TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF MOBILITY AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
IN FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN: A CASE STUDY

A thesis presented
by
Margaret S. Ryan
to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
in the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
November, 2015
Abstract

The population of English Language Learners (ELL) in schools is quickly rising and student mobility among them is an issue for educators. Kindergarten provides students with a strong foundation essential for success in later grades. The purpose of this case study is to determine teacher perceptions of student progress among mobile English Language Learners in two cohorts of kindergarten students in an urban, public school district in Massachusetts in 2011-12 and 2012-13.

The baseline data used in this case study is provided by the World-Class Instructional and Design-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) and measures it against student performance on the benchmark assessment: the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the state assessment for ELLs; the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA), the Massachusetts English Language Assessment –Oral (MELA-O) and the new assessment introduced in 2013-Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS). Attendance and enrollment data was also used to provide information on mobility among English Language Learners.

The participants (teachers) in the study were given student data before being interviewed about their perceptions of progress of mobile ELLs in their kindergarten classes. The information gathered from the interviews was coded and presented to the interviewees in a focus group for further clarification. The results of this study will expand the field of research on the efficacy of kindergarten programs for ELLs, particularly mobile ELLs and provide information to guide educational decisions on how to support mobile ELLs at the school, district, and state levels.

Keywords: English Language Learners; full day kindergarten; student achievement; language acquisition; student mobility; transience and chronic absenteeism.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter I</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical and Intellectual Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter II</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter III</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site and Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of Human Subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter IV</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site and Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student data, Semi-structured Interviews, Focus group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, and Implication 133

References 149

Appendices 161

Appendix A: Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: Superintendent
Appendix B: Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: School Principal
Appendix C: Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: Teacher
Appendix D: Home Language Survey
Appendix E: Sample Codes for Interviews
Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview Outline
Appendix G: Focus Group Outline
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Enrollment Data for Kindergarten Students 57
Table 2 Enrollment Data for Kindergarten English Language Learners 57
Table 3 Kindergarten Students “At Risk” on DIBELS Letter-naming Fluency 58
Table 4 MADESE Progress in English proficiency: student took spring assessment in the same school year 59
Table 5 Student performance in kindergarten as measured by DIBELS, MEPA and MELA-O 60
Table 6 Participant Interview Questions 64
Table 7 Summary of Data Collection and Analysis 66
Table 8 Sample of Codes Emerging from the Interviews 67
Table 9 An Overview of the Coding Process in Inductive Analysis 69
Table 10 Synthesis of Case Study 70
Table 11 Teacher/Participant Profile Information 83
Table 12 School A: Kindergarten Performance for ELLs on MEPA and ACCESS 88
Table 13 School B: Kindergarten Performance for ELLs on MEPA and ACCESS 89
Table 14 EWIS: Risk Level for 1st grade ELLs SY 2013-14 90
Table 15 Student Churn Rate for all students at School A and District 91
Table 16 Student Churn Rate for all students at School B and District 92
Table 17 Kindergarten Attendance Data for School A and District 93
Table 18 Kindergarten Attendance Data for School B and District 94
Table 19 Interview Questions and Their Relationship to the Research Questions 96
and the Theoretical Framework.

Table 20 Phases Two and Three of Data Collection Timeline

Table 21 Relationship among First Cycle Start List Codes, Research Questions and the Theoretical Framework’s Constructs

Table 22 Questions addressing attendance and mobility among kindergarten ELLs

Table 23 Questions Addressing Kindergarten Readiness among ELLs

Table 24 Questions Addressing Classroom Supports for Kindergarten ELLs

Table 25 Coding/Findings of Semi-structured Interviews by Theme

Table 26 Findings of Focus Group by Theme

Table 27 Triangulation of Data

Table 28 Relationship between Research Questions, Theoretical Framework and Findings

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 Maintaining A Chain of Evidence

Figure 2 Linear Logic Model

Figure 3 Letter-naming fluency for “At Risk” kindergarten students in School A

Figure 4 Letter-naming fluency for “At Risk” kindergarten students in School B

Figure 5 Process of analysis

Figure 6 Emerging themes that influence ELL performance
Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

John Locke, the Enlightenment thinker wrote in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* that “we are born with faculties and power, capable of almost anything,” and “as it is in the body, so it is in the mind, practice makes it what it is...” (1692, Section IV, p.12). This philosophy on the importance of time on learning from over three hundred years ago is still relevant today as there is much current debate in the United States as to when young children should begin their formal education and how much schooling they should receive at a young age in order to succeed. Changes in the family structure and women entering the workforce have increased the need for preschool programs and full day kindergarten. By the time many children from middle class families start kindergarten, they have been in some type of preschool or daycare program. However, families of students of low socio-economic status need public school full day kindergarten as the cost of sending their children to after school programs is often prohibitive even when subsidized by government funds. Many poor families trying to work cannot afford the cost of after school programs. Advocates for full day kindergarten programs for disadvantaged students such as the coalition “Early Education for All” in Massachusetts, argue that disadvantaged students need extra time in learning so that they can catch up to more advantaged students who start school more ready to learn, with greater vocabulary and greater family supports(www.strategiesforchildren.org). These advocates point to the necessity of full day kindergarten as a way to level the playing field for disadvantaged students as they begin their education. Students who fall into the category of disadvantaged are those children from low-income families and are often English Language Learners (ELL). A 2006 study of Latino students in
Minnesota advocates for increased support for early childhood education because “the data clearly demonstrates that for most districts, if the gap is significant in grade 3, it is unlikely to narrow in later grades” (Geller, J. M., & Werner, M., p.29). Some supporters of full day kindergarten maintain that African-American and Latino males, in particular, need early intervention as they are the most likely to drop out of high school (Cuban, 1992, p.191; Fergus, E. & Noguera, P, 2010, pp.97-139).

In response to societal needs, many public school districts have implemented full day kindergarten programs within the past two decades. The coalition “Early Education for All” in Massachusetts maintains that the model of half-day kindergarten was not as effective as the full day. By the time students entered the school, had taken off their coats, eaten a snack, and settled down, there was little instructional time. These advocates of full day programs point to the extra time that allows teachers to implement an age-appropriate curriculum that prepares students for 1st grade and beyond. According to Marzano, a guaranteed and viable curriculum has the most impact on student achievement (2003, p.22). This factor, which he ranks first, is a combination of time and opportunity to learn. Full day kindergarten programs provide teachers with the time on learning to deliver a “viable curriculum.” However, not all students have access to the curriculum as family mobility disrupts their school attendance.

Student mobility is a problem in school districts throughout the country. "Student mobility" refers to the phenomenon of students changing schools for reasons other than grade promotion. As a consequence of the economic downturn, this problem has been accentuated as families, particularly low-income families, move in search of work, and are affected by housing instability and family instability. Another reason for student mobility is that some immigrant families return to their country of origin during the school year for extended vacations. They then re-
turn in the spring to work. In the meantime, their children have lost valuable time in school. This practice causes havoc on education systems. The Office of Strategic Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) published an education research brief in 2010 *Student Mobility in Massachusetts* on the challenges of educating mobile students in Massachusetts and how it impedes efforts at school reform. An examination of the demographics found that:

- More than half of mobile students in Massachusetts are low income, a quarter are students with special needs, and 16 percent are limited English proficient (LEP).

- Mobility rates are highest in the early elementary and high school grades.

- Mobility is concentrated in the lowest performing districts and schools in the state.

- Mobile students are not as successful as non-mobile students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), even after controlling for low income status. *(Student Mobility in Massachusetts, 2010, p.1)*

The churn rate, which measures the extent to which students come and go at the district and school level, shows that almost 16% were Limited English Proficient (LEP)(MADESE, 2010). An examination by grade shows that mobility is highest for students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and 9th grade. In these grades, approximately 10% of the population was mobile and that these students are largely concentrated in the lowest-performing districts. These districts have the lowest-performing schools in the state and are identified as such as Level 4 districts under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L). According to this law, a school is categorized as level 4:
Schools that score in the lowest 20 percent statewide among schools serving common grade levels on a single measure developed by the department that takes into account student performance data and, beginning on July 1, 2011, improvement in student academic performance, shall be deemed eligible for designation as underperforming or chronically underperforming. Not more than 4 per cent of the total number of public schools may be designated as underperforming or chronically underperforming at any given time.

(M.G.L. Ch. 69 (1)(J)(a))

The study identifies the nine lowest-performing districts as having an average churn rate of 22%. These lowest-performing districts are also known as the “Gateway Cities.” These “former industrial mill cities are deemed “gateways” to the next era of the state’s economic success and key portals for their diverse, often foreign-born, residents’ ongoing pursuit of the American Dream” (Rennie Center, 2010, p.1). In a 2007 study: Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Lessons Learned and an Agenda for Renewal, the authors point to the need to build a middle class workforce and that “the Commonwealth should step up education and training in the Gateway Cities” by redoubling efforts at urban school reform (p.8).

These findings by MADESE are also supported by other research. For example, Kerbow asserts that “Mobility appears to constrain the opportunity to focus on instructional practices for the long-term improvement of a group of students for which the school is collectively responsible” (1996, p.161). In a recent study on the effects of student mobility, the researchers concluded that “school level mobility had negative implications for student achievement” (Thompson et al., 2011, p.19).
The mobility of students poses a tremendous challenge for educators at the school and district level. High mobility in the early elementary grades affects the acquisition of language and numeracy skills, as well as the social-emotional well-being of students. For ELL students struggling to learn the language, adapt to school and make friends, mobility can be extremely difficult. For districts and schools struggling to improve, the impact of mobility on instruction, classroom climate, and teacher attitudes is huge. In an article on mobility in the Philadelphia public schools, Offenberg maintains that Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) cannot be inferred from student achievement in highly mobile communities. “The achievement of students who happen to be attending a school cannot always be used to assess the quality of the educational experience provided to them” (Offenberg, 2004, p.351).

The major finding of a 1996 study of 2,524 kindergarten and first grade students was that there is a relationship between poor school functioning and high mobility when examined over the next three of schooling. By school functioning, the researcher means behavior and attendance. Although students of high mobility scored poorly on these measures, there was no relationship between academic grades and mobility. However, the researchers point out that those teachers of younger grades are often reluctant to assign students below average academic grades (Nelson, Simoni & Adelman, 1996). It should also be noted that this study was conducted before NCLB. A consequence of NCLB was greater focus on school performance in the early grades as measured by assessment. There is little research on the effects of mobility on literacy among ELLs in kindergarten. This study seeks to examine how effective full day kindergarten is in meeting the academic needs of these emerging learners from the perspective of teachers.
The Significance of the Problem

The recent US Census shows that by 2009, Massachusetts ranks 9th out of the fifty states for the size of its foreign-born, limited English proficient (LEP) population. The foreign-born, LEP population age five and older in Massachusetts, has increased by 57% between 2000 and 2012. There are currently 70,000 LEP students enrolled in public schools. Over 70 languages are spoken by LEPs in Massachusetts. However, the majority of these LEPs attending public schools in Massachusetts are Spanish-speaking. School districts across the state are working to adapt to these population changes. Many of the districts that have the largest LEP populations are the “Gateway Cities.” This trend indicates that by 2021 20% of all Massachusetts primary and secondary students will be ELLs (MADESE, State of the State: A Report on English Language Learners in Massachusetts, 2012). It should be noted that the terms ELL and LEP are interchangeable: the former i.e. ELL being used nationally while MA DESE uses the latter i.e. LEP.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is working to boost academic achievement in these cities by strengthening efforts to close the achievement gap for students. It has made a commitment to increasing third grade reading proficiency for all children. State assessment data for the past decade shows that aggregate proficiency for students has dramatically increased but these gains are most associated with students from predominantly white, suburban communities. Data disaggregated for students with disabilities, for low-income students, for race/ethnicity, and for English language learners are evidence of the achievement gap that exists. Data shows that less than one quarter of all ELLs are proficient in ELA in grades 3 to 8 and that there has been little progress over a five year period between 2007 and 2011. Although 10th grade MCAS data in 2011 was much better
than in previous years, the statistics are still troubling, especially for students wishing to pursue college or entering a challenging job market (Massachusetts State Report Card, 2007-2011).

At the Education Summit at the University of Massachusetts Boston campus in November 2011, Governor Deval Patrick spoke of his commitment to education and especially to closing the achievement gap among all groups of learners. Recognizing the urgency to increase universal literacy for 3rd grade students, he proposed two initiatives to help overcome the barriers to success: a pilot program for Kindergarten Literacy Readiness and Summer English Learning Camps. For FY14, the Patrick Administration proposed that 575K be set aside to establish pilot programs for kindergarten readiness. For FY13, MADESE made funds available to the Gateway Cities to establish spring after school and summer programs for middle school and high school ELL students. This grant funded program requires school districts to offer instruction and enrichment opportunities within Learning Academies to help ELLs acquire the language skills needed for school success.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) has stated its commitment to providing an education system where all students succeed (MADESE Board of Education Mission Statement). The state supports full day kindergarten programs as a way to boost literacy among young learners and to promote social and emotional wellness. The number of ELL students in kindergarten programs is increasing (State Report Card 2007-2011). However, student mobility among ELLs in kindergarten prohibits them from full access to the curriculum, and is disruptive to their education, to other students, the school and the district. Overall, student mobility is a problem that is detrimental to the economic and social well-being of immigrant families and to society as a whole.
Practical and Intellectual Goals

The practical purpose of this case study is to examine the effects of student mobility on English Language Learners in full day kindergarten and seeks to make recommendations on how best to make adjustments to educational practices and social policies to help these mobile students make progress and to provide stability for these transient families. As districts and schools work to close the achievement gap among students, this study will provide performance data for ELL students in full day kindergarten and disaggregate the data for mobile ELLs in kindergarten. The results of this study will provide guidance to state policy makers, city and school officials on how to create programs to diminish the adverse impact of student mobility on ELLs not only in kindergarten but in later grades.

The intellectual purpose of this study is to strengthen the researcher’s knowledge of early childhood education, the curriculum used at this age and how to better support learning, particularly for mobile students. Furthermore, it will increase the researcher’s knowledge of how children learn and the significance of time on learning at a young age, particularly for ELLs.

Research Questions

1. What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?

2. Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?
Organization of the Paper

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background for this study. The remainder of this case study provides the theoretical framework, review of the literature and design of the research. The researcher presents the theories that frame the problem of practice and research design. The literature provides information on previous research on the efficacy of full day kindergarten and the acquisition of second language. It connects the existing body of research to the problem of practice and the research design. Following the review of the existing literature, the research design is presented to include the research questions, the methodology and the trustworthiness of this study. The researcher explains how the study participants will be protected. Finally, the paper concludes with the references and appendices.

Theoretical Framework

This research study was conducted within the context of the importance of kindergarten in child development and through the lens of the theoretical framework of second language acquisition. Child development and learning theory traces the benefits of kindergarten throughout history to its beginnings in the 18th century, as developed by Johann Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel. The second language acquisition theory explains how children learn language and its relevance to second language acquisition. These language theorists, Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Stephen Krashen (1941-) both share similar theories on how language acquisition in young learners occurs. Vygotsky maintains that during the learning process a child follows the example of adults while Krashen believes that people acquire a second language through relationships with a native speaker.
History and philosophy of kindergarten. The notion of kindergarten as it is understood today was developed in 19th century Europe by Friedrich Froebel. However, the origins of child-centered learning can be traced to the Enlightenment ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, who both greatly influenced the field of education. Rousseau believed that the aim of education is individualistic, never social and that learning occurs from self-motivation and interest. In his work “Emile”, Rousseau asserts that all learning must occur because of the individual’s curiosity. John Locke believed that “when he can talk, ‘tis time he should begin to learn to read” (Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 1692, Section 148, p. 258). Locke stressed the importance of education for all children from a young age. These ideas on education influenced Johann Pestalozzi, who in the late 18th and early 19th centuries created child-centered schools and influenced the field of pedagogy throughout western civilization. Pestalozzi promoted learning for children that was child-centered, experiential, and communal with nature. He believed that knowledge should be scaffolded as explained in his “elementary method.” This method should “try to make, in every act, graduated steps of knowledge, in which each new idea is only a small, scarcely perceptible addition to that which is already known” (p.105). In his landmark book How Gertrude Teaches her Children, published in 1801, Pestalozzi stressed the importance of the role of the mother in early education and stated that it is necessary “even at the infant’s cradle [we] must begin to take the training of our race out of the hands of blind, supportive nature, and put it in the hands of that better power” (p.159).

The philosophy and work of Pestalozzi would greatly influence the German educator Friedrich Froebel, who is credited with developing the concept of kindergarten in 19th century Germany. He coined the term “kindergarten”, which means children’s garden in English and reflects his philosophy that this was a unique period in child development where children should be al-
lowed to explore. His philosophy was a radical departure from the educational philosophies of the previous century, which did not view childhood as a distinct stage in the development of human beings that required nurturing but that viewed children as young adults who should be seen and not heard. Although Protestant Europeans of that time valued the importance of education for children, they believed that the purpose of education was essentially to create literate people who could read the Bible and do basic calculations. Protestant Europeans also believed that idleness and play led to disorder and bad behaviors. Froebel was an idealist and his beliefs echo those of the Enlightenment era. He believed that every child is born with a spiritual essence that seeks to be realized through self-activity. The kindergarten is that place where this self-actualization can begin. Froebel’s pedagogical philosophy was revolutionary for its time and was in many ways socialistic. He believed that the poorest children should be exposed to an enriching, exploratory curriculum and that this experience should begin at the age of three. Froebel was an advocate for the poor and sought to provide learning to the poorest and neediest members of society. Were he alive today, he would most likely be an urban educator working tirelessly to increase the academic achievement of minorities. Froebel promoted certain principles for the education of children. Indeed these principles are still relevant to modern society. In summary, they are:

- that the primary purpose of school is to educate children to make them good citizens i.e. to make them cooperative participants in society.

- that all educational activity has its foundation in the instinctive, impulsive attitudes and activities of the child and that consequently, spontaneous play, games, and activities of young children are the foundations of educational practice.
that the proclivities of young children are organized and should be used in such a way to promote the ideal that all children become productive members of society. (Dewey, 1915, pp.111-127).

The “gifts” of Froebel to kindergarten education are still widely held today. His “gifts” are playthings of different shapes, materials for drawing, paper cutting and paper folding, and clay modeling, which form the basis of kindergarten play, which is the prelude to all learning. Froebel believed that “perception is the beginning and the preliminary condition for thinking. One’s own perceptions awaken one’s own conceptions, and these awaken one’s own thinking in later stages of development. Let us have no precocity but natural, that is consecutive development” (Froebel’s Gifts, p.1). He believed that children could express themselves and learn the unity of all matter through play with blocks of different shapes and colored balls.

In the United States, the first kindergarten was started for German-speaking children in Wisconsin in 1856 by Margarethe Meyer Schurz, who was a German immigrant. She had attended a series of lectures by Friedrich Froebel in her native Germany and later helped her sister establish the first kindergarten in London. When she moved with her husband to the United States, she applied the pedagogy of Froebel to her new kindergarten school. Interest in her work grew and in 1859, she was visited by Elizabeth Peabody from Massachusetts, who consequently opened the first English language kindergarten in the United States the following year. She and her sister, Mary, who was the widow of Horace Mann, were very interested in the possibilities of a free kindergarten system for disadvantaged children. She traveled to Europe twice to better understand the teachings of Froebel, and consequently traveled throughout the United States promoting the kindergarten model. It is largely due to her efforts that support for kindergarten grew throughout the country. St. Louis was the first public school district to implement kinder-
garten in 1873 under Susan Blow. The kindergarten movement gained momentum throughout the country. By 1900, about 6% of the kindergarten aged population attended kindergarten (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.66).

