. Romano was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she suggested that there was no one single method to teaching because there was no single type of learner. Since we are all different with different learning needs and styles, it was important for educators to find what is best for each learner.

Whatever works for each... Each child is so different. I don't know if there's a one-word answer for that because every child is so different. As we said in the very beginning, they come from different cultures, they come from different economic backgrounds, they come from different academic backgrounds, and they come from a different culture completely. We have to find what works for each child. We don't know the trauma the child has faced, we don't know the losses those child might have faced, the adjustment those children are facing, adjustment issues. So many things we don't know. We have to find what works for each child and then take it from there. I think that's the best answer I can give you. Everything… Scaffolding, we just have to hit everything that will help a child. Visual, oral, everything- Music, whatever works. Whatever will work for a child to open him up. Sometimes very simple. You don't realize it and you hit on it and you say, "Oh." Drawing, sometimes the child is so talented. Other children don't want anything to do with them, but you find a child who is. Then he becomes your visual person and he can learn tons and tons of vocabulary by drawing pictures. Just something he loves. Using peer models, using their strengths.
“Mrs. Anderson”. Mrs. Anderson, the sixteenth interviewee, was a White European woman who grew up in Vermont. Her maternal grandparents were both immigrants who came from Germany and Italy. Growing up, she spoke English and French. At 17 years-old, she spent time in Guatemala and Ecuador for her undergraduate studies. She studied Spanish Literature and Latin American politics in undergraduate school and obtained a Master’s degree in education from Lesley University. During the time of her interview, she had been teaching for four years, all of which were with ELL students. Mrs. Anderson spoke fluent Spanish and believed this influenced her understanding of her culture. She found being bilingual, trilingual, or multilingual to be empowering and exciting.

I grew up in Vermont. I am white. My mom’s parents are both immigrants from Europe, from Germany and Italy. I, when I was 17, spent some time in Guatemala and then some time in Ecuador when I was in college. I do speak fluent Spanish and that I think informs my current culture, that it’s really important for me to be bilingual. I think that’s one of the most empowering things which is why I work in the bilingual program here and why I like teaching ESL because I think it’s really empowering and exciting for me to be able to speak two languages and I want to instill that excitement in my students as well. But I’m not a former ELL.

Mrs. Anderson referred to herself as a person of privilege. When she was asked to discuss ways her background influenced her teaching, she shared her experience in Guatemala:

I definitely, when I was in Guatemala, that’s when I was 17 and I had spoken French growing up. Just my parents wanted me to learn French. Then I went to Guatemala and I thought, “It’s going to be easy to learn Spanish.” I felt frustrated and confused and everybody spoke so quickly and I didn’t know what was happening.
As a person of privilege and there on vacation obviously wasn’t dangerous or scary for me, but I did still feel frustrated and I realized how empowering it was as I started to learn Spanish. I started to feel like I had control and the very least safety. I try to remember that feeling of confusion or frustration when I think about our families here and that they are also coming from a place of extreme vulnerability because of the color of their skin and also because of the current racial climate and political climate here in the United States. It’s not just learning English. It’s also empowering for these kids and then they end up being translators for their parents. Sorry, this is long.

I think that’s my responsibility, is not here to babysit, but also to think about how this is going to be a leg up for these families. Then of course they’re doing all of the hard work. The families are the ones who are bringing their kids to school every day and working two jobs. I try to keep that in mind too, that they have a lot of work to do outside of just sending their kids to school.

When she was asked to discuss whether she believed her cultural background made her more effective at teaching ELL students and if so, how. She thought it would be better for children to see Hispanic teachers because they could relate to them and see them as role models. She discussed her experiences in Latin America and her ability to speak Spanish fluently. She believed that helped her relate to the ELL families and community. She shared the following:

I grapple with that a lot because I do think it would be better for kids to see, for my students here specifically to see a Hispanic teacher there. Just because then it’s more relatable for them. Then maybe that would be somebody who they could see themselves becoming some day, to be a model. I don’t think my specific cultural background is perfect. But then because I have spent time in Latin America and speak Spanish, I think,
and I know a bit about Latin American culture, that does give me a leg up and helps me at least relate to families and community with them.

My grandparents on my mom’s side barely spoke English, but the one thing they wanted to make sure she did was speak English. She just barely speaks German and Italian because they didn’t want her to speak those languages, which they think, again, feeds into me, it’s empowering to be bilingual or trilingual, multilingual, exactly, as opposed to discouraging that in your kids. I think, again, that political climate must have been even more scary to them, or not more scary, but different for them. They felt like they couldn’t have their daughters or sons speak their first languages.

Mrs. Anderson worked in a bilingual program in SPS during the school year as well as SPELL. She explained that during the school year, 25% of her students were White, native English speakers who were from Somerville and were learning Spanish. One or two of her students were first generation Afro-Brazilians and light-skinned Brazilians who spoke Portuguese at home. Many of her students were also Hispanics, typically born in the U.S., but their parents were born in El Salvador. She also explained the changing demographics of Somerville and the fact that the cultural and racial backgrounds of her students in the dual language bilingual program changed from ten years ago. In the decade prior, Mrs. Anderson had students who were born in El Salvador and came to Somerville, to now having first-generation American students whose parents were born in El Salvador. When she was asked if she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin have a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered:

Yeah. I guess I’ve never thought about specifically, like I said a lot of my students are from El Salvador, but I’ve never thought specifically about the differences between their
learning… Linguistically, I definitely think that for my students who are Portuguese because at home, the fact that they are learning a third language. I do think about that impact and how important it is because I teach part of my day in Spanish and part in English to clarify and to provide cognates, especially for those students who are learning Spanish as a second/third language. I’ve never thought… It’s hard for me to say if a student from Guatemala learns differently than a student from El Salvador. I’m not sure. Is that the question?

There is so much variation in the Latin American countries and so many distinctions. But then because of the common Spanish language and then specifically a lot of those countries in Central America have had similar tumultuous terrible political times. I think that’s why their parents have come to the United States, the parents of our students. I think it has created a more, for me what feels like at least similar culturally speaking background of those students. I don't know if that answers that question. I haven’t worked very much with students for example from East Asia.

She also found that students from other cultures had an educational impact on her and the way she thought, learned, and then taught. When she was unfamiliar with certain cultures outside of a Latino culture, it forced her to stop and think about her students from other cultures and how best to teach them.

This summer, I have a student whose family speaks Arabic. They’re from Abu Dhabi. That was my first exposure really to a student who’s Islamic, which he’s shared a lot with me about that. I just realized I had no… That’s not part of my cultural capital and I feel relatively comfortable dealing with teaching Hispanic families and a lot of my friends are Hispanic. Then I was like, “Wow, I don’t even know anybody who’s Islamic.” I’m not
sure how that affects their language acquisition or how they walk into a classroom feeling.

The researcher asked whether Mrs. Anderson believed grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress of learning English in school.

Yeah. I guess there’s definitely that phenomenon of being a lifelong ELL and I know we have some at our school for sure where you get kids in 1st grade and they’ve just come to the United States and they’re learning ESL for a long time. I do think there is a benefit in learning English younger. If nothing else at least for accent and cadence.

I don't know what the studies show. I think there’s so much research about second language acquisition that say that you can learn a second language literally at any time of your life. The only thing that’s really significantly affected by it is accent, but I think at the same time it also has to do with the effective filter and how confident you feel.

If you’re learning English at six with a bunch of kids who are also learning to read and write you don’t feel as self-conscious and anxious about speaking and making mistakes because little native English speakers, they’re still making mistakes in their first language too. If you’re learning at 15, that must be another … you have this feeling of anxiety every time you’re speaking and you’re already self-conscious. I think it affects it in that way, especially with how confident you feel.

When Mrs. Anderson was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I think it’s our job as teachers to empower them. I think it’s the most exciting and fun thing in a lot of ways to come to work and to be able to work with this group of kids.

Like you said, who have had these unique experiences at home.
Mrs. Anderson went on to speak about the need to focus on language, sentence structure, and grammar to really create a foundation for ELLs. She went on to talk about the need to model the English language structure to students so that the understood not just the words, but how to explicitly use them in context.

I think for me as stuffy as this sounds I do think looking at grammar specifically is really important because a lot of students, and this is mostly my experience, is just working with Spanish speaking kids at home, that have specific grammatical structures that are ingrained in them because maybe they’re doing a direct translation in their head.

I think a lot of, even if you’re not explaining like, “This is the syntax of a sentence,” having them had repeated exposures to sentences that they frequently mistake… They use the gerund a lot, the “ing.” I was eating instead of I was eating a hamburger instead of I ate a hamburger. Instead of teaching them, “Don’t use the past participle in that way,” I try to teach them in as many ways as possible just what I would use as a specific sentence and give them multiple exposures to that.

Again, she talked about the importance of modeling when teaching students – teaching them how to speak as well as what to say.

I think teaching ESL students to have to think about are they translating in their head or are they just repeating something that they hear and how could I be a model of the most accurate English for them so that it’s not just, again, it’s not just, “I hope they learn it” so that they sound really articulate when they go for a job interview. When they are translating for their mom at the RMV they’re able to explain exactly what they want to say.
The researcher asked Mrs. Anderson to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

I love hearing their stories. I love meeting their families. That’s really fun for me and getting to know more about their culture. We definitely here at this school I think do a great job of welcoming families into the school and having breakfasts in which we show student work. That’s been one of the most exciting and fun things for me too. It’s just becoming part of the community.

I live down the street. A lot of the families are here in east Somerville and I’m here in east Somerville. I get invited to go to church with them or I get invited to go to a birthday party. That’s really, really fun for me and exciting for me. Specifically in the classroom I like, again, that they all, a lot of them have the shared cultural heritage of speaking Spanish, but like I said, they have these different cultural experiences at home. I love hearing about that, what they like to cook, what they do for Christmas, what they do for this holiday, what they do for that. That’s really fun.

The researcher asked Mrs. Anderson if she integrated cultural diversity into the curriculum.

Yeah, I try to make it a culturally responsive curriculum. In some ways, if we’re going to work on some sort of project I definitely try to, for example we did a project last year on Mexico. I wanted to highlight a Spanish speaking country and we had an entire week, which we called the Semana de la Lingua Española, in which it was like just honoring Spanish language.

We had parents come in. I had parents come in, a mom from Peru, a dad from El Salvador, another mom from El Salvador read poetry, talk about their experience and pride in speaking Spanish. That’s something I try to integrate every year, is having
parents or community members. There’s a guy from El Salvador who works at the main branch library. He came here when he was 18 and he now he has his Master’s degree in library sciences. I try to think about ways that I… Obviously my kids are young, six and seven years old, but I think it’s important for them to see people within their community who are empowered and who are also native Spanish speakers. I do try to integrate it.

When Mrs. Anderson was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students.

Some of the things that I mentioned before. First I support I think can be really helpful, especially with cognates and looking at what the students already know. Using oral language to have kids practice language with each other. That’s [inaudible 01:05:17]

Using oral language and partner work as much as possible.

I would say best practice is doing project-based learning because it develops a context for the kids. Then also using activities with a concrete project, not just, “Write a book because we’re writing a book.” No, “Write a book convincing everybody why we’re supposed to be recycling in the school or write a pamphlet,” something with a specific tenor to it that will get them to realize why it’s important.

“Dr. Larson”. Dr. Larson, the seventeenth interviewee, was a White, Jewish, Eastern-European woman. Dr. Larson's first language was English but she read and understood Hebrew. Dr. Larson spent two years in Venezuela and, as a result, learned how to speak Spanish conversationally. After completing her Bachelor's degree with a double major, she went on to obtain a public school license for grades pre-kindergarten through 3rd. Simultaneously, she received Montessori training, which she integrated the principles of into her years of teaching. With a desire to be a teacher educator, she later graduated with a Master’s degree from Harvard
Graduate School of Education in Human Development and Teacher Supervision. After this, she received a doctorate from University of Washington in Teacher Education and Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Larson had been in the field of education for a total of 30 years, 25 of which she taught, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and 1st grade for 25 years and has worked for SPS for two years. Dr. Larson worked with ELLs but explained that she had no specific training in ELL practices. At the time of the interview, she was planning to take a Sheltered Immersion Instruction (SEI) endorsement course. When asked how she felt her cultural background has influenced her teaching, she shared:

That's really interesting question. As a white person, really I came to teaching and I think every white person has to go through this, and many don't or can't even articulate it, but the fact that you are white and working with people of color gives you that idea about white privilege. You have to be aware of that if you are going to be effective with your populations you're working with. Most people go for the colorblind narrative around that and it also means language blinding, like "Oh, we're all the same and everyone is just trying to learn at the same thing the same time." By doing that, you really negate all the funds of knowledge that come from all the populations that you served.

She later went on to share the ways her native cultural background, Eastern European Jewish, influenced her teaching.

I've heard a lot of people say that, but it is true and a true narrative from the cultural background that I come from, although it really bothers me when people compare it to the narratives of people of color or immigrant populations or true ELLs. Coming from an Eastern European background where our Jewish families did go through the atrocities of World War II, you do have that legacy of being outsider of having oppression as part of
your background, even though our whiteness enabled us to come to the United States and
not have to face the same things that people of color has faced because of the prejudices
that are inherent in our country. We walked both sides of the fence in that way.

Dr. Larson shared the difficulty of tracking her effectiveness with ELLs students and families but
noted the awareness that she subconsciously brought to her students and families. She shared the
importance of knowing what it feels like to be an outsider. This awareness gave her the ability to
be sensitive to her students’ needs. Dr. Larson shared the importance of helping other teachers
understand the importance of being aware of students’ needs. When the researcher asked Dr.
Larson if her cultural background as a Jewish woman made her more effective in working with
ELL students and their families, she stated the following:

I don't know if it's made me more effective or not because I don't have the data on that,
but it certainly brings a sense of awareness of what it's like to be an outsider and to
always be sensitive to that and not in a condescending way, but in a needs based way to
really think always have that in the forefront of when I'm approaching a family or when
I'm working with a family. Or with teachers to help them understand that. I do a lot of
work on anti-bias education and it's been a big part of my teaching when I worked with
young children to talk about these things with young children because they are going to
talk about them. Helping other teachers talk about these things is really important to me.

When she was asked to discuss the racial and cultural backgrounds of her students and families,
she stated the following:

It's basically the same demographic of Somerville Public School. I'm not going to get the
statistics right off the top of my head, but I feel like I think we're close to 69% ELL,
similar statistics for free and reduced lunch I believe. Large portion, maybe 30% Spanish
speakers. Tell me if I'm wrong and then a lesser percent, Portuguese speaking. Then the fastest growing is really our other languages. I think there used to be a larger population of Haitian Creole speakers, mainly 2% and it's gone up and down depending on demographic changes and where people are deciding to land. Then we have this fastest growing group; so the Arabic population, Nepalese speakers, etc., etc. That's basically it, and then the rest are Native English speakers.

Dr. Larson was asked whether or not her students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they've learned and she answered:

That really is I would say for me, there's two sides to that, right? There is the fact that when we look at funds of knowledge and we think about what people bring culturally, some of that comes from the ways in which people have developed cultural norms around certain practices. Even like how people do meals and how they enter spaces or how they set up themselves for any activity that they're going to do and how they interact with each other, right? Some of those are cultural. I would say contextual, that everything is contextual, but I think there are ways in which people attribute some of those practices to being innate, nurture inside people in a way that is in their DNA, which we know is not always the case, not certainly the case, right?

For Dr. Larson, the need to conceptualize learning was one of the most important factors to student success.

Everything for me is about context and all of it is learned in many, many ways. It's not just all about biology, but people like to attribute things to biology, which gets everybody off the hook for having to accommodate or understand the way someone is.
When Dr. Larson was asked if she felt the students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered:

Yeah. For me, that question is really about what the values around learning in your family and do the values that you have around learning, not do you value it because I think every family values learning and wants the very best for their child. Their value around learning and combined with their ability to access the system that they landed in may impact children's learning positively or negatively. I think it's a formula. I don't think it's as simple as oh your cultural background is X, therefore this is going to happen to you. I think people enter a system. They have certain values, cultural beliefs, cultural norms, then the system gets them. There maybe a mismatch or they may get lucky and have some alignment and then that ends up impacting how children learn.

People might come in and for a family who speaks English and is used to dealing with bureaucracy in the US, they might come in and know that they've got to make 7 phone calls in order to get something done. If you're ELL or you're just a newcomer or you come in and you aren't sure how to navigate that because in your country, you would make a trip to the office and you would have a personal conversation with somebody and then you would have to do that 5 more times. That's the way you used to doing it, but here, you need to make phone calls and email. If they can't get that initial conversation starter, they're at a dead end. Now they're just assuming that whatever service they were trying to get is not available to them.

Dr. Larson spoke of an undiagnosed problem of students and their families not having the knowledge or understanding of the social system and structures around them, which could have a negative impact on their learning.
They don't have the cultural capital or social capital, both of those things interchangeably to be able to move on forward and understand how to navigate the system. If they can't navigate it, if you spit that kid out on the other side, it may actually impact their learning because they didn't get what they needed from the system. They didn't get the right placement. Parent didn't ask the teacher the right questions, didn't know when to come to ask the questions. There are all of these pieces that I think are so hard for our ELL populations, especially our newcomers who are also navigating cultural issues as well as language issues.

The researcher asked Dr. Larson to say more about the lives of her students who came from different countries, particularly those who came from countries where they experienced war or violence.

Sure. It definitely does. I'm always hesitant to attribute it to culture because I don't want to make that like oh you're Asian, so therefore you're going to behave in this way when you come to school or you're from El Salvador so therefore you're not going to learn as well, right? Then you put into the mix the experiences that people had to get here or the experiences they had in their home countries that definitely impact learning. That's different when you're talking about trauma, right? That's another part of the formula. El Salvador plus trauma equals difficulty in the classroom. It's not that you're Salvadoran. That's not why you're not learning. It's the fact that you have these experiences.

We had a child in one of our pre-kindergarten classrooms this year, not here, at a different school. He was from El Salvador but came across the border in Mexico and was in a detainment center for only 2 days. The 2 days in that detainment center traumatized him to the point where he could not function. He would go into traumatic play, didn't
matter what costume, he was the guard. He would put on any costume and become the guard. He couldn't sleep at night. Two days impacted his whole life.

The researcher asked Dr. Larson if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English as a second language, or as an additional language. Well, as an early childhood person, what I see from very young children, so there is that understanding about the brain plasticity and that it is easier to learn a new language when you are younger. Your brain is more open to it. There's that fluidity that happens. I think there's also a social piece that happens when young children that I've seen. When I worked in Venezuela, I didn't have training as an ELL teacher, but my kids spoke 12 different languages. This was in our 1st grade classroom. I've had many kids who were speakers of other languages other than English in my classrooms over the years. Their motivation to play and connect with other children is so strong that they do not have the social inhibitions that adults have to try speaking and they will try it because they want to try it.

She brought up the idea of students speaking one language in one circumstance and another language in another circumstance, depending on the time and place. Dr. Larson seemed to believe that this practice, sometimes called code switching, was beneficial to the student’s language development.

In Venezuela, I would see Korean kids, Israeli kids, Brazilian kids come in to a school where English was the primary language and Spanish was the language of the street of the world come in and learn both those languages simultaneously depending on the context. If they were outside playing soccer, Spanish. If they were in the classroom, English. They went back and forth between their home language, the language of play,
and the language of academics all at the same time because they were so motivated to be part of that game or to know what was happening in the classroom and be able to communicate when you're collaborating on a project with a friend.

When Dr. Larson was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

Well, we've touched on this a little bit before. I mean I feel like children come to school with tremendous untapped funds of knowledge that we have this idea of assimilation and come on, let's get them with the program as soon as possible and yes they have to learn English. That's really the parents' goal in many cases. That's the school district's goal, right? Everybody's got that as their eyes on the prize, but I often just wonder are we missing something by having such a primary focus on that. We can't let that go, but what else are we not taking up and how do we find out what kids from different cultures have to offer and are we finding out what families value and what would be important to them in the learning environments that their kids go into? I don't know. I just wonder about that and I don't know the answer.

The researcher asked Dr. Larson to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

I think it goes back to especially... I'm director of early education, so I've seen the 3 and 4 year olds mostly, is their motivation to communicate. You do see some children who come in shy and quiet. I think some of those kids would be shy and quiet anyway, although you do see sometimes children come in and once they learned the language of the group, I was like, "I didn't know that she had that in her. Okay, she's really a dynamo. She was shy and quiet before." Often you just see that motivation to communicate and
play and be part of. They want to be part of the group. They want to be doing what everybody else is doing and making that happen is super satisfying and watching teachers who are able to engage their children is really gratifying and impressive.

Dr. Larson finished the interview by discussing best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students.

Yeah. I think it goes back to that we tend to get polarized in early childhood. It's like oh free play, don't interfere, give them lots of worksheets. We have to teach them this and move them in 15-minute increments, right? We get polarized and I think the best is to bring the best of all the worlds and all the pedagogies, so kids need time for direct instruction and one on one time with teachers. They need to be able to choose. They need time to play. They need time for inquiry, but it all has to be happening at the same time and the teacher has to be planning for all of it. I think in an eclectic approach is the strongest approach, but it is hardest for teachers to do. Yes. It has to be intentional. Like today, in my planning today, I want to make sure that I individualized for these children and I know I want to stir so and so over to this area and make sure that they get this. During my math time, I'm going to be really differentiating instruction, but also having some open-ended time too. I think teachers need more planning tools and they need to learn more about observation.

“Ms. Kuznetsov”. Ms. Kuznetsov, the eighteenth interviewee, was a White woman with a Russian cultural background. She grew up in the U.S. with her Russian grandparents. Ms. Kuznetsov attended Bunker Hill Community College and then the University of Massachusetts at Boston for her undergraduate studies, and Lesley University for graduate school. She explained that she worked in various educational programs for a long time. She began her teaching career in private schools that were both urban (Cambridge, MA) and suburban (Concord, MA), before
teaching in urban public schools (SPS). She described the demographics of the private school in Concord as being primarily White, with very little diversity. She explained that the private school in Cambridge was diverse in terms of having a variety of cultures represented. The Cambridge private school, however, did not have many ELL students. During the time of the interview, she had been teaching ELL students in SPS for twelve years. When Ms. Kuznetsov was asked what training she received to become an ELL teacher, she answered:

Other than the program, in every college program there's always ELL classes that you would take, specifically the professional development here in the Somerville public schools. Also the SEI endorsement program that we took.

Even though Ms. Kuznetsov learned Russian prior to learning English, and did not speak any English at all when she began school in the U.S., she did not consider herself a former ELL student. When she was asked how she felt her cultural background influenced her teaching and whether or not she felt her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students, she shared stories and experiences of the times she lived with her grandparents. She showed empathy for ELLs and the challenges and obstacles they confronted every day.

I lived with my Russian grandparents my whole life that I remember just my grandmother's heavy Russian accent. Sometimes people even, when we would eat at a restaurant, I remember specifically eating at Friendly's and they not understanding my grandmother and having to translate for her or just translating television shows or very simple things. I'm sensitive to having a loved one not being understood.

Also hearing really heart wrenching stories of back in the day when my mother first arrived in this country when she didn't speak English… There weren’t any special programs for ELLs when she came to this country. She was ten years old. They just put
her in a preschool class because she didn't know English so they just put her in a preschool class.

As a ten year-old. Then when they realized she did not... She also had trauma from being in refugee camps so when she acted behaviorally frightened they assumed that she was handicapped and they put her in a severely handicapped classroom. There wasn't any sensitivity or observation or no one...

When my mother tells me stories it just makes me sad. I think I'm extra sensitive to that. She found some commonalities with Russian ELLs in her own classes, not just in a shared language, but also in being raised by grandparents. She could relate to her students’ Russian grandparents and had primary interactions with them. She enjoyed communicating with her Russian students in her native language and felt comfortable doing so. Over the past twelve years, Ms. Kuznetsov’s ELL students have come from various countries, such as Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, China, and India. They had spoken Portuguese, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Punjabi, Chinese, and Russian. Ms. Kuznetsov found all children, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, were able to pick up a new language, especially social language quickly.

Working with the families and the children. Like I said, it's usually at the early young level. I find that all children, regardless of their cultural background, they pick up the language fairly quickly, through song and being with their friends and being in school. When she was asked if she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered:

I think that always does but I think it also has... I think every cultural background because it's what the family's bringing but I think it also has to do with the economics as well and
what educational level their family has. I think that has impact too. We have to debate those challenges with the culture.

I think that sometimes what I notice is some of the ELL students might have a difficult time... It seems that they might have a challenging time learning and it's not associated with them being ELL or their culture but it also is, it's an impact of maybe their parents not having a strong literacy. Their parents might be illiterate in their own language and that's because of economic issues whereas the exact same cultural background, coming from a family that perhaps had more... The same culture would have a different outcome.

I think people need to be careful not to associate with the culture because with each culture economics plays a part in it. I think that's really important because I've seen teachers discuss that and we've been really careful not to associate that with the cultural. Every culture has economics and that will play a part in how the child learns because of what the parents are.

She believed that all children had the right to learn and should have the same access to education, regardless of their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

I just believe that all children have the right and the privilege, they should have the privilege to learn and they should have the same things offered to them regardless of where they come from economically, culturally. I have a difficult time with the word "race." That specific word because I feel like there's only one race, the human race. I have a hard time using that word. I like to say culturally. I feel like everyone deserves the same opportunity to strive to do their best. I offer all my students the best that I can and I believe that they should be offered the best.
Mrs. Kuznetsov was not sure if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English as a second language or as an additional language. That's difficult for me to say on account of I'm always in early childhood. I'm always in preschool, kindergarten, and 1st grade. Beyond that, I'll be honest and I'm not sure if there is a child that comes in into a higher grade and how their growth is, I don't have experience with that so I'm not sure.

When Mrs. Kuznetsov was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she commented on the commonalities her students shared. I don't know if I have any attitude regarding it. I just believe that all children have the right and the privilege, they should have the privilege to learn and they should have the same things offered to them regardless of where they come from economically, culturally. I have a difficult time with the word "race." That specific word because I feel like there's only one race, the human race. I have a hard time using that word. I like to say culturally. I feel like everyone deserves the same opportunity to strive to do their best. I offer all my students the best that I can and I believe that they should be offered the best. I'm not sure about attitude. I don't know.

The researcher asked Mrs. Kuznetsov to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students. In response, she talked about the way in which ELLs expressed themselves and made connections through the English language. It's always wonderful. I know a specific student that I worked with in preschool who didn't know any English whatsoever. He was from Haiti and he didn't know anything at all and then towards the end of the year he was doing one word, two, three words. Then in kindergarten he picked it up even quicker. Then this year some of the words and the
vocabulary was just tremendous and just being able to see them express themselves more and more.

Also, in preschool maybe because they're so young and they're not shy I've had a lot of ELLs that expressed themselves so much and I run down the hall to find someone to interpret because I don't want their words lost. I remember that particular student would be expressing himself so dramatically and I would have Miss V. take over the class and I would run down to one of the aids because I'm like, "I need to know what he's saying because he's so excited about something. I can't let this moment pass." It would be something that he receptively understood but couldn't express it back. Something about, we were learning about, I remember space. He was like, "I know the sun. The moon follow's me at night." He understood circle time but he had... He couldn't express it in English but he was able to express it in his native language.

Right and it was a lot. Having that connection, when they make the connection even if it's in their own language because you know that they're learning something and to see them progress because they're in the school district you see them.

When Ms. Kuznetsov was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

I think, again, it's a lot of what I've been saying that having the supports, visual supports, family supports, support in the classroom, having them feel safe. A lot of that the SEI endorsement program that we... That the program that we took to have that certification. I thought that was a really great class. I find that a lot of that we did in the classroom but it showed us a lot of other ways to implement it for all students. Like I said, I think it's a lot of... Yes. I think that giving support to the parents like having the English class for
the parents, having the parents come in, I think that's important too. I think having the parents learn... I often find that the children over the years learn English but the parents continue not to. A few times I remember I had a mom who needed an interpreter and by the end of the year she came and she... Interpreter for her. She says, "Oh, no, no, no, I don't need one. I don't need one." She says, "I've been practicing, I've been practicing." We went and she was Portuguese. I was so proud. I'm like, "Oh my goodness, in one year you went from needing an interpreter to not needing an interpreter."

Then the second year when she was here in kindergarten she learned and she was better and better. I was really proud that she, and well as her children who were here. I find often the parents... I think it can be more challenging for the parents.
“Mrs. Peterson”. Mrs. Peterson, the nineteenth interviewee, is a White Latina Jewish woman. Her mother came from Argentina. Her maternal grandparents came from France and Poland. Her paternal grandparents were Jewish refugees from Germany. She shared the following about her cultural background:

It's so complicated. I think race, White, but my mom is from Argentina, and my family is Jewish, so sort of a lot of Jewish diaspora, moving around. My mom is from Argentina. Her mom is from France, and her parents were from Poland. My mom's parents were from Ukraine, and my dad's parents are refugees from Germany. I'm a Latina Jew, which is cool.

When she was asked how she felt her background as a Latina Jew influenced her teaching, she answered:

Definitely feel comfortable speaking in Spanish with students. Most of the students that I work with are Spanish speakers, so I think that makes it easy to make cultural connection with them. I don't know it's been interesting. Last year I taught this book “Number the Stars.” I don't know if you ever read it. It's about the Holocaust. I asked the students, "Oh, have you ever met a Jewish person," and nobody had, or nobody had known that they had. It was kind of fun. I had a day; it was like Ask a "Jew Day." They get to ask me any questions they wanted, and I was like, "I'm totally not going to be offended by anything." I don't know. It was a good. I feel like... I don't know. It was a fun cultural sharing for me that I hadn't really experienced before. I kept connecting, sharing with the students each other's cultural background.

The researcher asked her if it was powerful to share her own culture and she thought it was.
Yeah, it really was. They were super-excited about writing in Hebrew. It was really wonderful for me. Yes. I think it does help to make a connection. I'm not an immigrant, but I'm a childhood immigrant, and I can relate about that. I don't think that means that someone who didn't have that experience couldn't relate, but I think it makes it easier.

Mrs. Peterson spoke Spanish and English fluently. She learned both Spanish and English simultaneously and did not consider herself a former ELL student. She attended high school in Brooklyn Public Schools and then attended University of Chicago for her undergraduate degree, where she obtained her Bachelor's in public policy. She received her Master’s degree in elementary education through the Elementary Education Urban Initiative Program at Lesley University. Her professional experience working with ELLs included working in the dual language bilingual program, working with 1st-5th grade students. During the time of the interview, Mrs. Peterson had twelve newcomers (students who were new arrivals in the US from other countries) in her class, and four long term, ELLs with English Language Development (ELD) level 4. Many of Mrs. Peterson’s students were El Salvadorans and Colombians. She explained that one student came from Cameroon, one from Brazil, and one from Morocco. When she was asked to speak about whether or not she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she stated:

Coming here is a totally different world. In terms of, a lot of students are coming from rural areas, living on a farm, so their day-to-day life is just totally changed. A lot of them are going through trauma of leaving family, and traveling to the United States. Just a really intense experience. Dealing with missing people. I think there are different experiences they had back in school in their home countries that color how their experience is here. They're certainly super-eager to learn how things are here, for sure.
When asked if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English as a second language, Mrs. Peterson responded that although she learned this was not the case in school. She believed she did not have enough personal experience as a teacher to say one way or another. She then went on to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

I believe that ELL students should get to be bilingual. I think it's not fair to only learn in English. I think that when they graduate to be bilingual is such a huge advantage work-wise and life-wise. You're able to communicate with your family. My grandmother and uncle are visiting right now and if I didn't speak Spanish I would have no way to speak with them. I've been in parent-teacher conferences with my students last year who were ELLs, and I'd be like, "Tell your mom what you're doing in math class," and they literally can't. I just think that's a huge disservice that we're doing. They can't communicate with their parents in particular because they don't have academic language in Spanish. They may be able to communicate about...