Chicago was an early center of innovations that linked the kindergarten model to public schools, charity and settlement work, and John Dewey’s progressive education reforms at the University of Chicago. His work would have a major impact on early childhood education in the twentieth century. He carried forward the philosophy of Froebel, advocating for the education of the whole child and the use of play in kindergarten. He maintained that “the primary root of all educative activity is in the instinctive, impulsive attitudes and activities of the child” (Dewey, p.72). The school of experiential learning arose from his philosophy. According to Dewey, there are four essential interests present in young children: the interest in conversation, or communication; in inquiry, or finding out things; in making things, or construction; and in artistic expression. They are the natural resources that must be developed in order to educate the whole child. Dewey states that:

the peculiar problem of the early grades is, of course, to get a hold of the child’s natural impulses and instincts, and to utilize them so that the child is carried on to a higher plane of perception and judgment, and equipped with more efficient habits so that he has an enlarged and deepened consciousness, and increased control of powers of action. (p.127)

He further opines that when this does not occur, play becomes mere amusement and does not result in educative growth. The kindergarten model in the twentieth century expanded with this philosophy at its core.
Another major influence on early childhood education that emerged around the same time as the Progressive Movement in the United States was the philosophy and practice of Maria Montessori, an educator in Italy, who believed that the goal of education should not be to fill a child’s head with factual knowledge but to encourage a natural love of learning that will last throughout a person’s life. Life-long learners love education because of the natural curiosity that was cultivated in their early childhood. The “Montessori Method” (www.mariamontessori.org) consists of a carefully developed set of materials designed to cultivate a child’s natural curiosity and ability at each stage of development. This method enables children to acquire the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic in a natural way without the boredom or drudgery of traditional learning methods. Kindergartens that adhere to this philosophy are child-centered in that children are guided unobtrusively by the teacher, children explore their own interests, children set their own learning pace, children correct their own work through self-reflection, and children can move freely within the classroom. This method not only encourages social development but cognitive development as well.

Each of these philosophers and education practitioners contributed greatly to the field of early childhood education. They espouse common educational philosophies and practices that are used today which are: that early childhood education is essential to the development of the child; that the purpose of early childhood education is to stimulate and mold the cognitive and social abilities of children; that early learning should be self-centered and experiential; and that all early learning should pave the way for creating life-long learners.

In the 1960s, education was recognized as an important vehicle in reaching racial equality in the United States. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. the Board of Education and the subsequent civil rights movement highlighted the inequality of education in America’s public
schools. The government responded with the War on Poverty and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965). Programs such as Project Head Start invested in improving early childhood education. Increased research into early childhood education reinforced the benefits of such investments.

By the 1980s, concern over declining literacy among American students combined with a rise in single parent households and an increase in mothers working outside the home led to an increase in full day kindergarten programs. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, kindergarten education became more focused on increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of young children. Many urban districts implemented full day programs in order to close the achievement gap for struggling students and to better prepare all students for academic and social success in the later grades. Full day kindergarten is a way to help disadvantaged students. It echoes the philosophy and practices of Pestalozzi and Froebel, although some would argue the focus of content-driven learning in today’s kindergartens is contrary to its original intent.

**Lev Vygotsky.** Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist in the early 20th century whose theories of child development have greatly influenced the field of education, in particular, cognitive development. Much of his work was devoted to exploring how children acquire language. He claimed that all cognitive development is interpsychological; that is, it arises as a result of the interaction that occurs among individuals engaged in concrete social interaction (Wertsch, 1985). The central component of his theory on cognitive learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs through the mechanism of social interaction. His developmental theory stresses the inherent social nature of all human activity. The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration
with more capable peers” (L.S. Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). In other words, the ZPD is regarded as the range of potential that each person has for learning and that learning is culturally shaped by the social environment in which it occurs. Therefore, learning is a process of maturation i.e. reaching one’s potential level of learning. It is through continual guidance within the ZPD that learners are able to understand more complex ideas and concepts. His framework teaches us the following:

After a student receives instructional support or tutelage from someone who happens to be more capable in that particular context, the learner internalizes the new idea and will be more able to perform independently in the next similar problem-solving situation.

(Wink, Putney, 2002, p.86)

This theory forms the basis of educational practices i.e. students learn in classrooms from their teachers and from their peers. According to Vygotsky, learning is progressive and language is a tool to develop thought and at the same time, language is acquired through cognitive development. The implications of Vygotsky’s socio-cultural and developmental theory on teaching and learning are immense. His work has influenced the development of language learner programs and teacher quality programs throughout the world.

In order for the ZPD to be successful, scaffolding must occur. Scaffolding is the instructional strategy through which children learn i.e. tasks are provided by the teacher to structure and guide learning. Scaffolding provides a framework within which students can learn. For example, shared language is the medium through which children can learn to speak a second language. Shared language takes place between a native speaker, such as a teacher or peers, and can help the language learner by asking questions, modeling language, or providing direct instruction.
Shared language provides the scaffold upon which a learner can progress. Once mastery occurs, the teacher can withdraw his support for a given task. Vygotsky was a “constructivist” and believed that students who are actively engaged, collaborate with peers, and are guided by an experienced teacher will learn. His “constructivist” philosophy supports the need for extended time on learning for English language learners. For kindergarten ELLs, full day programs provide this milieu. Full day programs provide them with opportunities to interact with native speakers, scaffolds to help them acquire the language and time on learning.

Stephen Krashen. Stephen Krashen is professor emeritus at the University of Southern California and an expert in the field of linguistics, particularly language acquisition and development. Much of his recent work has focused on the study of non-English and bilingual language acquisition. Krashen has developed five key hypotheses on second language acquisition, four of which are relevant for young second language learners:

1. The Natural Order hypothesis states that “the acquisition of grammatical structures proceeds in a predictable order” (Krashen, 1982, p.12). Those acquiring a second language learn grammatical structures early, and others later.

2. The Monitor hypotheses claims that the language that one acquires subconsciously is responsible for fluency whereas, the language that one consciously learns acts as a monitor or editor and focuses on form and the rules of grammar such as taking a grammar test or writing an essay in a second language (Krashen, 1982, p.15).

3. The Input hypothesis “attempts to answer what is perhaps the most important question in our field, and gives an answer that has a potential impact on all areas of language teaching” (Krashen, 1985, p.20). That important question central to all research on language
acquisition is how does one acquire language? In his view, “we acquire … only when we understand language that contains structure that is a little beyond where we are now” (Krashen, 1982, p.21). This Input hypothesis relates to the process of language acquisition, not “learning.” Acquisition occurs when a person is exposed to language beyond his/her “current level of competence” (Krashen, 1982, p.21). He refers to this process of acquisition as the $i + 1$. The “$i$” refers to the current level of competence and the “$+1$” as structure a little beyond the current level.

4. The Affective Filter hypothesis states that self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety all affect language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, p.31). Each of these factors affects the readiness of people to acquire language.

According to Krashen, there are two independent processes in second language performance: one is the ‘acquired system’ and the other is the ‘learned system’ (Krashen, 1981, p.16). The acquisition of a second language is similar to the subconscious process children go through when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful communication in the targeted language. He refers to it as the “normal, fluent speech utterances” (Krashen, 1982, p.16). The ‘Acquisition’ hypothesis is the most widely known of all of his theories and guides much of the current research in second language acquisition. Learning is the formal process of language instruction where a student is instructed in the rules of the language i.e. grammar. He believes that the ‘learned system’ is not as important as the ‘acquired system’.

Krashen supports his Input hypothesis with evidence such as the “caretaker speech” effect (1982, p.61) on first language acquisition by young children. Caretakers i.e. parents modify speech in order to aid acquisition. This speech tends to become more complex as the
child progresses. He also points out that caretaker speech tends to deal with the here and now. In other words, it reflects the common interests of the caretaker and the child and provides context for learning in that it helps the child understand the $i + 1$, i.e. that which is a little beyond the child’s current level of competence.

Second language learners also get the modified input similar to that of young first language learners. The second example of evidence that Krashen uses to support his Input Hypotheses is simple codes. He states that there are three sorts of simple codes (modified input): foreign talk, teacher-talk (foreign talk in the classroom) and interlanguage talk (the speech between second language acquirers). The Input hypothesis predicts that “these simplified codes will be very useful for the second language acquirer, just as caretaker speech is posited to be useful for the child” (Krashen, 1982, p.25).

The last body of evidence to support Krashen’s theory is the silent period and the L1 (child’s first language) influence. The silent period is a phenomenon most noticeable in child second language acquisition. These second language acquirers often say very little at first. Krashen maintains that they are acquiring competence by listening and learning to comprehend. He provides research (Newmark, 1966) that claims that when a second language acquirer is expected to speak or participate before they are ready, that child will fall back on first language rules (L1). Therefore, progress will not occur.

Krashen’s Input Hypothesis is similar to Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development in that they both provide explanations of how a student acquires a second language. The Input Hypothesis $i + l$ where $i$ is the student’s actual competency, and $i + l$ is the student’s potential. In other words, the student improves and progresses along the natural or-
der when he/she receives second language ‘input’ that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. The student reaches his/her potential through interaction in a non-threatening environment where the student is allowed to take risks.

Summary

Both Vygotsky and Krashen stress that language acquisition is a process that requires guidance from an experienced teacher, scaffolding of tasks as the learner gains fluency, and communication with fluent speakers such as the teacher or native-speaking peers. These theorists provide the theoretical framework through for this research. Their theories on learning and language acquisition, in particular second language acquisition, will provide the lens through which this study is conducted. Language is acquired through practice. In addition, the importance of childhood as an important developmental stage during which a child learns in a kindergarten setting will also guide this research.

The study was guided by the language acquisition theory that children acquire a second language through communication with experienced native-speaking teachers and peers and by scaffolding tasks that provide children with a strong framework for learning. Through this lens the study will examine the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Full Day Kindergarten

The number of students attending full day kindergarten has steadily increased over the past four decades. In 1965, only 12.5% of kindergarten children nationwide attended full day programs. By 1980, the number had increased to 21.9%. By 1998 over half of all kindergarten children were enrolled in full day programs (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). In 2007, about 90% of eligible children in Massachusetts attended public kindergarten. Two-thirds of all Massachusetts public school kindergarten students were enrolled in full day programs (www.strategiesforchildren.org). MADESE supports the concept of full day kindergarten for all children and is supporting its expansion through grants to school districts.

The increased kindergarten enrollment across the nation reflects both the large percentage of working mothers. Two-thirds of mothers with children under 6 now work (Glynn, Farrell & Wu, 2013). Increased enrollment is also the outcome of state support for full day kindergarten in order to increase student literacy rates by third grade. In 2010-11, there were 67,496 Massachusetts students enrolled in kindergarten. The limited English population (LEP) statewide is 7.4%. Most of these children attend school in urban districts and 16% of LEP students are mobile. This study examined how teachers perceive the effects of student mobility on ELLs in kindergarten classrooms. Although student mobility is an issue for many young learners, this researcher seeks to focus on this subgroup who are disadvantaged by lack of English language fluency that prevents them making progress in later grades.
The Need for Full Day Kindergarten

The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 has placed pressure on districts to increase student performance at the elementary level in order to prepare them for state assessments beginning in the third grade. One of the initiatives to increase literacy was to expand early childhood learning opportunities, particularly for children of low socio-economic status. In many states, urban districts have implemented full day kindergarten programs through Title 1 and state funds. Research shows that there are substantial differences in children’s readiness scores as they begin kindergarten. These differences in scores are influenced by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Lee, 2002). There are many efforts to try to reduce these inequalities for children as they begin their educational journeys. One of the major efforts is to increase access for low-income students to attend full day kindergarten programs. Children living in poverty have heard 32 million fewer words by age four than children living in professional families. One in five children under the age of five lives in poverty in America (National Center for Family Literacy, 2006). Poverty is more prevalent in the United States than in other industrialized nations. Thirteen million children lack minimal resources essential to support normal growth and development (Ramey & Ramey, 1990). Also, one in five children in America now lives in homes where English is not the primary language (Aud et al, 2010). Poverty is the greatest inhibitor of student success.

The results of a 2004 study in Indiana supports these statistics. The report shows that one in five children there also lives in poverty (Brooks, 2008). One of the ways the state government of Indiana attempted to break this cycle of poverty is by increasing time on learning for all students by instituting full day kindergarten throughout the state in 2008. State policymakers maintain that full day kindergarten will help at-risk children and low-income mothers. Although the
report agrees that the results for the efficacy of full day kindergarten are mixed, it fully supports it in order to allow mothers to overcome the obstacles incurred by the “maternal wall” (Brooks, 2008, p.440).

The increase in full day kindergarten programs has led to increased research on the efficacy of these models. Prior to NCLB, most of the research advocated for full day kindergarten e.g. Fusaro (1997), Karweit (1987), Puleo (1988), and Sheehan et al. (1991). Karweit noted in her 1987 study “Full or Half day kindergarten: Does it Matter?” the shift in the emphasis on full day kindergarten education as necessary for academic growth asserting that “for many years kindergarten education has been viewed mainly as a means to develop children’s social and economic lives, with little formal emphasis on academics” (p.8). In his 1988 research, Puleo maintains that most of the research thus far is suggestive but inconclusive regarding the benefits of full day kindergarten.

**Student accountability and socio-economic status (SES).** The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 marked a watershed in public education. It was the first time that the federal government sought to improve student learning by measuring student performance and holding school districts accountable for that performance. This accountability for states and local school districts has led to great scrutiny as to the efficacy of programs and how funds are allocated to them. One of the most glaring outcomes of this educational reform is the acknowledgment of an achievement gap between students of high and low socioeconomic status, between white and Asian students compared with Black and Hispanic students, between students with disabilities and those without, and between English Language Learners and native speakers. Recent studies that use data from the 1998 Early Childhood Educational Kindergarten Cohort were able to disaggregate data by socio-economic status (DeCosta& Bell (2000), Le, V. et al. (2006);
Lee, V et al. (2002); and Larson, J. (2003). These studies concluded that students from high poverty begin kindergarten at a disadvantage. Therefore, these researchers claim that students of low socio-economic status benefit from full day kindergarten to help them achieve literacy at rates similar to their more advantaged peers. Le, Kirby, Barney, Setodji, & Gershwin (2006) found that higher income and parental involvement predict the development of nonacademic readiness skills of kindergarten children i.e. social emotional skills. These nonacademic readiness skills at entry are significantly associated with mathematics and reading achievement through fifth grade. The researchers suggest that policy makers and district educators may want to invest in the development of nonacademic readiness skills as a way to narrow the achievement gap between white and minority students. Interestingly, the argument for kindergarten education has changed little in a hundred years.

In Larry Cuban’s *Why Some Reforms Last: The Case of the Kindergarten (1992)*, he explains that kindergarten became incorporated with the elementary school model in an effort to meet the social needs of children defined by late nineteenth urban reformers as “immigrant and impoverished children who needed Americanizing and early training in social and civic responsibilities” (p.191). He further maintains that its [kindergarten] mission was “to save children, immigrant families, and southern blacks” (p.191). For the most part, the reasons in favor of full day kindergarten have largely remained unchanged today. Indeed, today many educators advocate for the need for full day kindergarten programs to help children disadvantaged by poverty and lacking in English language fluency. The extra time on learning is to help disadvantaged students catch up to their more advantaged peers.

In the book *Inequality at the Starting Gate* (Lee, V. et al., 2002), the researchers found that substantial differences in literacy and math by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status exist as
children enter kindergarten. According to these researchers, “before even entering kindergarten, the average cognitive score of children in the highest SES group are 60% above the scores of the lowest SES group. Moreover, average math achievement is 21% lower for black than for whites, and 19% lower for Hispanics” (Executive summary). They link socio-economic status to cognitive skills. Of the many factors they considered in this study such as race/ethnicity, family educational expectations, access to quality child care, home reading, computer use, and television habits, SES stood out as accounting for the unique variation in cognitive skills more than any other factors.

Until recently, most of the research conducted on the effects of full day kindergarten has been small studies in school districts. For example, a study conducted in New York by Hough and Bryde (2006) used a sample of six full day kindergarten classes matched with six half day kindergarten classes of similar location, school size, student data, and SES data. The study had many findings. It found that students in full day kindergarten participated in a greater number of small group activities; that there was no difference in fatigue between students who attended full day kindergarten and half day kindergarten; students in full day kindergarten were more socially interactive; students in full day kindergarten outperformed in ELA criteria and some math criteria; and school attendance was better and parental satisfaction was higher.

In a small study in a rural town, Carnes and Albrecht (2007) found that children in small towns also benefit from full day kindergarten particularly in reading and literacy skills. They found the extra time on learning not only exposed children to more instructional time but also helped broaden their social experiences, which helped improve their academic skills (p.68).
Another study of a suburban school district in Colorado (Wolgemuth, J. R. et al., 2006) supports these findings. This study concluded that full day kindergarten students perform significantly better in reading and math at the end of kindergarten and that these achievements were continued in 1st grade. Wolgemuth and his research team attribute these achievements to the “increased time that full day kindergarten students spent reviewing and practicing material” (p.266). A study conducted before NCLB supports these findings in reading but not in math or writing. Hildebrand (1997) studied three kindergarten schedules; 47 children in full day, 56 in alternate day and 44 in half day. Interestingly, she also found that children in half day programs exhibited greater pro-social competence than children from full day and alternate day programs.

The most recent research on the efficacy of full day kindergarten programs reaches different conclusions i.e. that there is little difference in academic performance between children who attend full day and half-day programs (Davies & Cress, 2010). These researchers examined the findings of sixteen case studies in elementary schools in northern Indiana. They further assert that any increase in time on learning for children of low SES merely maintains the achievement gap; it doesn’t close it. Contrary to the report by the University of Michigan (Lee et al., 2006), these researchers found that the amount of time spent on academics was the same for both full day and half-day programs. They are of the opinion that forcing young children, who may not be developmentally ready to work on academic tasks, may lead to them developing an intense dislike of school.

Weiss and Offenberg tracked over 17,000 children who attended Philadelphia schools in the 1990s and found that students who attended full day kindergarten were more than twice as likely to remain on grade through the third grade as students with no kindergarten. They also maintain that the benefits of full day kindergarten were found to offset nearly 19% of the actu-
al additional costs over half day kindergarten. These benefits refer to fewer students being referred for special education services and fewer being retained. However, they did not take into account the achievement level of students entering kindergarten. These findings are supported by Gullo (2000) who found the same i.e. that not only does full day kindergarten boost academic performance, it also led to less students being retained, fewer special education referrals and increased student attendance. These findings are important to educators, particularly those in urban districts, who constantly try to validate the investment in childhood education over later expenditure in other programs, such as special education.

Another study in a public school district in Maine (Baskett, R. et al., 2005) measured the performance of 228 students in both full day and half day kindergarten programs. The investigation used, among other measurements, eight child measures. These were reading level, literacy skills, alphabet recognition, letter sounds, works left to right, story sequence, creates patterns, and follows directions. The findings conclude that of eight measures used, only five favored full day kindergarten, which was not an overwhelming endorsement of the efficacy of full day kindergarten.

The Early Longitudinal Childhood Study (ECLS) is a government-sponsored program that includes three longitudinal studies of children nationwide to examine child development, school readiness, and early school experiences. One of the three studies is the kindergarten class of 1998-99 cohorts. It followed a random sample of children from kindergarten through the eighth grade. The children in ECLS-K came from both public and private schools and attended both full day and part-day kindergarten programs. They came from diverse socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Also participating in the study were the children's parents, teachers, and schools. The data from this longitudinal study is used by researchers to examine many as-
pects of education in the United States. Last year, another cohort of students entering kindergarten was formed. This new cohort will provide researchers and policymakers with comparative data to the 1998-99 cohorts upon which to base educational decisions.

A report published by the University of Michigan in 2006 expanded the research from the 1998 Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-K Cohort, a nationally representative sample of 8,000 kindergartners in 500 public schools across the country (Lee et al., 2006). The research addressed the question of whether children learn more in full day kindergarten programs than in half-day kindergarten programs. The results show that children in full day programs learn more in literacy and mathematics. The data that was used in this study was gleaned from individually administered assessments of skills in literacy, mathematics, and general knowledge at the beginning and end of kindergarten. Interestingly, the results show that children in full day programs only receive a 1/3 more instruction than those in half day programs. However, the extra time on learning is also spent on expanding their social and academic experiences.

**English Language Learners in kindergarten.** As mentioned earlier, recent data shows that the demographics of public schools are becoming increasingly racially diverse. One in five students (k-12) speaks a language other than English at home. Of this number, 5% speak English with difficulty. Nationwide, there are almost seven and a half million elementary and secondary school students who speak a language other than English at home. Hispanics are the largest ethnic group represented in this group of whom 19% enter kindergarten speaking English with difficulty (Audi et al., 2010). ELL children are the fastest growing segment of the student population in the United States. Educational policymakers are working to increase the literacy proficiency of all students but doing so for ELL children has become an urgent priority. In a recent study using data from the ECLS-K, the results show that ELL students who are proficient in English by the
spring of first grade had no difference in the rates of academic growth up to eighth grade when compared to native-English speakers (Halle et al., 2009). These results show the need to have strong literacy programs in the early grades such as kindergarten in order for these ELLs to make consistent progress over time and to stay on track with native English speakers.

There have been few studies into the efficacy of full day kindergarten on language acquisition for ELLs. In a study that examined the effects of full and half day kindergarten on linguistically diverse students, the results showed that full day kindergarten:

> Positively impacted children’s academic achievement in literacy but not in mathematics, regardless of children’s language status. In regard to language development, ELL children benefited more from full day kindergarten than did their English speaking peers, whereas all (ELL and non-ELL) children enrolled in full day kindergarten made greater language gains when they missed fewer than 10 school days. (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009, pp.25-26)

Another recent study that examined the effects of full day kindergarten on ELLs produced surprising results. It was conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District and the results showed that full day students perform better than half day students on kindergarten reading assessments and that advantage continued into 1st and 2nd grade (Cannon, 2010). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that students with higher levels of English fluency benefit more from full day kindergarten than those with low levels of fluency. Cannon suggests that policymakers should focus on improving literacy in pre-kindergarten programs. This suggestion is also reiterated in a doctoral study of a school district in Kentucky (Patrick, 2009). The researcher found that the evidence suggests the need for language development classes prior to kindergarten
enrollment, and for a focus on language acquisition in kindergarten classes. She suggests further investigation of preparatory classes, language coaches and volunteers in kindergarten classes to assist English Language Learners (p.120). These findings are also supported by a longitudinal study in Calgary, Canada. This study showed that most ELLs develop the basic vocabulary necessary to perform and often surpass native-speakers. However, by the mid-school years, there is a widening gap as ELL students fail to develop the necessary vocabulary for academic success and by the end of elementary school lag a year behind their native-speaking peers (Rousing & Elsie, 2009).

In a recent article in Catalyst Chicago (Summer 2011), an independent educational newspaper, author Rebecca Harris discusses the budget quandary in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), which is preventing the implementation of full day kindergarten programs. Chicago is outside the norm for large cities as Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco which all offer full day kindergarten. It should be noted that in Massachusetts, the MADESE has funded full day programs in all the Gateway cities. There are still suburban towns in Massachusetts with half day kindergarten programs due financial constraints.

The author cites CPS data from 2007 that shows that Latino students were more than three times as likely as African-American students to be in half-day programs. She also points to the research of Jill Cannon (2011) that shows that English Language Learners who attend half-day kindergarten programs are more likely to be retained by 2nd grade.

In a study of English Language Learners in Arizona, the conclusion reached was that Spanish-speaking ELLs perform better in full day kindergarten (Estes, 2007). On the east coast, in Delaware, high poverty minority students in full day kindergarten did perform better in basic
early literacy skills as measured by the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Benchmark Levels (Stewart, 2007).

Therefore the research shows that ELL students in full day kindergarten programs make greater literacy gains than ELL students in half day programs. This study attempts to study the effects of student mobility among ELLs on literacy in full day programs.

**Regional differences in kindergarten programs.** In 2003, only ten states mandated full day kindergarten programs. These are all southern states; Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia. The 1998 Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS)-K Cohort also revealed regional differences in the effectiveness of full day kindergarten. According to the study, full day kindergarten was most prevalent in the South (84%) and the Midwest (46%) and least prevalent in the Northeast and the West (between 25 and 29%). The researchers surmise the reason for the prevalence of full day kindergarten in the South is that it is largely supplemented by Title 1 funds. Of the four regions studied, full day kindergarten in the West was the least effective. The researchers explain this lack of effectiveness by speculating that it is a lack of experience in time management for full day kindergartenteachers because half day kindergarten is the norm in the West.

**Academic outcomes.** The information collected from the ECLS-K Cohort study has provided many different avenues for research. The study has been used to examine the relationship between school readiness, full day kindergarten and student achievement (Le, Kirby, Barney, Setodji & Gershwin, 2006). Walton and West (2004) concluded that children in full day kindergarten receive more math instruction and more reinforcement of mathematical concepts than children in half day kindergarten. Another study using data from the ECLS-K cohort contradicts
the findings of Leand Walton. In the article “Does full day kindergarten matter? Evidence from the first two years of schooling (2005)”, DeCicca asserts that the benefits of full day kindergarten diminish over time. He examines the impact in the short and long term: short-run refers to performance at the end of kindergarten and longer-run refers to performance on a similar test for academic progress one year later. He offers reasons why short run advantages fade by first grade due to loss of knowledge over summer vacation and family environment. These findings are supported by a study that examines the longitudinal effects of full day kindergarten on the achievement of low-income students (Cannon et al., 2006). The researchers use data from the ECLS-K Cohort and maintain that there are initial benefits for students who attend full day kindergarten programs but these benefits largely disappear by the time a student reaches third grade. In all academic outcomes, the academic effects for low-income students were smaller or equal to the effects for non-poor children. Another important finding was that “there is no clear benefit for poor students over non-poor students when attending full day kindergarten programs. In all academic outcomes, the effect sizes for poor students were smaller or equal to the effect sizes for the non-poor students” (Cannon et al., 2006, p.15).

A recent study comparing full day and half-day kindergarten using various data, including the ECLS-K, shows that although full day kindergarten students exhibited stronger growth during the kindergarten year, students who attended half day kindergarten had a stronger growth trajectory and appear to achieve any full day advantage by third grade (Cooper et al., 2010). Another study using the ECLS-K data also contradicts the belief that full day kindergarten provides students with an educational advantage, especially for students of poverty (Votruba-Dzral et al., 2008). Indeed, the research presented shows that students who attended half day kindergarten programs demonstrated rising achievement in math performance up to 3rd grade. On the other
hand, children who attended full day kindergarten show a declining trajectory in math performance by 3rd grade. Therefore for both groups, there is little difference in math performance in the 3rd grade. The research reveals that attending full day kindergarten yielded a modest benefit to children’s academic growth over time. The researchers speculated that there are other factors that influence why full day kindergarten programs fail to increase achievement trajectories over the long-term. Some of these factors are socioeconomic status, family structure, school attendance, and the quality of programs offered to children in full day kindergarten. In another examination of the same subject using ECLD-K data, the same conclusion was reached. There are no long-term benefits for students who attend full day kindergarten (Reedy, 2008). The body of research examined on the academic effects of full day kindergarten all show that there are only short-term benefits for disadvantaged children.

**Quality of research.** In 2008, a critique was published on the literature of the impact of full day kindergarten programs on student achievement in reading and math (WestEd, 2008). The evaluation of the literature was two-fold: to examine and summarize the quality of the research designs of studies being reported and to summarize the findings of those reports whose designs were reliable. Although many of the studies show a beneficial relationship between student achievement and full day kindergarten, many of them lacked rigor and none of them used random assignment for placing students in kindergarten programs. The evaluation involved examining 299 studies and of these only 21 passed an initial screening designed to study academic outcomes of full day programs compared to half day programs. The initial screening further narrowed down these 21 reports to 11 based on academic rigor. Interestingly, 6 of these 11 reports used data from the ECLS data. The WestEd researchers caution that for research design to have high validity there must be equivalence in the distribution of students in the programs being
evaluated i.e. students in full day and half day kindergarten programs should have equivalence in: student age, school readiness, SES, and opportunities to learn outside school.

Differences among children at the start of kindergarten will most likely lead to differences in their learning outcomes. The evaluators from WestEd agree that the research suggests a causal link between full day kindergarten and student achievement but they strongly maintain that the research is strengthened when using random assignment. They classified the research designs from 1 to 4 i.e. strongest to weakest. Based on their review, there were no level 1 or 2 designs and level 4 designs were disregarded because of their design flaws. Level 3 designs were those studies that ensured equivalence of students in full and half day programs by using statistical methods to adjust for non-equivalence pretests.

Therefore, their evaluation has important implications for recent and upcoming full day kindergarten research. They excluded some research that was influential in the past decade such as Gullo (2000), Larson (2003), Colvin & Salkind (2005), and Denton, West & Walston (2003) because of their research designs. They include in their research summary the following because of the credibility of the studies based on design: Walston & West (2004), Votruba-Drzal et al. (2008), Lee et al. (2006), Le et al. (2006), DeCicca (2007), and Cannon et al. (2006). All of these reports use data from the ECLS-K cohort. Most of these studies using this longitudinal data to demonstrate that the benefits of full day programs are lost by third grade.

The WestEd report also includes some studies conducted in school districts using a level 3 design. One of these studies conducted in a rural-suburban school district also points to the limitations of past research because of the absence of random assignment of children to programs (Baskettet al., 2005). This study uses eight measures to compare the effects of full day kindergarten to half day programs such as parental attitudes, teacher attitudes and SES. Of the eight-
measures, only five favored full day kindergarten. This study concluded that full day kindergarten gave students a modest academic advantage.

A study of a large school district in the Southwest on literacy achievement at the end of kindergarten concluded that:

Disadvantaged students in full day classrooms had a rate of literacy acquisition that outpaced that of demographically similar peers in half day classrooms during the first year of program implementation. However, the efficacy of full day kindergarten intervention was contingent upon class size as students in smaller full-day classes had faster literacy acquisition rates than students in larger full-day class size environments. (Zvoch et al., 2008, p.105)

A similar study conducted in the Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland of students in the 34 neediest schools (as identified by English Language Learner students and eligibility for free and reduced lunch) supports the efficacy of full day kindergarten, particularly for African Americans and Hispanics (Alban & Schatz, 2003). The researchers found more children meeting benchmarks in reading by the end of kindergarten. Two important findings were that: the percentage of all 2nd grade students able to read text at or above benchmark in 2003 increased from 62% to 68% in 2002, with greatest gains demonstrated for those students most affected by poverty and second language learning and that the achievement gap between African American and Hispanic, between Asian American and white 2nd grade students narrowed between 2002 and 2003. It should be noted that this study examined performance of full day kindergarten students beginning in 2000 up until the end of 2nd grade in 2003.

In another study of a suburban school district in Colorado that examined performance of kindergarten students until the end of 1st grade, the results showed that full day kindergarten stu-
dents perform significantly better than their half day peers in reading and math (Wolgemuth et al., 2006). In interviews with teachers on student achievement, the teachers attributed the enhanced performance to the “increased time that students spent reviewing and practicing material” (p.266).

**Different kindergarten models.** A study of a school district in Nebraska examined kindergarten achievement in three different models: full day, alternate day, and half-day (Hildebrand, 2001). The researcher found no significant differences in achievement in writing or math. However, it did show that students in full day programs had significantly higher scores in reading by the end of kindergarten. The researcher also examined the pro-social behaviors of students in each type of program. Of the four factors that facilitate learning (originality, independent learning, productive with peers, and involvement), the research shows that students in half day programs performed significantly higher.

Conversely, students in the half day program also rated the lowest on factors that interfere with learning (anxiety and intellectual dependency). The researcher also stresses the importance of parents in the literacy achievement of their children.

**Size of studies.** There have been several smaller studies conducted at the local level in recent years in order to weigh the academic benefits of full day kindergarten. These studies were conducted in order to fulfill the requirements of doctoral programs. Although these studies are limited in scope, they do contribute to the field of research into the efficacy of full day kindergarten by evaluating programs at the local level and disaggregating the research by selected groups. Two of the dissertations examined were longitudinal studies using data collected up until 4th grade. One study of a school in the Southwest shows that full day kindergarten benefits poor English-speaking children the most, particularly African Americans and Native Americans.
(Green, 2006). Similarly, in a dissertation another longitudinal study was conducted that showed by 4th grade, all gains made by full day kindergarten in math had disappeared (McFarland, 2007). This study showed that students who attended alternate day kindergarten outperformed their peers in mathematics and reading by 4th grade. Even more revealing was that “boys who attended daily full day kindergarten demonstrated significantly less productive social behavior than did boys from the alternating day program and girls from the daily full day program” (Abstract). The author notes that for those who attended full day kindergarten, “lower social behavior ratings predicted depressed academic achievement in English/language arts well beyond the kindergarten year” (Abstract).

In another recent study, the researcher used different data than the previous studies to reach the same conclusion (Oliver, 2008). The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between students who attended full day kindergarten and their second grade literacy and math achievement. It was conducted in the Rockwood Public School District in St. Louis, Missouri. The district offers both half-day and full day kindergarten programs. Results of the Stanford Achievement Test were analyzed for statistically significant differences between two second grade groups of children. Data analysis showed no significant statistical difference in student achievement.

**Urban studies.** According to Schroeder (2007, p.436), “More research is needed regarding the effect of full day kindergarten on achievement for disadvantaged children due to the effects of poverty, race and English language learners.” However, the results of his study on a large urban district in the Mid-West indicated “that the effects of poverty were offset by participating in full day kindergarten” (p.436). The study on full day and half day programs compared the scores on state standardized tests for five-year-old children. Four thousand four hundred and
eleven students were included in this three-year cohort study. The study focused on students in urban public schools who completed standards-based instruction. This study is significant because it shows a decrease in the achievement gap that exists between low-income students and those who are not. It showed that the gain in scores in English language arts and mathematics amounted to what was lost from the effect of poverty on students.

Much research has been conducted on the effects of full day and half-day kindergarten and the results disaggregated for students of low SES and for the most part, there is an increase in student performance for those students in full day kindergarten in the short-term (DeCosta& Bell (2000), Le, V. et al. (2006); Lee, V et al. (2002); and Larson, J. (2003). Based on this research, it can be deduced that full day kindergarten is beneficial to children in urban districts. These districts tend to have higher rates of poverty, greater racial diversity, tend to have higher numbers of students with learning disabilities and have a larger concentration of English language learners. Weiss and Offenberg, in their study following the progress of 17,000 students in the Philadelphia Public Schools during the 1990s, found that full day kindergarten provided strong academic benefits and that these children were twice as likely to stay on grade level through the third grade as students with no kindergarten.

In another study of the relationship between half-day and full day programs and early literacy behaviors of emergent readers in an urban school in the Midwest, the results also showed significant gains in literacy (Torkelson, 2008). Small, positive relationships between the length of the school day and academic scores were also demonstrated in a study of students in the Shawnee Mission School District in Kansas (Minor, 2008). The results of a study of a small rural district found that full day kindergarten provides teachers instructional time but also provides the
social environment to support the transformation of the “child to the “student” (Carnes & Albrecht, 2007, p. 71). They state that:

Teachers stressed how additional time affected their ability to provide higher quality instruction, enhance the curriculum, and initiate needed interventions. They voiced their relief in no longer finding it necessary to fit the curriculum into the constrained half-day environment.(Carnes & Albrecht, 2007, p. 69)

The research on the efficacy of full day kindergarten, for the most part, is mixed. It does show that achievement levels for children, who attend full day programs diminish over time and by 4th grade, largely disappear. This recent research is a departure from the research conducted prior to NCLB, which resulted in advocacy for full day programs. However, it must be noted that in today’s world of high stakes testing and accountability, the goals of early childhood education have changed over the past decade and are now much more focused on measurable results. There is an urgency to close the achievement gap for children of low income, race, and disability. The current research, although mixed, does show some advantages for these children in full day kindergarten programs. It should also be mentioned that there are other factors supporting the need for full day kindergarten programs not examined for this study such as the effects of full day programs on the social emotional wellness of children over the short and long term. This research is very relevant to this study of literacy gains of children in urban New England, particularly ELLs. If indeed, achievement gains disappear by the 4th grade, one wonders if money spent at the kindergarten level be invested elsewhere.

An evaluation of past research supports those studies which used random assignment of children in kindergarten programs e.g. WestEd (2008). The measurable outcomes show a greater
reliability when there is equivalence in the pretest groups. It must also be considered that there are other factors that influence the performance of students in both types of programs such as parental involvement, class schedule and teacher quality. Several studies showed that full day kindergarten schedules only spend one-third more time on academics than half day programs.

Another factor to consider when determining the relevancy of a study is the type of school district. Most full day programs are found in urban districts where there is high poverty, high levels of English language learners and minorities. Therefore, the effects of any increased time on academics should have a positive effect on performance. It must also be noted that some of the research supports the need for smaller class size in full day kindergarten in order to affect any significant increase in learning.

The research also shows that results from kindergarten programs in the West differ from those in the South and Midwest, where there is a longer tradition of full day programs. Programs in these regions most likely have greater success than their counterparts in the West.

Finally, although the literature was examined for the effects of kindergarten programs on student achievement as measured by test scores, much of the research conducted also examined the effects of full day programs on school readiness and pro-social behaviors. In an educational era doggedly faithful to data collection and analysis, the efficacy of kindergarten is measured by its effectiveness of preparing students for academic success in the upper grades. It must be noted that academic readiness is only one measure of the efficacy of kindergarten. Carnes and Albrecht (2007) in their study also concluded that full day kindergarten is an important way to provide the social emotional supports necessary to prepare children for the next grades.
The pedagogy of Pestalozzi, Froebel and Montessori must not be abandoned i.e. kindergarten ought to provide children with opportunities for play and exploration in order to engage children, improve their socialization skills and increase their acquisition of language, whether the model is full day or half-day kindergarten.

**Second Language Acquisition**

As previously stated, both Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982), both leading theorists on language acquisition, stress that language acquisition is a process that requires; guidance from an experienced teacher, the scaffolding of tasks as the learner gains fluency, and communication with fluent speakers such as the teacher or native-speaking peers. Research shows that ELLs who attend full day kindergarten programs acquire English at a faster pace than those who don’t (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Cannon, 2010). Recent research shows that ELLs require 3-7 years to reach proficiency, with younger learners typically taking longer but more likely to achieve close-to-native results (Dixon et al., 2012). A study of English Language Learners from kindergarten to eighth grade (with a nationally representative sample of first-time kindergartners) showed that ELLs who were proficient by first grade had modest gaps in reading and math achievement compared to native English speakers. Conversely, ELLs “who were not proficient by first grade had the largest initial gaps in reading and math achievement compared to native speakers but the gap narrowed over time in reading and grew over time in math” (Halle et al., 2012, p.1).

In a large study of ELLs in Canada, the research concluded that students need to acquire large vocabularies in order to be successful in fifth grade and higher. Their research showed that ELLs in the higher grades often perform poorly because they cannot access curricula because they lack the essential vocabulary (Roessingh & Elgie, 2009). The researchers suggested that in
order to challenge the student to move along the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), children must work in small groups, be exposed to new vocabulary, and be practicing continuously. These recommendations are supported by a research dissertation that concluded daily practice by students increased language acquisition as measured by school benchmarks (McNally, 2010).