Clean your room, and whatever, but to say, "Oh, I'm learning about multiplying fractions." That's a belief I have. It's hard to say. I'm new, but I'm convinced by the theory that ELL students need to be exposed to complex academic language in English and not be constrained to, "Jane marched up the hill." Really simple sentence structures and vocabulary.

Mrs. Peterson was excited to see professional development sessions being offered on teaching academic language in new and exciting ways.

We've been doing some PDs in Boston on this three Ls systems. It's basically taking super-complex text and just making it accessible to ELLs by really breaking it down and
playing with the sentence structures. Literally moving pieces of the sentence around, and playing with different vocabulary, and then using a lot of sentence frames to use the vocabulary. Again, I haven't seen any long-term effects of it, but it makes a lot of sense to me.

Yeah, the whole group. It's all whole group. I've mostly observed more than practicing it myself, but the Hennigan School in Boston uses it exclusively, I think. They do have Smart Boards, which makes it interactive for the kids to go up and move pieces of the sentence around, which is awesome. I don't have a Smart Board, so I've been experimenting with PowerPoint. In my class I have a projector, so I projected the text last year, the times that I did try using this. The practice to write on a receipt paper a really long sentence and then they tear it up, and the students hold it up as they're reading different parts of the sentence.

The researcher asked Mrs. Peterson to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

I love languages, so I enjoy the exchange of languages. Even if it's a language that I don't speak. I love learning bits, and then using it. I love the connection that makes. I just feel like it facilitates... It's hard. I haven't had a lot of experience not working with ELLs in schools, but I just feel like it makes this immediate really easy bond if you can teach me some words in your native language, and then I can teach you some of mine. We can share that and play with that. It just immediately lowers students’ affective filters and makes a fun learning environment, and a trust building.

Another thing is that I relate to having immigrant parents, so I feel like I like that relation. Also, it's different, long term ELLs as newcomers. There are good things about working
with long term ELLs too, but newcomers are so excited about school, and that is so
wonderful to be around.

When Mrs. Matthews was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL
students, she stated the following:

Well, there's those differentiations. Certainly working with a partner, which I feel like
students really love. When available, dictionaries, modeling, sentence frames, a ton.
Acting. My class was a big acting class last year, which was super-fun. No inhibition, so
that was really wonderful. We acted out stories. In fact, we wrote a play towards the end
of the year. That was really fun.

We read a book, and then we wrote a reunion of all the characters. The students worked
in partners to write interview questions. An interview program like Oprah. They wrote
questions and answers based on the characters, like how they would respond to questions
in the future. It was super-fun. We've done acting out vocabulary words. I preview
vocabulary, so we acted out those words. The one thing they really like too is... I've
made slide shows for different vocabularies of if a picture matches the word or not. Then
they have to debate. So many things.

Complex text, I think, is the biggest, and then sentence structures that are complex with
lead ins, with the subject is not always the first word in the sentence. Providing those
frames and then having them respond using those sentence structures within writing and
orally.
“Mrs. Jones”. Mrs. Jones, the twentieth interviewee, was a White American woman who had fifteen years of teaching experience, nine of which was in SPS. She began her career in education by learning multiple languages.

I studied Spanish and linguistics, and French in college. I majored in linguistics and foreign languages and focused on applied linguistics. From there I decided... That's how I got into ESL. I did a Masters in Education. Then I did additional coursework just for licensure, for ESL licensure, and that's it. Do you want to know where or that's enough? I studied applied linguistics in college. A focus on language acquisition, language teaching, language assessment, language learning, all of that. Through my Master’s I did a little more work with teaching and learning but not as specific. More training for an additional licensure program that I did in the ESL department. So I feel like I have a lot of training.

In college. I decided to major in Spanish, just because I wanted to learn Spanish. I had never studied it before. I was required to take a linguistics course, as a foreign language major. And then I was like, oh. I never knew anything about it. This is so cool. I took more and more and I ended up majoring in it. That's kind of how this became interesting. It just sort of happened by accident. I always say, I accidentally fell into this work but I really like it.

Mrs. Jones enjoyed visiting other countries and learning languages. She found her experiences in other countries and learning languages to be the most influential. She was asked how learning Spanish and being part of another culture influenced her teaching.

This is the thing that I think. I really feel that there's an understanding that unless you've done it, it's hard to really, really appreciate it. When we teach other teachers and we talk
about teaching ELLs, it's like if you've never had that full experience of feeling really lost and all the emotional stuff that goes on and all the frustration of like "I have these thoughts that I can't express."

If you've never really had to struggle with it, it's hard to really appreciate. Having gone through it has given me a lot more empathy, I think, and understanding of not just the language acquisition process, but like all of the other, like the emotional side and all the struggles. It's also different because I had the opportunity to dedicate myself to studying. Working part time, but the focus was study. I had the opportunity to travel and become bilingual because it was a choice, because it was something that was going to be additive to my life. It's a very different experience, but still, at least being able to empathize in that way with some part of the experience that my students might have has helped understanding definitely.

The researcher continued by asking whether she felt her experience, particularly her experience learning an additional language and visiting other countries made her more effective in teaching ELL students, and she agreed that it did.

    Just the empathy and just having some sense of understanding of some part of the challenges of doing that and what it really means. Then also just from a language learning perspective. Understanding from your own experience. Everyone's is very different, but some of the factors that could have affected it, some of the situations that were more or less helpful or just the patience with the process. And it really helps students, too… I think to see the example.

To say, "Your Spanish is so good. How long have you been studying?" And I say, "20 years." You know? Then I say, "And I had the opportunity." I really focus on that, too.
20 years and a lot of privilege and opportunity. The idea that it's something that can be achieved, but it's no small thing. To recognize that, I think is really important.

Mrs. Jones’ professional teaching experience with ELL included working in adult education, community education, high school, as well as after-school programs. She worked at a small non-profit in East Boston, whose mission was to teach pregnant and parenting Latina women. She taught basic adult education ESL classes where on-site childcare was offered for families. She also taught Spanish to ELLs in a charter school. During the time of the interview, she taught a specific subject to ELLs at the high school level and was an ESL specialist at one K-8 elementary school in SPS. Her experiences also included working with ELLs who were Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). Many of Mrs. Jones’ students came from Central America: predominantly El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. She discussed how in the past she had many students from Brazil and Haiti, but had fewer new arrivals from the two countries. She believed whatever was going on in the world (i.e. earthquake, war, etc.) often affected the population trend of students in SPS. She shared the following about the “really diverse” cultural backgrounds of her students:

Recently, it's trending towards predominantly Central American. A lot of students from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras. More from Brazil in the last year or two. It's kind of been like this, but there's a lot going on in Brazil. It's kind of like what's going on in the rest of the world affects population trends here. We had a number of Haitian students. I feel like in the last couple of years, I've seen like fewer new arrivals, high school level, from Haiti and more from Brazil, but with Central American being the predominant. We have like a handful of students from a whole host of other countries and linguistic backgrounds, but those are the big three in Somerville. Right now, this is... When I
started in Somerville High School, my first class, I had 10-12 countries and languages represented per class. This year, I have one class where only one student was not a native Spanish speaker.

When she was asked if she felt the students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the way they learned, she stated, “yes” and then went on to explain:

I think that there are just different norms and expectations for communicating and socializing. I would say group culture versus individual culture. I have a lot of students who come from systems where collaboration and working together and supporting each other are more valued versus individual. I feel like American school is all based on competition and individual. It's not the way that I run my classroom, but it's the way that... I feel like it's the culture of schools, it's the culture of just socializing and just general stuff that's hard to see and perceive, but I feel like over time it makes sense. And then also just schools, like school norms. Depending on the countries and rural versus urban and the kinds of school people were in, there's a lot of different expectations about what it means to be a reader and a writer, what it means to be a learner, what it means to be a student. It's very different. I feel like it's almost always very different from what it means to us here, so we do a lot of work in my class with what are the expectations, what does it mean in this class, how do you do every single thing? When we talk with a partner, we turn and we lean into them and we greet them. Stuff that I feel like it seems so much a part of American schools but is not necessarily... It's like stuff that shouldn't be assumed that's familiar to students. That was a long-winded answer.

The researcher asked Mrs. Jones whether she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English as a second language or as an additional language. At first,
Mrs. Jones answered, “no,” and then she answered, “yes and no.” She then explained why she believed that there were many things that affected students’ language acquisition and second language acquisition. She believed that when students had strong literacy skills in their primary language (L1), then they were better able to transfer these skills into learning English.

Yes and no. I feel like there are so many factors that affect language acquisition, so it's hard to say one thing more than another. I think what affects more than grade and age is prior schooling and level of native language literacy and opportunities for that.

I feel like students who come to Somerville High School, having completed ninth grade in their country with a very solid base of L1 literacy have a really different trajectory and outcome from students who enter Somerville High School having never gone to school. I teach students in this profile having never gone to school, or having gone to one or two years of school, little to no native language literacy. I feel like that's the bigger picture.

You're still developing. So there's that idea of the distance is smaller between if you're entering as a newcomer, beginner in kindergarten... The distance between you and what's the bar is not as great, but it doesn't mean that you also don't have the cognitive ability to do the comparing and contrasting comparisons, and you don't have the cognitive abilities to understand your situation and process it and talk to someone about all the confusing feelings you're having. Do you know what I mean? There's that.

And you don't have L1 literacy to support your... I feel like everyone's experience is so different. Does age and grade affect it? Yes, but I feel like among a whole host of other things. I wouldn't say like oh, categorically, it's much more successful for kindergarten.

When Mrs. Jones was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:
In general, how do I approach my students? They're resilient. They're hard working. Let's see, what else... they're complicated in terms of life circumstances and the variety and assortment of reasons for which they find themselves in my classroom are often complicated. But as a result, there's a lot of resilience, independence, maturity and strength that comes from that. And there are also a lot of challenges. There are a lot of emotional struggles. There are a lot of legal struggles. There are a lot of financial/economic struggles. There are a lot of family struggles. So it's just complicated. But they're awesome and inspiring and that's why I do what I do.

Seeing students’ challenges and obstacles motivated Mrs. Jones to become a teacher and influenced her teaching styles and methods. She targeted specific problems her students encountered in order to be a more effective educator.

A lot of supports. That's why I'm there. It's interesting because I started my career in an organization that was a very multi-service, social service type agency that had social workers and had immigration counselors and all this different stuff that was family and community support as well as education. So knowing that and then doing some part time work in different public schools and realizing that oh my god, they don't have this, right? And then coming to Somerville and seeing the amount of supports and the amount of work, even since I've started at Somerville, to build and expand on the supports for students... because usually it just falls on the ESL teacher in schools that don't have things built in. You just do it. You're like, oh yeah, you need help with this? Okay, I'll find out.

In my school we have something called the Welcome Center for English Language Learners, which is... there's no limits to what they do, but work with families'
interpretation and translation, that's the minimum...but then also academic support, social support. We've got social workers, we've got counselors as a dedicated... you should talk to this person. There's a dedicated guidance counselor for ELLs that specifically works to schedule classes and also meet academic and social needs and interface with teachers. She'd be a great person for you to talk to, that's so specifically for ELLs in my school.

Social programming, after school programming for social and academic needs. I mean there's just no end to the supports that we try to provide students. I'm not saying all of them because there's just no end.

So it's a really supportive place, and because of that it's a really comfortable place to work. I told you there are a lot of challenges. It's not a surprise. And we're not able to address them all. There's a lot of things that you just can't find a way out of in some ways. But there's a lot we can do and there's a lot that we do for students, and there's a lot of success because of it, if that makes sense.

The researcher asked Mrs. Jones to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

The energy. The motivation. The motivation and the energy and the enthusiasm for learning. I also enjoy... how should I say it? I enjoy the idea that you're really teaching much more than just reading and writing, or whatever it is. I just like the idea that... my supervisor has this thing she says, “You know you're leaving the school year and probably remember 1% maybe of what you've tried to teach them, so what's the big picture?” I think about that every year, and the big picture of the learning goes so much beyond the language development that happens, which I think is pretty amazing. We've had a lot of success there. I like the idea. I feel like we care about the whole student.
When Ms. Jones was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

I think...it's for everyone, but the idea of gradual release of responsibility, where there's a model with explicit instructions, and then we do guided practice, we do it together. And then there's a lot of scaffolding, a lot of supports before you do it on your own. But I think in general the way I teach, and the way I teach everyone to teach is basically, besides understanding your learners and who they are and their experiences and their whatever, and making sure you're trying to tailor and connect as much as possible to that, in terms of instruction, the idea of model, guided practice, individual practice, scaffolding and supports as needed.

In my world, we spend a lot more time in the second step of guided practice. Maybe other...but I feel like it's worked. Hands on. I mean everything. I feel like I don't say that because to me it's obvious, but every different possible way to make concept comprehensible in addition to that. To the extent possible. And with lots of visuals and technology, anything...objects...Using the native language if possible.

“Mrs. Clinton”. Mrs. Clinton, the twenty-first interviewee, was a Black Cape Verdean woman. At the time of the interview, Mrs. Clinton had lived in the U.S. for fourteen years and spoke English fluently. She studied English throughout high school in Cape Verde. She also explained that her work in tourism helped her with her English communication skills. She expressed that she had a similar background to many of her students, except the only difference is that she immigrated to the U.S. as an adult learner whereas her students came to the U.S. at a much younger age. When Mrs. Clinton was asked if she considered herself an ELL student, she answered:
Not in the sense that my students are right now. I studied English as a foreign language, not as a second language in my country. When I arrived here, I had to take; I think it was 3 months of intensive courses. In some ways. Then, maybe I was just trying to make it- I didn't come as a high school student and sat in a classroom. Yeah. I feel sometimes I'm an ELL when I make prepositions mistakes.

When the researcher asked if she felt her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students and how, she answered:

I think it has, because in many instances, I come from the exact same background my students are coming. Throughout my teaching career, I taught Cape Verdean students from same background, Asian students, and Latin American students. Even though sometimes they're coming from different places, the backgrounds are similar. We are all coming from- A lot of us are coming from the same, more traditional way of learning.

The fact that I moved from my country here, and was shocked at the beginning of how, even though I had a little bit of English, but I was shocked that I couldn't understand a lot of what people were saying when I just got here. I understand that struggle to try to make yourself understood, be part of the conversation, and understand others. I think that helps me in the classroom when I look at my students in understanding where they are at, and where they need to be.

The researcher asked her how she felt her cultural background has influenced her teaching, and she answered:

I come from a background that, as a student and looking at how my teachers would approach, it is more a traditional way of teaching. Then, when I got here, I was taking English classes. I loved so very much like how interactive and how many things we did
that I tried to combine both. I think that my background helps in a sense that it showed me the importance of having structures in place for students that they are held accountable for. I use a little bit of that in a way that sometimes I feel like it's being a little bit more open about teaching sometimes, elected, creating that disciplined- I don't know if I'm making sense.

Trying to make it interactive so I can engage my students, because I clearly do not believe that sitting stood and sound and talking at them is the best way to teach. That was how I learned a lot of my English. I don't really like it. I got bored. I don't want to repeat that with my students. It's trying to find that balance, because also you cannot just throw it all away just like, "Let's just have fun. Let's just talk and move in a classroom."

I think they have to have some structures.

Mrs. Clinton had two Master’s degrees, one in human services and one in applied linguistics and ESL. She was enrolled in a doctoral program during the time of the interview. She taught for seven years in the urban public school districts of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. She taught ELLs for all seven years. When she was asked what training she received to become an ELL teacher, she answered the following:

I went back to school and did my Masters in a specific ESL program. All of the schools that I've been to, there's always lots of PD around how to work with ELL's, cultural proficiency, PD's. I also took the Skillful Teacher Course, which was awesome. It was not specifically to work with ELL's, but I feel like it's one of those courses that every educator should one day take.

Her professional experience working with ELLs and their families began well before she began teaching in the classroom. She worked in social services where she assisted immigrant families
and newcomers. She believed her prior experience in social services strongly influenced her professional experience as an educator. She discussed the need to understand the issues students were facing.

As I said, I've been teaching. One of the things, though, that I think has made a big influence in my professional experience with ELLs is that before I became an educator, I worked in social services. I worked with immigrant families, newcomer families, and families that were just bringing their kids. I worked with a lot of young people and in adjusting to their life here. When I went into the classroom, I kind of came in already knowing a lot of the issues and problems that families face when they come in. Sometimes, you are in a classroom with students. You see, "That student is not performing. That student is not doing that." We forget to look back and imagine what else is behind their performance. For me, having had that experience as a social worker working with immigrant families, it helps me understand that sometimes, before I can teach that student, I need to understand what are the issues they are facing, how can I help them solve those, because then they can focus on their learning. I think that's one of the things I'm very thankful that I have had that experience before.

Her ELL students’ cultural backgrounds in Cambridge included Asians, Guatemalans, and El Salvadorans. Her students’ cultural backgrounds in SPS varied greatly across Central America, South America, and Africa.

Asians, Guatemalans, El Salvadorans, so all. I think especially in Cambridge. In Somerville, actually, I had some of my- The ELL students in my classroom were mostly from South America. I had Chile. Actually, it was also Central America, El Salvadorians. I had a couple of El Salvadorian kids. I had lots of Central American
students. I think the majority of students that I've had this far has been either from Cape Verde or from Haiti. Actually, I had, last year, a bunch of students from West Africa, from East Africa. They're all from all over the place.

When Mrs. Clinton was asked whether she felt her students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered:

I wouldn't say their cultural background, because sometimes you have students that come from the same place, and they have very different ways of being in a classroom of learning. I think it's maybe within their countries, or the place they're coming. It has to do with the kind of school they went to, the kind of teachers they had, and also their own motivation. Why are they doing this? Are they doing this because they came and they really want to learn English, or parents brought them here, and the parents are forcing them? There are a lot of factors. I wouldn't say that the background, because you can find the same background and completely different ways of being in school.

When she was asked whether or not she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English, she talked about students’ motivations to learn English, as well as their background knowledge of learning concepts.

I think combined. They can have a big impact. I do think that if a student comes here at the right age for the grade they're in, and they're kind of, academically, back in their native language they are where they should be, there's not a lot of issues. I think the issue is when older students come, and they are put in lower grade levels, or, academically, they're behind even in their native language. That brings some issues because they become very conscious that, "I am the oldest and I barely speak English." That influences a lot.
I think that if a student has all of the conditions for learning, age, grade level, whatever they come in, they all learn. We see lots of examples of kids coming in at high school level at ESL [ELD] Level one. Within 4 years, they have enough English that they are enrolling in college and successfully finishing college. I think it's like a combination of factors and motivations. I think motivation is bigger than any age disparity. Also, the preparedness that they come in their native language. It's just a question of learning the language and transferring in it. When you don't have this content knowledge, and you are like behind grade level in your own language, then it's hard because, at the same time that you're learning the language, you're also learning the content. I think that's the hardest part.

Mrs. Clinton found that it was crucial to understand the whole child, particularly their familial situations outside the classroom.

The whole child, exactly. You cannot teach someone that is coming to school every day and has on their mind, it's all of the issues that they're facing at home that- Some of our kids, they come through this different jumping from country to country until they get here. The situations they go through, or they have a family member that is in the process at the moment, or they're in situations where they live with dad but they are not with their mom, they are with step-mom, or even if they're with dad and mom, but they didn't grow up with them because they came earlier and they're arriving at this age. They're trying to connect to each other. That's not easy. There are a lot of issues that our kids go through. Sometimes, we forget about them in a classroom. I think that is important, is trying to give them content.
When Mrs. Clinton was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she felt it was important to set high goals for her students and hold them to rigorous academic standards.

My beliefs and attitudes, I believe that they can learn. I believe that they can achieve. I believe that we don't have to make things easier for them. Yes, we should simplify language, but not water it down. I think we should treat them as people that come with knowledge. They're coming with a body of knowledge. I think one of the things that bothers me is when people look at ELLs and assume that because they don't speak the language, they are ignorant, they don't know anything. I think that's wrong. Kids come with a body of knowledge. They just need the language. You see it, that once they learn the language, they are achieving at higher levels. I believe that they can do it. I believe that they know, and that we just have to support them in acquiring the language.

The relationships she built with her ELLs were what Mrs. Clinton most enjoyed about working with her students.

The relationships that I build with my students. This actually, I think, goes back a little bit when you talked about my students' backgrounds and my background, or what helped. I think a lot of us come from more warm culture where it's okay to give a student a hug and talk about things that are personal sometimes, and letting them know that you understand. I love the relationships that I build with my students that they can come and talk to me that they can trust that I'll understand something that they're going through without judging.

When Mrs. Clinton was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated it was important to acknowledge the differences in her students and then find ways to address their diverse needs.
That's a complicated question to answer. Because it depends on the student in front of you and how they learn. Incorporating that student's experiences and lives into your teaching and teaching those students in front of you in mind. Because what I can say, this year, was great. It was a great experience. It may not work for my group next year because the kids I have in front of me are very different. I think there are best practices, but I don't think best practices work for everyone. I think a best practice is one that attends to the students in front of you at that moment. It may be something completely different from your best practices last year, or someone else's best practice next door. I think they are. I think for our ELL's, it's important that, again, we attend to all of their learning. We have different ways of learning. For our ELL's, sometimes not just listening to the words, they need to hear the word. They need to see it. Sometimes, even manipulate with that. I think especially for reading classes, where we're teaching reading strategies, it's important to have anchor text that illustrate different kinds of text in writing, too, right? They need a lot of repetition. They need to have different ways of manipulating with words, being it visually, tactile, or even movement. I think an ELL classroom should be very visual. A lot of those visuals can be created with them, because sometimes it's more efficient when they are the ones creating their own visuals.

“Mrs. White”. Mrs. White, the twenty-second interviewee, was a White woman who identified her cultural background as Italian, Irish, and Welsh. When she was asked if she thought her cultural background influenced or impacted her teaching, Mrs. White replied:

Probably that I feel it's important to have traditions. I grew up having certain traditions, and even in the classroom of carrying that over into routines and wanting to learn about the families of the students that I work with and make sure that I learn about what
traditions are important to them and what that means when they come into the classroom. In terms of socialization and eating habits, things like that where you need to learn about other cultures in order to understand what their traditions are and what that might mean for those kids at school. Yeah, I think it's made me aware of what's important.

When she was asked how she felt her cultural background had affected her teaching, she emphasized that working with culturally diverse students was rewarding and made her a better teacher.

*I've always sort of had an interest in teaching students who come from different backgrounds than myself. I find it more rewarding, so my interest has always sort of been there to learn more about other families. I don't really want to be in this cookie cutter position as an educator where I don't feel as though I'm growing myself or helping students, so that's sort of where my interest lies... I just feel more passionate about what I do when I'm working with students who don't come from a similar background as myself.*

She did not feel her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students, although she did find traditions to be an important part of identity.

No, not really. I grew up in Texas but I went to private school so I didn't really go to school with many English Language Learners, so I don't feel as though my personal background has made a difference.

The diversity where I grew up in Texas is much smaller than it is here in Somerville, Medford, and the Boston area. How has it influenced me? They are three different cultures. I'm more Irish in terms of my culture with my family's traditions, so I guess in the way that I find tradition important with my own family, I can bring that to the table in
terms of my teaching and how it's important to keep traditions of different cultures and hold true to those even in the school setting, so in that way yes. I'm probably fourth or fifth from Ireland, but we sort of hold true to more of those traditions more so than the Italian side.

She attended Tufts University for her undergraduate studies where she received her Bachelor’s in Child Development. She received her Master’s in special education from Lemoyne College in Syracuse, NY. Mrs. White had been teaching ELL students since she began her teaching career eight years ago. This was her third year teaching in SPS. She took a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) course through the department of education prior to beginning teaching in SPS. Her teaching experience included working in Boston Public Schools for two years, as well as working in a non-profit special education, private school in Boston. Her teaching experience also included teaching in Lawrence where approximately 95% of her students were ELLs. Her experience teaching in SPS included three years with students who were dually identified, students, who were both ELL and special education students. Mrs. White confirmed that working with dually identified students brought different sets of challenges. She stated the following about her ELL students who were considered “dually identified” because they were ELLs with a disability (requiring them to have an Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and to receive special education services).

So I think in terms of their receptive language abilities, you face a lot more challenges because typically I notice in general receptive language challenges with my special education students, but then add on top of that they're an ELL so there's this much more challenging aspect. They have to one, come up against the barrier of their special needs,
but then two, it's a whole new world of this other language this person is speaking, so they're trying to do two things at once.

Mrs. White’s had mostly Latino students. During the time of the interview, she had a few students who were from Brazil and spoke Portuguese, one who was who was from Barbados and then one whom she was unsure of his cultural background. He was White but he was adopted. When the researcher asked her if she felt her students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered yes and then went on to talk about the impact of assimilation and family dynamics.

Aside from their language barriers when they come, a lot of the students here are if not first generation, second generation to our country, so I think speaking a different language at school than they do at home, when they first come to kindergarten and this is their first experience in school, can be really challenging because they have... that is the first barrier you come up against when introducing them into this whole new world of schooling. But I think also that piece of social norms is very different no matter what culture you're from, and how the family dynamics that can then play into their role here at school.

When Mrs. White mentioned that kindergarteners came in learning a new language, the researcher asked her if she felt grade level or age may have affected her ELL students’ progress in learning English.

Yeah, I think the earlier you learn, the easier it is. That's just based on what I've learned through my studies in ELL populations that the later in life you try to learn a new language the more difficult it can be because developmentally you're more absorbent
when you're younger in terms of learning a different language. I do notice that the kids in kindergarten pick it up pretty quickly if they come in speaking little to no English. The researcher wanted to know if Mrs. White was talking about social or academic language.

Social definitely is quicker. Academic, if we're explicitly teaching so much in kindergarten anyway, probably that too, whereas if you go into a sixth grade classroom there's this perception that you've already learned all the way up to sixth grade this academic language. We're in kindergarten, we're teaching the foundation of that academic language, so it's sort of in tandem with social.

When Mrs. White was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she discussed how the success of the student was tied to the success of others, including the teacher and the student’s family.

I don't really think of them any differently. I would like to continue to develop my own other language abilities and learn more about it so that I feel like I can be more helpful and more supportive in those areas. Sometimes I feel when there's those language barriers, you feel disappointed in yourself, that you get this five-year-old who's trying so hard to speak my language and I can try harder to speak hers or his. But I give a lot of credit to the families. That's what I notice probably most at this age, is that the families are wanting so much for their child, and that makes me want to continue working for them and do what I can for them.

The researcher asked Mrs. White to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students.

Probably seeing the progress that they make. Specifically, when I worked in Lawrence, because I worked in an inclusion classroom that had 28 students, myself, and another
teacher, and probably fifteen of those students came in with no English. Not a word of English. So it's really amazing to see from September when they come in until June when they leave how they're essentially fluent English speakers. If they were to take a test they wouldn't be considered fluent, but in social settings it's amazing to see how much they learn in one year, so that's probably what hits me the most, how fast they learn.

When Ms. White was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

Probably to just have an open mind with them and understand where they're coming from and how terrifying it can be coming into a place where you feel as though no one understands what you're saying. That alone can be sort of paralyzing to a child, especially when they're coming into school like you said for the first time and then top of it they're not speaking the language of the adults that they're working with. So trying to empathize with how challenging it can be for them I think is a really important piece.

“Mrs. Ivanov”. Mrs. Ivanov, the twenty-third interviewee, was born in Russia. Her family identified as both Eastern European and Jewish. She moved to the United States when she was a preschooler and grew up in the states. When she was asked if she considered herself a former ELL student, she answered, “no.” As a young, non-English speaker, she attended preschool in the suburban town of Brookline, MA where other children spoke only Russian and learned English through an immersion program. She discussed her memories of not being able to communicate with her teachers as a young child.

In preschool, I definitely went in as a non-English speaker. I was just really lucky that, at the time, I was living in Brookline and there were a number of other Russian speaking
kids there. A lot of families moved at that time to that area. I had peers but I never had formal ELL experience. I just learned through immersion in preschool myself. I do have memories of not being able to communicate with teachers, even at a really young age.

The researcher asked Mrs. Ivanov how she felt her background influenced her work with ELLs and she believed she could better relate to the students because she was also bilingual.

I think being bilingual at home and having the experience of having had to translate for my family members, having to help them through a lot of things that my current students help them with, even though my students are now learning English here, at a higher level and they're high school students, and I learned at a very young level, young age. Very different experience. Also, my family was well-educated and they did speak some English, whereas a lot of my students don't. I do think that experience of being a cultural ambassador, a lot of the time, for my family and understanding what it's like to be bilingual and to know different languages, sometimes feel confused because of that, I think definitely helps me.

I do think that there are many differences in the reasons my family came here, in the way they came here. They're well-educated, they have advanced degrees so they had a lot of opportunities and supports through their jobs and other sorts of things that the immigrant students that I work with often don't. I think being bilingual and growing up speaking another language at home definitely has helped.

The researcher asked Mrs. Ivanov if she felt her cultural background made her more effective in working with ELLs, and she was uncertain.

I don't know, I hope so, I guess. It's hard because, although, there are some people who consider me a minority for being Russian, for being Jewish, for being a female, under not
minority but not the most privileged class, I guess. The students see me as a privileged class, an American white person, Caucasian. I can't understand everything that a lot of them go through in terms of feeling like a minority or feeling like they're being treated differently. I hope that I express to them that I believe in them and that I want them to understand that I understand that they're going through a lot.

I ask open ended questions and try to understand their situation so that year after year, I think I understand a little bit more of what they're going through. They teach me a whole lot so I think I have learned, over the years, how to be more supportive and how to work with them better. I don't know if it's because of my background, but after a long time working with them, they just open your heart up and move inside.

Mrs. Ivanov, who held a Bachelor’s in Science and a Master’s in Education in School Counseling and Guidance, worked as a guidance counselor with ELLs for the past 12 years. Prior to coming to SPS, she spent two years in Arizona where her ELL students were mostly Latinos.

It was 75-80% Latino and the ELL students made up about 20% of the school. Almost all Mexican-American. We had a small Somali refugee population as well but the vast majority were Mexican-Americans.

Mrs. Ivanov also tutored her ELL students. During the time of the interview, she had been working in SPS as a guidance counselor for 10 years with ELLs coming from various cultural backgrounds. The students she worked with were about 50% Central Americans, but she did have students from South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa. She stated the following about the cultural backgrounds of her students:
It's a really mix. It's interesting, of my students, right now it's probably about 50% Spanish-speaking Central American students. We definitely have some Spanish speakers from other parts but the vast majority are Central Americans, mostly Salvadorans. We have another large group of Brazilians and a large group of Haitian students. Everything else, we have a mix. We have groups from different parts of Asia, we have Tibetan, Indian, Bengali students. Nepali students and then an African group that's coming more from Ethiopia, and Congo, and Togo, and all other sorts of different places. Currently, our top group is Spanish speakers from Central America. Our second largest group right now is Brazilians. Third is other, so all the other groups combined. Fourth is Haitian but Haitian is sort of the third biggest group, if you consider just the country that they're from. I think it's a really great mix and the students, although they sometimes do segregate into groups, they often do learn a lot from each other and they're mixed really well in classes.

The researcher asked Mrs. Ivanov what she thought caused the segregation.