Indeed, research on second language acquisition within the theoretical framework of Vygotsky and Krashen point to the need for extended time on learning, daily practice, small group instruction and collaboration. This learning environment can be provided in a full day kindergarten setting. Attendance in these programs can enable students to become proficient in English and engage them in learning at a young age. Full day kindergarten provides a solution to the barriers these ELLs face as they enter the American school system. The limited body of research on the efficacy of full day kindergarten on ELLs suggests that it is beneficial for this group of learners (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Cannon, 2010; Estes, 2007).
Chapter III: Research Design

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to examine the effects of student mobility for English language learners in full day kindergarten in order to identify ways for educators and policy makers to better meet their needs. Past theorists such as Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Montessori support kindergarten for children is an essential part of childhood development that provides an environment in which children can develop their minds and learn. Also, the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982) on language acquisition support the need for learning to occur through the guidance of experienced native-speaking teachers and peers and through the scaffolding of tasks. It is through these lenses that this researcher attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?

2. Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?

The questions that the researcher in this case study sought to answer are similar in that they focus on the perceptions of six kindergarten teachers in two urban elementary schools within the same district. The study focuses on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10), which provide a strong handle on what “real life” is like. This study was further strengthened by “local groundedness” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10) i.e. the data was collected in close proximity to a specific situation, rather than over a distance.
Another strength of qualitative research, according to Miles and Huberman, is that the data is rich and holistic with “strong potential for revealing complexity” (p.10). The data can provide “thick descriptions” that are framed in real context, are vivid and most often truthful, which makes a strong impression on the reader. Consequently, qualitative data places strong emphasis on people’s experiences and are suited to understanding the “meanings” people place on their “perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions (van Manen, 1977 as quoted by Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). The process of collecting the data enabled the researcher to explore and describe phenomena within a real life context.

Methodology

Background. Previous research shows that the effect of full day kindergarten on student achievement is mixed. Students of low SES show an improvement in performance but these results are often negligible by the third grade. However, research does show that extended time-on-learning i.e. full day kindergarten does benefit students learning English as a second language (Cannon, 2010; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Estes, 2007). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) defines English learners as “a child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English” (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71A, Section 2). The effectiveness of kindergarten programs determines whether each ELL is placed in a Sheltered Instruction classroom or in an ESL classroom in the first grade. According to the Massachusetts General Laws, Sheltered English immersion is defined as:

An English language acquisition process for young children, in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with the curriculum and presentation designed for chil-
Children who are learning the language. Books and instruction materials are in English and all reading, writing, and subject matter are taught in English. Although teachers may use a minimal amount of the child’s native language when necessary, no subject matter shall be taught in any language other than English, and children in this program learn to read and write solely in English. (MGL, Chapter 71A, Section 2)

This educational methodology represents the standard definition of “sheltered English” or “structured English” found in educational literature.” In addition, an English language classroom (ESL) means:

A classroom in which the language of instruction used by the teaching personnel is overwhelmingly the English language, and in which such teaching personnel are fluent and literate in English. English language classrooms encompass both English language mainstream classrooms and sheltered English immersion classrooms. (MGL, Chapter 71A, Section 2)

Students entering kindergarten in the district used in this study are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) based on two identifiers. All parents upon registering their children for kindergarten must complete a Home Language Survey. This survey must be in the parent’s native language if possible or orally translated if in a language other than English. If the survey is orally translated, a notation must be made on the instrument indicating this. If the survey reveals that the home language is other than English, an appointment for World-Class Instructional and Design-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) is arranged. The acronym ACCESS for ELLs stands for Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners. The W-APT is an English language proficiency “screener” test that is widely
used by educators to determine placement for ELLs. This assessment measures student proficiency in Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. In general, the W-APT is administered in the school in which the child is enrolled. The child is typically placed in the neighborhood elementary school where the family resides. The results of this assessment will determine if the child qualifies for LEP status. The assessment is administered by the school’s ELL liaison.

In Massachusetts, Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) is the required program for most LEP students from kindergarten to grade 12. There are two components to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI): English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and Sheltered Content Instruction. If an ELL student is attending a school designated as a Level 4 school, there are alternative program models. The district in which this study took place is categorized as Level 4. Also, one of the elementary schools in which this study is being conducted has just shed its Level 4 designation and is now ranked a Level 2 (School B), while the other is a Level 3 (School A). According to MADESE (Accountability Information), schools are classified into Level 3 if they are among the lowest 20 percent relative to other schools in their grade span statewide, if one or more subgroups in the school are among the lowest performing 20% of subgroups relative to all subgroups statewide, if they have persistently low graduation rates (less than 60% for any subgroup over a four-year period), or if they have very low MCAS participation rates for any group (less than 90%). The lowest achieving, least improving Level 3 schools are candidates for classification into Levels 4 and 5, the most serious designations in Massachusetts' accountability system. School B was designated a Level 4 school and after four years of intensive redesign, in 2013 it became a Level 2.

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, the MADESE developed and sponsored professional development for all elementary and secondary educators who have English Language Learners in
their classrooms. This training was aligned with one of the four Categories of Skills and Knowledge for Teachers in SEI classrooms. MADESE has also offered Training of Trainers opportunities in Categories 1, 2, and 4. The four categories of sheltered content instruction are: Category 1-Introduction to Second Language Acquisition; Category 2-Sheltered Content Instruction; Category 3-Assessing Speaking and Listening; and Category 4-Reading and Writing in the Sheltered Content Classroom. Every elementary school in the district has teachers who are trained to instruct students who are LEP. English as a Second Language (ESL) is the other component of SEI and must be delivered by a licensed ESL teacher. Under Massachusetts law, all teachers who teach in English must be fluent and literate in English. The legislation passed by the state of Massachusetts (MGL, Chapter 71A, Section 2), the adherence to Title III of NCLB, and the guidance and training provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are evidence of the state’s commitment to closing the achievement gap between those students proficient in English and English Language Learners.

In compliance with federal law, Massachusetts administered two summative assessments annually to measure student performance for ELLs until they were replaced by Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) in 2013. The assessments were:

- Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) assesses ELL student proficiency in reading and writing in grades k-12.
- Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) assesses ELL student proficiency in listening (comprehension) and speaking (production) in grades k-12.
ELL students were required to participate in both assessments (MEPA and MELA-O), which were administered in the spring for kindergarten students. However, ELL students participated in either the Level A or Level B MEPA-R/W test for both Reading and Writing. School officials decided which level of test (A or B) would be given to an individual student based on teacher observation, performance on district benchmarks, and an optional locator survey available from MADESE. It should be noted that the MEPA assessment (A or B) to which a child was assigned, was a predictor for how much progress that child would make in kindergarten.

An ELL student’s speaking and listening skills were assessed by a Qualified MELA-O trainer (QMT) or a Qualified MELA-O administrator (QMA) who observed the student engaging in interactive academic activities with the classroom teacher and/or other students. Using the MELA-O Scoring Matrix, the QMT or QMA rated the student’s levels of comprehension (listening) and production (speaking) on a 0–5 scale.

**Case Study Methodology**

The researcher chose the descriptive case study method because it is the preferred method to examine contemporary events. According to Yin, “a case study is an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2009, p. 18). The case study was set within the kindergarten model, which according to historical theorists is an essential setting in a child’s development. The researcher sought to examine the progress of second language acquisition of young ELLs in kindergarten who, according to Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982), should acquire language through exposure to experienced native-speaking teachers and peers. She also sought to investigate teacher perceptions of how effective full day kindergarten is in helping mobile ELLs acquire language.
Site and Participants

This case study was conducted in two elementary schools in the district, both of which have schoolwide Title 1 programs. These particular elementary schools have designated ELL programs. Most ELLs in the district are bused to these sites. The district developed this model in order to concentrate district resources for ELLs; each school being located at opposite ends of the city. Both of these schools, like all elementary schools in this district, have full day kindergarten. The poverty level in all Title 1 elementary schools in this district ranges between 78-94%. In these particular schools, the poverty levels are approximately 80% and 94% respectively. School A with 80% poverty is a prek-5 school with approximately 600 students and was designated Level 3 according to Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L.). School B with 94% poverty was categorized as a Level 4. Because of its accountability status, this Level 4 school was undergoing redesign supported by state and federal funds. It is currently a prek-6 school and is transitioning to a prek-8 school. There were currently approximately 400 students in the school.

The participants in this study were six kindergarten teachers; three from each of the elementary schools and two ESL teachers; one from each school. The researcher used assessment and enrollment data to inform the interview questions. The interviewer asked open-ended questions about their perceptions of the effects of student mobility among ELLs in their kindergarten classroom based on their analysis of assessment and enrollment data. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. Although the researcher is a district administrator, she does not have direct supervision over any of these teachers and individual responses remained anonymous. The researcher gained informed consent from each of the participants, and the nature of the case study was clearly explained to them (Appendix C). The researcher protected the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants by providing each of them with a confidentiality agreement to sign.
Data Collection

Yin states that there are three principles for data collection. When it is properly collected, the data strengthens the research by creating the construct validity and reliability of the case study evidence. The first principle of data collection is regarding using multiple sources of evidence. The case study inquiry “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p.18).

The data collected by the researcher in this study provided evidence of the effects of student mobility and its impact on learning in kindergarten as viewed through the lenses of the kindergarten philosophies of Pestalozzi and Froebel and the language acquisition theories of Vygotsky and Krashen. The analysis of the data showed the effects of student mobility on student growth i.e. progress in language acquisition for students in full day kindergarten programs.

Student enrollment data. Student enrollment data was collected to support the research topic. The researcher used data from both regular education kindergarten students and ELL kindergarten students for SY12 and SY13 attending two schools, School A and School B. In order to use student data for the study, the student must have attended kindergarten in that school for some of the year. Student names were not known to the researcher as the data was treated collectively, not individually. The data gathered for this study was the number of days of attendance and enrollment for students in the kindergarten class. This data was provided by the Data Warehouse, which is an on-line data storage system created by MADESE, through which districts provide the state information and can access it when needed. The data for students also contained information regarding: ethnicity, home country, home language, and eligibility for free and reduced lunch. Data for students who enrolled late or withdraw early from kindergarten was dis-
aggregated from the data of those students in attendance all year. The data of these mobile students was analyzed separately as an essential part of the research.

Table 1

*Enrollment Data for Kindergarten Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Days Enrolled</th>
<th>Attendance Rate (%)</th>
<th>Number of Days Absent</th>
<th>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility</th>
<th>English Language Learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Kindergarten Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Enrollment Data for Kindergarten English Language Learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Days Enrolled</th>
<th>Attendance Rate (%)</th>
<th>Number of Days Absent</th>
<th>Home Country</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL Kindergarten Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student assessment data.** All kindergarten students, including English language learners, are assessed using the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) in October, January, and June. Performance on this assessment is used to inform instruction i.e. teachers adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their students. The first assessment data set used in this study was student performance on the DIBELS in the 2011-2012 and 2012-13. This data set was disaggregated to show performance for all kindergarten students, ELL students, and mobile students.

Table 3
As stated previously, students entering kindergarten are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) based on a couple of identifiers: the Home Language Survey and the W-APT. All parents upon registering their child for kindergarten must complete a Home Language Survey (see Appendix). This survey must be in the parent’s native language or orally translated if in a language other than English, Portuguese, or Spanish. Therefore, if the survey results show that the home is language is other than English, an appointment for WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) is arranged. The W-APT is an English language proficiency “screener” test that is widely used by educators to determine placement for ELLs. This assessment measures student proficiency in Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. This assessment will determine if the child qualifies for LEP status. It is important to note that all ELL students in this study have taken the W-APT and are classified as LEP.

Prior to the adoption of the ACCESS in 2013, kindergarten ELLs, like ELLs in other grades took the MEPA and the MELO-O in the spring of their kindergarten year. Therefore, the second assessment data set will present student progress in English language acquisition as measured using the W-APT and the MEPA and MELO-O.
In order to measure the progress of ELLs in full day kindergarten, data was collected for the cohort of students in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. The baseline data collected in the fall was each student’s performance on the W-APT. This data set identified the level of English proficiency for each student. This was compared to each student’s performance on the MEPA and the MELO-O(2012) and the ACCESS (2013). Progress was determined using MADESE guidance (see Table 2).

Table 4

MADESE Progress in English proficiency: student took spring assessment in the same school year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline Performance level</th>
<th>Definition of Making Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Level 1 Low and Level 3 Low</td>
<td>Must advance 2 steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Level 3 High and Level 5</td>
<td>Must advance 1 step</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MADESE bases its definition of progress “on research into typical language patterns and the amount of improvement needed each year by a beginning English learner in order to transition out of ELL services in five to six years” (Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) Statewide Results:Spring 2011, p.6). There are five performance levels (Levels 1-5) of progress in language acquisition. Progress levels 1-4 are divided into two performance level steps (Low and High) and Progress level 5 (500-550) is divided into five 10-point steps. Because the baseline data (W-APT) for kindergarten students taking the assessment in spring of the same school year is in the same grade span, the MADESE determines that advancing two or more per-
formance level steps until they reach Level 3 High is making progress. After a student reaches Level 3 High, progress is defined as advancing one performance level step.

Using the baseline performance level data of the W-APT, the majority of kindergarteners will score between Level 1 Low and Level 3 Low. Therefore, they must advance 2 steps in order to be on a trajectory to achieve English proficiency. Data from students who do not complete kindergarten will be disaggregated from those who attend all year. Data of mobile students that is incomplete will be reported separately. Student information data will be by the following categories in order to provide additional information on ELL performance i.e. ethnicity and SES.

Two sets of assessment data were collected: one measuring student performance on DIBELS, which is used for all students and the other data set will be the state assessment measuring ELL progress. DIBELS data was disaggregated by ELLs and mobile ELLs. A comparison of these data sets shows how student mobility affects learning for ELL students.

Table 5

*Student performance in kindergarten as measured by DIBELS, MEPA and MELA-O*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DIBELS 2012</th>
<th>DIBELS 2013</th>
<th>MEPA/MELO-O 2012</th>
<th>ACCESS 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All kindergarteners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile ELLs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data provided teachers evidence of the performance of children in kindergarten. It allowed teachers to compare and contrast the performance of general education students with ELLs, particularly mobile ELLs. This information was provided to the interviewees beforehand and guided the interview process. It provided the framework upon which the study was built and allowed teachers to express their opinions, discuss their practices and offer suggestions on kindergarten practices and meeting the needs of mobile ELLs. It also informed the district leadership and state policy makers on the efficacy of the full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs and provided opportunities for serious discussion on student mobility.

The assessment data was collected from the Director of Student Assessment who maintains the assessment data for the district. Additional information, as needed, was requested from the Director of English Language Learners.

The second principle of data collection, according to Yin (2009), is to create a case study database. For this study, the data collection was the attendance, enrollment and assessment data, and the researcher’s notes taken during the interviews and transcripts of the interviews. The case study documents were those collected during the study such as student information, assessment data, interview questions, etc. These documents were annotated for easy retrieval.

Yin (2009) states that the third principle of data collection is maintaining a chain of evidence in order to strengthen the reliability of the study. The external observer should be able to trace the chain of evidence to the case study report. All evidence should be carefully considered and not lost through carelessness or bias.
Interviews. According to Yin, “the most important advantage by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation…Thus, any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (2009, p.115).

In this study, the researcher used two sources of student data to inform and guide the teacher interviews. The interview questions were developed within the theoretical framework that: children will acquire a second language with guidance from an experienced native-speaking teacher and peers; and that kindergarten is an essential part of child development. It was determined if
the teachers being interviewed are bi-lingual. Being fluent in a second language is not a requirement to teach in this district. The interviewees are highly-qualified kindergarten teachers knowledgeable in developmental theory and experienced in kindergarten pedagogy. The interviews were conducted in two separate stages with each of the six teachers.

During the first stage the teachers were given the attendance, enrollment and assessment data to analyze beforehand. During the semi-structured interviews, they were questioned about their perceptions of student mobility of ELLs in the kindergarten program. The responses to questions in the interview were open-ended and allowed this researcher to report the findings in a narrative fashion. However, the questions followed a set of questions from the case study protocol. The interviews were conducted as “guided conversations rather than structured inquiries” (Yin, p.106). The researcher needed to ensure that the questions were not leading or biased. After the interviews, the researcher transcribed the responses and used descriptive coding to chunk them and then organized these chunks into clusters to begin drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher analyzed participant responses to identify themes.

In the second stage, the researcher conducted a focus group with the same teachers for member checking and accuracy. During this time, the researcher corroborated certain facts that [the researcher] thinks have been established (Yin, 2009, p.107). Teacher participants had the opportunity to confirm/clarify/argue the findings of the interviews and provided suggestions on how to counteract the effects of student mobility on student learning. In order to promote rich dialogue “the specific questions must be carefully worded, so that [the researcher] appears genuinely naïve about the topic and allows the interviewee(s) to provide fresh commentary about it” (Yin, 2009, p.107). These interviews formed the core of this research and it was the intent that the
Table 6

*Participant Interview Questions*

- Describe the literacy program in your classroom/school.
- Do you receive supports in the classroom?
- Explain the biggest challenges you deal with on a daily basis in the classroom.
- Explain how ELLs are supported in your classroom/school.
- What are the daily challenges for ELLs in the classroom?
- Is the data reflective of ELL performance in the classroom?
- Is student mobility among ELLs an issue in your classroom? If so, how do they adjust?
- What are some of the reasons why students are mobile in your school?
- What happens to ELL students when they leave in the school year and then return?
- Do you modify your curriculum to help mobile students? If so, how?
- Do you provide individualized support to mobile students? If so, how?
- How much progress do you expect to make with ELLs by the end of the year?
- Does FDK help ELLs make progress?

**Data Analysis**

A logic model was used to depict the linear progression of “matching empirically observed events (data collection) to theoretically predicted events” (Yin, 2009, p.149). This study predicted that student mobility among ELLs in kindergarten impedes student progress and is a problem that affects not only student performance, school and district performance but will have
long-term implications for immigrant families and the economic and social well-being of communities. The theoretical framework of kindergarten and second language acquisition and the literature review that provided the context for this study suggested that data analysis would highlight challenges to the program’s success, which would inform program improvement, provide suggestions to increase family and community support and inform local and state policymakers. These strengthened support systems will, in turn, better help mobile ELLs achieve proficiency.

Figure 1. Linear Logic Model (adapted from Yin, 2009, p.157)

Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (p.10). Data reduction occurred throughout the research. It began in the planning of the research i.e. choosing the research ques-
tions, the conceptual framework and the data selection. It continued throughout the data collection. The student attendance, enrollment and assessment data was presented to the teachers/interviewees before the interview and provided them with the context upon which the interviews were based.

Table 7

Summary of Data Collection and Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Collection/Timeline</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English language learners?</td>
<td>1. Student attendance data</td>
<td>Enrollment data (November)</td>
<td>1. Enrollment data-breakdown student data by length of time in FDK for regular education students and ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Student enrollment data</td>
<td>Assessment data (November)</td>
<td>2. Assessment data-compare ELL student progress on the MELA-O and MEPA to the W-APT using MADESE formula and compare student growth for kindergartners (general education &amp; ELL) using DIBELS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Student achievement data:</td>
<td>Interviews (March/April)</td>
<td>3. Interviews-ask open-ended questions about mobile ELLs in FDK. Transcribe and code the responses by themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• DIBELS</td>
<td>Focus group (May)</td>
<td>4. Focus group-A focus group will be formed to member check, clarify and confirm findings of the efficacy of FDK for mobile ELLs. Recommendations for improving kindergarten programs based on data and themes will be collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• W-APT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• MELA-O and MEPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ACCESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Semi-structured interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Focus group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher organized the attendance and enrollment into tables and the assessment data into graph form in order to clearly display the data so that the interviewees could analyze it in order to make informed responses. “Valid analyses requires, and is driven by, displays that are
focused enough to permit a viewing of a full data set in the same location, and are arranged systematically to answer the research question at hand” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp.91-92). During the interviews, the researcher acted as a participant observer.