I think we have a natural tendency to self-segregate, sometimes. Especially if you spend all day in a language that's not your language, in the cafeteria, in activities after school. It's just so much easier to fall back, and not have to stress your brain, and not have to figure out what's appropriate and just be with people who understand you and where you're from. That said, the students that progressed the fastest and probably have the best experience are ones that reach out and make a friend, either due to sports, or a shared interest, or whatever reason they make a friend in a class and that really helps them evolve their student skills and their English language abilities. Especially their social language skills.
When she was asked whether or not she felt her students' cultural backgrounds or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered in the affirmative.

I do. I think different cultures have different educational systems and different countries have different educational systems. Of course, there's a lot of difference within each cultural group and each country as well. We have students coming from urban centers where they're in international schools or they're in schools that are very elite and other students are coming from rural backgrounds or from schools that are less rigorous or less similar to what we would see here. I don't know if rigorous is the right word but just very different in their philosophy.

The level of educational rigor and the expectations on students varied from culture-to-culture and country-to-country, which is something important for educators to recognize and respond to.

We have a lot of students who live in cultural areas where they go to school half the day and they're on the farm half the day. That's appropriate because that's what their lives are. Other students who have been in schools where they go from morning to 5 pm and that's their whole responsibility is just to go to school and to learn. Part of it, I think, is culture and what the expectations were in their country of origin. Part of it was their socioeconomic or their class status. Students from some countries they're in higher classes than others and, based on that, they have very different backgrounds. Some of the time, I think it's important to keep in mind what culture, what country a student's from. Other times, it's almost more their individual experience and what they've lived. The student who's been to a really elite school in one country might have more in common
with a student very elite school from another country than a rural student in the same country.

It is also important for educators to recognize and respect the individual experiences of the students. In doing so, this makes educators more effective with ELLs.

That's always the hard thing about generalizing. I have to keep in mind, and we also do a lot of trainings to help the teachers understand the different systems and what they might experience, what the students might have experienced, and how to help them integrate that into their expectations and their strategies of helping the students in class.

The researcher asked Mrs. Ivanov if she believed grade level or age affected ELL students' progress in learning English. Again, she stressed the need to recognize the individual learner and the circumstances from which they come.

Yeah, that's a really controversial, I think, thing. We've been talking a lot in our district and I know, I have friends in other districts talking a lot about what the best placement is for certain students. Obviously, there's lots of research to show that language acquisition is easier at younger ages. The students that come at the high school level are at a disadvantage, for that reason. On the other hand, we have students that come here that are more disadvantaged not just because they're in high school but because they've already done three years in another country and so they're trying to just do one year, finish everything that they need here. Learn English, pass all the state exams, and have that senior year experience all in one year. That's really difficult. Whereas, starting at the beginning of high school is a really different experience. They have four years to get through everything.
We're also really struggling to place students. We have students who have been out of school for a while, due to a variety of reasons. Either what's going on in their country, or financial family situations, or safety in their country or their neighborhood. Having students come at 16, 17, 18 that haven't been in school since sixth grade and then placing them in high school due to age, then it's hard to figure out what do they really need at that age? What are our goals for them as graduates and how do we build on what they've already learned and help them feel successful?

I think there are benefits to having them do more time but then, having them graduate at age 21, they're also very different than some of the kids who are graduating at age 17. How they feel about being an older student in school, also, is going to impact whether they stay. I think we try to balance some of that. We have rules at the school about how we place a student. The district, obviously, places into high school based on age. From there, I have to look at their educational background, what they've done, and place them in an appropriate grade. I think that affects, a lot of the time, their morale. If they're an 18 year-old and they have to start in ninth grade and they realize there are a lot of 13, 14, 15 year olds in my classes, that does make them feel bad and maybe they won't finish high school.

The researcher asked Mrs. Ivanov to discuss who was part of the decision-making process when it came to student placements and she discussed student placement.

We have school policies about how to place students. I do most of it, in conjunction with my department head. I look at their educational background. If they haven't done any high school in their previous country, or their previous school if they're coming from other parts of the U.S. I think that's something our district is really talking about right
now and who makes those decisions because, as a counselor, I want to be able to support students to do better. I am happy to make the recommendations but I don't think I should be making that decision, in the end. I think it should be a team effort, including administrators and maybe ESL professionals or other people.

When she was asked if the families were included in the process, she answered, “yes” and provided the following response:

Yeah. The families are made aware that there will be a decision made and, when I meet with them at the beginning, the family is aware of, this is what grade your student is placed in. The only thing that they really have, in terms of decision, is there are some times when they'll ask to move back. Like if a student finished 2-3 years of high school in another country but they really don't feel like they can graduate in one year, they have asked, sometimes, to repeat and move backwards. In terms of forward, we don't allow students to do that but we do offer adult education. If they really feel like they can't continue and they don't like their placement in a low grade, that's unfortunately the other option.

Mrs. Ivanov was well informed of her students’ needs and overall ELL policies.

The Department of Justice and the Department of Education have guidelines and requirements for ELL students. Obviously, we have to provide them with the supports they need at their level. Based on their WIDA level, they have a certain number of hours of ESL instruction, direct ESL instruction. Families are allowed to opt-out of that but we still provide them some supports, even if they opt out. If they want to be a part of the ELL program or our waiver, we have a waivered program for bilingual support, as well.
We have policies of how many hours they need to receive. In addition, we have sheltered classes for them.

Mrs. Ivanov looked at how these specific policies affected the students in their actual learning, as well as how they provided support outside of the classroom, for both the students and their families.

We also have mandated … the state, the country…We're required to provide interpretation, when necessary. For parent meetings, for anything having to do with... If we're disciplining a student, they have the right to have somebody with them to explain what's going on, so they can really understand and be a part of what's going on. We also translate the majority of our materials that we can into at least the three target languages, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole. On a case by case basis, we do other languages as well. Not as regularly, unfortunately. Given that database of interpreters that we have in the district of people that can translate documents and the support classes that we have.

She got more specific when she discussed mental health and legal services being necessary when teaching ELLs.

We're also working a lot with agencies right now to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services and other services. Working with them to help them find lawyers for the ones who have immigration things going on. We're really trying to beef up the services. The policies we have right now are just following what the state requires. We did have a program review recently, and we were found to be within compliance of almost everything. There were a couple small things that were at the high school so we're addressing those.
When Mrs. Ivanov was asked to explain the small things SPS’s high school had to address, she suggested the researcher speak with the Director of ELL.

I was on the committee for the program review but the only thing I was going through is student records, just to make sure we were notifying... There's a law that says you have to notify parents of student... That was one thing, actually, we hadn't been notifying parents quarterly, in writing, on student progress. Sending our report cards like general, that included how they were doing in their ESL class, but now we're also sending out quarterly report cards that are just the progress on WIDA and explain that to families. Right now, this is where they're at orally. This is where they're at in their literacy level. So they can compare quarter to quarter on their report card of how they're progressing. If not, we encourage them to come in and make an appointment. That was one change that we did make…

Mrs. Ivanov had a positive attitude about her ELL students. She believed that ELLs should have access to everything that other students have, in order for them to be successful. She shared the following about her own attitudes and beliefs towards her ELL students:

I guess the core belief just has to be that they are students that need to be successful. We need to make sure that we're supporting them in a way that allows them to have access to everything that all the other students have. If that means modification and accommodation in classrooms, if that means supporting them to be part of the full school community, in activities, in other events that go on. We do a lot to encourage that. Getting them prom dresses so they can go to prom and have that experience or helping make sure they know how to do the applications to be part of sports teams. Reminding them of those kind of things.
She went on stress the importance that creating a community in which the individual student plays an active part was crucial in student success.

I feel the ELL students are often, in many schools, kind of segregated and they're just the responsibility of one set of teachers, one set of counselors. They're kind of their own entity. My belief and the school's, I think, belief is that they are part of the school community and they should get what everyone gets and enjoy what everyone else enjoys. Unfortunately, suffer through the same classes everyone else... It's our job to make it a fair playing ground so that they can be successful in all the different areas and have access to everything everyone else has.

Mrs. Ivanov enjoyed working with ELLs, even when face challenges and difficulties.

I think I enjoy that, unlike maybe some other high school kids that are a little jaded by the time they get to high school, like, "I've been to English class, I've been to History class." They come at the beginning with this fresh enthusiasm like, "I'm going to learn something new, I'm going to get something out of this." Even if they have had lots of failures in the past or had a bad experience or even had a good experience and are really nervous to come here, there's some positive belief that this is an opportunity for them to do better. I really like that.

I have to be honest, sometimes it goes downhill really quickly, that positivity. I like that they come with that and I think that they really do believe, deep down, that this is an opportunity for them to have a better life and to do something. Some are very personal and they want to do it for themselves or they want to impress their families and support them or have a good job so that they can then support their families. For whatever
reason, I think they come with a really good attitude, overall. I think that really impresses me.

When she was asked what were the factors that caused doubt or disbelief for students, she answered:

I think you come, even if you're scared, if you have that positive hope like, "Okay, this is going to be hard but I'm going to learn so much. My English is going to be great." I think a lot of the time; they have unrealistic expectations of how quickly things are going to come. "Okay, I'm in English class for two hours a day and after a full year, I still can't have a full conversation with someone or I can't go to the store and ask for something. I can't do a job application. I think that they often get frustrated about how the standard language acquisition process. Same thing with other subjects. They feel like they're making the effort and it's not paying off so they often give up on themselves and they don't realize, often, that even American students struggle with the same thing. We have lots of students who grew up here, who had the education K-8, everything that we've taught them, and it's hard for them to do a math assignment, it's hard for them to do an English paper. They don't see that. Often they think that, "If I just knew English" or "If I'd just been here the whole time this would be easy for me. "I think they often give up if it doesn't come as quickly as they'd hoped.

Mrs. Ivanov mentioned some programs and plans in place to combat students’ negativity.

That said, I think we definitely have, in addition to our sheltered English immersion classes and program and our ESL, we do have the waiver program. We have enough students in our district that have asked for bilingual support, in Massachusetts, we have to do English-only education. I don't remember the name of the law but English-only
education. If at least ten families in a school request to waiver out of that English-only, basically is what it is, it sounds a little backwards, we have to provide it. We have many more than ten families so we offer a program. It used to be Bilingual Education and now we call it Alternative Language and Content Support, ALCS, I don't know if anyone else mentioned it.

The researcher explained that no one else brought up Alternative Language and Content Support, ALCS and wanted to know more about it.

The ALCS program is a bilingual support program. They are allowed to, because their parents signed this waiver opting out of English-only education, they can have materials in their native language, their teachers can provide instruction in their native language, and they can have a classroom setting where it is, essentially, not bilingual, half one language, half the other. We have a teacher that teaches U.S. History and she speaks Portuguese, and Spanish, and English in class. We have math teachers speak Spanish and English in class. There are also a lot of Portuguese speakers that can access the curriculum through… Spanish. We used to have a Haitian Creole speaking teacher. Unfortunately, we don't anymore but our population has gone down, so I don't even know if we'd have critical mass for that anyways. We have classes for students to take advantage of that. That's great. We have that in our History and Math departments, currently. If we need it in others, we would provide that as well.

When Mrs. Ivanov was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she did not discuss curriculum, but instead she stressed the importance of looking at the whole child, in and out of the classroom.
I can't tell you about the basics of curriculum and instruction and that but what I can say is that I try to remind teachers that you can't teach unless the student is there with you. Both being in the classroom, they have to be up in the morning on time, despite their job, they have to have been fed in the morning. There are these basic things that they need to do in order to be there and be attentive. Also, emotionally, if they feel that they can't be successful, they're going to shut down. If they have other things going on, they're just not going to really be a part of that classroom. They're not going to be engaged and learning in the same way. Although teachers' main goal, what they're thinking about, what they're taught is how to teach. What are the techniques to help the student learn, my role is to support that emotional piece and the other outside piece so they can learn? They're there and they're ready and willing.

“Mrs. Simpson”. Mrs. Simpson, the twenty-fourth interviewee, was originally from Croatia and became a U.S. Citizen several years ago. Her experience included teaching for a total of 20 years, all of which she worked with ELLs, which included teaching students in a bilingual program. She taught at three different school systems in the U.S. and she spent the past seven years teaching in SPS. At the time of the interview, Mrs. Simpson described her role as an ESL specialist. The researcher asked her to discuss what model of instruction she was using to educate her ELL students and Mrs. Simpson talked about content-based learning.

My service is that I pull out students and I go in the classroom. When I go in, if it is content based, I help students with content language. I help them when they work in small group and also one-on-one. Since my Spanish is not really good, but I use a lot of common aides and I keep telling them there are common aides they can use, you know. And if you have a list, you know, so when they do they could use those. Sometimes you
use the books that are in both languages but sometimes you kind that kids Spanish or their language is quite limited because this is academic language. So they know basic social Spanish which they communicate with parents so we use mostly English as a primary tool for instruction and then common aides are good and they help. Also with dictionaries, it is good to use them, kind of like help them and then we have different programs that we start with the new curriculum which will be interesting, using different resources, SmartBoards, different games, and then you have all four domains you want to develop: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. And there are so much different strategies and techniques to help.

Mrs. Simpson studied English as a foreign language in her native Croatia. When asked if she was considered an ELL student, she explained that even though she was not formally labeled as an, “ELL,” she felt she was one in college. When she was asked how she felt her background influenced her teaching, she answered:

I think coming from another culture, speaking another language, being an immigrant really helps me to understand who my students are and helps me understand their struggles and families and also understand what their families are going through. So I could really identify with them, you know, because I still deal with those issues sometimes or maybe I've dealt with some of those so that really I could identify and really understand, you know?

Mrs. Simpson was asked whether or not she thought her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students.

When you are from another culture, you have a... sometimes you look at certain issues a little bit differently than American, may you could say mainstream culture or something?
Or there are things, you know, in a way how people or how kids behave, you know, and I
accept it because this is part of the culture and it's part of their make-up, you know? So I
feel like this is also part of who they are and I think that is very important, you know?
When you teach, to understand them and you know what they are doing, why they are
doing, and this is part of who they are.

Mrs. Simpson then discussed the racial and cultural backgrounds of her students.

In our school we have majority Spanish speaking students, maybe 90%. I cannot tell you
exactly the percentage. We have to pull up that information if you need but I think
maybe 90%, or maybe 95% Spanish speaking in our school. I am talking about our
school. Then we have Portuguese, maybe 3-4%? You know I was not expecting that
question but if you need it we could always get it for you... but majority of students come
from Latin America, Spanish-speaking countries. The second group, let's put it this way,
second group, will be from Brazil, Portuguese-speaking, and then third group will be kids
who speak Haitian-Creole. And then we have not many students from Vietnam, or
Nepal, or Albania, or China. I guess that's about our school, the demographics we have.

When asked if she felt her students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a
significant impact on ways in which students learned, she answered that it depended on the
culture of the individual student.

Some cultures... I mean some parents value education and they want their kids to succeed
and they think, you know, even if the kids preserve their culture, they benefit in the
classroom, they could be...they could enrich the classes with their different background.
So I really believe that helps in a way. When you are learning you talk about different
stories, different cultures, different ways of thinking. It really enriches and helps other
kids to see beyond. Yes, because the way they learn, it's... they bring their way of thinking, their way of how to behave, they way of thinking culturally, and it's good. The kids can hear there are other ways, there are other cultures and it's good to have diversity. And it's very important, yeah… Tolerance towards other nations, other cultures, and other kids, yeah.

She went on to say she did not believe grade level or age affected ELL's progress in learning English, whether as a second language or additional language.

No. Growing up in another country, I think learning another language should start quite early, so I think learning another language it's only beneficial and there has been research done on bilingual brain and how kids who speak dual languages or 3 languages really help their brain and their thinking.

In regards to her beliefs and attitudes about ELLs, Mrs. Simpson stated that learning a new language was an ongoing process.

Since I am bilingual and still learning the language, I think it is a process that when you speaking another language it is always evolving, it's always learning, and it's always enriching. For me, that is who I am and I want my students to understand that learning never stops and the more you know, you are better off. Learning another language can only embellish your life and enrich your lifestyle and your relationship with other people.

When she was asked to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELLs, she said:

I like that they are coming from other countries. They bring different experiences. After 1 year, 2 years, you get to know them, so you feel like a community and it's nice to see them, especially when you see them working and making progress. I tell them I did it,
you can do it. It is kind of like, there is a chance for you so, I understand you, I can help.

So that is kind of what brings that extra.

Mrs. Simpson offered numerous strategies when asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students.

The best...use pictures, repetition, practice the language in small groups, one-on-one.

There are so many things you could do but I think repetition is...how do you call that...explicit instruction, you know, so teaching grammar... structure content and...

assessing so we can see how well they are progressing.

“Mrs. Kennedy”. Mrs. Kennedy, the twenty-fifth interviewee was a White, Irish woman who had been teaching for thirteen years. All of her thirteen years teaching were spent working with ELLs. Mrs. Kennedy had been officially teaching in SPS for four years at the time of the interview, where most of her students were Latinos, from Honduras, and various Spanish-speaking countries. Her students mostly spoke Spanish. Some of her students were also from Brazil and spoke Portuguese. Mrs. Kennedy worked in two other school districts and she discussed that they were not as diverse as SPS.

I've worked in two other school systems and they were not as diverse as this one. I feel they were probably most of the ESL populations probably mostly Latino and probably mostly from the Dominican Republic in both. There were kids that spoke other languages but not big groups. We had some Arab speaking and I feel like this is a lot more diverse here.

Mrs. Kennedy learned Spanish in school and spoke it fluently. In addition to teaching in SPS, she did a lot of translating for adults who were nervous about speaking English. She explained
that she did not have to learn another language out of necessity, but rather that she wanted to
learn Spanish.

I speak a second language. I didn't have to learn it out of necessity. That was my major.

I learned Spanish in school. Then I used it to do interpreting and I still use it.

When the researcher asked Mrs. Kennedy how she felt her background influenced her teaching,
she discussed the benefits of knowing a second language.

I think knowing a second language even though I didn't need it to survive in a society, I
know when I'm trying to speak and I don't know a word so I think it makes me really in
tune when a lot of times if I'm speaking to an ELL student.

The researcher asked Mrs. Kennedy whether she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or
countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned.

I think it sometimes does. I've known, not in this school so much, in another school that I
worked in... For example, again it may not just be the country of origin, it may be the
educational level of the parents too. I found that sometimes if I had a lot of students from
Russia sometimes their parents would have degrees from that country and it was a
different background for these students at home whereas a lot of the students that I work
with now are growing up in poverty. A lot of their parents are not educated, they still
care about their students doing well, it's just that they don't have the background
themselves to advocate for that.

The researcher asked Mrs. Kennedy if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL
students’ progress in learning English. She believed the student’s self-awareness was more of a
factor in their abilities to learn another language.
I think it probably does. I think anyone can learn a language but I think younger kids have less inhibition in general, they're all different too. Little kids are always eager to raise their hand everything. Sometimes you go to a middle school and just the nature of that age, they're a little more self-conscious if they're not confident of something. I'm seeing kids that have the right... I'd be walking around the room and I'd see that they have good stuff written on their paper and I'm saying, "You should raise your hand," and they're afraid.

I'm remembering one student that I had and he came here when he was fifteen and he didn't want to come to the United States so he was already upset about that. He looked physically a lot older even though he was fifteen, he looked about twenty. I think he was very self-conscious about the fact that he couldn't speak English.

Mrs. Kennedy was asked whether or not her own cultural background and experience with knowing an additional language made her more effective in teaching ELL students.

I grew up in my grandmother's home and she came from another country but she spoke English so the language not so much from my background. In high school, I worked in a place where most of the people did not speak English and that's why I started learning Spanish so I could communicate with them. I think it made me more sensitive.

I think maybe again because I, even though my family spoke English, they were from another country so I think I was used to growing up around people who were from another culture and it just makes me more sensitive about that.

Mrs. Kennedy was asked what were her beliefs and attitudes were about ELL students. She discussed the importance of being able to empathize with students struggling to learn another language.
I feel like in observing sometimes how other people treat them, and again I think maybe because I know another language that I know how hard it is to speak another language, I get nervous if I'm in a group of native Spanish speakers, I get a little nervous about speaking in front of them because I'm afraid to make a mistake. I always have that in the back of my mind with kids but they can do it. I feel like they need to have good expectations of themselves. I think sometimes, I don't see it a lot, I think it's getting better. I think years ago people would see someone who didn't speak English too well and automatically assume that they weren't as bright as other people. It's not that at all, it's just a language issue. When someone masters a language.

What Mrs. Kennedy enjoyed the most about teaching ELLs was learning about their different cultures.

I like knowing about other people's cultures. I always have since high school, I think that's what made me want to learn Spanish because my first job in high school was working with mostly people who were not born here. Kids are really eager to share their stories. They love it when you talk about the food that they eat or what they do at home. They always want to talk to you about that. I think it's just learning about, we're all members of this planet.

To Mrs. Kennedy, the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students were those in which students felt welcomed in her classroom.

I think, this sounds basic and every teacher should do the same, but have a very welcoming classroom, a place where kids are not afraid to make mistakes. I feel like it's something that I'm good at because I've had kids come in that don't talk in the classroom at all and then they come into my classroom and they talk all the time so I think they feel
comfortable here. I think trying to make kids feel comfortable. Again, trying to have a lot of visuals, demonstrate what you're doing, don't just say. I've seen people give three and four step directions really quick. Then ask, do you understand what I'm saying or I write it on the board or I have a picture. Just more than one way to teach someone. You don't just say it, you say it, you model it, you visualize it for them, even if we might have to get up and walk around, everybody come over here for a minute I have to show you this. Just more ways for kids to see it and not just hear something when they're not a hundred percent sure of it.

“Mr. Jackson”. Mr. Jackson, the twenty-sixth interviewee, was a White male teacher, who was one-third Native American Cherokee, but identified as White because he believed that was how the world viewed him. He stated the following about his racial and cultural background.

My race is white. I present as white. I am a little Native American Cherokee, but I mean I just pretty much say I'm white because that's how the world sees me and that's how I interact with the world and, yeah, English-speaking family.

Mr. Jackson received his Bachelor’s in sociology and Master’s in elementary education. He also obtained his educator’s license in reading and became a reading specialist. He taught at a local charter school in Cambridge, MA for 10 years. He then taught in SPS for five years, and worked with ELLs all five years. After Mr. Jackson enrolled in professional development (PDs) courses relating to working with ELLs, he took the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) ESL test and obtained his ESL certification. During the time of the interview, Mr. Jackson was an ELL teacher and taught in a special education, self-contained classroom. He explained that he “pushed in,” which meant he taught dually identified students (those who are ELLs and have
special needs) in their classrooms. He also taught the higher-level students who needed support in reading and writing to advance to English language proficiency classes. He stated this about his professional experience working with ELL students:

The researcher asked Mr. Jackson whether his students were considered Dually Identified, (ELL and special needs) and he answered, “yes,” at least half of his students were dually identified. He explained that most of his students were Latino and came from El Salvador. Mr. Jackson was careful about defining the race of his Latino and Latina students.

Most of my students are Latino. Most of them come from El Salvador. The race is a little complicated with Latino and Latina students I think. That’s harder to say, but I do have a lot of Brazilian, Portuguese-speaking students that are white. I had a lot of other students that are... I don't have many... I don't know. I don't want to define someone's race, so, yeah.

Mr. Jackson spent the majority of his time teaching at a charter school that had mostly African-American and Afro-Caribbean students. He also taught White Brazilian students who spoke Portuguese. He stated the following:

I worked at a Charter School in Cambridge for 10 years, and that was mostly African-American or Afro-Caribbean setting. I think it was like 88% of the students were of that race or cultural background.

Yes, and what else? Yeah, they're... Like our language is a lot of Haitian Creole speakers. Then I worked for some local public schools, and there we have... It's more diverse in the language backgrounds, but we definitely have predominance of Spanish and Portuguese speakers. We have a growing Nepali and Hindu and Punjabi populations as well, but I think there are 57 languages in Somerville that we serve.
When the researcher asked Mr. Jackson how he felt his background has influenced his teaching, he discussed having awareness of student needs and differences.

I think it made me a little bit... so I was a reading specialist and I kind of like... a lot of my students were English Language Learners, so I kind of had tended to go into the ELL field because I am like a white teacher and I... so I felt like a little bit nervous about that. I feel like I have to be extra conscious of being really... trying to develop culture-responsive curriculum that can meet the backgrounds of my students.

The researcher then asked if Mr. Jackson believed his background made him more effective in teaching ELLs and he explained that he was unsure. He, however, believed the students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned.

Definitely, the way countries teach and like the sort of... Yeah, I think their cultural background and the expectations for education within a culture for jobs and stuff like that affects... their parents' educational level and...

When Mr. Jackson was asked if he believed grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English, he answered that age did and whether or not one had a foundation of literacy in his/her native language.

I think age. I don't think grade level exactly, but I think age, when you're older and if you have a foundation of literacy in your native language, that you acquire English faster because you can easily transfer between your native language and your... and the target language, which is, here, English. I think that when you're young and you're a simultaneous bilingual, you're developing your... like if you're K-2 and you're developing
your vocabulary in your native language and English, I think that that presents a challenge, and I think English language acquisition can take longer as my experience.

Mr. Jackson was asked about his beliefs and attitude about ELLs. He discussed the misconception about what ELLs can learn and emphasized that it was up to the teacher to be able to tap into students’ cognitive abilities.

I really believe that they can do a lot more than what other... some might think that they can do. They just need the language supports in order to show what they know. I believe that they're cognitive functioning just like any other student, that we have to... but language, their second language acquisition doesn't always demonstrate that, so we have, as teachers, need to find a way to give them the language supports needed so that they can demonstrate that... the content and cognitive sort of requirements of whatever task they're presented.

The researcher asked Mr. Jackson what he most enjoyed about working with ELL students and he discussed the personal challenges ELLs presented to him. He also brought up ELLs’ awareness of the world around them and how it affects them.

I enjoy like, I think, like for the dually-identified students, really, that's like a challenge for me because I don't have the special education background, so I'm constantly trying to figure out like, "Is this a learning need or is this, you know, the normal process of second language acquisition?" I really enjoy that challenge and learning about that. That's been a really great thing and, I think, just in general, just how aware they are of the world sometimes. Like, just for instance, with the Trump, the primary with Clinton and Trump. I mean, that was somewhat like my... the best language that I got out of them. They were having some discussions. These were like 3rd graders. They were like fired up about...
because that affected them and their families, and I really learned a lot from that, so that's really cool.

When Mr. Jackson was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, he stated the following:

Culturally responsive teaching, the teaching explicit ESL instruction, providing language supports in the content areas, fostering home-school connection, I think for like the newcomers discussing, creating a narrative about the immigrant experience.

“Mrs. Mason”. Mrs. Mason, the twenty-seventh interviewee, was a Black woman born in Miami. One of her parents was Haitian and the other one was bicultural- a mixture of Moroccan and French. Mrs. Mason married a Haitian man and had a strong connection with the Haitian culture. The researcher asked her how she felt her background influenced her teaching and she stated the following:

I think knowing that a lot of my students look like me or that they are an extremely diverse community, that there are different ways that they learn, and that there's also different cultures at home, so there's certain things that we feel as if this is the right way to do things, but it's the American way. That doesn't mean it's the right way, and I know that students have to go home and deal with different cultural norms.

Although, Mrs. Mason was not a former ELL student, she grew up learning Spanish in school as a second language. When the researcher asked Mrs. Mason how her cultural background made her more effective in teaching ELL students, she answered:

I think that just by knowing specific words in different languages I can communicate with them a little better. Just even by saying something in Spanish to my Spanish students.

Growing up in Miami I did take Spanish almost all twelve years of my schooling.
Knowing that just by saying hola or take out your lápiz. They find it funny and they're more inclined to listen to me because it seems as if I'm trying to understand them.

Mrs. Mason received her Bachelor’s and Master’s at Brandeis University and was a doctoral student during the time of the interview. She had been teaching for five years, all which were in SPS. When we discussed ELL training, she brought up how she participated in the Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) course the very first year (2011), prior to it becoming mandatory the following year. RETELL was developed in response to the federal government’s charge against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for failing their ELL students.

Mrs. Mason explained that not only were her students ELLs, but a high percentage of them were also classified as special needs students. She worked with dually identified (ELLS who are also special needs) students. Mrs. Mason discussed the diversity of Somerville.

Somerville is extremely diverse. The entire high school has, I think, over thirty-plus nations represented. A lot of my students, we have a huge Central and South American population, so my students, a lot of them come from El Salvador. I have Haitian, or Caribbean in general, and even a huge Asian population with India and China being most represented in that.

The researcher asked Mrs. Mason if she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned:

I think so, because I think depending on where they come from there's certain norms that are asked of them in the classroom that we may or may not ask, so then it takes them a long time to transition into our educational sphere. As well as I think also just like cultural in general. For all different communities there are cultural things that are done,
or, again, that are expected that we don't really cater to in the K-12, or actually in all of education, so then it makes certain students feel like this is not the place for them.

When she was asked if age or grade level affected ELL students’ progress in learning English, she responded:

I don't think so. I think all students at whatever age or whatever grade they came from are capable of learning English. I think there are different scaffolds that need to be put into place for them to actually be able to be successful. I truly believe that all students can be successful. We're just not reaching all of them.

The researcher asked Mrs. Mason what were her beliefs and attitudes about her ELL and dually identified students. She discussed the need to do more, especially with scaffolds.

I think that they're extremely capable of learning and doing well and being successful in our schools. I just don't think that we're doing enough for many of our students. I think that there's not enough scaffolds. There are some teachers who I know for sure their philosophy is, "I'm going to teach. If they get it, they get it. If they don't, they don't, but I'm doing my job." I think that's just not the way teaching should ever be.

When she was asked what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students, she explained:

I think that what I really enjoy is the fact that they're so eager to learn. I think the fact that these students, no matter what, come every day, and are stuck in a room where half the time they don't understand what is being said, but they are trying their hardest to understand and they're doing all the work that they need to do, and I think that... It saddens me when I think about teachers who don't honestly provide them with the appropriate learning atmosphere, because it's just an injustice to them.
When Mrs. Mason was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

I think best would be two kinds of... Language is very difficult. I think as a subject teacher I realize that there needs to be a lot of emphasis on vocab and a lot of emphasis on oral and written English, and that just allowing students to have the w-, like having the word wall in your room. Having the different assessments for different students, because in your classroom you will have students that are on level four with level one, and expecting a student level one to give you the same paragraph that a level four student is going to give you is just completely unfair. Knowing that within that classroom there's going to be different levels, so there has to be different scaffolds, different assessments. Curriculum, I do believe must stay the same. You want all of them to learn the exact same thing, but you have to assess them where they are at that moment.
“Mrs. Sharma”. Mrs. Sharma, the twenty-eighth interviewee, was an Asian educator, born and educated in India. She received her teaching credentials in her native country and obtained her Master’s in the U.S. During the time of research, she completed her Certificate of Advance Studies (CAGS) from Lesley University and was on the verge of completing her doctoral studies. Mrs. Sharma taught for five years prior to becoming an administrator. She was an ELL coordinator for seven years, a principal for 10 years, and an ELL Assistant Director for three years. Her experiences included working in Lawrence and New Bedford. Mrs. Sharma referred to SPS as a “progressive” school district and she was delighted to have joined SPS a year ago. Mrs. Sharma spoke highly of SPS and stated the following about working in various school districts:

Yes. I worked in Lawrence, New Bedford, this is my first time I've come to a progressive urban district but for the most part I worked in New Bedford, Lawrence, Boston, where you see kids struggling all the time.