After the interviews, the researcher proceeded during this process by focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in the transcription of the interviews. The interview summaries were coded into themes or clusters. According to Saldaña (2009), coding is just not labeling, it is linking (p.8). He quotes Richards & Morse (2007), stating that coding “leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (p.137). The researcher read and reread the interview narratives “while writing analytic memos or jotting in the margins tentative ideas for codes, topics, and noticeable patterns or themes” (Saldaña, 2009, p.18). For the first cycle of coding, this researcher used open coding to reduce the interview transcripts i.e. broke up the text from the interviews into smaller groups for grouping and later analysis. A reflective memo on the research was maintained with analytic memos. Table 8 provides a sample of the codes that were used for the interview responses. A detailed explanation of the codes can be found in Appendix E.

Table 8
Sample of Codes Emerging from the Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CURR-PROG</td>
<td>Describe the literacy program in your classroom/school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURR-TRANS</td>
<td>Do you modify your curriculum to help mobile students? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-CLASS</td>
<td>Do you receive supports in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-ELL</td>
<td>Explain how ELLs are supported in your classroom/school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-MOB-ELL</td>
<td>Do you provide individualized support to mobile students? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS-CHALL</td>
<td>Explain the biggest challenges you deal with on a daily basis in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS-ELL-CHALL</td>
<td>What are the daily challenges for ELLs in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF-ELL</td>
<td>Is the data reflective of ELL performance in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF-ELL-OBJ</td>
<td>How much progress do you expect to make with ELLs by the end of the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the second cycle of coding, the process of pattern coding was utilized in order to identify emerging themes. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), “qualitative data can be reduced and transformed in many ways: through selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in a larger pattern…” (p.11). Through clustering, a phenomenon can be better understood “by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns or characteristics” (p.249). For example, in this study the researcher wanted to know how teachers perceive the efficacy of full day kindergarten on mobile ELLs. Central to this research, one had to find out how teachers support English language acquisition for students who are mobile in their classrooms. In order to do this, the researcher determined whether teachers understand second language acquisition theory, as developed by Vygotsky and Krashen. Teachers must also understand how the concept of kindergarten benefits early child development. The triangulation of the data connected emergent themes within the theoretical framework.
Table 9

An Overview of the Coding Process in Inductive Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
<th>Phase 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of Raw interview Data</td>
<td>Close Reading of Text</td>
<td>Creation of Categories</td>
<td>Overlapping Coding and Uncoded Text</td>
<td>Revise and Refine Category System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial read through interview data</td>
<td>Identify specific segments of information</td>
<td>Label the segments of information to create categories</td>
<td>Reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories</td>
<td>Create a model of important categories based on theoretical framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many pages of text</td>
<td>Many segments of text</td>
<td>20-30 categories</td>
<td>5-10 categories</td>
<td>3-5 categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Creswell, 2002, Figure 9.4, p. 266

In summary, the data collection and reduction process involved three stages. These were:

- Attendance, enrollment and assessment data

The data sets were collected, presented in table and graph form for teachers to analyze and respond to during the interview.

- Teachers’ semi-structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted after the teachers had the opportunity to analyze the data. The data reduction process consisted of transcribing interviews, preparing raw data files, close reading of text, creation of categories (in vivo coding), before finally revising and refining categories. In vivo coding is using quotes from the participants in order to keep the data rooted in their own language. Descriptive coding used “chunking” by theme and then organizing these chunks into clusters (emergent themes) to begin drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
The patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews informed the focus group. It was the goal of this research that the clarifications, confirmations and suggestions that emerged from this focus group would lead to better understanding of learning for mobile ELLs in full day kindergarten. The researcher hoped to use these findings to provide suggestions and guidance on how best to help these students achieve proficiency.

The data was triangulated through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks in order to answer the research questions.

Table 10

Synthesis of Case Study
Validity and Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the trustworthiness of research is important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They describe a series of techniques in order to achieve the aforementioned criteria.

The researcher established trust (credibility) with the interviewees by providing each person with an instrument protecting participant confidentiality. Although the researcher is a district administrator, the names of the teachers interviewed will remain anonymous and the information gathered will not be used against the teachers. The validity of the interview data was further strengthened by member checking i.e. when the analysis from the information gathered is reviewed by the interviewees. This process allowed participants (researcher and interviewees) the opportunity to assess the data, to correct errors and challenge what they believed were erroneous interpretations.

In order to produce understanding of the research, data was collected from multiple sources. This triangulation of data provided the researcher with an account that is rich, robust, and comprehensible. This triangulation as identified by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) enabled the researcher to examine the consistency of findings generated by the interviews, and student data.

The researcher engaged in peer debriefing which “is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical sessions and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” during the focus interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308). This process helped address any issues
the researchers may have had with bias, allowed for reflection, and allowed for testing and defending emerging hypotheses.

Transferability (external validity or fittingness) also occurred in the naturalistic inquiry. Thick description described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is a means to achieve transferability i.e. transferring the study to other contexts. The information gathered in the interviews will enrich the data by providing rich, detailed information. It will allow the reader to experience the process and enable the reader to transfer the experience to a similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 248).

Reliability or dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is often defined as the ability to replicate a study and achieve consistent results. In a qualitative study, reliability means that “the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Gibbs, 2007, as quoted in Creswell, 2009, p. 190). In order to ensure reliability, Yin suggests that qualitative researchers document the procedures of their case studies and document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible. He also recommends setting up a detailed case study protocol and database (Yin, 2003, as quoted in Creswell, 2009, p.190).

In order to achieve trustworthiness within qualitative research, Lincoln & Guba maintain that the data used must be confirmable by third parties. This researcher used a database that other parties can access to verify the data and trace the findings back to the original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 248).

The criteria followed by the researcher in this study will “assure the consumer of such research that any and all appropriate steps have been taken to assure that data from human sources and contexts are meaningful, trackable, verifiable, and grounded in the real-life situations from which they were derived” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 250).
Protection of Human Subjects

The Superintendent of Schools gave her support to this study. Written permission was obtained from her and from each of the building principals. Human subjects are an integral part of this study. Six teachers were interviewed. Written permission was received from each of the participants prior to the start of the study. The participants were informed that participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any point. All field notes, logs, and data were made available to the participants. Throughout the study and in the final report, the participants will remain anonymous. During the focus group, teachers underwent member checking. They had the opportunity to clarify and confirm the statements made during the interviews.

Attendance, enrollment and assessment data for ELL students in kindergarten was collected. Individual student confidentiality was maintained as students will only be identified by their SASSID. Individual student information such as assessment performance was coded to ensure confidentiality and protect privacy. This thesis proposal was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Northeastern University.
Chapter IV: Report of Research Findings

The goal of this qualitative single case study is to synthesize teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELL students. Student mobility is an issue in school districts throughout the country. It is a challenge for state policymakers, educators and community organizers as they try to provide services to these children. This study will expand the research concerning how other teachers can help these children such as: adapting their curriculum, adjusting their time on learning, and providing academic and social supports. It will also provide information to district personnel, community organizers, and state policymakers.

The practical purpose of this case study is to examine the effects of student mobility on English Language Learners (ELLs) in full day kindergarten and to make recommendations concerning how to make adjustments to educational practices and social policies to help these mobile students make progress and to provide stability to transient families. As districts and schools work to close the achievement gap among students, this study will provide performance data for ELLs in full day kindergarten and disaggregate the data for mobile ELLs in kindergarten. The results of this study will provide guidance to state policy makers, city and school officials concerning how to create programs to diminish the adverse impact of student mobility on ELLs not only in kindergarten but in later grades.

The intellectual purpose of this study is to strengthen the researcher’s knowledge of early childhood education, the curriculum used at this age and how to better support learning, particularly for mobile students. Furthermore, it will increase the researcher’s knowledge of how ELLs learn and the significance of time on learning at a young age.
This chapter is divided into six sections to facilitate the logical presentation of the data collected in this study. In the first section, Research Questions, the researcher describes the significance the research questions have on why and how data were collected. In the second section, Research Design, the researcher reviews the rationale behind conducting a single case study as supported by Yin (2009) and Maxwell (2005). The third section, Site and Participants, delivers a brief overview of the schools and teachers involved in this study. This section provides the reader with the types of kindergarten classes taught by each educator, the level of education and the range of experience of the teachers.

In the fourth section, Data Collection, the researcher sequentially delves into all three methods of data collection (student data, semi-structured interviews, and focus group) and the analysis of each. In the subsection, Student Data, the researcher presents several forms of data on kindergarten students i.e. attendance, enrollment and performance. In the second sub-section, Semi-Structured Interview Results, the researcher describes the coding process for inductive analysis of transcription. Then, the researcher highlights significant findings from the analysis of participant interviews regarding their perceptions of ELL mobility in kindergarten. Because the interviews served as the primary data set, findings from the interviews informed by the student data will be presented in this section. In the last sub-section, Focus Group Results, the researcher uses participants’ collective commentary to affirm and clarify the data collected throughout this research, and unveils yet another finding in the final phase of research.

In the fifth section, Member Checking and Peer Debriefing, the researcher seeks to demonstrate two methods by which the findings of this case study were validated. Lastly, in the sixth and final section of Chapter Four, the researcher presents the impressions of all cumulative data in the Summary of Findings.
Research Questions

This investigation was a qualitative, single case study. This research method was deemed most appropriate to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009). The researcher designed the study to reveal the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in two elementary schools in an urban district in Massachusetts.

The problem of practice was identified as the mobility of ELLs in kindergarten and whether full day programs compensate for transiency. In order to gain insight into this issue to help policy makers, district and school leadership, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?

2. Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?

These research questions have “an inherently processual orientation” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 75). Therefore, it is appropriate and right to use an open-ended, inductive approach. By gathering data through three different data collection methods, the researcher was able to reveal the meanings behind situation-specific phenomena through the perceptions of those involved (Maxwell, 2005). Utilizing multiple sources of data was an effective way to access teachers’ perceptions, because although these were unique, each layer was complementary to the others (Yin, 2009). More specifically, this study highlighted the perceptions of six teachers to determine how to meet the educational needs of transient students, particularly ELLs.

A logic model was used to depict the linear progression of “matching empirically observed events (data collection) to theoretically predicted events” (Yin, 2009, p.149). The theoretical
framework is centered on how children acquire language and specifically for this study, acquire a second language. The philosophies of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982) stress the importance of time on learning from an experienced teacher to acquire language. Grounded in these theories, the researcher sought to examine the effects of full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs to inform program improvement, provide suggestions to increase family and community supports and inform local and state policymakers. It is the goal of this study that by providing suggestions to strengthen systems of support for ELLs and their families that it will, in turn, better help ELLs be successful learners.

![Figure 1. Linear logic model (adapted from Yin, 2009, p.157)](image)
The logic model was processual and depicted the steps that the researcher took in this study in order to make recommendations for change. Answering the research questions of teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs was the focus of this study. Three data sets was collected and presented to the teachers before the semi-structured interviews. They were given time to analyze the data before being interviewed. After transcribing and coding the interview responses, the researcher held a focus group. After the focus group, the researcher triangulated all three data sets. From these data sources, findings were revealed. Based on these findings, the researcher made recommendations for improving supports for mobile ELLs in kindergarten.

When designing each phase of data collection, the theories that framed the study i.e. the acquisition of language through modeling and practice were critical. The researcher sought to guide the study through the lens of the efficacy of the full day kindergarten model for urban students. Previous studies (DeCosta & Bell 2000, Le, V. et al. 2006; Lee, V et al. 2002; and Larson, J. 2003) support the need for more time on learning for disadvantaged children. Also, Krashen’s theory on language acquisition (1982) provides evidence that children acquire second language when placed in educational settings where they are taught by a native speaker who scaffolds instruction and provides multiple opportunities for verbal practice. When formulating the research questions, the researcher sought to discover the teachers’ perceptions of full day kindergarten as a model to overcome the effects of transience among ELLs.

For this study, the researcher collected and explored a variety of data sets to assess the performance of ELLs in kindergarten. The process by which data was collected is described in detail so similar studies may be conducted in the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Research Design

In this qualitative single case study, the researcher investigated the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in two urban elementary schools in Massachusetts and established the unit of analysis as teachers (Yin, 2009). Because there was only one unit of analysis, this was a holistic design (Yin, 2009). Using a qualitative means of data collection and analysis allows for a holistic view of the problem and eventual recommendations for improvement (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher sought to use this comprehensive method to collect, analyze and interpret data in order to reveal the most salient findings. According to Yin (2009):

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 18)

A single case study “can represent a significant contribution to knowledge, and theory building” (Yin, 2009, p. 47). The researcher hoped through interviewing these particular kindergarten teachers, improvements may be made to the district’s current kindergarten and ESL model, and that some of the findings may also support change to state policy regarding the absence of a mandate requiring kindergarten for all students; and lastly find better ways to support immigrant families and their assimilation into the American culture, in particular its system of education. Additionally, upcoming researchers may look to this case to refocus future findings to either confirm or refute the practicality of the findings, especially in the application to similar settings (Yin, 2009). The data collection techniques the researcher used in this study reflect Yin’s (2009)
case study research design. Yin rationalizes using a single case design when the single case is
the “representative or typical” case (Yin, 2009, p. 48). By capturing the everyday experience of
kindergarten teachers at these two elementary schools, the researcher illuminated areas of
strength and areas of weakness in the current implementation of kindergarten, particularly for
ELLS.

Case study design has proved to be an effective method to provide rich, humanistic data
on a phenomenon, while also allowing for the unexpected (Yin, 2009). Although there are
strengths and limitations to this research method, once these are acknowledged, the researcher
can move forward on a rigorous methodological path to explore important problems of practice,
as well as potential solutions.

Site and Participants

This single case study was conducted at two elementary schools in an urban school dis-
trict in Massachusetts, both of which have schoolwide Title 1 programs. These particular ele-
mentary schools have designated ELL programs. Most ELLs in the district are bused to these
sites. The district developed this model in order to concentrate district resources for ELLs; each
school being located at opposite ends of the city. Both of these schools, just as all elementary
schools in this district, have full day kindergarten. The poverty levels in all Title 1 elementary
schools in this district range between 78-94%. In these particular schools, the poverty levels are
approximately 80% and 94% respectively. For the purposes of this study, these schools will be
designated School A and School B. School A is a prek-5 school with approximately 600 students
and 80% of its students are categorized as low-income. It is designated Level 3 according to
The Massachusetts' state system places schools and districts on a five-level scale, ranking the highest performing in Level 1 and lowest performing in Level 5. According to Accountability Information provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) in 2012, schools are classified into Level 3 if they are among the lowest 20 percent relative to other schools in their grade span statewide, if one or more subgroups in the school are among the lowest performing 20% of subgroups relative to all subgroups statewide, if they have persistently low graduation rates (less than 60% for any subgroup over a four-year period), or if they have very low MCAS participation rates for any group (less than 90%). The lowest achieving, least improving Level 3 schools are candidates for classification into Levels 4 and 5, the most serious designations in Massachusetts' accountability system. The strength of this accountability system is undergirded by the state's Act Relative to the Achievement Gap Process (2012) for “Underperforming Schools”, which provides tools, rules, and supports for the state to aggressively engage with schools and districts in Levels 4 and 5.

School B has 94% poverty and was categorized a Level 4 but shed this designation in September 2013 and is now Level 2 because of its strong student performance. As part of the redesign work at this school, the school model was changed from an elementary school to a community school containing approximately 500 students in preK-8.

The participants in this study were four kindergarten teachers: two from each of the elementary schools, one literacy coach and one ESL resource teacher. The six participants were selected by purposeful sample, with voluntary participation of all. The following profile information was gathered during the interviews. All the participants were female with teaching experience that ranged from one to fourteen years. Two of these participants are no longer teaching students. One has now taken a new assignment as an elementary school literacy coach but did
teach the cohort of students whose data was used for this study. The other works as a resource ESL teacher and provides the ELL students with push-in support and assembles data on student performance to inform instruction. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants listed in Table 11.
As depicted by the logic model, there were three phases in the collection of data. The first step in the process was the collection of student attendance, enrollment and performance data. This information was used to guide the interview process i.e. the second step of data collection. Lastly, the participants were provided with the emergent findings to corroborate these or make changes, if deemed necessary. The three data sets were then triangulated to support the findings and make recommendations for changes to existing educational practices for ELLs in kindergarten and suggestions for further research.
**Student Data**

**Assessment data.** There were two types of student assessment data collected: 1. ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners). This assessment based on WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) English Language Development standards measures ELL proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking English, as well as the progress the students are making in learning English. 2. DIBELS are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. The procedures are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. DIBELS are comprised of seven measures to function as indicators of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. For this study, student performance on letter identification was utilized because it is implemented three times during the school year and is a reliable predictor of student performance and growth. It should be noted that students were also tested in Nonsense Word Fluency and Phonemic Segment Fluency.

The DIBELS data sets were presented in the form of bar graphs and show the percentage of students identified “At Risk” of not reaching the target goals in “Letter-naming Frequency” by the end of the school year for two cohorts in SY12 and SY13.
The data presented in Figure 2 shows the progress of kindergarten ELL students compared to regular education kindergarten students in School A and to the district as a whole. This data was collected in late spring of the kindergarten year. This was the end of year benchmark data for all kindergarten students. In SY12, the data shows that 18% of ELLs were “At Risk” compared to 9.5% of students in the same school. When compared to district performance, ELLs outnumbered all students for “At Risk.” In the following year (2013), 47% of ELLs were “At Risk.” That is almost double the percentage of regular education students of whom almost one-
quarter are “At Risk.” When compared to overall district performance, the gap between ELL and all students in the district widened. District-wide, 17% of students were “At Risk.”

![Figure 3. Letter-naming fluency for “At Risk” kindergarten students in School B](image)

The second graph (Figure 3) presents data gathered on kindergarten students in School B for two separate cohorts in 2012 and 2013. Again, the achievement gap between ELLs and regular education students is evident. Almost twice the number of ELLs (45%) was “At Risk” compared to regular education students (24%). In the following year (2013), the percentage of ELL students “At Risk” increased dramatically to 64.7%. Two out of three ELLs were “At Risk” in School B compared to one out of three regular education students (32%). According to the data, ELL students attending School B were four times more likely to be “At Risk” than students across the district.
Overall, the DIBELS data indicates a large percentage of all students “At Risk” in kindergarten for both cohorts in 2012 and 2013 and a steep increase from one year to the next. The data shows that ELL students were making progress at half the rate of kindergarten students at each school.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of students “At Risk” at School A from 2012 to 2013. The percentage increased from 18% to 47%. In other words, the ratio of ELLs “At Risk” increased from approximately one in five to one in two. School B has been struggling with the performance of all children in kindergarten. However, the most dramatic increase in “At Risk” students was for ELLs. In 2012, approximately one in two ELLs was “At Risk.” In 2013, this ratio had increased to two in three.