From the little experience of mine in this district (SPS), I've seen they have a lot more money in the district to spare for the kids. Kids have more resources to work with. Class sizes are small. There are more staff members to take care of different needs, so that makes a huge difference than a place like New Bedford or Lawrence where resources are very skimpy.

When she was asked to discuss the demographics in Lawrence and New Bedford, she answered:

Lawrence, the demographics in my school as a principal there, I had 98% Hispanics. In New Bedford it was a mixed bag, but very low socioeconomic conditions.
The researcher asked Mrs. Sharma whether the needs in Lawrence, Bedford, and Somerville were similar and she identified and explained many differences, specifically relating to socioeconomics.

When they come from low socioeconomic conditions, they need a lot of TLC. The students need the teachers to be more understanding. They need them to know that the school is not their only life. The students struggle, they have jobs. They have constraints on their time. They may be babysitting at home. All those needs or they may be just latchkey type of kid who has to open the door and get in and there's no adult there. So very little language is used with them. Teachers need to understand all those conditions. They just need to understand. Whereas over here they come from for the most part, not always, they come from steady homes, two parents, one of the two parents is always home for them, and so the conditions are very different.

The researcher wanted to learn more about the new immigrants and if there was a difference between new immigrants in Somerville versus other districts in which she worked.

Most of them (the new immigrants) come here because they have other families. They have members of their families here, so they come into an extended family situation. So that interaction is always there for them for the most part. One or two cases, those incidental cases were different.

Many of Mrs. Sharma’s students were Hispanic. According to her, some of her students were Haitian who spoke Kreyol (Haitian Creole) and Brazilians who spoke Portuguese. She also expressed that she had some Pakistani, Indian, and Nepalese students. When she was asked what training she received to become a certified teacher and administrator, she answered:
I was a certified teacher. Then when I came here, I took a 2-year course teaching bilingual/sped students from the department of education. From there, I kept taking professional development courses that would help me understand students. I did my Master’s in special education so I could understand what's the difference between special education and bilingual, where the language needs stop and where special education disabilities began.

She stated the following about her professional work with ELLs:

My professional experience, I've been working with ELL's for 30 years now, and I've seen variations. For the most part the one thing that I've seen is that no matter what you do, students are going to need at least two to three years to learn a language proficiently, at least.

Mrs. Sharma, who considered herself a language leaner and not an ELL spoke Utu, Spanish, and several Indian dialects fluently. She could identify with learning English from a young age, like her ELLs. When she was asked how her cultural background influenced her teaching, she discussed her affinity with ELLs and learning another language at a young age:

I grew up with not really bilingual, but starting from kindergarten. English was taught to us in the school. So I grew up learning academic vocabulary. Never been called or never even talk about an ELL person, but we spoke another language at home and we spoke English at school. But we knew how to code switch, and that is my strength even today. I'll be talking to you in English, I'll be talking to someone else in Hindi, and I’ll talk to somebody else in Spanish and keep coming around. That's why I never consider myself an ELL person. I'm a language learner.
The researcher asked Mrs. Sharma if she was asked to code switch or was it something she learned to naturally do on her own. She answered it was something she did naturally. The researcher asked her if she thought her students needed to be taught to code switch.

They need to be taught how to code switch, plus they need explicit direct instructions in vocabulary and sentence structure.

Definitely, because I understood what was the role of cultural relevance within the repertoire of an English language learner. That's what has always helped me, I've always been cognizant, I'm not going to teach a holiday to the kids until they know the background of the holiday, until they know the vocabulary, until they know the cultural relevance of that particular holiday. Celebrations are the same thing, if you're going to have a prom, then they need to understand what that means before they can go there.

Mrs. Sharma was asked if she felt her students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin made a significant impact on ways they learned, she answered, “yes.”

Absolutely. It's more the habits that they have grown up with, the values that they have grown up with, especially when they come to the high school. If they come from a very young age, they quickly acculturate and they mix in with the culture and they're more familiar with it. But, definitely it does have an impact because the values and what's being taught at the home they bring it to school and that's what they live by, so definitely a factor.

She was asked if grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English at the high school and she answered:
No. What I feel is that it seems like the little ones are learning faster because they have less to learn, whereas with the older kids their needs are so much and they want everything at the same time. That... it's hard and they get frustrated.

Mrs. Sharma shared her beliefs and attitudes about ELLs:

I'm working on that, I'm part of the cultural proficiency committee over here and I think a lot of people they just don't want to waste their view, so it's very hard to understand what their views and attitudes are. They're scared to say something today. Whether it could be misconstrued, it could be misunderstood, it just is difficult.

When she was asked what she most enjoyed about working with ELLs, she stated the following:

What do I enjoy? The interaction with them, just being a part of them, and they feel comfortable when they come to a person like me who's ethnic.

When Mrs. Sharma was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she said:

It's basically breaking it down and going from whole to part and really showing them. This is what the final should look like. This is how you break it down, literally from paragraphs, to sentences, to words.

“Mrs. Silva”. Mrs. Silva, the twenty-ninth interviewee, was a Brazilian born woman. She received her Bachelor’s in in bilingual education. Mrs. Silva did not have any teaching experience. She did not consider herself a former ELL because she came to the U.S. as an adult and went straight into higher education. She spoke fluent Portuguese and Spanish. When she was asked to discuss how she felt her cultural background influenced her work, she answered the following:
Gratefully because I came under the settlement of immigrant families because I went through by myself. I raised a child, although not an ELL child, but I've raised a child in the district and as a first generation, I understand how difficult that could be for families because of other languages and other cultures.

The researcher asked her if she felt her cultural background made her more effective in working with ELLs and their families, and she answered:

Yes, not per say my cultural background, but my experience in this country. It's more effective on my work then I have this new immigrant experience and can understand where families come from other than someone who might not have had the same experience as I had. Yes, in terms of being effective, I think it has a great influence.

Mrs. Silva’s past and current experiences included working with families as an interpreter. She has worked with immigrant families since 1995. Mrs. Silva became a professional multilingual interpreter. She has worked at SPS’ Parent Information Center (PIC) for 17 years since she began her career in education. Her work involved registering, assessing, and identifying ELL students. As PIC’s director, she worked hard to make the office a friendly and comforting atmosphere for all families, especially since it is one of the first places SPS families are in touch with the school when they register their children. Mrs. Silva and other PIC staff members speak numerous languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and French and they spend a lot of their time translating materials for SPS schools when needed. She also explained that PIC staff members take pride in assisting families locate local resources and services to support students’ educational and overall development.

Mrs. Silva stated the following about her work with immigrant families, her role at PIC, and the mandates when identifying ELL students.
Since we first opened the Parent Information Center in 1995. I worked with families before, in an interpreter's capacity. I always worked with immigrant families in the hospital setting, and then in Education since 1995.

Absolutely, I can tell about the mandates as far as identification of a student. A student that comes and registers in the home language, a language other than English, once or more times, that identifies them as a speaker of another language, maybe. Therefore, it's our mandate to assess that child and provide the service that the child needs in order to succeed in school, provided the parents accept our recommendation. If the parents don't accept our recommendation, the child has to receive the service need in whatever setting the child is in. A parent might opt out of a sheltered English immersion program, but a parent cannot opt out of ESL services, because our mandate is to provide that service to that child regardless of what school that child is at.

The researcher asked Mrs. Silva to discuss the racial and cultural backgrounds of the students in SPS. She responded:

Somerville is very diverse, so we have a very large Spanish speaking population, second by Portuguese. Then we have a large Haitian population. Now, we see Nepal settling in Somerville, Nepal descendants, and also different points of India. We've had a few kids from African descent, anyhow it's very diverse. We have, because this is so close to Cambridge and Boston, we have a parent and student population that comes from China, from different parts of the world. They settle in Somerville, but the parents go to school in Boston or Cambridge and while they're here they enroll their kids in school. That population as well can be from different parts of Europe.
The researcher asked Mrs. Silva whether she found the families, especially the parents who are young professionals or who came here to attend school, were more educated than the previous parents.

The one who comes to study only, they're here to study only. Usually they do not work; they're here for research only. Yes, they're usually highly educated. They usually come for their Doc or Post Doc. It's a small number, and they usually accept the enrollment of their children in the English Learners’ program.

The researcher asked Mrs. Silva to discuss her beliefs and attitudes towards ELL students. She stated:

I believe that there is a program that's structured for English Language Learners that makes it easier for them to understand the notion of this language and leads them on their way to proficiency. That's very important. It's respectful of the students. It reinforces their cultural identity, because they are not thrown in a mainstream with children who were born here who might not have a second language at home. I think a second program, or ESL services, it's respectful to a child understanding that the child wasn't born speaking English. The way it's done, it's in a way that even without noticing that the student will be learning English in a timeframe that will help him to succeed in the school. I truly believe in the program. I believe the way it's done here in Somerville and I believe that it's very important for a child's identity. That validates that kids come from different cultures, and that's okay.

When she was asked what she most enjoyed about her work, particularly her work with ELLs and diverse families, she answered:
It's the contact with the families everyday. Everyday learning about different aspects of different cultures, and what I like most is to welcome them. Since this is the first stop for the Somerville Public Schools, I think that's very important for us. That's the impression that they're going to have of the school district, so I think it's important the way that we receive them, the way that we welcome them. That's a part of my job I enjoy very much.

The researcher then asked Mrs. Silva what steps she took to ensure that families were comfortable and trusted her (particularly the families who may not have legal documentation to reside in the U.S. and may be nervous about their status).

We have bilingual, bicultural staff in the parent information center, and they are sensitive to new immigrant needs or anyone coming to the parent information center. Here we register everyone for the Somerville Public Schools, so it could be families from different walks of life. So we welcome everybody. We want to make sure that our sensitive issues, that the family will talk about it, and we are ready we have a lot of referral services. We are very sensitive to family needs and issues that they bring with them.

The researcher asked Mrs. Silva to say more about the family resources.

We have bilingual, bicultural staff in the parent information center, and they are sensitive to new immigrant needs or anyone coming to the parent information center. Here we register everyone for the Somerville Public Schools, so it could be families from different walks of life. So we welcome everybody. We want to make sure that our sensitive issues, that the family will talk about it, and we are ready we have a lot of referral services. We are very sensitive to family needs and issues that they bring with them.

The researcher also asked Mrs. Silva to share, in greater detail, the family resources that SPS had.
We register families that might have issues with domestic violence. What we try to do is not to scare the families, but to be very aware of the circumstances and if we don't refer out of this office. My staff and I are so connected with the community that we can refer people according to their needs and we do health insurance. No, we refer because of mandates, we help people with the health insurance telling them where to go, what they need to bring for health insurance. We now have a social work in the city that we showed a lot of the families. We have a lot of mental health support in the Somerville Public Schools. We have a lot of unaccompanied minors coming across the borders, so they get a lot of support in the Somerville Public Schools, especially the high school with different kinds of programs.

It all depends, again I cannot be specific, but it depends. We promote also, we've done information for families that have crossed the border. We have had lawyers, or advocates, working with the families in a workshop last year. We have a clothes entry for families without any clothes. Resources for them and for their kids. We view it around families needs.

When Mrs. Silva was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she answered that she did not have specific pedagogical experiences. To follow up with Mrs. Silva’s response, the researcher asked her if the families discussed what they feel their kids are missing or need. Mrs. Silva responded:

Once they are in school, unless there is something out of the school that they need. They will come if it's a resource or if they are going through something that probably the school could not address. But, they established a relationship here. Directly involved with the child's education and their needs, I'm sure they're expressing their needs. We
provide English classes for parents as well. Once they are in school, unless there is something out of the school that they need. They will come if it's a resource or if they are going through something that probably the school could not address. But, they established a relationship here. Directly involved with the child's education and their needs, I'm sure they're expressing their needs. We provide English classes for parents as well. Yes. Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, which is the umbrella the Parent Information Center, falls under. The playgroups are under it, the parent-child program, such as the home visit program is under that, too. It's the umbrella organization for parent engagement in the Somerville Public Schools. So the English classes are just one of them.

“Mrs. Banai”. Mrs. Banai, the thirtieth interviewee grew up in Chicago with a strong Jewish identity. The researcher asked Mrs. Banai to discuss how her background influenced her work and she stated the following:

I'm actually, my personal background, so I grew up in Chicago with a strong Jewish identity. My extended family… many of them were killed in the Holocaust, and so I think the experience of being “other”, very different because I had white skin. I have white skin, so I wasn't identified as the other, but when I moved to Somerville, I experienced... It was my first experience with anti-Semitism, because there were very few Jews in Somerville, and so I think in that... I think I was raised in a family, both my parents were teachers, and there was a real value around giving back and making the world a better place. Everybody needs to be included...

Mrs. Banai was asked whether or not she felt her cultural and/or religious background made her more effective in teaching, and working with diverse ELL families.
I think it has. I think it has because even my kids who attended the Somerville Public Schools, to me, for being Jewish, it's also my culture. I'm not a very religious Jew, but it's part of... I identify myself as Jewish, so my kids who went to the Somerville schools, missing holidays, the fact that they weren't Christian holidays was very, was new for a lot of teachers, and not celebrating Christmas, so I think it sensitized me in a different way. When I was school adjustment counselor, I worked with a fair number of Haitian families who really felt outside the school system, and I remember on Halloween, it was expected that every kid dresses up and march, and school basically shut down for Halloween. For Haitian families, Halloween was not something important or meaningful. They would not send their kids to school that day. …because it was a day of the dead, I think, for them. It had a very different meaning. Yeah, and it felt like damn, you know, and the teachers in the school saw it as a fun day and, of course it's great for everybody. I think that was twenty-some years ago, and that still happens, but I think it really raised my awareness.

She began her career as a teacher in a childcare center in the seventies and then attended school for social work. She worked in SPS for 26 years where her experience included working with teachers and families, as well as in the area of childcare policy.

I started my career as a teacher in a childcare center in the seventies, and then I went to social work school, and then I was part of something called the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, which was a center for child care policy and also working with teachers and families. Then I worked in a Family Literacy Program in the Somerville Public Schools, and on and on and on.

The researcher asked Mrs. Banai to discuss her role in the family literacy program:
I was the co-director. It was called the Even Start Family Literacy Program, and then I moved on to become the director of the Somerville Community Partnerships for Children, which was working with all the childcare centers in the city trying to raise quality, increase family engagement, provide mental health support, and then I... I was school adjustment counselor for a few years in the Somerville Public Schools, and then I became director of all the family engagement in the city. I've had a wonderful, wonderful career. I've been very lucky just reinventing programming based on the changing needs of families in the community.

The racial and cultural backgrounds of the families Mrs. Banai worked with included both English-and Spanish-speaking, mostly from El Salvador and Portuguese speakers predominantly from Brazil. She explained that the number of Haitian families somewhat went down from previous years. Mrs. Banai discussed the growing number of Nepali and Indian families from different parts of India. She discussed the diversity in Somerville and stated how powerful it was to hire and work side by side with staff who came from various cultures. She shared the following:

I think the most powerful piece in terms of my learning and development has been working side by side, hiring staff that represent the different cultures, because that's really what it's about, and that's really changed Somerville Public Schools in dramatic ways to have family support, staff, teachers, leaders, administration that represent the culture. When the researcher asked Mrs. Banai what training she received to be qualified to work with diverse families (ELL families in particular), she discussed the change in immigration over time. Well, my initial training was training in early childhood, but Somerville was a very different place when I started. When the immigrant population started to emerge and feel
comfortable emerging, it enriched the whole community, and it changed the course of how we did education in the city, and family engagement. It was a very slow change. In social work school, I think there was much more of a focus on serving diverse families. The Even Start Program that I ran, I was originally hired to be a home visitor, or part of my job was to do home visiting for like fifty families, all English-speaking, and I said, "We live in a diverse community. Change the job," and we hired four multilingual home visitors. That predated the Parent Information Center, and that was kind of the start of having people who spoke the languages of the families in the city to work with them.

The researcher asked Mrs. Banai to discuss in what ways the city of Somerville was different and had evolved. She brought up the major changes in education and student experience.

This was, well, I moved here in the seventies. I moved here a really long time ago, and...

Well, we were kind of the step-child of Cambridge. It was mostly white, working-class, Irish Catholic, French Canadian. We’re a large population of working poor. It only started to change probably in the eighties, and in the eighties, there was pretty overt racism. I think it started in the housing development. Then there was an initiative by the Department of Human Services to... I forgot, “Count on Me” or something, to begin to address issues of racism in the city. The Even Start Program started in 1990, and in about ’95, the Parent Information Center began. That was because of a mandate around desegregation in the cities to create equity in all the schools, so you needed centralized registration to create balance throughout the city. There was Bilingual Education when I started in the district, but the whole system was a closed-door system in many ways. It wasn't an inclusive system, even for people who were white and weren't born here.
I think a piece of that was, it was a population of people who felt disenfranchised themselves, and as college students started to move in, there was this fear of them being displaced. Actually, you look at gentrification in Somerville, and a lot of that has borne out to be true, so...

When Mrs. Banai was asked whether or not her ELL students' cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she responded:

Well, I think it's about, I mean, I think we've discovered that there are some kids that come from backgrounds where their schooling is very different, and so to come into this culture, and whether it's, and the literacy level of their own parents, or school being valued in a different way, or survival needs in their country, and the trauma they've experienced. I think it's across the map, depending on the country of origin and the changing political situation in those countries, and the color of their skin.

The researcher asked Mrs. Banai to elaborate on what she was suggesting about skin color.

Yeah, I think it makes an enormous difference. I think you just see that... I mean, there are people that are discriminated against because they have an accent. Now, we all have accents, but I think in this city, Brazilians who are white have a different experience than a Haitian person who may have come from an upper-class background, because their skin color is different. I think also I would say, and this... I really experienced, years ago, Haitian boys, this expectation that dark-skinned boys may be behavior problems, that I've witnessed that, and the assumptions that people make.

The researcher wanted to know if these assumptions came from educators, ESL teachers, and classroom teachers.
When I think, just being tuned into discipline practices being different, and at home and in school, and parents' expectations of what might happen once kids are in school or feeling like the school's in charge, and that's why parents aren't coming into school. It's not that they don't care, and the blaming teachers could do, can do, about parents from other cultures because they're not engaged.

The researcher asked Mrs. Banai to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELLs, and she stated:

I want them to be entitled to the same education that every other kid is getting, and it's our job to make sure that happens and give them all the support they might need if they are not native English speakers. We have to do everything we can because there's definitely a gap. There's a big gap in terms of opportunity and access, and so that's our job.

When Mrs. Banai was asked what she most enjoyed about working with diverse families and ELL families in particular, she answered:

It just helps me grow. I have just learned so much from the families that I work with from other cultures, and the generosity and the care... I feel like there's more of a focus on community than independence, kind of the American tradition is, "It's about me," and I feel like particularly families that come from cultures that are more collectively or socialist-oriented care more about the whole, and I feel like we have a lot to learn.

When Mrs. Banai was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

Yeah, I don't feel like I... Because, for me, I feel like kids should be educated in their native language till, maybe, they're four, five, become really literate. I mean... that appears to be what the literature says, and then learning more academics in English. I
mean... the Unz Amendment threw everything off. It kind of forced us to do things in
new and different ways, and I think Sarah's been amazing, but I don't feel like I'm...

No, no, so this is really important, in terms of the history. The Unz Amendment was a
ballot question that it... It eliminated bilingual education.

The researcher wanted to know if the Unz Amendment had to do with “No Child Left Behind”
Act. Mrs. Banai stated:

No, it preceded No Child Left Behind, I think. It was a guy from California that basically
campaigned in Massachusetts for this. Nobody thought it would pass, that in
Massachusetts, such a progressive state would eliminate Bilingual Education so that you
couldn't use a kid's native language in the classroom. It upended Bilingual Education in
the state, and then it had to be reinvented, but it was because of the way the ballot
question was phrased.

“Mrs. Santos”. Mrs. Santos, the thirty-first interviewee, was the director of the parent-
child home program - an early literacy, home visiting program in SPS that placed emphasis on
verbal interaction between family members, specifically parents and caregivers. Her
professional work included conducting home visits and early literacy home training with families
and their young children. She and her staff helped the families create a literacy-rich environment
and helped both parents/caretakers and children engage in early literacy skills, such as picture
walks and readings. They also translated materials into the families’ native languages for them
to feel comfortable. Mrs. Santos stated the following about what she did during the home visits:

We basically encourage verbal interaction in the house. We want to make parents
comfortable with talking. Through toys and books we try to engage parents and kids in
conversations about daily things. For example parents don't know much English about
want to start the home visit, so we might bring books that are in English. We try to translate as much as we can into their own language so they can just feel more comfortable and ready in doing picture walks and picture reading. The goal is not dialogical reading. It's to really engage in conversations, but since we want to change the habit, the routines of parents, we need to model, we want to model for them. We get more involved.

Yeah, it's basically about the change of the habit of trying to learn and trying to talk and working the sounds. At this age we visit kids who are one and a half to three, four years old. It's basically about the preparation. So it's really the language acquisition. We are working on learning and supporting the first and second language acquisitions. It's about the sounds. It's about getting the families to expose the kids to more literacy rich environments.

We try to, Like I told you, we do verbal interactions. It's mostly about just talking and the focus is more on expressive language. Evaluating the receptive language, having more words, having a more literacy rich environment. We try to engage families to participate in more activities, like playgroups.

In the past, Mrs. Santos and her staff provided books and CDs for the families. However, because of recent budget cuts, Ms. Santos was unable to continue this. She explained that she and her staff take the families to the local public libraries to show them how to find and check out books, how to obtain a library card, and how to access free passes to the local museums. The researcher asked Mrs. Santos to discuss the purpose of this work and why it was important.

The purpose is to also give parents all the research about bilingualism and how important it is… The first and second language acquisition is important. The idea is to give them...
some information and to help them get their children ready. So they know what it is and what to ask for.

We do that basically to help those families that are more isolated. We do it to help the families who may not have many education opportunities. The families who may be hard to reach. Not only do we go to the homes and work with families in the house, but we also model verbal interaction with them. We bring them lots of information about other programs and partnerships, or other things in the community. We tell them what’s happening in the community. We do assessments also. We do screenings and assessments and we refer out.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos to tell her more about the assessments and to discuss exactly which assessments were used.

We use “Ages and Stages” for parents, the screening. It's “Ages and Stages.” So we basically use it, so we can see the child in all different areas. We don’t only look at the child’s communication, but we also look at the social, emotional, and fine motor skills. It's a questionnaire that the parents fill out and we help them. From there, they start thinking what the child should be doing, like a milestone around that age and we start questioning them to find out what the child is already doing or not doing. If we need a deeper understanding or evaluation, we might refer out. We do this for our intervention.

She explained that the questionnaire also helped identify students for early intervention.

Exactly, that's huge. Because our intervention goes until three years old. If the child is already three years old then we do public schools. We have a social worker on our staff also, so we might get her involved if we need. We use DECA; I haven't used DECA in a while. The Devereux assessment.
Mrs. Santos also talked about professional development in SPS. She discussed having a variety of presenters who are considered experts in early childhood education. She brought up that SPS’ professional development sessions were often on diversity, cultural sensitivity, and ways to support ELLs.

We have a large group of presenters. We always look into diversity. We talk about what kind of cultural sensitivity materials we need or what we might need for second language development for ELLs. So, we always bring somebody who is in early childhood and who is an expert in this area. Basically in early childhood.

That's actually very interesting because our home visitors, they are all parents who went through our program, and then became home visitors. They went through all of this themselves. I think all of us… I think that's what makes the program so unique. It makes it peer to peer so they are all immigrants. We are all immigrants.

Even though we go to trainings because we have our own cultures, we are dealing with families who are from several other cultures. So, we talk a lot about this. They all have their own experience in that.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos what were the challenges with working with diverse families, particularly immigrants, ELL children and their families.

I think it's the families learning about American culture and trying to redefine themselves and learning English at the same time. We do the home visits. We all speak different languages. We all have accents when we speak English. It's really beautiful in the end. It makes it very diverse. It’s also about checking ourselves at a home visit. It’s about looking at our own biases in several areas, and our own experiences. We do lots of reflective supervision so we can really separate our own experience and what the families
go through. Our families are going through lots of stress. The experience of immigration, it's really very large, especially when you have little ones. Many are starting to work. You are working, you are learning English, and you are doing so many things at once. There are several things that are happening at once for our families. It's not that there are priorities, but of course the essential needs are very important. For most of these families, they live together in one house. Several families live in one house at once. We need to be very sensitive to all of these different situations.

Mrs. Santos also worked in SPS schools directly, focusing on family engagement. She provided English classes and workshops on expectations in U.S. schools, particularly SPS schools to the ELL families. The workshops were also about school policy, child development, and SLA.

We provide English classes for parents here and I think this is fundamental because parents want to learn. We try to work a lot on parent engagement. So, supporting them, supporting parents, working together with parents, and teaching parents how to support their kids. We basically work with this framework. Supporting parents so they are the first teacher, their kids' first teacher. Giving them information about the systems, about child development and about language development, second language acquisition, and everything else.

Sometimes I sit with some families and I show them a visual on how it is in this country. I draw how it is in your country, and how it is in here. This is just for them to understand a little bit about the U.S. educational system.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos why families, particularly ELL families had to understand the U.S. educational system.
To know what is a pre-school, what to expect, the age, how kindergarten works, how many years in school, who is the principal, who to look for in the school, who to talk to in the school, homework policies, and any questions they may have. Because we all have a different school experiences.

Because the schools have lots of expectation from parents but they don't know everything. They don't know what it is so it's really trying to explain to them and show them how the system, how the educational system in the United States works and what is expected of them. We try to explain what is parent engagement, and what is parent involvement. They are all very involved. They are all very engaged in their own ways. It doesn't mean that if they don't come to school sometimes that they are not engaged. It's just different in some of their cultures. It’s just a different culture and a different experience.

I think there have been lots of trainings in this area. Not as much as we would like to, but there are lots of talks about that. Also, there are talks in having teachers doing home visits, at least once a year so they will know the family. They will come with a better understanding of who the family and who the child is.

The researcher wanted to know if childcare was provided for families when workshops and classes were offered. Mrs. Santos answered:

As much as we can. In workshops and all of those things we do provide as much as we can. We haven't been doing that for English classes lately, which, if that is a big need, if our needs are big, I think we should. I think we should. It's about the funds, also. We do, if we have the space, we provide childcare as much as we can for all of those events.
Mrs. Santos was asked to discuss her experiences and relationships with school administration, the families, and her colleagues. The researcher wanted to know if PIC staff supported ELLs and the work being done. The researcher asked, “Did the relationships with administration, families, and your colleagues support ELLs?”

We all work very closely together. Since I started here, that's what fascinated me. The diversity and really the team… "We want to make it right." With our own differences, without different experiences and cultures… We talk about different cultures. We help each other to really see what the families need most and how we can be very inclusive of all the different cultures and languages. We talk about what the families really need. We try to translate, for example, as much as we can. We translate our materials in the four target languages, which are Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, and of course in English. We do personal encounter with phone calls. We know that most immigrants need at first... they need a little bit more support to enter the system and to understand it, to get information. We try to go where they are, not just having the school with the doors open but also going to them where they are.

We go to churches. We go to community events. Our work depends on a lot of word of mouth. In the home research were parents in the program and they all live in Somerville and that's really fundamental. Using the community liaisons to really build this trust and to share this information, and see what else do we need to offer.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos to discuss how closely she worked with the teachers, school principals, and other school administrators, such as the director of ELLs. She answered:

The director of ELL Program is my boss actually. She’s my supervisor, so we do work very close. Even though I don't work directly with teachers, I work with family
engagement. I work to promote family engagement in schools. I'm always there and learning about what else is going on in the schools, when are things happening, what are the efforts, what is being done, and what is being discussed. Yes, we do have meetings with the principals, with the superintendent, with the assistant superintendent once a month. Every three months depending... I work directly with the principals.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos whether she felt that communication and ongoing support from administration were helpful towards ELLs and their families:

I think so. I think it's more and more each year. Out of those sixteen years, at the beginning there were just a few of us that were from other cultures and now you see much more. You see things are really changing. I know how much they really want to be very inclusive and be aware of all of those things here in Somerville. I think there are lots of new initiatives in all of this area. We want to make sure that every child, every family has the opportunity to really have a good education and see what they... I always say that we work more in trying to work in the preparation gap because we are trying to prepare our families. Preparation gap… I think that's why the liaisons are so fundamental. They are community liaisons. We meet with other programs a lot in the community and we try to go where the families are. We go where they are to give them resources. Because of our language capacity, we are able to make lots of phone calls, follow-up and trying to see what the needs are. Yeah. We are always trying to see what works better for that specific group because they might have different needs.

Through the conversation, it was understood that Mrs. Santos was being flexible and accommodating to families, especially those who were employed.
When Mrs. Santos was asked to discuss the racial and cultural backgrounds of the students and families she worked with, she explained that close to 100% of the families were immigrants from South America and South Asia. These families spoke about diverse languages, including: Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, French, Kreyol (Haitian Creole), Urdu, Hindi, and Nepali. Although Mrs. Santos herself was not a former ELL student, she was able to relate to the ELL students and families because of her own experience as a learner. She learned English as an adult in her graduate program. She stated the following about her experience as an adult learner of English:

Yeah, even though maybe I wasn't a formal ELL student in, I mean, in school but of course in my Master’s degree I was learning English when I started it. As an adult. In this sense... I think it finds me incredibly. Incredibly, because I came to this country with little English and I had to learn and learn everything else at the same time.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos if her experience helped her work with ELL students and families.

Absolutely, yes. Because I see the struggles and the challenges that we go through. I think that I can understand what families and little kids go through and how the process of switching languages is challenging. I speak three languages now. Spanish, Portuguese, and English. Learning a second and third language as an adult was different and switching between systems can be hard. I think it has helped me with my work.

When Mrs. Santos was asked whether or not her student's cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned, she answered the following:
Well, yes and no. I think in general it's what they were exposed to. Not only the culture of the country, but also the culture of the family, the environment. All of those have an affect on learning. So, yes. Towards their approach to learning, how they really engage and how they can start a conversation or if they take longer to understand. I think it is all about the culture.

…Everybody wants to learn and they are really eager to learn. Of course, it depends on the culture of the family, the culture of maybe where they come from regarding to their approach to learning, how ready they are to really be. In general they all want to learn. When they come to this country, if the child comes with some language already it's a matter of just learning the second language and being exposed, too. It's a lot about verbal interaction. It's about being part of other groups and going out and doing more activities.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos if she believed grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English, she responded:

It would be easier for the little ones if they're exposed to many languages since the beginning. Actually, I think that they already have their own system. They already probably learned their model language so they will have a second language so in this sense yes, but in general frankly, no.

The researcher asked Mrs. Santos to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about English Language Learners and she stated the following:

I think there is a misconception, a misunderstanding that kids who are exposed to language take longer to learn. I think maybe this is what pediatricians may be telling parents. Maybe ELLs might just need some time to develop their receptive language and for the expressive language to show. But kids can learn two or three languages.
Definitely, if they're exposed to the language and if there's verbal interaction, whatever it is. I think there is an attitude or understanding that kids will take longer if they know more than one language.

When Mrs. Santos was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following:

We basically encourage verbal interaction in the house. We want to make parents comfortable with talking. Through toys and books we try to engage parents and kids in conversations about daily things. I think there are lots of new initiatives in all of this area. We want to make sure that every child, every family has the opportunity to really have a good education and see what they... I always say that we work more in trying to work in the preparation gap because we are trying to prepare our families.

The researcher asked her if there was anything else she would like to share about the work that she was doing with diverse families, ELL families, and ELLs in Somerville.

We love what we do and we see what we are doing is really working. Of course we want to do more and we want to have more families involved and engaged but I'm really proud of what we have been doing. It's about funds, so there is some limits because we don't always have the funds to do everything. But it's definitely, seeing those families being part of the program and then becoming home visitors and sharing information through word of mouth and hearing families talking about their own experience with other families are all great. It really works. It really works.

“Mrs. Sousa”. Mrs. Sousa, the thirty-second interviewee, was a White woman who grew up in Jamaica. Her parents were originally from Germany. Mrs. Sousa identified with the Caribbean culture. She spoke English all throughout her life, but was exposed to and learned
about many different cultures. Although Mrs. Sousa was not a former ELL student, she believed that her cultural background made her a more effective ELL teacher. When asked how, she shared:

I know what it's like to be moved into a new country and new place with new expectations and getting your bearings and what all of that is about. I share cultural understandings in terms of what is different than mainstream American culture because that's my culture, too. I definitely work hard to value students’ home cultures and make a bridge or make it explicit what the US mainstream cultural expectations and experiences are too for my students.

Mrs. Sousa spent a lot of time visiting different countries. Upon returning permanently to the U.S., she attended the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (UMASS Amherst) where she received a Bachelor’s degree in Science and studied French, German, Spanish, and International relations during her undergraduate studies as a hobby. She then went on to complete a Masters’ degree in Education. When the researcher asked Ms. Sousa what training she received to become an ELL teacher, she shared:

I had hands-on experience working in, it wasn't a bilingual setting, but it was a bicultural classroom where all the students were Spanish speakers or from the Caribbean and had different cultural experiences. It was a culturally responsive classroom and linguistically responsive. I had specific coursework on how to scaffold language and shelter content. I have developed that throughout my years and my experiences as a teacher.

While completing her Master’s program, she worked full time in Springfield Public Schools where she described the student population as being all ELLs. When Mrs. Sousa was asked to describe the demographics in Springfield Public Schools, she discussed how the students were
mainly Spanish speakers, mostly from the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. She also shared that Springfield was not as diverse as Somerville in terms of the ELL population.

Mrs. Sousa had been teaching ELL students in SPS for 10 years. Her professional work with ELLs included teaching ESL in a self-contained classroom for newly arriving students from around the world. Most of her students had limited or interrupted formal schooling. She explained that for many of her students, this was their first school experience. Mrs. Sousa taught two to three hours of explicit, “self-contained” ESL instruction, but not in a “vacuum,” always contextualized in what was relevant to her students and within the confines of the curriculum standards. She taught all content areas, including literacy, math, science and social studies. The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa to define and explain “self-contained.”

Yeah, self-contained just means they're receiving their ESL services from me. They're not getting pulled out. They need so much ESL that they're in the classroom where that's the way that we live and work in the classroom is getting your ESL all day long.

The researcher then asked if the students left the classroom to attend any specialty classes, such as physical education, art, and music classes.

Yeah, we go to art and music. It's just a normal classroom except that the students I guess right now in Massachusetts in an SEI classroom, the students get their ESL services from an ESL specialist, but in this case I am the ESL specialist. I'm licensed to teach the ESL and the content, so they stay with me all day long. It doesn't have anything to do with learning disability, although I do have students in my class who are dually identified who are ELLs with learning disabilities.

The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa to say more about the dually identified students. She stated the following:
Usually because they're coming from other countries and in many other countries, special education doesn't exist, so I'm the one that sometimes identifies that there is a learning deficit or maybe even a physical disability. For example, with a mouth or something and they're going to need speech services, anything like that, usually I'm the one who will identify that. Or the teacher before me if the student happened to enter in 2nd grade. Sometimes she does. I've developed an expertise over the last 10 years. I'm not quick to refer students. I'm not confused about what does this limited formal schooling look like, having no access to formal education, and just not being exposed versus students having a real learning disability. We work really hard to discern the two because that's a bad mistake to make. The student's never been to school before and you're referring them because they don't know how to read; yet they've never had the chance to read yet. I don't do that, but that does happen sometimes.

I work hard to discern between Learning Disability and Language Development. I am also acutely aware of the effects of trauma on the brain and ability to learn. I also understand that students "accessing formal education" (those students who have limited or interrupted or no formal schooling) will need different supports and instruction than other students.

The researcher wanted to know if misdiagnosing of ELL students ever happened with Mrs. Sousa and she stated that while it never occurred with her, it did with other teachers.

Yeah. I'm on the MTSS team. The multi-tiered systems of support team in my school. I make sure that does not happen. I'll say, "Wait a minute here. When did this student arrive? Okay, nine months ago? Was the student ever in school before in Honduras before? No, okay then let's really look at what's a reasonable amount of progress to make
in 9 months and let's revisit this." Making sure that the teachers are really doing all they can to support the students.

Yeah. All the public schools have them (the committees). They're either called STAT team, student teacher assistant team, or MTSS, which is multi-tiered systems of support. It's a group of specialists, meaning the nurse, a special educator, the principal or the vice principal, counselor educator, outside therapist, speech pathologist, usually the occupational therapist as well and the physical therapist, and some classroom teachers or an ESL representative which is myself for teachers to be able to bring a student to the table and say, "I'm not really sure what's going on with so-and-so. I've been trying this, it's not working."

Mrs. Sousa discussed what she did when a student lacked progress in mathematics. She went on to talk about progress monitoring and Response to Intervention (RTI), a process used by educators to support struggling students.

"He's still not making progress in this area or I'm concerned about so-and-so's math skills in this area. What can I do?" It's a round table approach of getting different perspectives or solutions and interventions. Interventions are placed with support to that teacher. She then applies them in her classroom and after 6 weeks, data's kept. It's called RTI, which is response to intervention. Progress monitoring. You keep progress on very specific goals and how that student is making progress towards those goals. Then you revisit after 6 weeks to see if there's anything else we can do to support that student and that teacher. Yeah, it's cool. We meet every week. The whole school, every teacher can refer a student to that team. Then they get to go, bring the cumulative folder to get some background knowledge. That's where I dig deep with my lens. Like, "Wait a minute.
Let's really look at what the student had in terms of skills prior to arriving," if they're an ELL.

Yeah, exactly. You have to allow more time by the process. It's never a straight referral to special education, but things will progress after 6 weeks if there's no progress or little progress or yes, more time or if something becomes very obvious. Or maybe the specialist like the speech pathologist will come in and do an observation. If there's a very obvious deficit or difficulty that they can already put into action, then that student would be referred for an evaluation.

The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa to discuss the racial and cultural backgrounds of her students and she shared:

My students are mostly black and brown in terms of race if you're going to name it a color. I don't have any white students. Latino I guess, if they call that a race even though that's cultural. Hispanic and Latino. The cultural background, so African, Caribbean, meaning Dominican students, Puerto Rican students, Haitian students, lots of central and south American Spanish speaking students as well as Brazilian students. Every once in a while I will have a student who has some European influences, too.

Right now, I have a little boy, his dad is from Norway, but his mom is Kenyan and Indian. I also have lots of Asian students that range from Bengali to Indian, Nepali, Tibetan, Japanese, and Chinese. A wide variety.

The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa whether she felt the students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned and she answered:

Definitely. I remembered one more. Native. Indigenous people. I have a lot of students who are from indigenous families in central and South America as well, which has its
own culture. Yes, definitely. It does have a significant impact on the way they learn because you make sense of your life the way that you've been exposed to it in your experiences. Everybody has their unique set in how they make sense of what they're learning and how they approach it and even interact in the classroom and with the teacher, with their peers.

The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa if she believed that grade level or age affected ELL students’ progress in learning English and she stated:

The age piece, it depends on the student I think. Meaning that I guess it depends on more of your prior literacy skills. If you're coming in at grade level, whatever grade level it is and you're already reading in your native language, then that's going to help you in transferring to English literacy skills.

At the same time, no matter what your age if you've had limited or interrupted formal schooling like most of my students have, then I think being in school 7 hours a day is going to help you a lot learn English. Just being immersed all day long. I'm not sure that the grade level and age... Maybe students are less aware and they have less self-confidence issues the younger they are, definitely. If you come in in high school you only have 2 years left until you graduate. You have less time as well to access all of that. I think the younger students are at a little bit more of an advantage.

When Mrs. Sousa was asked to discuss her beliefs and attitudes about ELL students, she answered:

Oh, I think they are the most amazing students in the world and that is why I love to teach them and learn with them and their families. I think as we talked about before, your cultural background has so much influence on who you are and how you learn and
interact with the world and with people around you. It's such an amazing pleasure to be able to get to know so many students and families and different cultural perspectives and really value them and use a constructivism model in terms of I know that my students have so much knowledge and so much life experience just because they don't speak English or just because they may not know something that is expected in the 3rd grade classroom.

That doesn't mean anything. They haven't had the same experiences. I love working with them. It's interesting. Every year it's a whole new challenge, so it never gets bored and I have to learn lots of new languages and cultural mannerisms and expectations. It's amazing and challenging. I'm impressed every day by a student's ability to adapt and understand and make sense of all the new changes they're going through.

The researcher asked Mrs. Sousa to discuss what she most enjoyed about working with ELL students and she answered:

Yeah. I think I touched on it a little bit. Every teacher loved to work with, or hopefully they should be if they're working with children, loves to unlock the enthusiasm that's inside of a child to learn different things and to learn about the student as an individual. When all of my ELLs are in front of me, everyone has had so many amazing experiences already and they're such little people. 8, 9, 10 years old. I really work hard to get to know them as a person in terms of any traumas and what they're thinking about everyday and their families.

I work to build a really strong relationship with families to support them. That's what I love. Being kind of like an ambassador and part of the community. I love right in the
same neighborhood where lots of my students live, so serving as a resource bigger than in the classroom.

When Mrs. Sousa was asked to discuss best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students, she stated the following in relation to attitudes:

Being culturally and linguistically responsive, meaning you need to appreciate and understand, be educated, about the cultures and the languages that your students are coming with. That's number one. Number two would be to be well versed in the content that you have to deliver in 2nd language acquisition and the sequence and the strategies of delivering that instruction effectively and in multiple modalities of learning, multiple intelligences. It's about appreciating and understanding and making experiences in your classroom mirror what students need. Building on student's strengths while building up their less developed areas.

Confidence and motivation is huge. High school level, you know? You come here say 10th grade and you have 3 years left of high school and then you're going to be out? You really have to buy into that and think that school is important for you. It's tough and it's hard and you're different. I think in the earlier grades that I teach, it's a little bit easier in terms of that and we think forming a community is huge. Being supportive, making it a safe learning environment where students take risks and building a relationship between teacher and student where the student trusts you. With the families too.

She went on to talk about what actions educators could adopt to be more effective in teaching ELLs:

I think making things visible. They say it's the same as if a dear loved one of yours passes away and nobody talks about them. It's like, "Oh, do they think he never existed?"
Something like that. The language, they say it's worse to have things be invisible than to not. You need to make things visible, so native language alphabets should be up in your classroom. I have a photograph from each student's home country. We talk about it. The students had no idea where Norway was or that El Salvador had a volcano. That Haiti had this beautiful beach in Lake Aux Cayes (Les Cayes). We were talking about the specific town of where each student was from.

We build a lot of respect for each other. I guess as a model of myself, if a student laughs because somebody says a name in another language, in Chinese, that sounds funny, I quickly humble them and say, "Honey, you just came from Brazil where everybody's speaking Portuguese. Here there are a lot of languages. It may sound different, but guess what? You sound very different to them." We try to build this mutual respect. Again, appreciating differences and celebrating them and making them visible. For students to say, "Oh, yeah. I can see myself here." Building that they feel invested and needed in the classroom. I think that's key in the older grades with older students.

The researcher asked why it was important to know the whole child and whether or not it was important to know the child to teach effectively. Mrs. Sousa replied:

What they're going through. It's important to know what the child is going has experienced and is currently experiencing. That's huge. The fact that the student knows you care about them and believe in them and making things relevant and important is huge, too.

Yeah, it's ongoing. The child picks a family member. It can't be themselves, but somebody else in their family to do an immigrant experience. What was their experience? We talk about most people come by land and we talk about what happens
and crossing the river and things like that, or coming by boat. How they got here, what happened, etc. Yeah, most students come by boat and foot. Yeah and by foot... It's eye opening for other students who came here on a plane or who were born here, and then went back to their country, and came back and they're citizens of both. What does that mean? We do. We make things very visible and have people come in, present on different religions and different family traditions and different experiences.

**Best Pedagogical Approaches**

This study sought to identify best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELLs by examining ELL educators’ experiences, beliefs, and attitudes towards their students. Research participants of this study were comfortable discussing their teaching experiences, those teaching strategies they found particularly effective, ELL teaching policies and their impact on teaching and learning, the various models of instruction used to teach ELL students, they ways ELL educators supported SLA and students’ development of oral fluency and CALP.

One of the primary goals of this study was to examine the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELLs. According to the participants, SPS offer ELLs the opportunity to learn English in various programs and models: integrated model, self-contained model, and sheltered immersion program. As discussed by participant thirteen, some ELL students get pulled-out to receive ESL instruction with an ESL specialist during a time where they do not miss core instruction.

We have an integrated model, so well, we have self-contained classrooms, and we have integrated. Our sheltered classrooms are for kids who are more beginners, so they might have recently come to America, or they have a low score on the ACCESS/ WIDA testing.
There's always ELL scaffolds provided to these students. We work really closely with ESL specialists. Most, almost every teacher in the school might either have their ELL license, but every single one is SEI endorsed, so we're really big on integrating them into the classroom, and providing them with people who they can, students who they can learn from, as well as the teacher.

They (ESL specialist) They push-in for some supports, but they also pull-out if they need more intensive support…Usually, for 40 minutes. It's during X Block, which is called an intervention block, so it's not missing core instruction. It's just extra help during the day.

Some of the participants explained that they use explicit teaching as a strategy. In addition to that, the participants found that it was important to make connections between their students’ primary languages and the English language. A large number of the participants thought it was important to learn about the students’ primary languages. Participant thirty-two commented on making connections with students through language:

I try to be really explicit because a lot of my students speak romance languages or a creole of a romance language. I try to make as many connections between English and their native language as possible because that doesn't come naturally if you've only spoken one language your whole life. I try to learn as much as I can about the native language. Say in Chinese that there are certain sounds that are more difficult for students to produce in English because they don't exist in the native language of the student. I try to really approach it like a science in that way.

Educating myself about the student's language, but also we use a lot to acquire English as a second language. The focus of my classroom is primarily building oral language. Like I said, most of my students have limited literacy skills in their first language, so how would
I expect them to be reading and writing in a language that they don't even speak yet? We try to incorporate all the domains all the time, but in a way that's not frustrating and that's respectful and responsive for students to be able to be learning how to speak the language, what it looks like, and use it in a social and academic way; and then be responsible for reading and writing, but at the appropriate time. We do lots of choral activities, lots of choral and shared activities together.

Every participant in this study discussed the importance of using visuals to teach, as well as how visuals support SLA. Classroom teachers and ESL specialists brought up the need to use visual input to support vocabulary development and content learning among ELLs. The teachers and specialists provided specific examples of making connections between tier two and tier three words by using familiar pictures. They explained that students were able to identify the images and then put them with the printed identifying words.

Thirty of the participants agreed that there were a number of ways to provide support to ELL students. These participants shared numerous examples of supports they use for educating ELLs.

- Sensory supports - such as physical activities
- Graphic supports - such as graphic organizers
- ELA supports - word wall with illustrations, photographs, songs, poems, chants, posters, listening center, audio books, environmental print, etc.
- Mathematics supports - calendars, weather charts, hundred charts, and math manipulatives (counters, blocks, cubes, coins, number lines, protractors, rulers, calculators, geoboards, clocks)
- Science supports - science tools, posters/illustrations of processes, life cycles, objects for hands on observations, scientific instruments

- Social studies - globes, atlases, compasses, maps, globes, timelines, multicultural artifacts, photographs, and videos

Participant twelve, for example, explained that there were many ways of providing support for ELLs. She pointed out that the kind and level of support depended on the curricula and the language level of the students.

There are so many ways to provide support and it depends on the curricular area and it depends on the linguistic level of the kids that are sitting in front of you. Of course, there are the typical things. There are the visuals. There's making sure you have language objectives. There's increase engagement. There are hands-on activities. There's building background. I mean there's all that stuff. I mean I could list it all, but there's many of those techniques that you need to use and multiple techniques that you need to use in order to give support to our English language and Spanish language learners.

Participants spoke about the need for ELLs to be paired with students who are native English speakers, in order for them to have positive language role models. Participant thirteen stated the following about the integrated model:

We're moving towards an integrated model, so putting these kids who are English Language Learners in with students who speak English so that they can have positive role models, and learn from the English - the social English, along with the academic English.

Several participants brought up the need to pay attention to ELL’s language levels, language abilities, and language needs when teaching specific content areas. These participants brought up the fact that many ELLs have difficulty with language and comprehension. ELL educators shared
that they used language objectives with every lesson, encouraged students to use the “Turn-and-Talk” strategy to practice answering questions, and participated in oral discussion and reading comprehension. These same teachers also used the retelling comprehension strategy to foster students’ comprehension during storytelling and writing. In this strategy, students retell stories and story problems in their own words to demonstrate comprehension.

Participants who took the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course discussed the ways they used strategies to connect content and language objectives when designing lesson plans for their ELL students. One classroom teacher, for example, explained the need for the language objectives to be directly linked to the language goals or skills that students need to have to be successful. She went on to describe language objective differentiation for proficiency levels in order to support the individual learning needs of each ELL student. Language objective differentiation sets out different goals for different learning levels for the same assignment or task. It was explained that when a teacher has students with various English proficiency levels (i.e. students with solid receptive language skills, but who may be shy, or students with stronger expressive language skills, but may have challenges with comprehension) differentiation is a useful tool to reaching the diverse needs and learning styles of the different learners. Differentiation can include:

- Having students partner with each other for peer models.
- Pairing students based on social interactions and language strengths.
- Finding opportunities for interactions (particularly interactions involving language).
- Avoiding having students who may be reluctant to speak to share in front of the whole class, but find other ways for him/her to share his/her ideas.
  - Encouraging the reluctant speaker to illustrate his/her ideas.
Completing group tasks in which the reluctant speaker may feel more comfortable to participate.

Providing opportunities for student to have quiet time where he/she can speak one-on-one with the teacher.

- Rephrasing what students say to model how to use proper grammar.
- Asking student to repeat the teacher’s versions of her idea or sentence.
- Responding to students’ language needs immediately.
- Linking oral language proficiencies to the literacy domains.
- Finding ways to link all listen, speak, read, and write skills.
- Finding ways to maintain rigor and high-level critical thinking during differentiation.

Mentor texts also came up among the participants. They discussed the need to implement vocabulary instruction from a mentor text as a pre-reading/pre-teaching vocabulary strategy to assist students in understanding a target mentor text. Mentor texts are texts that are used as exemplary texts from which vocabulary words can be pulled and then used to teach ELLs. When the researcher asked those participants who brought up vocabulary instruction through the use of a mentor text, they expressed what they learned from taking the SEI endorsement course. Mentor text teaching methodology includes:

- The teacher previewing the mentor text, then selecting and tiering the vocabulary chosen for pre-teaching from the mentor text.
- Selecting a few words taken from the mentor text.
- Providing definitions (from the dictionary) for each word.
- Having sentence starters, stems, or frames ready for students to use.
Participants who attended the SEI endorsement course also discussed Calderon’s (2011) Pre-teaching Vocabulary in Seven Steps:

1. Repeat. Teacher states the vocabulary terms and asks students to repeat.

2. Contextualize. Teacher states the vocabulary terms chosen from the mentor text and puts them into context.

3. Define using a dictionary. Teacher provides definition(s) for the terms taken from the dictionary.

4. Define using student language. Teacher then provides a student-friendly definition.

5. Describe word features. Teacher highlights word features and grammatical points:
   - cognates, word tenses, prefixes, suffixes, etc.
   - Pictures and images
   - Other languages

6. Use activities. Teacher uses Total Physical Response (TPR) to engage students in various activities to help them develop vocabulary/concept knowledge. Teacher engages students in various activities. Some activities include:
   - Turn and Talk to your partner about the vocabulary,
   - Turn to Your Partner and use the word 5-6 times in complete sentences, etc.

7. Reminds and explains. Teacher reminds students of a word and then explains how it can be used everyday.

During the activities of the seven-step strategy, the role of the teacher is to walk around to ensure students are using the vocabulary words. During this time, the teacher can also hold short conferences with students to ask questions, such as, “How did you use the word in a sentence?” or “What did your partner say?”
One teacher shared the following example of Calderón’s (2011) seven-step vocabulary strategy (SEI Course) she found particularly helpful in teaching. This example included content and language objectives, examples of the chosen vocabulary from the mentor text, vocabulary in context, definitions from the dictionary, student-friendly meanings, word features, examples of how the vocabulary terms are used, and visual support for the vocabulary terms (Table 5).
### Table 5

**Example of Seven Steps Vocabulary Strategy Lesson**

| **Content Objectives:** | 1) Students will define the three types of heat transfer and be able to explain how convection currents move the earth’s plates that are floating on the molten mantle.  
2) Students will name and describe three pieces of evidence that lead to the formation of Plate Tectonics theory. |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Language Objectives** | **Listening:** Students will listen to their partner’s and teacher’s definitions in order to participate in the vocabulary activity.  
**Speaking:** Students will create and share orally five different examples of words that were discussed using the seven-steps.  
**Reading:** Students will read the given selection and define the three types of heat transfer - radiation, convection, and conduction. |
| **Key Vocabulary Term Chosen:** | **Density** |
| **Step 1** | Student repeats the word |
| **Step 2** | **Student uses the word in context**  
*Different substances on earth have different densities.* |
| **Step 3** | **Dictionary definition is provided**  
*The mass per unit of volume of a substance.* |
| **Step 4** | **Student-friendly definition is provided**  
*Density is the measure of how much material of a substance can be found in a certain amount of that substance.* |
| **Step 5** | **Features of the Vocabulary**  
- The word density is a *noun*.  
- The word density can also be used in other non-science situations (the degree to which something is filled or occupied), such as: “There is a high density of building in town.”  
- The vocabulary term is used in a similar form in the following languages:  
  - Spanish - densidad  
  - Haitian Creole - dansite  
  - French - densite  
  - Italian - densita  
  - Portuguese - densidade  
  - Romanian – densitate |
Step 6  
**Turn and Talk with a Partner**  
“____________ is more/less dense than water because it will float/sink.”

Step 7  
**Students share how the word can be used**  
When materials are heated their particles move apart so they are less dense - when they cool the particles are closer together so the density increases. This happens within the earth’s mantle creating currents.

**Vocabulary Term With Visual Support**

Adapted by (Calderón, 2011)

**Best practices for teaching ELLs in action.** Participants of this study were comfortable sharing the best practices they were using with their ELLs. After studying teaching methods in SEI courses, participants talked about putting pedagogical theories into practice. When putting pedagogy into practice, it is important that teachers have a clear plan of action. This may include:

- Having a clear schedule with visuals.
- Providing predictable routines (school attendance/morning sign-in, morning activities, set activities/work stations in a set place).
- Having focused lessons with language goals and objectives.
- Using slower speech when talking.
- Providing opportunities to hear fluent native English speakers.
- Providing native language support.
- Providing books on tape.
- Using visuals.
- Using Total Physical Response (TRP) strategies.
• Using Realia strategies (Realia is using real-life objects).

• Connecting language to real world.

• Facilitating field trips to provide experiences.

• Engaging in interactive readings: aloud readings, shared readings, modeled readings, and guided reading activities.

• Providing ample opportunities for students to talk quietly with an adult, peer, small group, and/or (whole group when they are ready).

• Using graphic supports (graphic organizers, charts, tables, graphs, timelines, number lines, web maps, semantic maps, and word wizards).

• Using Sensory Supports (realia, manipulatives, pictures and photographs, illustrations, diagrams, and drawings, magazines, and newspapers, etc.).

• Previewing and reviewing vocabulary and concepts.

• Finding numerous ways to introduce vocabulary (word wizard, word detective, word connect, word cube, four square, etc.).

• Providing vocabulary instruction in a variety of contexts.

• Allowing multiple opportunities to use words in everyday interactions.

• Providing opportunities for small group work and one-to-one pairing.

• Clarifying and repeating information.

• Providing opportunities for practice and repetition.

• Engaging students in cooperative and collaborative learning.

• Having project based projects and integrated curriculum project.

• Providing multimedia presentations (audio and video).
• Using technology (video, blackboard, whiteboards, projectors to present information and computer/internet to conduct research or to publish work and presentations).

• Incorporating Culturally Responsive Pedagogy /Teaching (CRP/CRT).

• Using cultural studies to show respect for home cultures and to learn about each other’s cultures.

• Engaging students in activities to build classroom and school communities.

• Providing lots of modeling and repetition.

• Modeling language.

• Reporting and sharing out.

• Role-playing word problems and stories.

• Retelling stories.

• Making connections (self-to-text, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections).

• Having word walls and content vocabulary word walls (math word wall, STEM/STEAM, etc.).

• Teaching explicitly.

• Using multiple intelligences strategies (visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, logical/mathematical, musical, etc.).

• Engaging in silent and independent reading.

• Using bilingual dictionaries.

• Providing outlines.

• Engaging in shared writing experiences.

• Providing opportunities to write.
When the participants were asked to discuss how they support SLA among their ELL students, many agreed that strategies like “Turn and Talk” or “Turn, Talk, and Report” worked well. A few of the participants argued that the “Turn and Talk” comprehension strategy is often used by educators without any careful thought or plan. Participant twelve, for example, stated the following about “Turn and Talk.”

I want to say really clearly that Turn and Talk is something that people sometimes do without really thinking carefully about the kind of question, a nice meaty question, that kids can actually talk about.

Participant twelve also pointed out that these “Turn and Talk” strategies must be structured well. She explained that the teacher needs to think of students English Language Development (ELD) levels and the kind of supports they need when working in social groups. Participant twelve also brought up the need to have good questions in order for students to be successful at doing activities.

Well, there are a whole bunch of techniques that come across and work well. There's the turn and talk. “Turn Talk and Report”, which is very helpful, but the Turn and Talk strategy has to be structured well. There needs to be a good question or it doesn't work very well. There's also group work where kids are placed in groups with a real thought to what are their ELL levels, what are their ELD levels, what kinds of supports do they need socially in a group, what kinds of supports do they need academically with the content itself. All of those things come into play when planning and executing group activities, but you need to do a lot of that.

ELLs need visuals and they need reference points. I call all that stuff reference points and what I mean by that is if it helps for them to have a tent card with things on their desk
that have sentence stems written out, then I'm going to do that. If it helps to have a map that's pre-labeled, partially labeled in the middle of the table when they're working in a group, then I'm going to put that. If students themselves say ... I don't know ... A dictionary or yesterday's assignment. Can I have yesterday's assignment back, or can I go get a book to look this up, or can I go on the computer? You have to be willing to give them access and also respond positively when they ask for materials that you've used in the past that they want to reuse.

Can I highlight? Make copies so that they can highlight and write on the margins. Make sure that they have a partner that they can talk to. I could go on and on about all those techniques. Is that enough?

The participants also discussed the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for ELLs. Many of the classroom teachers, ELL specialists, and program directors also referred to these benchmarks and outcomes as “Can Do’s.” For each proficiency level (beginning, early intermediate, intermediate) and each literacy domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), students have a list of things they can do. The participants explained that some examples include:

- **For Listening:**
  - Understanding using some clarifications and visual clues.
  - Understanding social and selected academic vocabulary.
  - Understanding common words with various meanings.
  - Understanding most interpersonal and classroom interactions and discussions when clarification is provided.

- **For Speaking:**
  - Participating in discussions.
o Expressing opinions.
o Using basic second language grammar when speaking.
o Using social and academic language in L2.
o Using L2 words.

• For Reading:
o Decoding words.
o Demonstrating comprehension of what has been read.
o Identifying main ideas.
o Identifying evidence to justify an argument.
o Gathering information for research from print and non-print materials.

• For Writing:
o Using a variety of sentence structures.
o Demonstrating an understanding of the second language.
o Spelling high frequency/ sight words correctly.
o Organizing ideas for narrative and expository writing.

In order for ELLs to perform many of these “Can Do Descriptors”/ tasks (Which could also be found on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment- WIDA Website), their teachers have to provide appropriate supports.

• Listening (the use of realia, and visual aids, providing opportunities for practicing repetition, teaching vocabulary in context, providing books on tape, encouraging slower speech, making students comfort in the classroom, etc.).
• Speaking (providing opportunities to talk and ask questions, correcting pronunciation and grammar in a non-threatening and embarrassing manner, building background knowledge, clarifying/repeating).

• Reading (facilitating shared reading experiences, encouraging independent reading, re-reading, rephrasing, retelling in different and easier to understand words, providing bilingual dictionaries, answering key questions/guiding questions/essential questions, responding in a reading-response journal, discussing books with a partner or in a small group).

• Writing (use of graphic organizers, such as web maps and outlines, providing modeling and writing exemplars from both native English speaking peers and teachers, giving extra time for editing/revising, engaging in shared writing experiences, giving opportunities to write in science/math or daily journals, using writer’s notebooks, etc.).

Curriculum and assessment. It was explained by the participants that the ELA and mathematics curricula were provided to teachers by the district. Curriculum pacing guides for ELA and mathematics were also given to teachers. Most of the participants found the ELA and mathematics curricula to be accessible, and could be found online. One participant also brought up the fact that even though the curricula and pacing guides were provided, teachers had to make modifications and build supports for their ELLs.

The ELA curriculum and math curriculum are dictated by the system. They give you a pacing guide. They do all that. The curriculum has to be modified and supports have to be built in by the teachers themselves.
I don't think there's any building in Somerville that doesn't get the ELA curriculum and the math curriculum. I'd be very surprised. Although I can't speak to the special education rooms, the substantially separate special education rooms. I'm hoping because it's not okay if they don't have all the resources. Everybody can get the curriculum right offline. The ELA, math, social studies, and science standards. Social studies and science topics are all on there. That's available to everybody and no school can say that they don't have it because it's online.

The classroom teachers, content teachers, and specialists spoke openly about the ELA and math curricula in great detail. For the most part, they believed that it was the teacher or specialist’s job to modify and make adaptations for the ELL students. They also talked about the fact that the different curricula lacked information on differentiating/adapting for ELLs.

The curriculum for ELL or the ELL test and those kinds of thing are available online as well. Let me think. It's more about resources. The math resources should be available to every class.

When you're talking about resources and curriculum, I think the match between the standard curriculum and the performance of ELD level ones and twos doesn't really mesh. The curriculum can't be taught the way it is for our ELL students and the lower levels.

A teacher from the dual language program expressed frustration about the lack of curricula and general resources to support teaching and learning for ELLs. She believed this was ultimately a hindrance to the teachers and had potentially negative impacts on the students.

The curriculum has a content objective and a language objective, so it's not that the kids can't reach for a high level and rigor and high level thinking skills just because they can't
quite express all of that yet. The curriculum doesn't really give ... The ELA and math curricula don't really give a ton of resources for how to do that. That's where the teacher really needs to step up. As far as resources, you keep talking about resources to ELL programs, but we're a dual language program and so the resources we get, in terms of books and materials and all that kind of stuff, come through the school. I don't know what's been given to the ELL teachers in the standard, so I feel a little ...