Finally, the last assessment data used to inform the interviews was the use of summative assessment data. The data was presented to the interviewees by school. In SY12, the summative assessment used by MADESE was the Massachusetts English proficiency Assessment (MEPA). It was replaced in SY13 by the ACCESS. MADESE equated both tests so that progress for the SY12 cohort can be tracked in SY13. These assessments measure student progress for ELLs in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The ACCESS test designates five levels of proficiency for ELLs: entering, emerging, developing, expanding, bridging, and reaching. Students who are classified as “reaching” demonstrate that the English language is no longer a barrier to accessing academic content appropriate to their grade level. It should be noted that the performance level “expanding” on ACCESS is considered equivalent to “beginning” on MEPA.
Table 12

*School A: Kindergarten Performance for ELLs on MEPA and ACCESS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A</th>
<th>Cohort 1</th>
<th>Cohort 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2012 (MEPA)</td>
<td>2013 (ACCESS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 students:</td>
<td>17 students</td>
<td>All 17 “Entering”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 “Entering”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 “Beginning”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 “Developing”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>2013 (ACCESS)</td>
<td>2014 (ACCESS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 students enrolled of original FY12 cohort</td>
<td>Not available until fall 2014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 of the 9 deemed “Making Progress”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At School A in 2012, there were ten ELL students in kindergarten. According to the MEPA, five of these students were “developing.” By the end of 1st grade, one student had left. Of the original kindergarten cohort, 4 out of 9 were deemed “making progress.” The SY13 cohort had 17 students. In kindergarten, all 17 students were classified as “entering” according to the ACCESS test. In essence, the SY13 kindergarten cohort had not made progress.
At School B, the data is similar to School A. In SY12, only one student was classified as “entering” according to MEPA. By SY13, one student had left the cohort. Of the remaining 12 students, only 4 of them (33%) were reported as “making progress.” For the SY13 cohort, all 12 students were classified as “entering.” The performance data for these students in 1st grade will not be available until fall 2014.

To summarize, there was attrition from SY12 to SY13 at each school. In School A, 92% of the SY12 kindergarten cohort was enrolled for 1st grade in SY13. For School B, 90% were still enrolled for 1st grade. Based on performance data for SY12 and SY13, the MADESE determined which students were making progress. Only 33% of ELL 1st graders were “making progress” in School A and 44% of ELL 1st graders in School B.

Lastly, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) has recently introduced a new teaching and learning platform known as “Edwin Analytics.” The data analysis tool provided by this system is the Early WarningIndicator System (EWIS). It provides early warning risk levels of students in danger of not reaching proficiency on 3rd grade MCAS based on several data sources. Students are categorized by English proficiency,
socioeconomic status, race, and special education status. There are three levels: high, moderate and low. Almost all ELLs are classified as high risk as evidenced in Table 5 because of their lack of language fluency.

Table 14

EWIS: Risk Level for 1st grade ELLs SY 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Included</th>
<th># High</th>
<th>% High</th>
<th># Moderate</th>
<th>% Moderate</th>
<th># Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools A &amp; B</td>
<td>31*</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>9,600</td>
<td>6,650</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 shows that only one ELL student in the district has a moderate risk level. The data also shows that ELL students in this district are not performing as well as students across the state. It should be noted that this data includes all ELLs in the 1st grade at School A and B. Nineteen of these students were in the SY12-13 kindergarten cohort.

**Enrollment data.** The enrollment data was presented as the *churn rate* for each school. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) usesthree different measures to capture mobility: Intake (Transfer-in) Rate; Churn Rate; and Stability Rate. This study used *School-level churn*, which is based on the students enrolled in a school who are not reported as enrolled in the same school throughout the year, as reported by districts in the School Information Management System (SIMS), the data warehouse operated by MADESE. The school *numerator* includes each student who transferred into or out of the school at any time. Each student is counted only once regardless of the number of transfers. The school *denomina-
tor includes each student reported as enrolled in the school in any of the three SIMS data collections. Each student is counted only once in the denominator.

Table 15

*Student Churn Rate for all students at School A and District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012 School A/District</th>
<th>2013 School A/District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students (%)</td>
<td>19.4/20.9</td>
<td>17.7/15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLs (%)</td>
<td>38.9/38.7</td>
<td>29.1/21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten ELLs (%)</td>
<td>40/31.5</td>
<td>71/44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 shows that the mobility rate for all students attending School A has declined from 2012 to 2013. However, it still remains high, particularly for ELL students. In SY12, the churn rate was high for all ELLs and particularly, kindergarten ELLs of whom 40% were mobile. In other words, two out of every five kindergarten ELLs were mobile. Although the churn rate for ELLs throughout the school dropped in SY13, almost 3 out of 4 kindergarten ELL students either entered or left this school during the school year.
Table 16

*Student Churn Rate for all students at School B and District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School B/District</td>
<td>School B/District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students (%)</td>
<td>19.8/20.9</td>
<td>16.6/15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLs (%)</td>
<td>28/38.7</td>
<td>15.2/21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten ELLs (%)</td>
<td>23/31.5</td>
<td>17/44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mobility rate for students in School B is better than School A as depicted in Table 16. At School B, the rate has declined from SY12 to SY13 across all three groups. In SY13, almost 1 out of 7 ELL students either entered or left the school during the school year. District-wide, it was approximately 1 out of 5 students. For kindergarten ELLs, it was almost one out of two.

**Attendance data.** This data was collected to identify the percentage of students attending school daily and to highlight the percentage of students who were chronically absent. Chronic absenteeism is defined as enrolled students missing more than 10% of school. For the whole year, this is 18 days or more. The attendance data was gathered for two cohorts of students both in SY12 and SY13.
Table 17

*Kindergarten Attendance Data for School A and District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attendance rate (%)</th>
<th>Chronically absent (%)</th>
<th>Average number of days absent:</th>
<th>ELL attendance rate (%)</th>
<th>ELL chronically absent (%)</th>
<th>ELL average number of days absent:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall attendance data for School A in SY12 and SY13 is strong as shown in Table 17. The overall attendance rate does decrease slightly from SY12 to SY13. When the data is disaggregated for chronic attendance, it shows that approximately 30% of students missed 18 days or more (28.4 in SY12, 30.1% in SY13). For all students the average number of days absent was 13 in SY12 and 13.6 in SY13.

However, the data shows ELL chronic absenteeism is very high. Absenteeism increased from SY12 to SY13. In SY12 and SY13, almost one out of every two ELLs was chronically absent. For both years, ELL students missed almost three weeks of school on average.
Table 18

*Kindergarten Attendance Data for School B and District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attendance rate (%)</th>
<th>Chronically absent rate (%)</th>
<th>Average number of days absent:</th>
<th>ELL attendance rate (%)</th>
<th>ELL chronically absent rate (%)</th>
<th>ELL average number of days absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012</strong></td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013</strong></td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall attendance rate also declined in School B. The chronic absentee rate also increased from SY12 to SY13. On average, all students were absent approximately 13.6 days in SY12 and 15.9 days in SY13. The overall ELL attendance rate was much lower than the overall attendance rate. Conversely, the ELL chronic absentee rate was very high. Almost one out of every two ELLs was chronically absent in SY12. The rate increased from SY12 to SY13 to two out of three ELLs. Overall, kindergarten ELLs at this school missed more than one month of school on average for both years.

As shown in tables 17 and 18, the overall attendance rate for both schools decreased from SY12 to SY13. The attendance rate for both ELLs and the whole kindergarten were on par for School A. However, for School B it was lower for ELLs and the whole kindergarten. The chronic absentee rate for ELL kindergartners in School A remained high for both years. Almost 1 out of 2 students missed 18 days or more. From SY12 to SY13 there was a dramatic increase in chronic absenteeism for all kindergartners and ELLs in School B. In SY13, 2 out of 3 students were absent 18 days or more.
In conclusion, the historic student data for ELLS collected in Phase 1 shows that they are at risk of not reaching proficiency in literacy based on DIBELS data, student mobility data, and attendance data. According to DIBELS, most of these ELLs are “At Risk”. High churn rates and chronic attendance indicate that time on learning for many of these students were inconsistent and interrupted. According to Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982), children need time on learning to be successful. ELLs acquire fluency in a second language by learning from a native speaker. The data suggests that these ELLs will not acquire the fluency necessary to be successful learners.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** Teacher participation in the semi-structured interviews was voluntary. The experience of each teacher varied from one year to fourteen years. Four of the participants were classroom teachers. The other two participants were an itinerant ESL teacher and a literacy coach. The literacy coach was a kindergarten classroom teacher at School B during the 2012 and 2013 school years. The researcher conducted each interview individually in each participant’s classroom. The decision to do this was intentional in order to promote a feeling of comfort. Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. The researcher noted that each participant appeared willing to discuss her individual classroom experiences and perceptions.

The underlying vital themes from which the interview questions were developed were: time on learning, kindergarten readiness and classroom supports. These themes emerged from a review of the literature and theoretical framework as depicted in Table 20. Success in kindergarten occurs when students are regularly present, ready to learn and are guided by an experienced teacher.
Table 19

*Interview Questions and Their Relationship to the Research Questions and The Theoretical Framework*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Research Questions</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework Construct/ Themes</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?</td>
<td>The importance of time on learning for second language acquisition-mobility</td>
<td>Is student mobility an issue among ELLs in your classroom/school? If so, what are some of the reasons for mobility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do you support mobile ELLs in kindergarten?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?</td>
<td>The importance of time on learning for second language acquisition-kindergarten readiness</td>
<td>In your opinion, what are some of the biggest daily challenges for ELLs in kindergarten?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Does the data accurately reflect ELL performance in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Why does MADESE rate so many ELLs as not making progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does FDK help ELLs make progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What progress do you expect ELLs to make by the end of the year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What supports do you receive in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your biggest daily challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What additional supports would you like to have?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the questions were asked within the context of English Language Learners and teacher perceptions of ELLs’ educational experiences. The researcher carefully analyzed participant responses to identify themes/findings that emerged from the presentation of student data. The themes/findings that emerged centered on lack of kindergarten readiness, lack of parent support, the impact of poverty, the effects of class size and the impact of the absence of state policy. These themes emerged through descriptive coding as the majority of participants referred to the same central ideas, as evidenced in Table 20.

Table 20

*Phases Two and Three of Data Collection Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Research question(s) addressed</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time on learning</td>
<td>What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs?</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>The effects of poor student attendance/high absenteeism on achievement.</td>
<td>Student data &amp; semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among ELLs?</td>
<td>MOB</td>
<td>The issue on student mobility on achievement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As similar words appeared and were highlighted, the themes became apparent. In this way, Saldaña (2009) urges researchers to, “trust your instincts with In Vivo coding” (p. 75). As recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994), “One method for creating codes – the one we prefer – is that of creating a provisional ‘start list’ of codes prior to field work” (p. 58). Many themes that emerged were those the researcher predicted would arise based on the theoretical framework and the review of the literature. As supported by the research on the efficacy of full day kindergarten, there are many variables that affect it such as poverty, student readiness, race, class size and parental engagement. Research has found that many students do not start kindergarten prepared to learn because of poverty and race (Lee, V. et al., 2002). Another researcher maintains that ELLs benefit from additional time on teach (Cannon, 2010).
An evaluation of kindergarten models by WestEd researchers maintained that variables such as parental involvement, class size and teacher quality affect their efficacy (2008). These variables (themes) affect time on learning for students, particularly disadvantaged students such as ELLS. When viewed through the lens of time on learning for language acquisition, these variables simultaneously overlap with the research questions and the literature review.

**Coding.** The researcher utilized Saldaña’s (2009) in vivo, also called “literal” coding, as the initial method of organizing the interview data. “In Vivo’s” root meaning is ‘in that which is alive,’ and as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 74). The researcher highlighted each interview transcription by theme in different colors. The initial coded themes were those that were also addressed directly in the interview questions and focused on the data presented to the participants. The emergent themes of the absence of a mandate requiring kindergarten, the lack of readiness of students for kindergarten, the lack of classroom supports, and the lack of parent engagement served as the foci for the interview questions and provided the data to respond to goals of this study i.e. how effective is full day kindergarten for mobiles ELLs.
Table 21  

Relationship Among First Cycle Start List Codes, Research Questions and the Theoretical Framework’s Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Research Questions</th>
<th>Constructs of Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Theoretical Definition (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982)</th>
<th>Applied Definition</th>
<th>Themes/Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?</td>
<td>The socio-cultural and developmental theory (Vygotsky). The theory of second language acquisition (Krashen).</td>
<td>Students learn in classrooms from their teachers and peers. Learning is progressive and language is acquired through cognitive development (Vygotsky). Students acquire a second language by meaningful communication with a native speaker (Krashen).</td>
<td>A student makes progress by time on learning in a classroom setting with an experienced teacher. A student acquires language in a classroom with an experienced speaker (teacher) who provides guidance and meaningful communication, and scaffolds tasks. A student acquires language that is “one step” beyond his/her current level of competence.</td>
<td>Time on learning-attendance; time on learning-mobility; time on learning-kindergarten readiness; time on learning-class size; time on learning-classroom supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English Language Learners?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the researcher allowed flexibility to explore other areas of importance as these arose. Because in vivo coding does not assign a fixed number of codes, but rather imparts the overall sentiments of the interviewee, it is a flexible option for practically all types of qualitative research studies (Saldaña, 2009).

As a second level of coding, the researcher applied inductive coding techniques to focus in on the most relevant information. Because of the dialectical nature of the semi-structured interview process, the data collected was abundant but not all of it was relevant. By carefully narrowing and focusing through the categories, the researcher developed emergent themes (Thomas, 2003). The transcriptions were coded for the predetermined themes. Each theme was assigned a
color. As other, sometimes unexpected, ideas emerged and were descriptively coded in the margins of the transcriptions, recurring patterns were noted.

For the most part, and as expected, these themes correlated to the themes already developed through the review of literature, as well as the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s (1978) and Krashen’s (1982) theories supports the need for time on learning with an experienced native speaker to acquire language fluency. Full day kindergarten provides children with the learning environment to gain fluency. The review of the literature supports these theories, particularly for children who are disadvantaged by poverty and lack of English fluency. Studies support the need for full day kindergarten, particularly for African Americans and Hispanics (Alban & Schatz, 2003, Weiss and Offenberg, Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Cannon, 2010). The researcher wanted to determine if the participants’ perceptions of full day kindergarten in helping ELLs become fluent coincided with the theories supported by the framework and further reinforced by the literature review.

Despite the similarities in emergent themes, this coding technique was useful because the categories materialized more spontaneously. The emergent themes served as the foundation but the researcher was cognizant of coding for unexpected themes. Consequently, the researcher maximized the ability to be more objective when determining outcomes.

The researcher was surprised that there was no mention of the burdens of extended time on learning i.e. full day kindergarten on young learners. Indeed, the length of the school day and its impact on young learners was viewed as necessary for student success.

These interviews were analyzed using a process that consisted of transcribing interviews, preparing raw data files, creation of categories (in vivo coding), and finally revising categories.
Descriptive coding allowed for “chunking” by theme and then organizing these chunks into clusters to begin drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Figure 4. Process of analysis, adapted from Creswell, 2002, Figure 9.4, p.266

Finally it should be noted that although the researcher carefully structured the coding process, there also needed to be fluidity (Saldaña, 2009). Saldaña (2009) states that “sometimes the participant says it best; sometimes the researcher does. Be willing to mix and match coding methods as you proceed with data analysis” (p. 76).

Phase Two of the data collection timeline necessitated many sequential steps. First, the researcher prepared the raw files by typing these into a common format. Second, the researcher read the text closely to familiarize herself with the themes and details. Next, the researcher defined the general categories as influenced by the research goals, but redefined by the specific content of the interviews. Then, the researcher eliminated any text that did not inform the research goals and double-coded any text that overlapped among two or more themes. Lastly, the researcher continued to narrow the codes, eventually distilling findings (Thomas, 2003).

The researcher utilized first-level coding as a starting point to sort participant responses into the three targeted themes: student attendance, mobility and performance (time on learning), student readiness (parental supports and preparedness) and classroom supports (class size, class
resources and parental involvement). Through the use of color, this process allowed the researcher to find out the continuity of the themes and how strongly the predicted themes emerged from the actual data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The semi-structured interviews were initially broadly coded by theme, and then analyzed for recurring patterns of codes. Researcher memos were recorded in a journal and also through researcher commentary in the margins of the transcriptions that highlighted interesting and/or common remarks (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

“These ideas are important; they suggest new interpretations, leads, connections with other parts of the data, and these usually point toward questions and issues to look into during the next wave of data collection, and to ways of elaborating some of these ideas” (Miles & Huberman, 2009, p. 67).

![Figure 5. Emerging themes that influence ELL performance](image)

**Data analysis.** Three major themes emerged as influencing the efficacy of full day kindergarten: time on learning, kindergarten readiness and classroom supports. Furthermore, unantici-
pated themes such as frustration over absence of legislation mandating kindergarten and the lack of parent engagement also emerged throughout the interview process in Phase Two of the data collection. Kindergarten is not compulsory in Massachusetts. Children are not mandated to attend school until the age of six.

These themes supported the research question regarding how teachers perceive the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs. More specifically, the themes revealed the perceptions of teachers and their perspectives concerning how to offset the negative effects of mobility for ELLs. These themes provided the researcher a basis from which to begin coding. Furthermore, the themes support the philosophies of Froebel and Dewey (1915) of the importance of early childhood education for children. Time on learning through play and practice is an essential component of childhood development. Both Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982) believe that language is acquired through continual, regular practice with a native speaker. Therefore, poor attendance and mobility are barriers to time on learning spent with an experienced teacher. Student readiness such as fluency in the child’s native language impedes the child’s ability to progress. Large class size and lack of parental support are also impediments to efficacy of kindergarten.

*Interview questions.*

*Student attendance and mobility.* The first set of questions focused on student attendance and mobility among ELLs.

Table 22
*Questions addressing attendance and mobility among kindergarten ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is student mobility an issue among ELLs in your classroom/school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>If so, what are some of the reasons for mobility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How do you support mobile ELLs in kindergarten?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What are some of the reasons kindergarten ELLs have such high absentee rates?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the teachers stated that mobility was a bigger issue two years ago. The student enrollment data supports this. Student mobility declined in both schools from SY12 to SY13. The churn rate decreased at School A by 10% and at School B by 13%. Two of the teachers have the newcomers’ class and they continue to experience mobility among their students. The ESL teacher and the Literacy Coach also spoke to the problem of mobility as they have been in the district for several years. They concluded that this issue has improved over the past two years. They suggested the reason for this improvement was probably due to the improving economy. When asked the reasons for mobility, they responded that some families return home to Puerto Rico when the weather becomes cold or some families will return home for an extended Christmas vacation. One spoke of one set of parents returning home in the winter and leaving their children with family members. Others are in shelters or hotels due to homelessness or trauma such as domestic abuse. One family left because their house was “shot up.” Some families move to be closer to family members in other parts of the state. The newest kindergarten teacher to the district had expected greater mobility but said it has not been as bad as she had experienced in her previous job in another urban district.

All the interviewees spoke of absenteeism as an issue. They were not surprised by the data. For the most part, they all stated that transportation, bad weather and sickness were the major factors causing absenteeism. ELL students are transported to these two elementary schools from around the city. They are not transported door-to-door but must walk to a pick up site. If they miss the bus, they are unable to make it to school. If the weather is bad, parents will not wait by a bus stop or, for those on foot, walk their children to school. If it snows or rains, ELL children miss school. If a family has a child who gets sick, the mother will keep all her children home because she can’t leave sick children unattended while she walks one child to school or the bus.
stop. Early release days for professional development for teachers were also mentioned as a reason for high absenteeism. Some teachers mentioned that when the mother is sick or works late, the children are late getting to school.

However, the reason they all agreed upon for mobility and poor attendance was that kindergarten is not mandated by the state. Therefore, parents do not see it as important and have no urgency about getting their children to school regularly and on time. Also, the school has no legal basis to file a CHINS petition to the courts. A CHINS (Child In Need of Services) is a petition to the Juvenile Court in Massachusetts for children who regularly run away from home, or constantly disobey the commands of a parent or legal guardian, or miss school on a regular basis, or constantly fail to follow school rules.