You get the curricula written out. Investigations, books. In terms of hard stuff like that, all of the read-alouds. There's more flexibility with what the kids read after those read-alouds. All of our teachers have classroom libraries in the language that they're teaching either Spanish or English. As far as math, there's a whole math kit for every ... All of those manipulatives are available to all the teachers.

One of the participants talked about not having a social studies or science curriculum. She brought up the fact that only a list of social studies topics and list of science units of study with their content objectives were provided to teachers. Again, a lack of a strong, central curricula was seen as a obstacle to effective teaching.

Well, the social studies, as I said, it's not really a curriculum. It's a list of topics. The science is a list of units of study with their content objectives, but the materials and that kind of stuff ... That's where we don't ... Social studies and science are where the ... In this building, we have lots of science materials, but they're not what at this point totally well-organized and they're centrally located and those are just the specifics that need to be dealt with.

Social studies, for instance, where teachers are provided with the topics and they still have to develop...
Yes. It's not well-supported. ELA and math is delineated down to the day just about. More than half of the participants found that the availability of the ELA and math curricula affected students’ performances in a positive way.

If people don't provide the ELL students with or the classrooms with curricula because they think, oh, well, they're working a lower level, then you lower the expectation for our ELLs. That's really bad. That's one of the things that can happen if there's no ... If the standard curriculum isn't even available to you, you can't modify appropriately and keep HQT, high order thinking skills. You can't keep them if you're not careful.

Newer classroom teachers and specialists brought up the challenges in having to develop curricula. Out of all the participants, one teacher and one specialist felt that the curriculum in general was not easily accessible in SPS. When participant three was discussing meeting the different needs of ELLs, he stated this about the challenge of developing curriculum for his ELLs:

I guess just that as I gain more experience and as I continue to work in the educational field, that I hope that I'll be able to put more energy into meeting the different needs of ELL students. That the challenges have been great, the challenge just as a new teacher and developing new curriculum that isn't fully there. It's been tough doing it for the main student body.

The participants confirmed that ELLs in SPS take the same assessments as their native speaking peers (end-of-unit and end-of-year assessments, DIBELS, MCAS, PARCC, writing assessments, and Star Testing. In addition to the district and state assessments, ELLs take the ACCESS test.)

All the children who go to the parent information center get tested there. They're given part of the WIDA testing. We've adopted WIDA. From that information, we are told at
what level they're at, so we're able to place them in the proper classrooms. Every January, students take what's called the ACCESS WIDA test. It's a statewide test for English language ability. They get four scores in all four domains. One for listening, one for speaking, one for reading, and one for writing. Then, they're given an overall score. From that, we determine when and if students are ready to be mainstreamed into the regular education classes. That's our goal.

Some of the participants also discussed that many of the assessments ELLs were asked to take were inappropriate for them. Fairness came up on numerous occasions. One teacher spoke about not holding students accountable if they are unable to answer a question due to a language processing issue or because they simply do not understand.

If the student is still learning the English language, I'm not going to hold their results of their answers against them if they are not able to fully understand the question.

Several of the participants pointed out that ELLs do not always have the language to answer some of the questions asked on English language arts assessments.

Star Testing. Let me think. How many are there? Star Testing ... There's end of the unit tests that are completely out of kilter for level one ELLs in fourth grade for example. Like the questions that are being asked in ELA are just ... You can't answer that. You don't have the language to answer that. There's a tremendous amount of testing. I actually have added the last links, which is an end of the year assessment of language level in Spanish and I hate that I'm giving a test, but we had to have, we have to see what's going on with proficiency.

She went on to talk about the additional tests individual schools and programs give to ELLs in order to make up for the lack of information received from state-wide standardized testing. She
added, however, that despite gaining more information through these self-imposed tests, they were not necessarily a good thing for students, as they were additional assessments on top of an already burdensome testing schedule.

The ELL department is adding their own assessment tools for writing, which I understand the need to try to measure levels one, two, and three ELD to give teachers and students some sense of I'm progressing. I'm just not progressing MCAS level or whatever. The trouble with it is it's yet another test and we're finding it's much more productive to look at writing sample, like straight ahead writing samples from kids in ELA or science or math and taking them and “rubricking” them and looking at them with a rubric. That's been much more effective.

The same participant explained that she was not against testing ELLs, but was against the massive amount of testing ELLs are required to take. She questioned how much information these assessment actually gave teachers and whether or not the information provided was helpful in teaching ELLs.

It's not that I'm against all testing. It's the massive amount. Is it giving us information? The last links in Spanish is giving me really strong information about how strong their language levels are in Spanish, but the MCAS is not giving me really great information about ELLs in the lower levels, for example. We're spending an inordinate amount of time on it.

Participants argued that there should be less testing in schools, especially for ELLs. They felt that a good way to measure ELL student success should be through classroom observations, conferencing, anecdotal records, and portfolios to show student progress. One participant suggested that assessment procedures for ELL students should be artifact-based on what the
student is doing. This participant also brought up the use of language rubrics for benchmarking.

Assessment procedures for ELL students should be artifact-based. They should be based in what the student is doing, against a rubric, against an expectation of drawing proficiency. We should be spending much more time looking at a language rubric, for example, that we will use to assess our students' writing capability. It really doesn't matter what the subject matter is as much as are they developing the ability to express themselves in writing. That you can do by collecting samples twice a month and putting it on a continuum and looking at it.

Much more effectively than these quarterly questions that have nothing to do with what kids have studied. The problem is that what we do is we handicap our kids because we take them and we say to them, "Okay. Write about this topic and we're going to collect the paper and we'll assess it." We'll do that three times a year. Well, do they have any background in that topic? Have they been taught anything? Are we really getting the best example of their work by doing it that way? We're getting a kind of example, which is valid, which is no supports.

Some of the participants found the MCAS to be inappropriate for ELL students, particularly ELLs with ELD levels one and two. One of the classroom teachers raised the point that educators of level one ELLs did not get much data when their students took the MCAS. She stated the following:

A level one ELL ... It's completely inappropriate. I'm sorry. There's not another way to say it. It's like I know we want to test everybody, but what are we getting? The reason you give an assessment is you take the data from that assessment and you use it. Now
while it might be valid for ... There are ways you can make it valid and appropriate for level three perhaps. No, not really.

A level four and five, you could provide support, but the whole thing with MCAS is there's no support offered. There's been no support offered for ELLs other than a word-to-word dictionary. That's it. If you intend to keep that as a rule, I don't know what you could do.

Participant thirteen spent a lot of time discussing the ACCESS Test and former ELL students who passed. As a result of their passing ACCESS, ELL students’ status changed from ELL to Former Limited English Proficient “FLEP.”

I've worked with students, many students who are English Language Learners. I've worked with kids who have just recently “FLEPPed”, too, so have passed the ACCESS, and are just kind of being monitored.

It just means that they have received a passing score, which is about a Level 5 on the ACCESS testing, but they’re basically just monitored by ESL specialists. The ESL specialists will come so many times, work with them, and help them out just with minor English issues. A lot of kids in Spanish will say the verbs backwards because, in Spanish, it’s a little bit different, so just working with that.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions of SPS ELL Educators Towards Students

Every participant discussed the fact that all ELL students are different from each other. Thus, there is a need to honor their differences. They further explained that ELL students have different learning styles, learning needs, and learning abilities. Many of the participants also discussed that the length of time it takes ELLs to master English varies because of the learner. Participant fifteen pointed out that not every ELL demonstrated readiness at the same time. She
went on to say that some children develop oral language quickly while writing may take time. Participant fifteen also stated that ELLs who have studied English in other countries may not experience much difficulties in literacy.

Not everybody is ready at the same time. Some children develop orally very quickly and the reading/writing takes some time. Other children, especially if they've studied English in other countries, their reading and writing might not be too bad, but with speaking they're very shy and that takes some time. It depends.

Educational rigor came up often throughout the interviews. A majority of the participants found the need to maintain rigor and high level thinking to be crucial to successfully teaching ELLs. Participant two, for example, talked about helping her ELL students see themselves as learners. She argued the need to set the bar as high as possible for ELLs.

I think that we have to always put the bar as high as we can. The sky is the limit, and if you expect a little, you will get a little. If you expect superstars, then you will get superstars. It's all about what you as the teacher put into it, as far as the planning, and as far as differentiation of proofing and levels ... Instruction, your pedagogy, keeping in mind that not all of these children have had the language, have had the experiences and the enrichment that other children have had. They haven't been to museums when they're little. They haven't had those experiences that produce language and give them the background knowledge that they build their reading skills on.

Most of the educators who participated in this study discussed the joy they receive when ELL students made progress in English and achieved academically. Participants stated that ELLs deserve the same education as their peers and are able to learn successfully with the proper supports in place for them. The participants listed many supports that ELLs require to succeed.
Most of the participants further expressed that they enjoyed teaching ELLs because of their work ethics. One participant explained that ELLs are always willing to try, work hard and never give up.

I think they're just like everyone else. They deserve the same education that everyone else has, but we need to give them the tools in order to access the curriculum, so if it's a word bank, a scaffold, picture cues, things like that. Gestures work, giving them the tools that they need to succeed, and knowing that they're different than a regular education student, or any student who speaks English, so just giving them the same opportunities. The thing that I enjoy most about English Language Learners, and also, dually identified students, is that this ability to never give up. They're always willing to try. Even though they don't know the language, they're still trying to speak in English, or they're still trying their best. There's no giving up. I've never seen a kid really give up. They want to learn, and I think, that's something really special about them.

The ESL specialists and classroom teachers expressed how much they enjoyed teaching and watching their ELL students learn, particularly when they acquired language, as expressed through demonstrating proficiency in reading and writing. Educators who teach in the dual language bilingual program discussed the advantages ELLs have because they are learning to be truly bilingual. All the participants believed that being bilingual, biliterate, and/or bicultural is a huge asset for learners. Several touched on the fact that being bilingual provides students with opportunities for success. One teacher stated:

I think that our kids, in the Unidos Program have a tremendous advantage. There are benefits in being in the Unidos Program. I really try to promote that and make sure that
the kids are proud of who they are and what they can do. The goal is to create bilingual and biliterate children. Being bilingual provides students with opportunities for success. Bilingualism builds confidence in ELL students and, as a result, builds confidence in the teachers who continue to instruct them. Educators also believed that their younger ELL students were more receptive and open to learning, because they are not afraid to make mistakes.

I do think that age has an affect… I think that the brain is more fluid. The younger they are, the more receptive, the more open they are. They're also not afraid. They dive in, for our Spanish speaking second language learners. Now, our English-dominant kids who are learning Spanish will take the risk. I think part of that is because the dominant culture is still English.

Several of the participants found many of their ELL students have positive attitudes toward learning. Some of the participants explained how they have been inspired by ELL students’ drive, motivation, and desire to learn. Participant fifteen described her ELL students as being delightful children. She explained that despite the challenges and obstacles many of her ELL students experienced, she found their perseverance, eagerness, and honesty to be amazing.

I say it all the time. Given the challenges that they are faced with and the obstacles, what they are able to overcome is absolutely amazing. I see it year after year after year and it just gives you such inspiration. These children come to school with so many issues, so many problems, and they come to class and they're eager to learn, they're delightful children. I have been blessed having children in front of me who come from all over, all parts of the world, and we're together as a family. We look out for each other. If a kid leaves his cell phone in the desk, I never have to worry that a kid is going to steal it because a child brings it up to me and says, "Oh, Miss. So and so left his phone. Can we
go give it to him?" They look out for each other. It's just wonderful. I hope it continues, because it's just a wonderful feeling that we're able to create-

That sense of community and that it doesn't matter where we're from, we're here together. Being an American, I do keep on telling them, "You know, boys and girls, there's nothing here that you can't accomplish. I love to show them this wonderful, inspirational movie that I show at the end of the year every year and every year we're all crying.

Most of the participants described their ELL students as being enthusiastic about school and learning. Participant twenty-three, for example, explained how she enjoyed the enthusiasm she witnessed among her ELL students. She went on to talk about how ELL students want to learn. The students realized that through learning, they have a chance to better their lives and create more hopeful and positive futures. She also discussed the fact that some of her ELL students have personal goals they want to achieve, either for themselves or their families. Participant twenty-three, however, also realized that the enthusiasm among her ELL students often deteriorates fairly quickly.

I think I enjoy that, unlike maybe some other high school kids that are a little jaded by the time they get to high school, like, "I've been to English class, I've been to History class." They come at the beginning with this fresh enthusiasm like, "I'm going to learn something new, I'm going to get something out of this." Even if they have had lots of failures in the past or had a bad experience or even had a good experience and are really nervous to come here, there's some positive belief that this is an opportunity for them to do better. I really like that.

I have to be honest, sometimes it goes downhill really quickly, that positivity. I like that they come with that and I think that they really do believe, deep down, that this is an
opportunity for them to have a better life and to do something. Some are very personal and they want to do it for themselves or they want to impress their families and support them or have a good job so that they can then support their families. For whatever reason, I think they come with a really good attitude, overall. I think that really impresses me.

Participant twenty-three elaborated on why the enthusiasm can be lost so quickly for some of the ELL students.

I think you come, even if you're scared, if you have that positive hope like, "Okay, this is going to be hard but I'm going to learn so much. My English is going to be great." I think a lot of the time, they have unrealistic expectations of how quickly things are going to come. "Okay, I'm in English class for two hours a day and after a full year, I still can't have a full conversation with someone or I can't go to the store and ask for something. I can't do a job application. I think that they often get frustrated about how the standard language acquisition process. Same thing with other subjects.

Some participants spoke about why they thought some ELL students struggled and, in some cases, often gave up on themselves.

They feel like they're making the effort and it's not paying off so they often give up on themselves and they don't realize, often, that even American students struggle with the same thing. We have lots of students who grew up here, who had the education K-8, everything that we've taught them, and it's hard for them to do a math assignment, it's hard for them to do an English paper. They don't see that. Often they think that, "If I just knew English" or "If I'd just been here the whole time this would be easy for me." I think they often give up if it doesn't come as quickly as they'd hoped.
One participant described himself as being curious and wanting to learn more from his ELL students because the students had a lot to offer. He went on to say that he enjoyed learning about their cultures and family traditions. Many participants also discussed ELL students as being assets to their learning communities. These participants explained that they found that ELL students enriched their classrooms and encouraged learning about differences.

Access came up on numerous occasions. Educators spoke about the need for themselves, their students and their students’ families to have access to resources in the school community, as well as the wider community (church, community partnerships, multicultural centers, etc.). They spoke about ways they work to provide access to the students and their families and, in return, are accessible to them. They spoke about students requiring access to the English language, the content, and the curriculum.

Even though a majority of the participants spoke about ways the administration aided them, two of the participants felt that the school district did not fully support their ELLs. For example, he talked about a lack of communication within the school in relation to ELLs. Specifically, neglecting to inform specialists who the ELLs are and share important background information about them (learning needs, learning styles, ELD levels, etc.). These two participants felt that every specialist, teacher, or paraprofessional who work with ELL students should know about their ELL status, ELD levels, and any special learning needs. They found these information to be critical. One of the participants stated the following:

I feel like I don't see much support. The way that I see that the school district is not supporting ELL students is by not having ... I guess the main thing would be not informing specialist teachers on who is the ELL students and what sort of learning needs that they need. Maybe making it more clear about the resources that we have to the ESL
One participant discussed the challenge of having an ELL student and not knowing much about this particular student. He explained that all he knew about this particular ELL student did not know any English.

Yeah, it was definitely challenging. The first class he joined us, it was tough. They just gave me a little heads up that a new student was coming in and didn't speak much English at all. I think even the SEEK aides that work with him were kind of unsure of what to do and kind of just following around and trying to keep him safe.

The same participant also brought up the need to have additional support in the form of more teachers and specialists who are able to work with the different types of learners. He explained that by having these individuals, he could dedicate more time with ELLs and be able to create useful and practical strategies to educate them.

But in the same way where I wish I had more time or more people, more human resources to work alongside of to meet different types of learners, I want to improve upon that and have more time and more techniques to ... I guess initially assess ELL students and see how much ... What their needs are at the beginning of the year to meet those needs throughout the year so that they are getting instruction at the same level that the rest of the class is.

Having more time also meant teachers would have additional opportunity to review the dually identified students’ (ELL students who are also special education students) Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).

Yeah, individualized educational plan. Which was new to me as a first year teacher and was a little overwhelming as a specialist teacher, because they just come in in piles and
piles. We see all the students, so we get all the IEPs but it's very overwhelming and no one ever really sat down and explained it to me.

Several educators who work with dually identified students discussed the fact that ELL strategies also work well for individuals with special needs. Many of the participants who taught dually identified students found their students to be challenging and “hard to teach.” One participant explained that dually identified students had a greater problem and needed to work harder.

A dually identified student is a student who is a special education student, has an IEP, is also an English language learner, so they have this double problem. They’re not able to access the... but also, their language is getting in the way, too, so they have to work, I call it working double hard.

The participants also expressed that dually identified students were not able to learn the same way as their peers who did not have a disability. Some of the participants explained that for some dually identified students, it was more than language that caused the difficulties. One participant went on to say that the cognitive abilities of the dually identified students caused language processing difficulties.

It is their disability, or is it actually their language that's causing them to not be able to show that they can't do it. A lot of the times, especially for my older kids, it's not the language that's inhibiting them. It's the cognitive abilities, but then, I mean, there are still going to be language difficulties. It's one of those things that I've seen can last all your life, but you are proficient.

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions of SPS ELL Educators Towards Families

All the participants of this study felt they had a positive relationship with the families of their ELL students. More than half of the participants expressed that having a positive and
trusting relationship with the families is one of the most important aspects in being effective when working with ELLs. Participants also argued that developing strong and open relationships with parents and colleagues can better support student learning.

Well I definitely feel like the relationships with parents and colleagues can support all students. I guess for ELL students, being able to talk to some of the parents gives me a better idea of their culture and their background and where they are coming from. There is one student who is in the upper grades whose parent came in during the open house for parent teacher conferences.

Many of the participants shared various ways they worked hard to maintain positive relationship with the families. They conducted home visits and held parent-teacher conferences, family nights, and classroom presentations. Five participants brought up how they worked hard to diminish animosity between themselves and the families. One explained:

If an adult is having animosity or an issue towards the teacher or a staff member, that child will know it and that creates a whole dynamic and what it does is it hinders learning.

Almost all of the participants brought up the fact that the ELL families they worked with were grateful and hopeful. Numerous participants touched on ways the families showed their gratitude. In addition, the participants discussed ways the families conveyed their hopes and dreams for their children, despite their current and sometimes difficult circumstances.

When I see the families and all that they're going through and their hopes and dreams that they have for their child. They come, I think, similarly to the students, they come with this hope. They're going to get this, I explain all of these supports when I do an orientation. I say, "We have these classes and this is the way we support students. We
have tutoring. We have these extra supports." They're like, Thank you, thank you."

They're usually very grateful. A lot of them haven't had a chance to go to high school, even elementary school. Some of them are illiterate.

I think that seeing them and seeing what hopes they have for their children and even their own desire to better themselves through their children. Like, they're going to learn and then they're going to teach me and we're going to be able to do all these things.

One of the participants discussed the disconnect that often occurred among ELLs and their families. She also discussed the fact that often a lot of ELLs end up giving up.

Knowing that, despite all of our efforts in school, a lot of the time, a lot of those students end up either giving up or their families become disconnected because they feel like, more and more as the student advances, maybe they don't have as much pull with the student. They feel like the student knows more than me and I can't really be involved. That always makes it really difficult. Although I think we're helping the student a lot in all the things we do here, I almost worry sometimes that we're pulling them apart from their families too. We're creating more and more differences.

**Family and community involvement.** Parent/family involvement came up continuously among almost all (28) the participants. The participants discussed the need to have family collaboration and input. They talked about how not every family feels comfortable with the school for different reasons. Reaching out to families, especially those who do not feel much comfort in the schools was critical.

In terms of all the way ... Sometimes I can understand the way parents see education, which might be a slightly different from what is typical in the US.

Study participants empathized with the families. They understood that families care for their
children and want the best for them. These educators who raised these points also realized that some cultures depended on the school to educate their children wholly. Such parents believed that home and school were completely separated and that no parental involvement in the learning process was expected or necessary. Families from cultures with this mode of thinking viewed the role of guardian as someone who provides life essentials, but does not tend to a child’s academic or educational needs.

Sometimes here we expect the family to do that. Sometimes their parents are expecting those things to be done by the school.

That course for background helps me understand that sometimes it's not like the parents don't care, but there's some cultures that depends, expect the school to step up on some things.

This same participant went on to say that she understood what the families are going through and recognized cultural differences were present in her classroom. She discussed the need to understand the families and their cultures in order to be effective at teaching ELLs.

I understand what the families are going through only because I can relate to the students. I know I can relate to the families as well. I know what they're going through. In some cultures looking at the person is an insult. where in our culture here that we're raised in, you look at the person in the eye.

Recognizing differences is an important part of teaching ELLs. Cultural differences affect ELL behaviors, learning methods, and social interactions. It is important for teachers to be aware of such differences to prevent unfair and culturally-based biases or stereotypes.

**Language barriers.** More than half of the participants found language barriers to be frustrating. Classroom teachers spoke about the importance of communicating with the families
and not always being able to do so because of language barriers. Non-English speaking participants brought up using older, bilingual students, other teachers, paraprofessionals, home-school liaisons, and translators from the Parent Information Center to translate for them. One participant also discussed the need for interpretation, especially when it is important information that is going to affect students academically or, in some cases, legally. The third participant discussed how one parent brought in her own translator to discuss her concerns over her son’s grades.

Luckily she came with a translator so she was able to address her concern with her son's conduct grade, and explain her concern with that and kind of give me a better background of the student that I wasn't aware of from interacting with the student in class. I felt like that was hugely beneficial. It opened up my eyes to kind of how that student would be learning in the classroom environment, interacting with other students and their personal experiences beforehand.

Participants also suggested many non-English speaking families could get insulted when teachers asked them if they would like an interpreter. One of the participants brought up how he often had to rely on his limited Spanish skills to communicate with his ELL students and families who do not speak any English. He did this in order to not only communicate with the family, but also to show his respect for his student’s home culture as well as his own willingness to learn a new language.

Personally, I draw upon my mom being a Spanish teacher. The little Spanish that I know, I'll use that to try to communicate to some students.

Non-English speaking teachers also spoke about the need to want to communicate with the families in their native languages, but how their own limited abilities to do so can cause more
anxiety or problems. One participant stated, “that I find frustrating, the barrier. I mean I'll speak a couple of words, but I'd sound like a fool.. I want to communicate with them in their language and I won't even attempt.” Many participants also discussed their wish to speak an additional language or to be able to speak fluently with non-English speaking parents. Sometimes, however, student bilingualism was admirable to educators: "I wish I could speak another language and then I get so frustrated. It can be sometimes frustrating because I’m actually jealous. It's more my own issues, I envy them."

**Attitudes, Beliefs, and Perceptions of ELL Educators Towards their Colleagues and School Administration**

Participants of this study, for the most part, found that they have had great experiences with their colleagues and administrators. A majority of the participants found their the support staff around them to be helpful. One participant explained that her colleagues were her best support.

I've had great experiences with colleagues, families, and school and administrators who support my teaching again to a degree. If I asked for a translator or asked for support, I absolutely do get that. My colleagues are my best support because they are in the classroom with me so they do understand.

Participants also discussed ways they collaborate with their colleagues to support their ELL students. One participant explained that being able to go to another teacher to learn about an ELL’s history and how he/she is performing in class is beneficial.

I think the majority of the time, I work very well with the colleagues. I think that they, knowing that I have all the ELL students, they are able to come to one person and find out the history of that student or a little more information on how they're doing in other
classes. I think that's really helpful for them. A lot of districts don't have that so I think that's beneficial.

Every participant in this study who taught in the dual language program was bilingual. Participants who worked in the dual language program also explained that all staff members of the Unidos dual language program (whether teacher or paraprofessional) were bilingual. Educators who participated in the study and who were not teachers in the dual language program found their colleagues who taught in the dual language program to be capable and talented. They spoke highly of them and their work with ELLs and Spanish Language Learners (SLLs). The participants discussed ways they collaborate professionally in development meetings and rely on each other for translation. In addition to translating, the participants often relied on their bilingual colleagues for ELL support and resources. Overall, the participants found their colleagues and administrators to be great assets in teaching ELLs.

Although most of the participants were positive about their experiences with colleagues, two of the participants felt frustrated with some of their colleagues. One of the participants explained the frustration she experienced with the ESL specialist in her building.

Again, my wish is for an ELL actual person in our building to work in a more collaborative, more supportive way that would make it only better because that is there expertise and they're the ones that could provide me with resources, materials or co-teach with me in that situation, so it's sad in that way that that's not happening in our school. Another participant explained her dismay with teachers who were frustrated with their own ELL students or ELLs in her class.

I do think, like I said before, that often ELL students are put in this category. Sometimes my frustration is that a teacher will have a frustration with ELLs or with ELLs in my
class. Okay, but let's give specific examples of specific students and how we can help each one of them because it's not an ELL problem. It's like different students in your class are having different struggles. That's when I get frustrated and I have to check myself and say, "Okay. Maybe you're not being professional or maybe I'm overreacting to what you're saying but I need to step back." I think that's the hardest thing for me, when I see that.

Most of the participants believed that school administrators have tried to hire staff who speak additional languages, provide resources for ELL students, and actively engage in professional development.

I think through the pocket book they have tried to hire people and provide resources for kids who are ELLs. I think they've also tried to provide professional development to teachers on improving their practice with ELLs.

The same participant explained that there is only one area where she did not feel supported from administration. She felt that some of the administrators did not quite understand that it takes ELLs time to acquire language.

I think ultimately the place where I do not feel supported is in the absolute well-documented reality that it takes time to acquire English. It is not something that you just walk in and study really hard and walk out of here later and have. No matter who your parents are, no matter what kind of supports you have, you don't learn a language in a year. The place where I don't feel support is this reality that this is a process and we should be looking at it as a process. We should be looking at a bilingual profile, particularly when we're dealing with special needs students. We should be
looking at a bilingual profile. Like when you first came, you were a level one reader or level two, and did you learn? Did you learn English in a year?

**Racial or the Cultural Background of ELL Educators and ELLs**

The racial and the cultural backgrounds of ELL educators did not appear to have a negative effect on ELLs, according to many of the participants of this study. Most of the educators who participated in this study were white women with varying cultural backgrounds (mostly Italian, Irish, or Jewish). There were a number of participants who spoke an additional language. Those who spoke another language felt that their own experience with learning an additional language led them to better relate to the experiences of SPS ELL students.

**Summary**

All of the research participants were comfortable answering the researchers’ questions and provided numerous examples of best pedagogical practices and their overall experiences with ELL students and their families. Specifically, educators who participated in this study shared their educational backgrounds, perceptions, attitudes, and experiences. Most of the participants, except for two who had not spent much time directly teaching ELLs in the classroom, provided explicit examples of their teaching experiences with ELLs. If a question did not apply to an educator because it had to do with direct instruction, and/or because they did not know what response to give, they simply articulated that to the researcher. Overall, all participants discussed their work with ELLs, the methods and ways they supported teaching and learning for ELLs, and the manner in which they provided support for ELL families.
Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in this research study. It provides a summary of the methodology used and garnered results. In addition, the researcher discusses the results of the study and the implications they may have on future teaching practices and pedagogical research. Finally, chapter five discusses the limitations of this study, the researchers’ recommendations and solutions that arose from the study.

Research Context

This section provides a summary/overview of the background research, the research gaps, research questions, a summary of the significance of the research, the methodology used, and main findings of the research.

Summary/Overview of background research. The number of immigrants in the United States increases every year, meaning that the number of ELLs in the U.S. education system also increases. The influx of immigrant learners creates a number of struggles surrounding the best ways to educate them. Approximately 20 years ago, several states with large ELL populations (one being Massachusetts) voted to restrict Bilingual Education programs (Mitchell, 2016). In 2011, the federal government charged Massachusetts with failing to mandate ELL training for classroom teachers. The Department of Justice (DOJ) directed all Massachusetts teachers to take up to 45 hours of training in order to renew their teaching licenses. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) developed the initiative, “Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners” (RETELL), which revised the ELL training program and set completion deadlines for teachers (Ruppenthal & Shanahan, 2014).
**Research gap.** Recent research in this field examined topics such as teacher attitudes and beliefs, educator preparation and practice, and teacher’s relationships to student academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pease-Alvarez, et al., 1991; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). The research demonstrated in this project works to identify educators’ attitudes, beliefs, and any potential lack of understanding or preconceived notions they may have about their ELL students. Nonetheless, there continues to be insufficient research studies on mainly ELL teachers (Flores, 2001).

Academic achievement of ELL students and their educators’ ability to effectively help these students meet challenges becomes more pressing as the number of ELL students increase and statistics on their academic development demonstrate their continued lagging behind Native English Speakers (NES) (Solís, 1999). Measuring ELL teachers’ attitudes and experiences was significant because it has received limited attention in research. The researcher had the desire to lessen this gap by evaluating educators’ attitudes and experiences. This way, schools would be able to identify and determine the necessity of an anti-bias curricula as well as professional development training that uncover unconscious biases.

**Research questions.** This study was designed to examine ELL educators’ experiences in Somerville Public Schools (SPS). It addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?

2. Does racial or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?

The researcher found the attitudes and beliefs of ELL educators to be an important element in understanding the educational landscape for ELL students. As a result, a sub-question that was related to the perceptions, attitudes, and experience of ELL educators in SPS was added.
Summary of the research significance. The review of literature suggested that the number of ELLs who attend U.S. schools and come from homes where English is not their primary language is increasing at an immoderate rate. ELLs are the fastest growing diverse population in U.S. pre-K-12 schools. About 3 out of 4 classrooms in the U.S include at least one ELL (Sparks, 2016). Although ELLs in U.S. schools continue to increase rapidly, the best pedagogical approaches to educating ELLs are unclear, inconsistent, and often lacking. Often, the opportunity and achievement gaps between ELLs and NES begin at an early age. There were problems with some of the programs for ELL students as quality instruction was lacking in ESL and appropriate grade-level academic content was not present. The review of published literature also suggested that there were several complications relating to ELL educators. Some of these deficiencies included:

1) Many teachers of ELL students are unable to relate to their students. Ninety percent of pre-service teachers in teacher training programs in the U.S. were White, middle class, and came from non-urban environments (Nieto, 2000; & National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Many teachers were monolingual in English and some were unable to relate to their students.

2) ELL teachers’ often hold biased or misconstrued attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their students (de Oliveria, 2011).

3) Teaching conditions and resources affect ELL teachers’ experience to teach ELL students and their interest to remain in the teaching field (Brooks et al., 2010).

Yet again, as in the case of previous findings on the nature of ELL students, gaps remain in the literature concerning the nature of ELLs. This study attempted to fill the gaps. In addition, the findings of this study are useful to practitioners, researchers, and policy makers.
It was important for the researcher to gain an understanding of teachers’ experiences in order to create the best teaching and learning opportunities for ELL students. This research study was significant because it has the potential to aid policymakers, administrators, school leaders, and families of ELLs to gain an increased understanding of the factors that influence and affect ELL educators’ work and student success. The purpose of this study was to examine ELL educators’ experiences and best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELLs.

**Summary of the Methodology**

This study used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the methodology to explore the experiences of ELL educators in SPS. The purpose of this IPA study was to explore how SPS ELL educators made sense of their experiences working with their students. The researcher attempted to understand best practices for educating ELL students, addressing their challenges, and meeting their needs. The researcher in this phenomenological study sought to study and understand ELL educators’ experiences, behaviors, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. The researcher shifted her study from talking to only ELL classroom teachers and ESL specialists to including ELL administrators and support staff who work with ELLs and ELL families in SPS. Thus, the 32 research participants who were interviewed for this study included: classroom teachers, ESL specialists, content specialists, director and assistant director of programs for ELLs, and a guidance counselor who work with ELL students. Within the context of collaboration, the researcher also believed that there were important and effective leaders and policymakers who were able to frame educational policies for programs that served ELL students successfully.

This study investigated the best pedagogical practices to educate ELL students and if practices and expectations were consistent throughout the district. In addition, this study
examined if educators believed their racial or the cultural backgrounds affected their interaction with their students. As this study was focused on the thoughts and experiences of ELL educators, the IPA method was the most practical for analyzing this specific data. Finally, the focus on a specific group of educators unveiled very particular processes, as opposed to more general pedagogical practices.

Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents discussion of the findings of this study. During the interviews, many themes and subthemes emerged. Certain central ideas came to the fore, however, as participant after participant discussed similar ideas.

Emerging Themes

Four overarching themes emerged from participants’ interviews:

- Educating the whole child
  - Meeting basic needs,
  - Ensuring physiological health and safety,
  - Ensuring psychological healthy and safety,
  - Providing a sense of belonging.

- Community
  - Engaging families and community in student learning,
  - Providing opportunities for cultural interaction, both at school and in the wider community
  - Encouraging family traditions,
  - Making human connection and relationships through an emphasis on similarities,
• Highlighting changes in immigration over time, including how segregation and diversity relates to education.

• Cultural responsiveness
  • Lessening the opportunity gap and the preparation gap,
  • Cultural Pedagogy or Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), with a focus on cultural competency, cultural proficiency, cultural sensitivity, cultural and religious traditions, and social capital
  • Focus on teacher’s positionality

• Expectations
  • Right to same education as native English Speakers
  • Educational rigor
  • Making learning visible
  • Differentiation/ individualized instruction by using numerous strategies to support learning
  • Building on students’ strengths
  • Opportunities for reflection
  • Showing compassion, enthusiasm and empathy
Figure 15. Theme 1: Educating the Whole Child

**Theme 1: Educating the Whole Child**

Educating, understanding, and supporting the whole child continuously appeared throughout the interviews. Most of the participants discussed the importance of having a good understanding of the whole child when educating them. This included thinking about the learner’s basic, physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Understanding the whole child was found to be important when the educators were asked if they felt the students’ cultural backgrounds and/or countries of origin had a significant impact on the ways in which they learned. They discussed the importance of understanding each ELL student as an individual. Participants said it was important to recognize ELL students’ successes and struggles and most
believed it was necessary for ELL educators to understand the cultures and nuances of the students.

Educators also spoke about educating, understanding, and supporting the whole child when they acknowledged students’ and SPS’ diversity. SPS is a multicultural school district that includes students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Those interviews unveiled the need to understand ELLs’ cultural backgrounds and family traditions. The participants discussed the diversity of SPS ELLs and that many have learning obstacles that are related to economics, health, and safety. Such external factors can make students vulnerable and may have an effect on their ability to progress and succeed in school.

What the educators who participated in this study stated about economics was consistent with what was discussed in the literature review. It seemed fair to say that findings of this study indicated that SPS educators who participated were concerned about and aware of the effects poverty had on their ELL students. Many participants shared that numerous ELLs who were not prepared for school had a difficult time demonstrating academic progress. Socioeconomic factors affecting students included poverty and a lack of parental resources, while economic factors affecting the schools included limited language services and inadequately trained teachers, all of which impeded student success. SPS educators who participated in this study discussed many of their ELL students’ low socioeconomic statuses. They believed that poor student performance in ELLs may result from a lack of basic food and shelter, students living in overcrowded housing situations, and many families working long hours for low wages. Participants believed many students and their families had barriers to accessing medical and legal health services. Participants of this study shared that older students had responsibilities such as having to work to
help support their families and/or had to care for their younger siblings, which also had an effect on completing homework and school readiness.

SPS ELL educators who participated in this study believed that ELLs needs are beyond just academics. ELL students’ social, emotional, physical, and health needs, as well as past experiences should also be considered when educating. Frequently, the physical and psychological health of students was discussed during interviews. The physical and psychological health of ELLs begins at home. When children come to class, they bring with them experiences from outside the classroom. If a child is mistreated or neglected at home, this will affect their demeanor in school, impacting their learning. When trauma or abuse becomes apparent, teachers must take time away from instruction to take care of the student and his/her immediate needs. ELL educators help build safe and comfortable environments where students feel both physical and mentally secure, thus ready to learn. This is why it is vital for educators to look beyond the academic environment and consider the child as a whole.

Many participants also spoke about the lack of mental health support for ELLs. Participants discussed the changes and adjustments that ELLs experience when they move to a new country and school, as well as the need for them to have appropriate mental health support. Trauma, particularly for newcomers to U.S., is a major obstacle to ELL learning. Often, but not always, immigrant students come from places that are besieged by conflict, poverty, danger, violence, and other physical and emotional threats. As some educators mentioned, many of the ELLs in Somerville are from El Salvador or are first generation El Salvadorians. El Salvador is a Central American country with a history of war and conflict. Many of the Somerville El Salvadorians came to the U.S. as refugees. When students flee from such horrific and violent circumstances, the traumatic experiences remain with them. Some students constantly think
about these experiences, which may affect their abilities to think about academic subjects affecting their academic performance. Educators, therefore, need to be aware of a student’s past and show compassion and understanding in order to deal with the changes and adjustments faced by ELL students.

Issues relating to students’ social and emotional needs, such as self-awareness, self-esteem, self-identity, self-confidence, and motivation, were also discussed. SPS educators understood that there were challenges that could affect students’ emotional needs, self-awareness, identities, confidence, and overall motivations to learn. Participants brought up the need for educators to be supportive of their ELL students and to provide a safe learning environment where students are comfortable and feel like they belong.

In terms of engaging the students in the classroom community, the need to encourage students to take risks, respect diversity and differences, trust their peers and teachers, and build positive relationships are themes that emerged.

SPS educators discussed the relationship between learning and health, with one directly supporting the other. Without a doubt, health and education were important factors in ELLs’ successes. ELLs learn best in safe, healthy, nurturing, and supportive educational environments with appropriate academic, psychological, and emotional supports. Aids such as this promote pride, inspire success, help students to become lifelong learners, and empower learners to be positive citizens of their communities. Findings of this study suggest the need for educators, families, and the wider community to work collaboratively in using a whole child approach to educate and support ELLs. In addition to supporting ELLs’ basic needs, educators also discussed the need to help ELL families’ access food, work, and legal services. Being accessible for students and families as a way to reduce anxiety and promote comfort was also a common
talking point amongst study participants. They found it necessary to build relationships with
students and families.

**Opportunity gap.** One of the subthemes mentioned (and is closely related to the larger
theme of educating the whole child) was the opportunity gap. The opportunity gap, one of the
greatest problems facing U.S. schools, is related to the ways race, ethnicity, socioeconomic
status, and family circumstances affect students’ educational achievement. The opportunity gap
affects access to quality programs and resources needed for ELLs (and all students) to achieve.
The opportunity gap occurs when some students lack the resources necessary (economics or
availability) to succeed in an academic environment. For example, a poor student might not be
able to afford a language tutor that would help him/her overcome struggles with literacy,
whereas someone more economically comfortable would be able to afford a tutor and improve in
the area of literacy. Several participants suggested that the opportunity gap was closely
connected to the achievement gap, the preparation gap, and the learning gap. These gaps can best
be summarize as:

- The achievement gap refers to the performance of groups of learners in relation to
  others, often in terms or race or ethnicity. The achievement gap is more quantifiable
  and measurable than some other gaps in that assessment scores reveal disparities
  between those groups (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Skalsky, 2009).

- The preparation gap refers to the different levels or preparedness required by different
  groups in order to get to the same place academically. A contentious point of
discussion, this gap refers to the idea that certain minority groups must work harder
than White native English speakers to achieve the same goals (Price, 2001; Mead,
2004).
• The Learning Gap refers to the expectations and benchmarks set forward through standardized curricula versus what students actually know at a given point of measure. For example, the idea that a student should know how to spell certain high-frequency words by the first grade, but he/she lacks the conceptual knowledge of knowing how to spell because those particular skills were never taught (Stevenson, & Stigler, 1994; Glossary of Education Reform, 2017).

These gaps represent impediments to learning that ELL educators must be aware of and actively combat. Teachers need to not only educate with this in mind, but also advocate for real change in school policy, community outreach, and district and statewide curriculum development.

Numerous participants explained the need for students to be prepared when entering school. In an effort to remove the opportunity gap, Somerville has taken pride in ensuring that children (as young as newborns) and their families receive proper support. SPS provides opportunities to participate in playgroups, home visits, and family literacy programs. Participants also discussed the need for flexibility within out-of-school programs in order to allow working families the opportunities to attend. They spoke about the idea of doing more to include working families. SPS has literacy initiatives, such as their annual literacy fair, designed specifically to reduce the opportunity gap among ELLs and their native speakers. At the fair, SPS educators modeled literacy activities for families and demonstrated effective read-aloud strategies. English classes were also offered to non-speaking families.

Many of the participants believed that ELL students were provided with opportunities to learn and succeed. Findings of this study suggest that educators must diligently work to close the opportunity gap between ELL students and their NES peers.
Figure 16. Theme 2: Community

**Theme 2: Community**

A major theme that emerged in this study was, “community”. Using the common proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.”, the community is important in the growth and development of ELL students. Findings of this study suggest that building community is important in the success of ELLs. Helping students feel like they are a part of the school community was mentioned numerous times among the participants. Students need to learn how to work cooperatively in order to complete tasks and learn effectively. Cooperation is a fundamental social skill needed in every aspect of life. Teaching the theme, “community” and
respect for differences, begins in the classroom. However, it also extends to the larger community, the city, the country, and even globally. Classroom teachers who participated in this study discussed the need to make the students’ cultures visible, thereby giving each legitimacy and equality in the school community.

Somerville is a global community because of the different cultures that live, work, and thrive there. In fact, the U.S. as a nation is a global nation with nearly every country and language represented. It is imperative that these different cultures peacefully and successfully coexist. This is accomplished through learning about and respecting both the similarities and the differences of others. This learning of respect begins at home and in the classroom. Participants spoke of providing opportunities for students to learn about each other’s cultures and family traditions by scheduling activities for cultural interactions. They invited individuals from the community who shared similar cultural backgrounds with their students to come in and present on their cultural and religious backgrounds, family traditions, roles in the community, and their experiences. Through the community partnerships and classroom visits, students learned about similarities, differences, and different immigration experiences. In addition, students were also invited to participate in community events.

Participants of this study spent time discussing what it meant to be part of the community. They discussed specific cultural communities they often relied upon for additional support and resources. Spanish, Haitian, Brazilian, and Nepali communities are examples of large cultural communities in Somerville. Many of the educators in SPS relied on specific churches, restaurants, and/or cultural organizations for support and resources when needed. Participants of the study talked about their dependence on the community for services and other supports. Using the community as a resource assisted in teaching and learning by showing
students the world around them and that they are active members within it. Strengthening ties with the community helps encourage students to become involved. It fosters a sense of pride and a belonging, therefore encouraging students to give back by becoming respectful citizens. Through teaching about the local community, educators are helping students become community members.

Those participants who were born and raised in Somerville, and/or resided in Somerville felt invested in working with children from the community. For the educators who lived within the community, they believed they were able to serve as a resource in both the classroom and the community. One participant explained that her own children often played at the park with her students and other children in the community. Another educator described being in the community as an ambassador.

**Family and community engagement.** The educators who were born and raised in Somerville (or were born elsewhere, but currently resided in Somerville) discussed their need to be responsive to family and community engagement. These educators believed being open, flexible, and collaborative enabled them to meet students’, families’, and communal needs. Their overall attitude on parental and community involvement was positive. Educators who were Somerville residents also described themselves as being sensitive to intercultural and diversity issues. They discussed the need to have respect for diversity in the larger community, as well as in the smaller community (their individual schools and classrooms). They were concerned with how their schools were viewed within the larger community.

Many educators in this study discussed the need for more family and community engagement. Others talked about actions they took to improve parent involvement in their schools: providing translators at school conferences and events, translating materials that went
home, making the school a comfortable and inviting environment, providing child care for families, conducting home visits, being flexible with times and meeting locations, and calling to share positive interactions and experiences with students. The interviewees also discussed that their students responded positively when their families were actively engaged in the school. Overall, such interactions improved student behavior and allowed them to better adapt in school. Students completed homework frequently, their attendance approved, and they were more motivated to learn when parents and community were a part of the learning process. Moreover, families were able to respond more effectively to the school when they were included in the learning processes of their children.

A majority of the participants believed that family and community engagement supported partnerships and collaborative initiatives for them. These same educators who valued family and community engagement discussed the ways they used family and community partnerships to maximize resources. Data from the participants suggested that schools, families, and the community should work collaboratively to promote academic success and overall achievement of ELL students.

**Diversity in the community.** Diversity in SPS, diversity among ELL students and families, and overall diversity within the community, was a consistent subtheme that emerged. The term, “diversity” has different meanings to different people. Discussion of diversity arose when participants answered questions relating to students’ race, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and gender. The participants talked about their ELLs as diverse student learners who came from racially, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, religiously and economically diverse backgrounds. In addition, they shared that their ELL students had diverse learning styles and needs. They shared various teaching strategies they used with their diverse learners.
Participants also discussed diversity when sharing their own personal, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Many participants mentioned that Somerville changed from being composed of primarily one race to now being comprised of multiple races and cultures. Participants expressed that Somerville and the student population in SPS is currently more diverse than it was in the past. The educators in this study had a positive attitude about Somerville’s diversity, particularly among their ELL students.

Many expressed that Somerville was much more diverse compared to the other places where they were raised and school districts where they had previously been employed. Some described the demographics at a different Massachusetts, urban, public schools noting that Somerville was much more diverse. They spoke about the diversity among their students, which represent a vast array of countries. Several participants expressed the idea that the diversity in their schools made them curious to learn more from their ELL students, their families, and about their cultures.

**Segregation among ELL students.** Racial segregation is when individuals are separated into racial or ethnic groups. Participants in this study spoke about their ELL students having a tendency to segregate themselves. The participants explained that ELL students, particularly at the high school level, self-segregated from students outside of their race and cultures. They found it was natural for the ELL students to want to spend time with those who they felt most comfortable with in school, which were generally students with whom they resemble in race and ethnicity. Students work hard in learning difficult academic concepts. When it is time to relax, each lunch, participate in extracurricular activities, or simply share free time, ELL students have a natural tendency to gravitate toward those students who speak the same language and share the same cultural characteristics. While this is both a healthy and natural tendency, it is important for
educators understand these groupings, but also to prevent a negative group mentality. Educators must respect the fact that students will often gravitate toward students from the same background. While this can be positive such groupings can become unhealthy or damaging, especially if crimes are committed, peer pressure is exerted, or racial profiling occurs. In these instances, it is important to be vigilant in observing for characteristics of gang-like activities occurring in divided groupings.
Figure 17. Theme 3: Cultural Responsiveness

Theme 3: Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural competence. Cultural competence, a developmental process is defined as the ethics, principles, policies, structures, behavior, and attitudes aligned with standards that move an organization or an individual toward effective culturally proficient interactions (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). Having cultural competence, which can be learned, practiced, and institutionalized to serve the needs of students, families, and the community is important in having culturally diverse and healthy classrooms and schools communities. All of the educators who participated in this study appeared to be culturally competent. They had an awareness of their own cultural identities and spoke openly about differences. They shared information about
their cultural and racial backgrounds as well as those of their students. Cultural competence is being able to recognize one’s own cultural identity and understanding about differences (Fong, 2001; De Gaetano, & España, 2010; Muñoz, & Graybill, 2015). When an educator has a strong understanding and acceptance of his/her own culture, he/she is better able to understand and accept the cultures of others. Not only does it allow for outward respect, but such self-knowledge and understanding models for students how they should be proud of their own heritages while also being respectful of others.

Educators who worked directly with ELL students discussed how they included their students’ cultural backgrounds in the curriculum and encouraged them to learn about each other’s cultures and experiences. Many participants said that there are educational differences within cultures and the need for educators to understand those differences when working to understand ELLs. One challenge to effectively educating non-White ELLs in the classroom is the disproportionate number of White teachers. Students may not be able to identify, culturally or racially with their teachers, which may cause an impediment to learning if the teacher is not culturally competent and proficient. It is the responsibility of the teachers to understand students’ cultural backgrounds and needs, and to bring them into the classroom to facilitate a better understanding of who their students are as individual learners.

**Cultural Responsive Pedagogy (CRP).** Cultural Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) is one of the themes that arose among many of the participants. One of the goals of CRP and maintaining a cultural responsive classroom is to get students to understand and appreciate their own cultures, in addition to other people’s cultures. Gay (2000) defines culturally CRP as using, “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them.” CRP should apply to all learners, particularly to ELLs and
students from diverse cultures (i.e. African-American, Latino, Asian, Native American students, etc.) because it directly considers the identity of the learners. Many of the participants argued that if educators did not have knowledge of their students' lives outside of paper-and-pencil work, and even outside of their classrooms, they were unable to know their students and understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Participants shared the importance of helping their students learn about their own cultural heritages, as well as the different cultures represented in the class. Some participants assigned their students to interview their families about cultural practices and traditions, and then provided them with opportunities to share and present such cultural experiences, family stories, traditions, and religious and holiday practices, both orally and in writing. Participants invited their students and families to present information about their cultures (i.e., presenting a cultural game, song, story, or tradition to the class). Students could create a cultural poster with their families at home. They could include information such as flags, languages, religions, foods, art, music, photos and other artifacts and/or illustrations from their native countries. Participants also discussed ways they provided their students with opportunities to learn from invited guest speakers who served as role models.

Many participants discussed CRP and the need to include students and families’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some of the comments shared included:

- Being sensitive to students’ cultural and linguistic needs.
- Including students and families’ cultures in the curriculum.
- Building bridges of meaningfulness between home and school.
- Having positive relationships with the families. This provides support for ELLs and helps them to better cope with the challenges they may face.
• Providing communications that are written in the families’ native languages.

• Teaching students to respect and praise their own, as well as their peers’ cultural heritages.

• Allowing students to feel safe and comfortable in their cultures within the classroom. The more comfortable ELLs feel in the classroom, the easier it is for them to learn. When ELLs experience anxiety, they comprehend less.

• Incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials in all daily routines, subject areas and skills taught.

• Reading literature that reflects multiple ethnic perspectives and literary genres.

• Reading literature that is relevant to students and has characters students are able to easily identify with.

Participants in this study also stressed the importance of student representation in the curriculum. They noted that if students were able to identify with the lessons being learned and place themselves in the curriculum, there was an increased likelihood of student achievement. Many stated that if students were not represented in the literature and if what they were learning was not meaningful to them, did show any interest.
The concept of, “expectation” is having a strong belief that an individual should, or will, achieve something (Spiegel, 2012). The theme of expectations arose among ELL educators who participated in this study. In order to have a safe, nurturing, respectful, responsible, and safe teaching and learning environment, students and teachers must adhere to school and classroom rules and expectations. Usually, if there are any types of violation or offenses, there are consequences. Having high expectations for students may impact instruction and overall achievement.
Educators’ attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors have been shown to have an association with expectations they have for their students. Participants in this study had positive attitudes and perceptions towards their ELLs. One of the most common expectations was that students could make progress and develop both their language and understanding of curriculum content. However, this achievement was largely reliant on the educator and what he/she did in the classroom. These participants believed that ELLs required the right to the same education as their native English-speaking peers including having access to the English language and the curriculum. They held high expectations and promoted instructional rigor for their ELL students. The ELL educators from this study shared examples of how they showed empathy and compassion while maintaining high expectations for their students. All participants used numerous strategies and pedagogical approaches to motivate their students and build their confidence. Using the ideas of multiple intelligences and individualized learning, participants differentiated instruction for their ELLs. Many described ways they worked on building students’ strengths to instruct them.

One theme that emerged in relation to ELLs’ attitudes was their fearlessness and humility. Many ELL students were not afraid to make mistakes when learning English, making them eager learners, not afraid to make mistakes when they misunderstood a linguistic concept. This attitude of fearlessness towards learning had a positive effect on the teacher’s instruction. It forced them to reflect on their own teaching practices and experiences in learning new languages and to further identify and empathize with their students.

Participants also discussed the district’s expectations for educators to teach language proficiency, academic content and the need for educational rigor. District-wide expectations lead to collaboration between administrators, school leaders, teachers, and other support staff. These
groups worked collaboratively to support each other, their students, families and communities. Cooperation between school personnel made the curriculum stronger for ELLs and also provided a model of cooperation. Collaboration allowed for a shared pool of resources that was accessible to all who taught ELLs. This saved time, individual effort, and worry, while simultaneously creating a standardization of practice.

**Objectives of the Study**

The goals of this study, to find best pedagogical approaches and practices to teaching ELLs and learn about the attitudes, experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of those educating these learners, were accomplished. All of the participants answered the interview questions, which were guides to responding to the main research questions:

- What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?
- Does race or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?
- What are the perceptions, attitudes, and experience of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools?

**Implications for Practice and Research**

The findings of this study have implications for developing pedagogical models for effective instruction of ELL students. Based on the best practices highlighted in this research, practical methods of teaching and knowledge sharing can be used to develop lessons, assessments, curriculum and educational policies. The findings also suggest further research can be completed to examine ELL students’ learning. Additional research on the connection between the best pedagogical approaches outlined in the literature, as well as best practices
discussed by the educators, and ELL students learning outcomes, need to be examined closely. It would be interesting and meaningful to take a closer look on the actual learning that occurs.

The findings in this study extend beyond grade school to higher education. The findings discussed above have the potential to positively impact the way ELLs are educated as well as the way educational policies are designed and implemented for ELLs. Further research is necessary to examine the types of supports ELLs and the families need to be successful. Further research is needed to examine the families’ perspectives, attitudes, and experiences. It is important to find out directly from the ELL families what kind of support they require in order for their children to be successful.

Another implication born out of this research is that diversity of educators creates and fosters a positive atmosphere for student learning. The lack of diversity in the teaching staff may leave a negative impression and possibly create an undesirable hierarchy. It is important for students to see those who resemble themselves as educators and role models. Although it is not always possible, teachers need to keep this in mind and find ways to introduce cultural diversity into the classroom.

The findings of the study will make significant contributions towards understanding pedagogical issues related to instructing ELL students, particularly those within the Somerville school district.

**Study Limitations**

The researcher’s goal was to have 20 interview participants. Since there was a limited number of males who participated in the study as well as educators of color, the researcher continued to interview additional participants. Additional ELL educators were willing to meet with the researcher and participate in the study thus increasing the sample size from 20 to 32.
Although there was an increase in the participation sample, 32 still presented a limitation to the study. In qualitative research, small sample sizes may be too small to support certain claims. The sample size in this qualitative study depended on factors such as the number of ELL educators who were available to meet with the researcher to discuss their work with ELL students. The in-depth interviews from these 32 educators provided ample data on educating ELLs in SPS.

This study made all attempts to reach out to educators who teach ELL students to address their respective backgrounds that may have implications for student success. However, because the schools are in a small urban district, not enough participants could be included in the study sample. For example, participants of this study were predominantly White women with Italian and Irish backgrounds. This shows not only a limitation in the study, but also a limitation in the way in which ELLs are educated. The lack of teachers who culturally, racially, and ethnically match their diverse student populations is a subject that needs to be addressed, both in Somerville and outside districts.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, there is a need to continue on this path of exceptional teaching practices. There is also a need to continue to have high expectations for ELLs and expect the best from them. The study identified the need to continue to develop rigorous curriculum that represents and engages the students. Findings of this study also unveiled the need for educators to continue to demonstrate empathy with the students’ intellectual development. It is imperative that ELL educators understand the changing needs of ELLs, both in and out of the classroom. Table 6 below shows essential ELL practices from current research and evidence from SPS educators.

Table 6
### Essential Best ELL Pedagogical Practices From Research and Evidence From Somerville Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Best ELL Practices From Research</strong></th>
<th><strong>Evidence From Somerville Educators (Quotes)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use students’ prior knowledge and background information/ schematic building</td>
<td>I input more choice into the curriculum, and we've actually been very deliberate about that, particularly in the World History curriculum, so that kids can learn about what they're interested in. For example, in World History some kids will research a dictator of their choosing, so kids from the Dominican Republic might choose one from the Dominican Republic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create scaffolded lessons and instruction</td>
<td>Scaffolding, we just have to hit everything that will help a child. Visual and oral. Based on our balanced literacy model, I would see that a purposeful interaction with English speaking peers meaning the I do, we do, you do model, where we do a lot of modeling and scaffolding, we bring up a lot of schema, we try to connect that schema to the English language learner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for children to engage with literature and tell stories</td>
<td>There's that combination of direct instruction and open space for children to be able to engage with literature, to be able to tell stories, to be able to hear read-alouds, to be singing. All of those things are good for any child no matter what their language is. If they're English Language Learners, they're going to pick up this new language. If they already speak English, they're going to be connecting with language in a new way. They have to have that and some of it has to be very direct.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide direct and explicit instruction and opportunities for experiential learning</td>
<td>Some kids like they need direct instruction, like /M/, “Mm”, myth. Like, &quot;This is the letter M. It makes an /m/ sound and it goes with these words.&quot; They're not going to get that without you telling them. I think that this blend of direct instruction, experiential learning and then open space for them to interact with others in a social way is a combination and that's what I've seen teachers doing here. I try to be really explicit because a lot of my students speak romance languages or a creole of a romance language. I try to make as many connections between</td>
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English and their native language as possible because that doesn't come naturally if you've only spoken one language your whole life. I try to learn as much as I can about the native language. Say in Chinese that there are certain sounds that are more difficult for students to produce in English because they don't exist in the native language of the student. I try to really approach it like a science in that way.

I try to be explicit in terms of what is expected of how you produce a sound and even what might help someone form a certain sound. The way your mouth looks. We look in the mirror. We look at each other. We model in terms of fluency. We work a lot on social and instructional language in the beginning of the year and throughout because we're always getting new students. We'll do a greeting in the morning. We're always just maybe plugging in a new word. "Good morning class," and they say, "Good morning Mrs. So and So."

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<th>Be intentional and differentiate instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>It has to be intentional. Like today, in my planning today, I want to make sure that I individualized for these children and I know I want to stir so and so over to this area and make sure that they get this. During my math time, I'm going to be really differentiating instruction, but also having some open-ended time too. I think teachers need more planning tools and they need to learn more about observation.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Engage students in drawing, writing, storytelling, and story acting</th>
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<td>In kindergarten they use talking, drawing, writing. We introduced this past year something called storytelling, story acting. I think that we've seen that has actually increased children's fluency. It's a movement where kids tell a story and the teacher writes it down and then they see a group of children spontaneously act out that story.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Build vocabulary through storytelling and story acting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gradually over time as they hear their stories and watch other people act out stories that are even more words in them, their vocabulary builds.</td>
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<th>Preview Vocabulary</th>
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<td>I preview vocabulary for every last thing we're doing, because I know that there are some words that even if they have been confronted with that word, they may not know exactly what it means. I preview vocabulary by throwing the words out there and seeing what they know or have about the word. If they know a word,</td>
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they give me examples or a sentence where they would use that word. Also, sometimes, it's just by letting them read a text, and whatever word they don't understand, try to read it in that context. “In that context that you're reading, what do you think it means?” Or, sometimes, just go fishing for themselves. Those are the words. Underline the ... this is your text, all of the words you don't know. Go and find out. Then, come and explain to us what the word is. We use different approaches.

Pre-teach vocabulary with visuals

The more that the teacher can bring alive the curriculum, the better success that she will have, whether that's doing a science project on how worms grow and bring the worms in and let them touch them and feel them, and then start to build vocabulary from there, and connecting to previous knowledge.

I try to use visuals. Sometimes I show them two documentaries on the same topic, one in English and one in Spanish. We do Venn Diagrams to compare the different vocabulary that they saw. We work a lot of (contents) in the sixth grade to help them find and finish all the words or finding the words in context. That's something else we do as well in sixth grade.

We'll teach a new vocabulary word and we'll do the 7 step approach where we act it out, we yell it, we show a picture, we use it in a sentence, we whisper it, we clap it out. Multiple exposures. A lot of exposures to new words and phrases I guess for this fluency piece. We hunks of language using them in a real life way repeatedly.

Send writing prompts home

A student’s mother would get some of my lessons or journal writing a week before and she would actually verbally speak to her son about some of the writing prompts that are coming up or some of the things we're doing in class so that he's already prepared a little bit, so if he has to write a piece on Monday about what was your favorite part of the field trip. He has already spoken to his mom about it.

Make learning visible (include students in the curriculum and document their learning)

We were trying everything with this child from Haiti who came this summer. We ended up taking lots and lots of photographs of his learning and showing them to him and to his mom, so that he could see himself being successful and then we put language with that.
Documenting children's experiences and adding language to that... We made little books for him. We had pictures of "velcro", social stories that we developed with photographs for him to help him learn all the routines because he had no idea what was happening.

You need to make things visible, so native language alphabets should be up in your classroom. I have a photograph from each student's home country. We talk about it. The students had no idea where Norway was or that El Salvador had a volcano. That Haiti had this beautiful beach in Lake Aux Cayes (Les Cayes). We were talking about the specific town of where each student was from.

<p>| Build mutual respect for each other | We build a lot of respect for each other. I guess as a model of myself, if a student laughs because somebody says a name in another language, in Chinese, that sounds funny, I quickly humble them and say, &quot;Honey, you just came from Brazil where everybody's speaking Portuguese. Here there are a lot of languages. It may sound different, but guess what? You sound very different to them.&quot; We try to build this mutual respect. |
| Appreciate and celebrate differences | Appreciating differences and celebrating them and making them visible. For students to say, &quot;Oh, yeah. I can see myself here.&quot; Building that they feel invested and needed in the classroom. I think that's key in the older grades with older students. |
| Provide comprehensible input for students and connect any new learning to the learner’s prior knowledge | With any students I think, not just ELLs but anybody it’s including again their voice, perspective, having them have some autonomy over the experience. That’s why I think later in life, people struggle with high school and college more so than they did in other grade levels and they’re not capable of just getting by because they’re actually asked to have some autonomy at that point. |
| Use visual supports | If we're talking about Egypt, I cannot just stand over there and say, &quot;Okay, so Egypt and the Nile.&quot; Those are words that fly, but if they're watching a documentary that they're ... like all the ways that people from Egypt they depend on the Nile and they hear what they watch. Those are ways ... I think that's very powerful to provide life to what they're teaching. That way, we're |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Incorporate kinesthetic learning and Total Physical Response (TPR) in lessons</th>
<th>Total Physical Response (TPR), small group instruction is also very helpful for all of the students, not only English Language Learners. Small group, I also use and students like it a lot and they benefit a lot from buddy reading. When they read with a buddy or their friend.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for partnered reading, multiple readings, read-aloud, and shared reading</td>
<td>We read a lot of books and we read the same books multiple times. We have buddy reading—reading with a friend, shared reading, independent reading, and guided reading. Reading, reading, reading! Read-aloud is important! I've even had seventh and eighth graders say to me, it helps them when I read to them because when they're trying to read it themselves sometimes they get confused but if they hear the way I read and I model for them, they say, &quot;Oh, it's so easy to understand when you do it.&quot;</td>
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<td>Have opportunities for practice and repetition</td>
<td>The best...use pictures, repetition, practice the language in small groups, one-on-one. There are so many things you could do but I think repetition is key...how do you call that...explicit instruction, you know, so teaching grammar explicitly and have kids practice. There's so much, repeating things a different way.</td>
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<td>Use sentence frames/sentence stems</td>
<td>I give them help to form sentences. I give them sentence stems to help them. So if somebody doesn't know how to say something or they say it wrong, I don't say that's wrong, I just repeat it correctly so they can hear me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use context cues to support learning (contextualizing learning)</td>
<td>I think there are some very specific strategies that we can employ with ELLs that help increase narrative fluency and oral language in addition to setting up social situations so that children can hear language. I am always traced about meal times in schools. How can we use lunch and snack better to actually help kids</td>
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to develop conversation that they can have during those times to develop that oral fluency? How about during play? If kids are playing trucks or they're building in the block area and they're talking, they need to be able to hear and talk and repeat and get context clues so that they can participate in the conversation.