Two teachers were frustrated because under the new teacher evaluation system, student performance is considered. They felt that they were being evaluated for their effectiveness as teachers but had no control over the students being present in their classes. One teacher stated that she had one child last year who missed 40 days of school. She said that “if the kids are not in school, they can’t make progress.”

All the teachers use the Reading Street literacy program by Pearson Publishers. The students receive two hours of literacy instruction daily. Teachers scaffold the instruction by DIBELS groupings. Newcomers receive additional instruction in language. The newcomers are given many opportunities to speak and repeat. At one of the elementary schools, they use the push-in model for intervention and provide one hour of after school tutoring for ELL students by grade span i.e. kindergarten to grade 2. The push-in model involves an ESL teacher working with students in small groups for an additional 30-40 minutes daily. For teachers who do not have the
newcomers, they use their professional judgment to determine the level students are at as they do not receive the ACCESS data until May. All of the teachers stated that tardiness is an issue. Again, the reason they all agreed upon for tardiness is transportation. The literacy block occurs in the morning. If a student is an hour late, he/she missed most of that block.

*Student readiness.* The second set of questions focused on ELL preparedness for kindergarten.

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In your opinion, what are some of the biggest daily challenges for ELLs in kindergarten?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Does the data accurately reflect ELL performance in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How do you support mobile ELLs in your classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Why does MADESE rate so many ELLs as not making progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Does FDK help ELLs make progress?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were several challenges agreed upon by all the teachers. The first challenge for ELLs is that they lack the foundations in their native language. Before they can access the academic language in the classroom, they need to build vocabulary. Because they do not know this in their native language, it is challenging for teachers to create this context for learning. One teacher of newcomers who understands some Spanish stated that it is amazing the amount of language the students acquire after a short time.

The second challenge that all the teachers agreed upon was class size. One teacher with a newcomer class has 17 students. The other class sizes ranged from 28 to 32 students. The student enrollment in the district has increased dramatically over the past two years. These large classes make it difficult to provide students with the small group instruction they need. Kindergarten students (both ELLs and non-ELLs) enter the year with a wide range of skills and experiences.
Some have been to prekindergarten and are almost reading while others do not know their letters or numbers. One comment from a teacher was “Teachers can’t do it with 32 students.”

All the teachers have a full-time paraprofessional in their classes. The responsibilities of these assistants are to provide support so the teacher can group students by ability and then provide them with small group instruction and support. Both of these schools have an ESL teacher. These teachers are mobile and provide small group support where needed. One of the schools was using the “pull-out model” for interventions. Both schools now utilize the “push-in model” with Level 1 (entering) and 2 (emerging) ELLs. As a result, these students can potentially receive an additional 45 minutes of literacy instruction daily. However, two of the teachers mentioned that this model is often not implemented with fidelity. Often, the ESL teachers are used for administrative duties due to staff shortages i.e. coordinating the state testing. The paraprofessionals are utilized to cover classrooms when teachers are absent, to oversee recess and assist with lunch.

The teachers did not agree with the MADESE determining that their ELLs were not making progress. They argued that many of the ELL students they teach enter kindergarten with large language deficits- “children come into kindergarten unprepared.” One of the teachers (the newcomers’ class) mentioned that using DIBELS is like “comparing apples to oranges.” She believes her students make tremendous progress. She gets upset when she sees achievement data from the general education kindergarten classes but has to remind herself the progress her students do make within a year.

All the teachers agreed that if they were able to control some factors such as attendance and class size, their students would make greater strides. When asked if they believed full day
kindergarten helped ELLs make progress, five out of the six interviewees responded affirmatively. The most frequent comment was “kindergarten is the new 1st grade.” When asked to explain what they meant by this, teachers responded that with the new kindergarten curriculum and expectations for student achievement, students are now required to learn in kindergarten what was once taught in 1st grade.

The teachers also said that prekindergarten for students should be universal. One teacher said that 1/3 of her students attended prekindergarten and some of them were already reading at a 1st grade level while some of those children who did not have prekindergarten could not recognize their letters. The ESL teacher said she would love to see an ESL preschool. It was agreed by all that full day kindergarten needs to be mandated by the state. The literacy coach supports extended school day for kindergartners. Her experience was that overall children get used to the additional time on learning. When a child falls asleep in class, she allows him/her to nap for a while and then wakes him/her up.

Five of the six teachers agreed that full day kindergarten for ELLs is essential if they are to become fluent. However, one teacher was of the opinion that the current model for full day kindergarten is not helping students as there is too much focus on academics and not enough on social interaction through play. She believes that ELLs would acquire language faster this way. A few years ago, kindergarten classes had social centers and all students had an additional 30 minutes of recess at the end of the day. Social time has been replaced with ELA and math interventions. Eight hours in school is a long day for young children. She is also of the opinion that because of the large class size less gets accomplished than if there were half the number of students in a half day. Much of the beginning of the school year is focused on helping students gain basic skills and working on improving their social behaviors.
Classroom supports. The last set of questions focused on classroom supports for teachers.

Table 24
Questions Addressing Classroom Supports for Kindergarten ELLs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What progress do you expect ELLs to make by the end of the year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What supports do you receive in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What are your biggest daily challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What additional supports would you like to have?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked what progress was expected of ELLs at the end of kindergarten, all the teachers responded that ELLs are held to the same expectations as their regular education students. By the end of the year, ELLs are expected to advance one level according to the WIDA classification of student proficiency. Students in the newcomers’ class are expected to reach a Level 3 “Developing.” It is challenging to move ELLs in any grade past Level 3 because they need to have strong comprehension in academic text. One teacher of newcomers was unsure if being in a self-contained class inhibits progress as this structure provides ELLs with no models of their own age.

ACCESS data for ELLs is not available until the end of the school year. This data does not provide a clear picture of growth because the test is administered in January, less than half way through the year. The ACCESS test in 1st grade provides a stronger picture of growth achieved in kindergarten.

All the teachers concurred that they had all the supplies needed for instruction. Each classroom is assigned a full-time paraprofessional to support the classroom. However, these paraprofessionals are often utilized for other duties in the school as needed. The ESL teacher also provides small group support for ELLs daily. However, two of the teachers mentioned that this
does not always occur as these ESL teachers are often used for administrative duties such as testing. Again, the greatest challenges for teachers were providing supports for ELL students because of the large class size.

Four of the teachers stated that communication with ELL parents was difficult and they wished that they had greater support from parents. It is a barrier that most of them are trying to work around. They agreed that their students need more help at home with schoolwork. Because standards are so high today for students, ELLs need a lot of help at home. However, the teachers maintained that many parents also lack the language skills to help their children. One teacher mentioned that she has one student who speaks Mandarin Chinese. She relies on an older sibling to communicate with home. Parent notices are sent home in Spanish and Portuguese. Parent conferences are mandatory. At School B if parents don’t show for conferences, the Social Emotional Learning team makes a home visit to see if there are ways they can provide support or information to parents. Teachers were not in agreement on attendance at these conferences. Some said they had good turnout while others said it is poor. Transportation was an issue for some parents while others were unable to attend because of conflicts with work. The teacher of the newcomers said that she had good turnout for conferences. She added that ELL parents “do the best they can.” Different cultures have different ideas about the role of parents in education. It is a “big trust.”
## Coding/Findings of Semi-structured Interviews by Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Questions Where Related Codes and Sub-codes Appeared</th>
<th>Examples Of Excerpts (Descriptive)</th>
<th>Frequency of Theme (# of times in six transcriptions)</th>
<th>Finding (if any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Time on Learning | Question 3: ATT-TRANS ATT-ILL                          | "It isn’t a neighborhood school-students are bused here."
                    |                                                       | "If a child misses the bus, they can’t get to school." | Attendance Transportation-4 Attendance Illness-4 | Mobility and attendance are issues that affect the progress of ELLs.
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance. |
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Improving transportation may improve attendance and reduce mobility. |
| Time on Learning | Question 3: ATT-PARENT                                | "When the weather gets cold, absenteeism increases"
                    |                                                       | "Kindergarten is not mandatory." "Mom’s not up on time. In the older grades, the kids can get themselves ready." | Attendance Parents-8 | Mobility and attendance are issues that affect the progress of ELLs.
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance. |
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Improving transportation and supports for ELL parents may improve attendance and reduce mobility. |
| Time on Learning | Question 1, 1A: MOB-ECON                              | "…one was a shelter child"
                    |                                                       | "One child enrolled after MLK Day from Honduras." | Mobility Economy-5 | Mobility and attendance are issues that affect the progress of ELLs.
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance. |
| Time on Learning | Question 1, 1A: MOB-CULT                               | "Families return to their home country in the winter." | Mobility Cultural differences-3 | Mobility and attendance are issues that affect the progress of ELLs.
                    |                                                       |                                                   |                                                      | Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance. |
| Kindergarten Readiness | Question 4 & 5: ELL-READ-LIT | "Children are at so many levels and the curriculum is high-reaching."  
"no foundations in their native language" | Literacy Readiness-4 | Prekindergarten programs need to be provided to prepare all students for kindergarten.

| Kindergarten Readiness | Question 6: ELL-READ-PARENT | "Parents don’t/can’t help their children with homework.”  
"Parent support is a barrier."  
"Different cultures have different ideas about their role as parents in education." | Readiness-Parent involvement-6 | Parent support/engagement needs to be improved.

| Classroom Support | Question 10: KIND-SUPP | "I have a full-time para."  
"There is an ESL teacher to work with students but she is often pulled for administrative duties." | Classroom supports-4 (all of the classroom teachers) | Class size needs to be limited.

| Classroom Support | Question 11 & 12: KIND-CLASS-SIZE | "Her first year (3 years ago) had 22 students, every year after 30-32 students."  
"It is almost impossible to provide help to struggling children." | Classroom size-6 | Class size needs to be limited.

| Classroom Support | Questions 8 & 9: KIND-CURR | "Children are at so many levels and the curriculum is high-reaching."  
"Kindergarten is the new 1st grade." | Challenging curriculum and standards-6 | Prekindergarten programs need to be provided to prepare all students for kindergarten. Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance.
The semi-structured interviews provided rich data regarding teacher perceptions concerning the efficacy of full day kindergarten for ELLs and the challenges that exist for teachers as they work to improve their literacy skills. The participants were eager to provide their opinions on the efficacy of full day kindergarten. While most of them support full day kindergarten, their frustrations with lack of a state mandate for kindergarten, pressures to accelerate student learning while coping with transience and poor attendance, large class size and lack of parental support were strongly evident. Their opinions supported the emergent themes that influence the effectiveness of the kindergarten program.

For the last data set (the focus group), the researcher met with the same group of participants to affirm or change the data collected during these interviews.

**Focus Group Interview**

Phase Three of this research simultaneously addressed both research questions for this study, with the intent of affirming participants’ perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELLs. The emergent findings are supportive of the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982). Language acquisition occurs through time spent with a native speaker who scaffolds instruction. The findings are ways to improve the kindergarten model by ensuring and supporting time on learning. Poor student attendance and mobility reduces time on learning. Large class size, inconsistent school supports and lack of parent involvement are impediments to time on learning. They impact the ability of teachers to provide quality instruction. Lack of preparedness for kindergarten also detracts from quality time on learning as teachers struggle to catch students up to where they need to be. The data from the semi-structured interviews show that teachers perceive that full day kindergarten is essential for student progress, particularly for
ELLs. For this final phase of data collection, the researcher conducted a focus group. Teachers from both schools came to a classroom in School B. The questions (Appendix G) were created by the researcher, and culminated from the student data in Phase 1 and the data emerging from Phase 2 (semi-structured interviews) in this qualitative, single case study. During the focus group, and after already determining emergent themes, the researcher corroborated certain facts she believed were established during the study (Yin, 2009). The researcher presented the rich, textual interview data on the efficacy of full day kindergarten to the group. Participants were given the opportunity to affirm or reject the results.

The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, and throughout this time all participants voiced their thoughts and opinions about the various prompts. This process allowed the participants the opportunity to confirm, deny and/or revise the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The researcher presented the emergent findings and a series of questions about these. The group was given time to read the findings before being asked questions. The researcher noted that the atmosphere was relaxed and collegial and participants were given ample time to speak. During the focus group, the researcher again looked for the emergent themes of student readiness, time on learning and classroom supports, by carefully wording the questions, so the researcher appeared genuinely lacking in knowledge about the topic. The researcher took this approach so that the process would be natural and lacking bias. It would also encourage the participants to be more explanatory in their responses. This allowed the interviewees to provide fresh commentary about the results as suggested by Yin (2009).

The researcher’s reflective memos of this process indicated the focus group was held during the teacher preparatory period beginning at 1:20 p.m. It was difficult to agree upon a time when all participants could meet. The start and end time at each school differs. Many of the par-
The participants had after school obligations. Only five of the six participants were able to attend. One teacher was unable to make it because of the scheduling differences between both schools. After several attempts, the researcher decided to go ahead with the meeting rather than try to reschedule. Despite this, the rest of the participants appeared willing and eager to share their perceptions as a group. The researcher also noted that despite the participants’ care and concern with responding to each question, the atmosphere was relaxed. The researcher noticed that the participants found humor and commonality in their experiences and frustrations. Once one participant started to talk they were all eager to join in the conversation.

Again, the researcher created the focus group questions as a natural sequence to the interviews questions, seeking to clarify and confirm of both the first two phases of data collection. In this section, the responses have been synthesized and analyzed seeking confirmation of the Phase 2 findings as well as any additional findings. The following themes/findings emerged from the student data collection and the semi-structured interviews and were presented to the group as a whole.

Attendance is a major problem in schools, particularly in kindergarten. Mobility was a problem over the past few years but has declined this past year. Attendance and mobility are greater problems for ELLs than the general education population. Transportation is an issue that leads to poor attendance particularly for ELLs who do not attend neighborhood schools. ELLs are bused from all over the district to these two elementary schools. Busing is not door-to-door. Parents walk their children to pick up sites around the city. If the weather is bad or there is a sick sibling at home, parents tend not to walk their child to the bus stop. Many parents do not see the importance of getting their children to school on time and regularly. This is may be because kin-
kindergarten is not mandatory. However, while this may be the case, chronic absenteeism is an issue across all elementary grades.

Class sizes are too large and impede the ability of teachers to meet the needs of students, particularly fragile learners. Teachers are urged to provide individualized supports to struggling learners but unable to successfully do so because of large classes.

Many children do not enter kindergarten ready to learn. ELLs do not have adequate knowledge of their native language to provide context for learning English. Teachers spend considerable time at the beginning of the year trying to prepare students for learning and socialization. Students enter kindergarten at various stages of readiness. In general, students who attend prekindergarten are better prepared for kindergarten.

Family engagement needs to be improved. There needs to be more concerted efforts by the school to reach out to parents. Different cultures have different expectations about their role in their child’s education. Work schedules and lack of transportation make it difficult to engage families.

The group was asked questions regarding these emergent themes/findings captured in the responses given by them to the researcher during the semi-structured interviews (Appendix F).
Table 26

Findings of Focus Group by Theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Exemplary Excerpts (descriptive)</th>
<th>Findings from Focus Group</th>
<th>Original Finding Confirmed?</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>New Findings (if any)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time on Learning</td>
<td>“Busing is not door to door, not even for ELLs. They have to walk a mile to the bus stop.”</td>
<td>Improving transportation may improve attendance and reduce mobility.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A sick sibling leads to all the children in a family staying home.”</td>
<td>Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“SPED is door to door.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving transportation may improve attendance and reduce mobility.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving transportation and supports for ELL parents may improve attendance and reduce mobility.</td>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prekindergarten programs need to be provided to prepare all students for kindergarten.</td>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prekindergarten programs need to be universal and regulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent support/engagement needs to be improved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Support</td>
<td>“Class size with a high needs population- numbers keep increasing.”</td>
<td>Class size needs to be limited.</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“In 2002…two full-time teachers and one full-time para for 26 kindergarten children.”</td>
<td>Parent support/engagement needs to be improved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“ESL law-kindergarten does not need to be serviced. In the past, ESL service was rare.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Paras and ESL teachers need to be in class and not pulled for other duties.”

The responses collected during the focus group all affirmed the emergent themes of student attendance (and to a lesser degree mobility), student readiness, class size and parental engagement. The group spoke again about their frustrations regarding the lack of legislation mandating kindergarten. Two of them reiterated that kindergarten is the new 1st grade. It was agreed that the absence of a legal mandate was probably due to the high cost of funding full day kindergarten statewide. They also mentioned that the quality of early childhood education personnel needs to be improved and regulated. Preschool teachers should be held to the same standards as k-12 teachers. Children need to attend prekindergarten in order to be prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

The growing size of kindergarten classrooms was a major impediment to student achievement. Teachers stated that class size had increased by almost a third within the past three years. Only one teacher, who had a newcomer class, had a manageable class size of 17 students. The other teachers had class sizes that varied from 28-32 students. Teachers found it difficult to meet the needs of their students because of increasing numbers and lack of continuous support within the classroom. Both the ESL teacher and the paraprofessional were being assigned to other tasks within the school as the need arose. Therefore, teachers could not rely on these supports which made it almost impossible to scaffold teaching for all learners. Also, it was pointed out by the ESL teacher, kindergarten ESL students do not have to receive services by law. Therefore, although schools recognize the need to provide ESL services for these students, they are usually prioritized for 1st and 2nd grade students.
It was unanimously agreed that transportation was a major issue affecting the attendance of students, particularly ELLs. These children are bused from all over the city. Bad weather, sick siblings or tardiness resulted in high rates of absenteeism. Many parents were struggling in this bad economy. ELL parents were challenged by lack of language and often education and were not accustomed to American culture. One participant stressed that she did not want it misconstrued that they were of the opinion that ELL parents did not care. She believes they do the best they can, given their circumstances.

It was pointed out that starting this year, ESL kindergarten students will be provided summer programming in order to help them catch up to their American peers. The teachers would like to see most of the testing of these students take place during the summer but they recognized that given the fluidity of the population, this would be difficult.

Finally, what emerged from this discussion was that the teachers all believed that these students are making progress. They do not agree with the MADESE that these students are not making progress. When they reflect upon their students from the beginning of the year to the end, they contend that they are making progress. However, it is issues outside their control that impede the efficacy of their program and if these issues were addressed, ELL children would make much greater progress.

Lastly, the researcher triangulated the data by comparing the outcomes of the all three phases of the data collection process. The following table summarizes the outcomes of this process.
Table 27

Triangulation of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Source 1</th>
<th>Source 2</th>
<th>Source 3</th>
<th>Final Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Time on Learning       | Student data | Semi-structured Interviews - Perceptions of the efficacy of full day kindergarten | Focus Group | • Improving transportation may improve attendance and reduce mobility.  
|                        |          |          |          | • Mandating kindergarten would improve attendance and help performance.       |
| Classroom Supports     | Student performance | Teachers reported that class sizes are too large and classroom support is inconsistent. | Teachers want smaller class size, consistent school supports and increased parent supports. | • Class size needs to be limited.  
|                        |          |          |          | • Parent support/engagement needs to be improved.                            |
| Kindergarten Readiness | Student performance | Teachers reported that many students are not prepared for kindergarten. | Teachers want student entering kindergarten to be better prepared to learn | Prekindergarten programs need to be provided to prepare all students for kindergarten. |

The final findings that emerged from the triangulation of the data support the theories espoused by Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982) on how children learn and acquire language as shown in Table 29. Vygotsky claimed that all cognitive development is interpsychological; that is, it arises as a result of the interaction that occurs among individuals engaged in concrete social interaction (Wertsch, 1985). The central component of his theory on cognitive learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs through the mechanism of social interaction. His developmental theory stresses the inherent social nature of all human activity. Similarly, Krashen maintains that children acquire a second language by spending time with a native
speaker. Acquisition occurs when a person is exposed to language beyond his/her “current level of competence” (1982).