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<tr>
<th>Engage students in partner work, open response, <em>Turn-and-Talk</em>, and Reader’s Response</th>
<th>Then we have an opportunity during that time to turn and talk, to speak, to peer edit, to peer conversate, to work in partners, and then it's a gradual release of responsibility depending on the student. It depends on why we're doing the turn and talk. If we're doing the turn and talk so the students can predict what will happen next in a story and I'm really focusing on are they comprehending the story, I don't care what language they're going to talk in. We're going to use native language partners and we're going to be trying to model that thinking process. I really want to know what they think is going to happen. Those ideas. I don't want to limit those based on beginning English skills.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Engage students in balanced literacy lessons</td>
<td>A balanced literacy lesson would begin with me doing a lesson and then the children would do a “we”, and again that could be something written, it could be something oral, and then depending on the level of the ELL student, the gradual release responsibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use sentence starters and graphic organizers</td>
<td>They might need a sentence starter or graphic organizer. Some other support. Scaffolding modeling type model.</td>
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<td>Promote journal writing, interactive writing, model writing as part of the classroom routine</td>
<td>The ones who are getting close to transitioning are writing a full essay, and then there's this little template you use, and then maybe the ones who are at level two and three are writing a paragraph, and the level ones are doing either sentence completion or a picture collage, answering the same question trying to demonstrate the same concepts, but using the language that's appropriate to theirs. We're actually going to try and pull some of those strategies for students in our non-ELL classes as well, so the idea of being able to demonstrate your knowledge in different ways, depending on your academic readiness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep vocabulary journals, vocabulary notebooks, word</td>
<td>I tried a word wall for a while. One or two people, I think, have a journal (vocabulary journal). I think it's more we do it by a unit. The whole tenth grade team</td>
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starts their units with that Tier 2 vocabulary, here's what you're going to need to know, and they do that before they start the reading, but again not just ELL students, kids don't have an academic vocabulary at all. You'd be shocked at what they don't know.

I have word walls that sometimes, we choose. Just because there are so many words you can fit in your word wall. From time to time, when it's like bag, we go back to the word wall. We go, "What are the words that we really don't need here anymore that we all know by heart, and we don't need to have them?" We remove the words they mastered. We take those out together and create space for new words. They have to prove that they've mastered those words.

If someone says, "Teacher, someone said this word. What does it mean?" It goes up in the wall because then we're going to look at it as a group and see, "Does it need to stay on the wall, or no?" Sometimes, it stays, because a lot of other kids never heard of the word. Until they master it, it's on the wall.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teach specific-tiered vocabulary</th>
<th>We would teach specifically tier 2 and tier 3 words to students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use songs, poetry, tongue twisters</td>
<td>We use songs, poetry, and tongue twisters to support ELLs’ second language acquisition.</td>
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<td>Reward students with positive reinforcement</td>
<td>We reward our students with positive reinforcement.</td>
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<td>Provide extra tutoring before and after school</td>
<td>ELLs need extra tutoring during the day, before and after school. I wish we had more after school programs geared to ELL kids and what their needs might be. Maybe homework help. In fact, another teammate and I are going to offer an hour class, after school, one day a week, to help with that. We're actually piloting right now free after school for children who are in our Head Start collaborative classrooms at the Healey and Capuano. Those children were guaranteed the spots until 5:30.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involve families (Offer home visits, open houses,</td>
<td>Home visits... I think in a daily basis is to provide your expectations in open house. Send a lot of letters home, communications home so parents know what they're</td>
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<td>Task</td>
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<td>parent/teacher conferences, family nights, cultural events, etc.</td>
<td>working on. Invite parents to come to (school) presentations. When we do the science fair, I invite all the parents to come and see. That's like an added incentive to kids. Your parents will come and see this. Do you want them to see something that is well done? You can see them get into it. I think that those are ways that you ensure that families are involved in their kids’ education.</td>
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<td>Explain the school culture and what the U.S. school system is like to families</td>
<td>I explain all of these supports when I do an orientation. I say, &quot;We have these classes and this is the way we support students. We have tutoring. We have these extra supports.&quot; They're like, &quot;Thank you, thank you.&quot; They're usually very grateful. A lot of them haven't had a chance to go to high school, even elementary school. Some of them are illiterate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide resources</td>
<td>I think an infusion of resources. I mean, maintaining stability, and people being able to stay, it just will, have such a profound effect. The anxiety kids live with, because they don't know if they're going to be able, their parents will be able to pay rent, or they'll be in this school next year. Social work resources within the schools, more coaching and tutoring support for kids, being able to home visit every family with an ELL student in the district to just be able to translate for them what school is like in this country, and just help them understand what school is, and that going to your country during vacation for two or three weeks has an impact on the kid and attendance matters. All these things that I don't think I took seriously years ago; they really matter now.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have parent/ family liaisons in the schools</td>
<td>There are lots of liaisons where students’ parents are working in the school. Say the Nepali, I have a friend who's Nepali and she helps all the Nepali families. Somerville has really great services. They're called wraparound services. If a student is coming into school real tired, we're going to find out why is this student tired? Are they sleeping okay? Just being a team with the parents and trying to support them in any way we can.</td>
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<td>Provide summer programs (SPELL Summer Enrichment Program)</td>
<td>Summer Program for English Language Learners (SPELL). The program is targeting kids who are still classified as ELLs just to provide the some of the opportunities as I mentioned before. Other</td>
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opportunities that sometimes kids don't get with their parents, like going on a field trip or having extra reading. We try to support those academic skills that they acquire during the year so as to avoid any losing of their ... Sometimes when they don't do anything, when they come back, they lose months of learning. This is to avoid some of that regression.

The main purpose of this is to keep supporting the ELL strategies that they learn during the year.

### Use realia

In a variety of ways. I think that the more that you can make instruction (come) alive to them, whether it's using realia. It's basically bringing your instruction alive to them, something that they can see using all of the senses. Things that they can smell. Things that they can touch. I believe that this is the most important way to instruct children who speak English as a second language.

To support how they learn? Again, a lot of visual stuff. We have a lot of pictures. For example, some of the older kids we would read nonfiction articles because in their unit of study for English language class that's what they were doing, so we would read non-fiction. If it was a real life event that took place, I've been able to find news broadcasts showing that. It really helps them understand what they read because now they're watching the news report.

Visuals, maps, they love looking at the maps and seeing where their parents came from, acting things out.

### Use technology (Smartboards, computers, iPads, etc.) to support learning

Oh technology, iPads, one-to-one computers, the smart boards, projectors... It's amazing when I go into a class now, and every class has a smart board, and if it's a transition time sometimes the teachers will have on the songs about the states.

We have lots of listening centers. We have little ChromeBooks for the students to be able to listen to with headphones. Yes. I actually even have these really cool little telephones where they can hear themselves and I also have, it's a tool I guess you could call it, where the student hears something. Even if it's a word or a phrase, they press the button, they listen to it, and then like your phone's doing a recording, it records it.
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<th>Activity</th>
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<td>They record themselves saying it and then they play it back and they can correct themselves.</td>
<td>I think songs and memory games are also great for ELLs. We sing songs and play a lot of memory games. I also like to do a lot of games with words. For example, I have this thing that I do on Fridays. It's super fun that we do a bag full of words. Every unit, all of the new words that we learn go into the bag. At the end of the year, we have a lot of words. It grows. They love this game. They go up there. Then, the first round of the game, they have to pick up the word and try to say the word without using it. They can use as many other words as they can. The next one, they have to only use 2 words to bring them to this word. They're going to have to mimic it. I found that they learned a lot of the words just because they wanted to win the game. They want to make sure that they have the right word. I do a lot of different approaches to vocabulary, because I don't think there is a one style, one size-fits-all.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Songs, memory games, and word games</td>
<td>Use hands on learning, whole group, small group, centers/work stations, and one-on-one opportunities to support learning</td>
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<td>It's actually built into the curriculum we used that's called Building Blocks. It has various elements, whole group, small group, hands-on learning, which is open-ended centers.</td>
<td>Use specific language targets</td>
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<td>It (The Building Block Curriculum) has very specific language targets for talking about things like more than and less than or bigger and smaller or attributes that go with shapes and different categories of items as kids sorting and making patterns, etc. Then it has this whole section on weekly questions. You asked children about their learning, like how did you know that or what happens when you and then vocabulary as well. Like this is a square, can you give me 6 squares, how do we do that. That curriculum has actually been really nice for all the children in the district.</td>
<td>Find various ways to support second language acquisition</td>
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<td>Basically, I do a lot of integrated language learning within the domain, so I like to read text, teach vocabulary, read a text, talk about it, write about it. That's kind of my method for operation. Then I'm providing language supports throughout that. I have a Word Ball with the tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary because I want them to use that when they're speaking to their...</td>
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peers and when they're writing. I'm giving them graphic organizers to help plan the writing. I'm giving them partners to help them listen to the academic language and then to especially use that, sharing and then like elevate the academic language within the classroom after everyone shares. "Oh, add to what she said, let's build on that," that kind of thing.

I think you have to have a language objective with every lesson, so providing language support, no matter what, and just decide which domain it's going to be in beforehand, so today, am I going to focus speaking. Are they going to have to speak what they, or talk about what they learned, or is, today is going to be writing. Allowing kids to experience all those, I really think that, having a language objective along with your regular learning objectives, is really important because it takes into account that one thing you really want to work on that day, and it's different everyday.

| Use native language to support learning | I use the native language when it's helpful. I don't have to do that most of the time but I do use it if kids need it. I do a lot of vocabulary. I do a lot of showing them things on the board. I use the smart board a lot because I think even if I explain something in English and even if I explain it in Spanish, if they see a picture then they know. If we read something, I might show them a little film to illustrate what we just read, things like that. |
| Check-in frequently with students | It’s important to check-in with students frequently. Have students talk about how they spent their weekends, what’s going on at home and in their community. Students do that in morning circle. |
| Have weekly team meetings to support learning. | Once a week, my colleague and I have a meeting. It's a second grade planning and we talk about all of our specific children and the lessons that are coming up and we take a look at our data and decide which students need some support or might need some pre-teaching and that includes our ELL students. If we know there's a math coming up where there's a lot of geometry vocabulary, we'll make sure that we'll come up with some strategies as to they might need a lot of pictures, they might need a lot of reinforcement, we might use a video with a lot of visuals to get those |
| Educational rigor and engage students in cognitively demanding tasks | Just because you're not at a higher proficiency doesn't mean that you should not be being cognitively challenged every day. That is an awesome challenge for me as the teacher, to make sure that I'm posing questions that challenge students to really analyze and evaluate and create in their minds.

I was teaching about perimeter last week and it's a new concept. My students may know what perimeter is, but they don't know how to name it yet. They're only 8 or 9 years old. It's a new concept to most. In Haitian creole, in French, in Norwegian, in Chinese, in Spanish, Portuguese, I had the sentence written out. I'll call my friends or ask for help. I have staff members that speak other languages to make sure that it's accurate, or if it's not I'm not afraid of making mistakes. Try to keep the language simple so that I know what it's saying, but in Chinese I don't know what it's saying so I use other resources to make sure that they are really accessing...

They're being challenged cognitively too. Also, it's just the way you set up your lessons I think in terms of it needs to be quality curriculum. There's no busy work. There's no time for busy work. Everything has to be really crosscutting and getting into those critical thinking skills. We try to work on that. I guess my answer is designing units of study to make sure that kids have to take a critical stance lesson by lesson and then trying to support them in terms of language with that. |
| Have appropriate professional development (PD) and encourage teachers to participate in meaningful PD and other trainings | In the past it's been very heavy teacher teaching teachers. Like I said, in some areas that's great and sharing is fantastic.

I was a certified teacher. Then when I came here, I took a 2-year course teaching bilingual/sped students from the department of education. From there, I kept taking professional development courses that would help me understand students. I did my master's in special education so I could understand what's the difference between special education and bilingual, where the language needs stop and where special education disabilities plain. |
This study illuminates these best practices and attitudes and encourages their continuation and development.

- SPS must continue to work diligently to ensure all ELLs have access to a rigorous English language curriculum, as well as access to learning content in all subject areas. This includes ensuring students meet state requirements and that curriculum goes above and beyond academic proficiency. Students need to use what they have learned in an English class in the real world and not just when taking an assessment.

- SPS should ensure that their ELL students are developing SLA in English and closing the achievement and opportunity gaps between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers. Being aware of these gaps is fundamental, supporting the need to constantly strategize about what could be done to create a more level learning environment.

- SPS should continue to provide professional development to support ELL educators in meeting the needs of their students. Educators should receive training in learning about their students’ cultural backgrounds, as well as in understanding the families’ needs and situations.

- SPS should continue to be mindful of students’ needs both in and out of school. This could include providing community based services, as well as additional learning resources and materials when and if these are not accessible to students.

- ELL educators should be strategic in pedagogical approaches and how they deliver instruction to their ELLs. When educators take the time to get to know their students,
they are able to recognize specific pedagogical needs and learning styles around which they can create lessons.

- SPS should ensure that curricula are accessible to every educator. Each subject should have its own lexicon that needs to be integrated into and ESL framework for ELL students. Students need to be able to understand concept vocabulary in order to be successful in all subjects. In short, efforts should be made to have coherent and accessible curricula in all subject areas (instead of having list of topics for social studies and list of units of studies for science) to ensure teaching success for ELL educators and academic achievement for ELL students.

- The district should base their assessment policies and ELL classification decisions on ELL students’ language proficiency levels in academic English. That then requires a much clearer guide for overall assessment and student achievement.

- Efforts should be made in creating more inclusive Advancement Placement (AP) curricula for ELL students.

- SPS should continue to avoid the, “one size fits all” model and adapt curricula, policies, and assessments based on the specific needs of each school.

- The district should find a systemic way to monitor ELLs’ progress even after they have been reclassified from ELL to Former Limited English Proficient (FLEP).

**Conclusion**

This study was designed to address the following:

1. What are the best pedagogical approaches to teaching ELL students?
2. Does race or the cultural background of ELL teachers affect the interaction between the teachers and their ELL students? If so, how?
3. What are the perceptions, attitudes, and experience of ELL educators in Somerville Public Schools?

Based on the answers to these primary research questions, conclusions about the success of educating ELLs in Somerville were drawn. The findings suggest that SPS is doing an excellent job educating and supporting their ELL students. There is a system in place for identifying ELLs and then placing them in the correct programs and classrooms to suit their language levels and needs. All of these systems and programs are monitored to ensure they are as effective as possible. There are ESL specialists in every building and there are models in place for each type of learner. Parents have more choice in opting in and out of programs to suit the needs of their children. Above all, ELLs receive the supports and instruction necessary for them to make significant progress in their language acquisition.

The findings also suggest that SPS ELL educators were sensitive to ELL students’ needs. Whether it was because they brought their own experiences as language learners into the classroom or because they took the time necessary to learn about their students’ backgrounds and cultures, ELL educators were extremely effective in helping their students learn English and acquire content knowledge. Due to the size of the community, and the fact that many of the teachers live in Somerville or are from Somerville, these educators spend time focusing on building community. Likewise, some teachers have children of their own who attend Somerville schools, again strengthening this communal bond and show a belief in the district.

According to numerous participants, the racial and the cultural backgrounds of ELL educators did not appear to have a negative effect on ELLs. In fact, because many of the participants did not match their students in terms of race or ethnicity, they were more aware of
factoring these differences into their teaching practices and altering the curriculum to accommodate racial and cultural disparities accordingly.

Somerville, a historical city, with great ethnic diversity, has evolved to become one of the most culturally rich communities in the nation, and a vibrant community in which to live and/or raise a family. This is reflected in Somerville Public Schools. SPS educators are dedicated to making sure that no ELLs are left behind. They are flexible and take pedagogical chances to educate their ELLs. They are actively committed to learning more about their students’ cultural backgrounds. They are also committed to learning about themselves and their own practices, taking time to examine their pedagogy to see whether or not it is successful. SPS encourages community involvement, and the schools in the city are centers for everyone, not just teachers and students. For example, the Kennedy swimming pool is a place where families take their children for swimming lessons. Somerville High School was where a recent sanctuary rally was held. Additionally, voting is held in the schools bringing all members of the community into the buildings. The care, concern and pride of Somerville residents are reflected in the teaching practices of ELL educators. SPS educators are working to bring everyone together, regardless of their cultural backgrounds as Somervillians. Educators are preparing ELLs not to be just English speakers, but rather integral, positive and productive members of the community.
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Appendix A: Approvals

Northeastern

Notification of IRB Action

Date: March 3, 2016  IRB #: CPS16-02-03
Principal Investigator(s): Kristal Clemons
                        Adeleine Mannion
Department: Doctor of Education
            College of Professional Studies
Address: 20 Belvidere
         Northeastern University
Title of Project: Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language
                 Learners and the Experiences of their Teachers
Participating Sites: Boston Public Schools permission forthcoming
Informed Consent: One (1) unsigned consent for online surveys
                 One (1) signed consent for interviews

As per CFR 45.46.117(c)(2) signed consent is being waived as the research presents no more than
minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally
required.

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Monitoring Interval: 12 months

Approval Expiration Date: MARCH 2, 2017

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. Informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants
   into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new
   information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be
   reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the
   expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other
   university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Kim C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Notification of IRB Action
Modification

Date: June 1, 2016

Principal Investigator(s): Kristal Clemens
Adeline Mannion

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University
Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners
and the Experiences of their Teachers

Modification: Change Study location from Boston Public Schools to Somerville
Public Schools

Participating Sites: Permission forthcoming
Informed Consent:
One (1) signed consent form
One (1) unsigned consent for survey

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

As per CFR 45.46.117(c)(2) signed consent is being waived as the research presents no more than
minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally
required.

Monitoring Interval: 12 months
Approval Expiration Date: MARCH 2, 2017

Investigator’s Responsibilities:

1. Informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into
   the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information
   that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed
   and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the
   expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other
   university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina
Director, Human Subject Research Protection
Appendix B: Introduction Letter to Superintendent of Somerville Public Schools

Dear Mrs. Mary Skipper,

My name is Adeleine Mannion and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am a current Somerville resident and have resided in Somerville for the past 11 years. My three children attend Somerville Public Schools (SPS). I spent the last 18 years as a teacher and teacher leader in Boston Public Schools (BPS) and I am passionate about improving our urban public schools. I am also a former ELL student who attended the bilingual programs in BPS and Cambridge Public School (CPS).

I am writing to ask for your help in a research project I am conducting which is designed to improve the educational practices of English Language Learners (ELLs). As a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, I am currently working on my dissertation entitled “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners and the Experiences of Their Teachers.” The goal of my doctoral thesis is to find the best teaching practices of teachers and specialists currently teaching ELLs, in an effort to better serve these students. The study requires the input of ELL instructors in an urban school district. My research is focused on the experiences of ELL teachers and specialists and finding best practices for educating our ELL students. All of my findings will be shared with both ELL educators and school leaders in SPS, in the hopes of sharing beneficial information learned during the course of this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Adeleine Mannion
Doctoral Candidate, Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies
Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning Leadership
E-mail: mannion.a@husky.neu.edu / Tel. (617) 216-2339
Appendix C: Introduction Letter to School Leaders

Dear ________________:

My name is Adeleine Mannion and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am also an urban public school teacher in Massachusetts. I am writing to you to ask for your help in a research project I am conducting designed to improve the educational practices of English Language Learners (ELLs). As a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, I am currently working on my dissertation entitled “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners and the Experiences of Their Teachers”. The study requires the input of ELL instructors. Please share the attached introductory letter with any teachers or ESL specialists who work with ELL students or pass along any of their contact information.

My research is focused on the experiences of ELL teachers and specialists and finding best practices for educating these learners. All of my findings will be shared with both ELL educators and school leaders, in the hopes of sharing beneficial information learned during the course of this study.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Adeleine Mannion
Doctoral Candidate
Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies
Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning Leadership
E-mail: mannion.a@husky.neu.edu
Tel. (617) 216-2339
Appendix D: Introduction Letter to Participants

Dear ________________:

I am writing to you to ask for your help in a research project I am conducting designed to improve the educational practices of English Language Learners (ELLs). As a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, I am currently working on my dissertation entitled “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners and their Teachers’ Experiences”. The study requires the input of ELL instructors, which is why you are being asked to participate in the study by answering a short web-based online survey and participating in a brief in-depth interview.

Should you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to respond to a brief survey and participate in an individual interview. All participants’ responses to the web-based online survey and interviewing will remain confidential. An average survey will take 15 minutes and interview will take no more than 45 minutes. The questionnaire will gather information to be used in a research thesis that I will publish to satisfy my doctoral thesis requirements at Northeastern University. I am researching this subject in an effort to understand ELL teacher’s experiences and to find ways to improve education for ELLs.

If you would like to volunteer, please visit this link for the web-based online survey. The first page will be a consent form. Participation is voluntary and you will not be contacted again if you choose not to participate in the web-based online survey.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Adeleine Mannion

Doctoral Candidate
Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning Leadership
E-mail: mannion.a@husky.neu.edu / Tel. (617) 216-2339
Appendix E: Informed Consent Document

UNSIGNED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR WEB-BASED ONLINE SURVEYS

45 CFR 46 117(c) In certain instances, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects. In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research. Only the IRB can waive or modify the consent process. Researchers are not authorized to make this decision. Please modify the following information as necessary.

Northeastern University, Department of:
Name of Investigator(s): Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristal Clemons
Student Researcher: Adeleine Mannion

Title of Project: “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Learners and the Experiences of Their Teachers”

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to participate in a web-based online survey. The web-based online survey is part of a research study whose purpose is to examine the teaching practices and professional experiences of English Language Learners (ELL) teachers and specialists across one urban public school system in an effort to find the most effective practices. This web-based online survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

We are asking you to participate in this study because you are an educator of ELLs working in the Somerville Public Schools. You must be at least 18 years old to take this web-based online survey.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about best teaching practices as they relate to ELL students.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to Adeleine Mannion at mannion.a@husky.neu.edu the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Clemons at K.Clemons@neu.edu, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

By clicking on the web-based online survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ELL_Teachers

Thank you for your time.

Adeleine Mannion

Northeastern University

College of Professional Studies

Curriculum, Teaching, Learning and Leadership

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kristal Clemons. Student Researcher: Adeleine Mannion

Title of Project: “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Leaners and the Experiences of Their Teachers”

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study entitled “Towards Understanding the Nature of English Language Leaners and the Experiences of Their Teachers”.

This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep for your own records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You are being recruited to participate in this study because you teach English Language Learners (ELLs) in an urban public school.

**Why is this research study being done?**

The purpose of this research is to publish an advanced analysis of diverse teaching methods most employed by educators of English Language Learners (ELLs) to increase student achievement. The purpose of the research is to also develop a valid and reliable instrument that will provide qualitative data that can be analyzed to support ways for teachers of ELLs to educate ELLs.

**What will I be asked to do?**

You will be asked to read a letter of introduction, outlining the aims of the study, and should you wish to participate and you meet the study requirements, you will fill out a consent form. From there, you will be asked to complete a short web-based online survey and then participate in a one-on-one interview with the student researcher. The individual interview will take about 30 minutes and will be recorded for data transcription. These activities will be conducted at specified agreed upon locations.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort. Any information requested of you is voluntary. You are not compelled to complete the web-based online survey or interviews. In instances where web-based online survey or interviews are used, you will not be asked to provide your name and addresses on the web-based online survey or in interviews.

Your school name or any other school community identifier will not be needed or used in the study findings. In view of these steps, no possible psychological harm, loss of confidentiality, financial, social, or legal damages as well as physical risks are likely to occur.

Data will be obtained from personal interviews and the web-based online survey. Individual identifying data will be used solely for research purposes and will not be disclosed to any schools or school districts.

The confidentiality of any information shared will be carefully protected. Only the student researcher and the thesis team will have access to information collected as part of this study. All information shared and collected will be kept in locked file cabinets. Analysis files will have no identifying information. Computer files will be password protected. All information will be deleted or destroyed upon completion and approval of the study.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. The information learned from this study may help you with ELL instruction. Research conducted with this data could help research and policymakers design culturally sensitive ELL instruction.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your identity as a participant in this study will not be known. You will NOT be asked to provide your name and address on the web-based online survey or in the interviews. No one, including the researcher, will know your answers. Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researcher of this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

Data will be obtained from personal interviews and web-based online survey. No identifying names will be noted on any data. Only an informed consent form will have identified names matched with an identification number on the data.

Any information collected from you will be used solely for research purposes and will not be disclosed to any schools or school districts. All data collected, including tapes, transcripts and hard copy will be kept in locked file cabinets. The PI will supervise data entry and verification of qualitative data. All qualitative data (web-based online survey and interviews) will be taped-recorded when possible and transcribed. The confidentiality of all data will be protected. Only the student researcher and the thesis team will have access to information collected from you as part of this study. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

If any research-related injury (physical, psychological, social, financial or otherwise) occurs, no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an ELL teacher.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Kristal Clemons at k.clemons@neu.edu or the student researcher, Adeleine Mannion at mannion.a@husky.neu.edu

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617-373-4588.

Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation or will it cost me to participate?
Participants of this study will not be paid or given any gifts. It will not cost you anything to participate.

Is there anything else I need to know?

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this study and you must currently be teaching ELL students.

I __________________________ have read the above and agree to participate in the research study.

PRINT NAME

______________________________
Signature

______________________________
Date

___________________________________
Signature of the person who explained the study to the participant.

Date

___________________________________
Printed name of person who explained the study to the participant.
### Appendix F: Web-based Online Survey Questions

1. What is your current teaching position? Please check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Text</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Classroom teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Subject-specific classroom teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ESL teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Special education teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Speech and language pathologist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What subjects do you teach? Please check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Text</th>
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<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. English as a Second Language (ESL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. English Language Arts (English, Reading, Writing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Social Studies, History, Government, Civics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Special Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Art, Music, Drama</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Physical Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Computer Science, Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Vocational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
k. Other

3. What grade(s) do you teach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Pre-school</th>
<th>b. Kindergarten</th>
<th>c. First grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. Second grade</td>
<td>e. Third grade</td>
<td>f. Fourth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Fifth grade</td>
<td>h. Sixth grade</td>
<td>i. Seventh grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Eighth grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Do you work with ELL students in your classroom? Yes or No?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. Do you hold an English as a Second Language (ESL) license in MA? Yes or No?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have the necessary resources to effectively teach ELLs.</th>
<th>a. Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>b. Disagree</th>
<th>c. Neutral</th>
<th>d. Agree</th>
<th>e. Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My school district provides me with</th>
<th>a. Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>b. Disagree</th>
<th>c. Neutral</th>
<th>d. Agree</th>
<th>e. Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

OTHER (Please specify)
the necessary resources to effectively teach ELLs.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.</th>
<th>Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:</th>
<th>OTHER (Please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have conversations about the most effective way to teach ELLs.</td>
<td>a. Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>b. Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9.</th>
<th>Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:</th>
<th>OTHER (Please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have had conversations about my personal or professional experience with ELLs.</td>
<td>a. Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>b. Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10.</th>
<th>Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:</th>
<th>OTHER (Please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have had conversations about curricula for ELLs.</td>
<td>a. Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>b. Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have had conversation with my colleagues about differentiating instruction for ELL students.</th>
<th>a. Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>b. Disagree</th>
<th>c. Neutral</th>
<th>d. Agree</th>
<th>e. Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have had conversations about assessments for ELLs.</th>
<th>a. Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>b. Disagree</th>
<th>c. Neutral</th>
<th>d. Agree</th>
<th>e. Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Please mark the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have had conversations about the challenges and/or success with teaching ELLs.</th>
<th>a. Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>b. Disagree</th>
<th>c. Neutral</th>
<th>d. Agree</th>
<th>e. Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix G: Interview Questions

1) What is your educational background?

2) How long have you been teaching?

3) How long have you been teaching in your urban public school district?

4) What training did you receive to become an ELL teacher?

5) How long have you been teaching ELLs?

6) What is your racial and cultural background?

7) Are you a former ELL student? 7b. If so, how do you feel your background has influenced your teaching? 7c. Do you feel your cultural background has made you more effective in teaching ELL students? How so?

8) What is the racial and cultural background of your students?

9) Do you feel the students’ cultural background and/or countries of origin have a significant impact on the ways in which they learn?

10) Do you believe that grade level or age affect ELL students’ progress in learning English in the elementary schools, middle schools, and/or high school?

11) What is your professional experience working with ELLs?

12) Can you describe your school’s ELL teaching policies?

13) Have you worked in other school districts? If so, please name the districts and describe the districts’ demographics.

14) What are your beliefs and attitudes about ELL students?

15) What do you most enjoy about working with ELL students?

16) What model of instruction are you using to teach your ELL students (native language instruction and/or support with ESL certified teacher, ESL instruction embedded, content
based, sheltered instruction, dual language/bilingual, purposeful interaction with English-speaking peers, etc.)?

17) How do you support second language acquisition among your ELL students?

18) How do you support your ELL students’ development of oral fluency in English?

19) How do you support your ELL students’ cognitive academic language proficiency?

20) How do you feel your school district’s administration supports or does not support teaching and learning for their ELL students?

21) What are the curriculum and assessment tools you are currently using to educate and assess your ELL students?

22) Are curriculum and assessment tools specifically designed for instructing ELL students easily accessible to you and provided by the district? Please explain your answer.

23) Is the curriculum you are currently using to educate ELL students provided to you by your school district? If so, is the curriculum aligned with the Common Core Standards? Please explain your answer.

24) Is the curriculum you are currently using to educate ELL students provided to you by the state? If so, is the curriculum aligned with the Common Core Standards? Please explain your answer.

25) Is the curriculum you are currently using to educate your ELL students developed by your school or yourself? If so, is it aligned with the Common Core Standards? If so, how? Please explain your answer.

26) How closely is the curriculum you are using to educate your ELL students aligned with Common Core learning standards?
27) How does the availability of a curriculum and/or resources in ELL programs affect ELL students’ performance?

28) What do you consider fair and appropriate assessment procedures for ELL students?

29) What personal and professional experiences do you draw upon when dealing with ELLs?

30) In what ways does your experience and relationship with the students’ parents and colleagues support or not support teaching and learning for your ELL students?

31) What are the challenges with working with ELL students?

32) What are the specific needs of ELLs and how should their needs be addressed?

33) What do you believe are the best pedagogical approaches/best practices to teaching ELL elementary students?

34) Do you believe that country of origin or region of origin affect ELL students’ progress in learning English as a second or additional language? Why or why not?

35) How do your experiences and relationships with the school administration, families, and colleagues support or do not support teaching and learning for your ELL students?

36) Is there anything else you would like to share regarding English Language Learners or your work with English Language Learners?