Table 28

*Relationship between Research Questions, Theoretical Framework and Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Research Questions</th>
<th>Constructs of Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Theoretical Definition (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982)</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners?</td>
<td>The socio-cultural and developmental theory (Vygotsky). The theory of second language acquisition (Krashen).</td>
<td>Students learn in classrooms from their teachers and peers. Learning is progressive and language is acquired through cognitive development (Vygotsky). Students acquire a second language by meaningful communication with a native speaker (Krashen).</td>
<td>Improving transportation would increase student attendance and reduce mobility. Mandating kindergarten for all students would improve student performance. Limiting class size would improve supports for ELLs and regular education students. Parent support/engagement needs to be improved. Prekindergarten programs are necessary to prepare students for kindergarten.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children learn and acquire language by time spent with an experienced teacher. Full day kindergarten provides the time on learning for ELLs to acquire a second language. However, this study revealed that impediments to the efficacy of full day kindergarten and as such second language acquisition need to be addressed if the model is to be successful.

Language acquisition, as explained by the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982), occurs when a student receives multiple opportunities to learn and practice with an experienced teacher. The assessment data in this study reveals that ELLs are not making sufficient progress. Time on learning is interrupted as evidenced by the enrollment and attendance data, which consequently impairs student progress. The semi-structured interviews and the focus group informed by this data support the need to improve time on learning for students to acquire language so they can be successful. Poor attendance and social mobility among ELLs are barriers to their cognitive development as they limit their social interaction and opportunities to learn from an experienced teacher.

The final findings provide ways to improve the kindergarten model so that ELLs acquire fluency. Improved transportation and a mandate making kindergarten attendance compulsory would increase time on learning by improving attendance and reducing mobility. Reducing class size and increasing parent involvement would improve the efficacy of full day kindergarten for all students, particularly ELLs. Lastly, preparing ELLs for kindergarten by providing prekindergarten programs would also improve the efficacy of full day kindergarten.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness addresses the truths of respondents in the context of the study, the applicability of the findings to other settings, the replicability with the same or similar respondents
over time and the degree to which outcomes arise from data gathered as opposed to biases, motives, interests and perspectives of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose four terms to address trustworthiness as “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (p. 219). To address concerns about credibility, the researcher triangulated the data. The researcher thoroughly documented procedure and data analysis techniques so when applied to a similar population, the outcomes will be as transferable as possible.

**Member Checking and Peer Debriefing**

After the focus group met, the researcher provided each participant with the findings of the study. At this time, each participant was requested to review the findings. To establish credibility, as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), participants were encouraged to review the researcher’s findings and clarify any misinterpretations before the study was reported in full. The participants were asked to review the results of the interviews and focus groups for clarity and accuracy. This was how member checking was achieved. The participants all concurred that the results were clear and an accurate representation of their perceptions.

The researcher chose student data and asked a variety of open-ended questions to confirm objectivity. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher presented biases and limitations, such as acknowledging the small sample size and that the researcher works in the same district as the participants but in an administrative capacity. However, it must be noted, the researcher’s position as an administrator requires no direct supervision of the participants. Thus, participants responded openly knowing that the researcher was neither a supervisor nor an evaluator. Additionally, the participants had a vested interest to improve their current kindergarten model.

The researcher used several strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1982) to ensure credibility (internal validity). They point to peer debriefing as a method whereby an impartial
colleague critically reviews the research methods and findings of a researcher. In so doing, they confirm the accuracy and completeness of the research. To add to the credibility of this study, this work was peer debriefed by the district’s director of English Language Learners, who has a vested interest in the ESL population of students. She read through the study and agreed that the research was clear and appropriate, and that the findings were valid. The researcher also utilized member checking (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1982) or respondent validation (Maxwell, 2005) in which the participants in the study confirm the data and the findings.

**Summary of Findings**

The goal of this study was to discover and synthesize teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile ELL students. From the information gathered through this study, the participants suggest strategies for improving the current kindergarten practices for these fragile learners. The educators who participated in this study are experienced in teaching ELLs in kindergarten. Four of the participants currently are kindergarten classroom teachers; all of who have ELLs in their classrooms. Two of these classroom teachers only have ELL students. The other two educators in this study no longer teach in the classroom; one is an itinerant ESL teacher and the other has left the classroom to become an elementary literacy coach in the middle of this past year.

Each participant was given student data on performance, attendance and mobility before the interviews for review. This data informed the questions that were asked during the interviews. During the initial analysis of the interviews, three major categories emerged that affected student progress in kindergarten: student attendance and mobility; student readiness; and classroom supports. Each of these categories contribute to student performance in
kindergarten. Some of the categories overlapped. Each of these categories are linked to the theories of language acquisition espoused by Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982). Through further coding of the transcripts, a rich picture emerged of the factors that influence student progress and in particular, progress for ELLs.

All the participants agreed that full day kindergarten is essential for all students, particularly ELLs who need additional time on learning and practice to acquire the language skills necessary for success. They believe that these children are making progress but agreed that it could be greater. The data gleaned from the interview process revealed several factors that would improve student performance over which teachers have limited or little control. Some of these findings were expected and some were not. Because of increased enrollment over the past few years, it was expected that teachers would be frustrated with increased class size. The absence of compulsory kindergarten and the inability of districts to enforce this plays a major role on the efficacy of kindergarten.

Both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview revealed the frustrations of teachers over factors of which they have little or no control but impede their efforts to educate children. However, the triangulation of these data sets resulted in findings that do provide several solutions to improving progress for mobile ELLs, and for all children attending kindergarten.

Finding 1: Improving transportation would increase student attendance and reduce mobility. As expected, this finding viewed through the theoretical framework of second language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978, Krashen, 1982) supports the research on the value of time on learning for student achievement in kindergarten (DeCosta & Bell, 2000; Le, V. et al., 2006; Lee,
V et al., 2002; Alban & Schatz, 2003; Weiss and Offenberg, c.1990s; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; and Cannon, 2010). The participants agreed with the data that poor attendance and student transience make it difficult for students to make progress. These issues were prevalent for ELLs. They all agreed that mobility had decreased over the past two years and was not as big an issue as in the preceding four years when the economic downturn led to increased poverty and put serious pressures on families. However, they recognized that chronic absenteeism is increasing and expressed their frustration in how to deal with it.

In order to improve attendance and enrollment, they recommended improving transportation for families which they all agreed was the greatest barrier to attendance. ELL students are typically bused to these schools as a way to concentrate services in one location. However if a child misses the bus or if the weather is too cold, they do not show up for school on time or at all. These factors affect all children but in particular, ELLs who are reliant on school transportation to schools often at a distance from their homes.

**Finding 2: Mandating kindergarten for all students would improve student performance.** Again, this finding viewed through the theoretical framework of second language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978, Krashen, 1982) supports the research on the value of time on learning for student achievement in kindergarten (DeCosta& Bell, 2000; Le, V. et al., 2006; Lee, V et al., 2002; Alban & Schatz, 2003; Weiss and Offenberg, c.1990s; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; and Cannon, 2010). The participants acknowledged that poor attendance and mobility affect student performance. Data shows that chronic absenteeism is especially high in kindergarten. It improves in 1st grade. The teachers all stated that this problem in kindergarten is because it is not compulsory. There is very little that can be done to enforce attendance because parents do not take kindergarten as seriously as other grades. They all pointed that the lack of compulsory kin-
dergarten was at odds with the new rigorous kindergarten standards in the Common Core State Standards. Teachers are held accountable for student growth but their efforts to educate kindergartners are restrained by the absence of a state mandate. According to the National Center for Education Statistics NCES, by 2012 only 16 states had mandated kindergarten.

Finding 3: Limiting class size would improve supports for ELLs and regular education students. Over the past few years, large increases in class size have impeded the efficacy of full day kindergarten as supported by recent studies (Zvoch et al., 2008; Konstantapolous, 2008). Some of the participants spoke to classes increasing by one third within the past two years. Although each classroom teacher has a full-time paraprofessional, the needs of the students, as well as the number of them, have increased. In particular, the number of ELL students has increased dramatically over the past five years and the percentage of students on IEPs remains high. District and school leadership have implemented teams to address the social emotional and academic needs of students. They have created Response to Intervention (RtI) protocols to provide supports to fragile students. However, most of these supports remain the responsibility of the classroom teacher. This model requires teachers to scaffold instruction for all learners in the classroom as supported by Krashen (1982). Teachers typically group students by ability or pair a struggling student with a student who is performing at or above grade level. Teachers are then able to move around the classroom and work with groups as needed. However, all the participants said that this is unrealistic given the size of their classes and the needs of their students. Reducing kindergarten classes to fewer than 24 students would allow the teacher and the paraprofessionals to provide small group instruction.

Finding 4: Parent support/engagement needs to be improved. This finding expands upon the first finding regarding providing supports to parents in order to improve attendance and
reduce mobility. When participants were asked what supports they as teachers needed, they all said that they needed more help from parents. The participants spoke of parents not getting their child to school, not preparing their child for school, not giving their child enough help with homework and not communicating with the teacher. Both Vygostsky (1978) and Krashen (1982) maintain that language acquisition occurs when learners spend time with an experienced teacher. Therefore, strong parent involvement improves time on learning for students.

The teachers agreed that many of parents of ELLs need supports as they themselves are struggling to adapt to life in the United States; are often poor and uneducated; do not speak the language and do not understand the American educational system. Because of the language and cultural barriers, communication is difficult. There needs to be better coordination of supports provided to these struggling families to help them. Recent studies support the need for parent engagement and a better understanding of the education expectations of immigrant parents (Hildebrand, 2010; Harler and Pelletier, 2010).

School B had a student support coordinator and parent engagement facilitator. They did home visits when parents did not come to the school for conferences. Both schools sent home translated notices. The teacher from School A with the newcomers’ class felt that her students’ parents were “doing the best they can.” She said that parental attendance at her meetings was good. The other teachers were frustrated. It appears that parent engagement needs to become a greater part of the school culture and mission.

There needs to be professional development on cultural responsiveness as many teachers are unfamiliar with the cultural attitudes and expectations of their students’ parents. Teachers need training on how to reach out and engage families. Also, schools need to work around the
issue of transportation for ELL parents. Many parents do not own cars, live far from their child’s school, and rely on public transportation to attend meetings.

**Finding 5: Prekindergarten programs are necessary to prepare students for kindergarten.**

All the participants echoed the same belief that kindergarten had become the new 1st grade. The Common Core State Standards for ELA and mathematics consist of rigorous learning standards for kindergarten students. Students are expected to reach or exceed these learning expectations in order to be prepared for 1st grade and beyond. Every teacher is held accountable under the new educator evaluation system for meeting these new standards. They are used to measure their effectiveness as educators. However, the participants in this study all agreed that it is impossible to start teaching to these new standards when many children enter kindergarten not ready to learn. Many do not recognize colors or numbers, know how to use scissors, know left from right or follow expected norms of behavior. Many do not speak English and lack the native language to help acquire a second language. Language acquisition, as explained by the theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1982), occurs when a student receives multiple opportunities to learn and practice with a native speaker. ELLs entering kindergarten are disadvantaged compared to their American peers. Research shows that substantial differences were found in literacy and math by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status exist as children enter kindergarten (Lee et al., 2002).

Children who attend prekindergarten are better prepared to learn. Universal prekindergarten for ELLs would help prepare them for kindergarten and increase their opportunities for success.
Conclusion

Full day kindergarten is a model utilized in urban districts in Massachusetts to compensate for the effects of poverty and to provide children with the skills necessary for success in the following grades. Poor attendance and mobility are issues that schools are trying to cope with. The district in which this study was performed has also experienced a large increase in English Language Learners. The researcher conducted this single case study to examine teacher perceptions of the efficacy of full day kindergarten programs in meeting the needs of mobile ELL children.

The study was comprised of six educators all of who work with kindergarten children in two schools that have the highest concentration of ELLs in the district. The researcher collected data in three distinct and separate phases. In Phase 1, data was collected on student attendance and enrollment as reported by the district to MADESE, as well as DIBELS data on performance. In Phase 2, each participant was asked a series of questions individually in a semi-structured interview process to assess her perceptions of the efficacy of full day kindergarten in her school. In Phase 3, a focus group questionnaire was given to the participants. The researcher carefully collected and analyzed the data from each of the three phases to seek emerging trends and themes. Phase 1 data was used to inform Phases 2 and 3 of the study. The overall picture that emerged is that all the teachers believed that full day kindergarten is necessary for their student population. However, they made suggestions as to how this model needs to be supported if it is to successfully promote student achievement. To confirm the validity and accuracy of this study, the researcher utilized member checking (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln and Guba, 1982) or respondent validation (Maxwell, 2005) in which the participants in the study confirm the data and the findings. The researcher also utilized peer debriefing by asking the district’s Director of English
Language Learners, who has a vested interest in the ESL population of students, to read through the study. The director agreed that the research was clear and appropriate, and that the findings were valid.

The data analysis through the three phases of this case study revealed the five findings. In the following and final chapter of this thesis, the researcher will make recommendations for improving and supporting the kindergarten model, as well as implications for further research. The participants overwhelmingly support the model of full day kindergarten for all children and in this study, for ELLs. Time on learning is essential for ELLs in kindergarten. However, barriers to its efficacy of the model need to be addressed if students are to make adequate progress. They perceive that full day kindergarten can offset the negative effects of mobility for these learners if there are more supports for the model and support for and from the families of ELLs. These findings are suggestions to improve the efficacy of the kindergarten model and experience for ELLs.

Kindergarten is an important stage of childhood development and provides the learning necessary for future success. The full day kindergarten model provides the time on learning necessary for disadvantaged children to make gains so to help close the achievement gap with their more advantaged peers. Children acquire language fluency and in particular for this study, English Language Learners by time spent with an experienced and native speaker (Vygotsky, 1978; Krashen, 1982). Extended time on learning as provided by full day kindergarten provides the optimal setting to help ELLs become proficient and successful. The findings that emerged in this study are the suggestions to overcome the barriers to ELL success in kindergarten.
Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, and Implications

Introduction

The final chapter in this qualitative, single case study presents the essential findings within the context of the theoretical framework and the literature review. Also, it provides recommendations for both educational practices and for future research. This case study model enabled the researcher to reveal a clear and complete presentation of the participants’ perceptions of the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English Language Learners (Yin, 2009). The primary source of data used for this single case study was the semi-structured interviews. These interviews were informed by the data collected by the researcher on student attendance, student mobility and student performance. The researcher followed up the semi-structured interviews with a focus group in order to confirm the findings. This study contributes to the existing literature in the following areas: English Language Learners; full day kindergarten, second language acquisition, class size; kindergarten readiness and parent engagement.

This single case study that examined teacher perceptions of the efficacy of full day kindergarten programs in meeting the needs of mobile ELL students was undertaken in an urban district in Massachusetts. Six teachers participated, all of who work with kindergarten children in two schools that have the highest concentration of ELLs in this district. This urban district, like many others in Massachusetts and around the country, has experienced high unemployment, increased poverty, a large influx of immigrants and social transience since the economic downturn. These factors have placed additional pressures on schools struggling to provide a quality education to their students. This study seeks to provide suggestions on how to improve the educational experience for English Language Learners in order to promote their achievement.
Research Questions

1. What are teacher perceptions about the efficacy of full day kindergarten for mobile English language learners?

2. Do teachers perceive that full day kindergarten programs can offset the negative effects of student mobility among English language learners?

Time on Learning

In reference to the theme of the time and learning, two important findings emerged:

1. Improving transportation would increase student attendance and reduce mobility.

2. Mandating kindergarten for all students would improve student performance.

Theoretical Framework

These findings confirm the theories of Lev Vygotsky and Stephen Krashen as to how children acquire language. Vygotsky claimed that all cognitive development is interpsychological; that is, it arises as a result of the interaction that occurs among individuals engaged in concrete social interaction (Wertsch, 1985). The central component of his theory on cognitive learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs through the mechanism of social interaction. His developmental theory stresses the inherent social nature of all human activity. Similarly, Krashen maintains that children acquire a second language by spending time with a native speaker. Acquisition occurs when a person is exposed to language beyond his/her “current level of competence” (1982).
In this study, the participants expressed their frustration over the poor attendance and tardiness of kindergarten students, particularly ELLs who rely on busing to reach one of the two elementary schools where ESL services are concentrated. The teachers unanimously support the need for time on learning for these students. They all agreed that these students do make progress when they are in school but there needs to be state and district supports to ensure these students are coming to school regularly. As repeatedly stated by them in the semi-structured interviews, improved transportation would help reduce chronic absenteeism and student mobility.

Both Vygotsky and Krashen stress that language acquisition is a process that requires guidance from an experienced teacher, scaffolding of tasks as the learner gains fluency, and communication with fluent speakers such as the teacher or native-speaking peers. The teachers all echoed the same sentiment that “kindergarten is the new 1st grade.” By this they meant that the learning expectations for kindergarten students are now what they once were for 1st grade students. Increased accountability and urgency in education has placed pressure on teachers to meet these expectations for their students. However, kindergarten attendance is not mandatory in Massachusetts. The teachers maintain that because of the lack of a legislative mandate, kindergarten is not taken seriously by some parents. However, kindergarten is taken very seriously by district and school administrators who work to ensure that these young learners are prepared for 1st grade and beyond. It was also mentioned by the participants that they are evaluated based on the performance of their students.

Urban districts are often challenged in trying to provide services to meet the needs of their students, many of whom are challenged by the effects of poverty. Therefore, if policymakers at the state and federal levels wish to close the achievement gap for all learners, supports must be implemented to school districts to help struggling families. This case study revealed a
disconnect between the theories on language acquisition and the importance of socialization and the lack of state and district-level supports for kindergarten.

**Literature Review**

Kindergarten is an essential part of the development of a child, particularly for children who are disadvantaged by poverty and lack English fluency. Children living in poverty have heard 32 million fewer words by age four than children living in professional families (Hart & Risley, 2004). One in five children under the age of five lives in poverty in America (National Center for Family Literacy, 2006). Poverty is more prevalent in the United States than in other industrialized nations. Thirteen million children lack minimal resources essential to support normal growth and development (Ramey & Ramey, 1990). Also, one in five children in America now lives in homes where English is not the primary language (Aud et al., 2010). Poverty is the greatest inhibitor of student success.

Studies support the efficacy of full day kindergarten, particularly for African Americans and Hispanics (DeCosta & Bell (2000), Le, V. et al. (2006); Lee, V et al. (2002); and Larson, J. (2003). These researchers claim that students of low socio economic status benefit from full day kindergarten to help them achieve literacy at rates similar to their more advantaged peers. Weiss and Offenberg in their study following the progress of 17,000 students in the Philadelphia Public Schools, found that full day kindergarten provided strong academic benefits and that these children were twice as likely to stay on grade level through the third grade as students with no kindergarten (1990s). Another study on a large urban district in the Mid-West indicated “that the effects of poverty were offset by participating in full day kindergarten” (Schroeder, p.436).

Furthermore, full day kindergarten has strong benefits for English Language Learners. ELLs require 3-7 years to reach proficiency, with younger learners typically taking longer but
more likely to achieve close-to-native results (Dixon et al., 2012). Although the research on full day kindergarten for this fast growing student population is limited, recent studies do maintain that ELLs who attend full day kindergarten programs acquire English at a faster pace than those who don’t (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009; Cannon, 2010). Therefore, the research suggests that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and in this case ELLs, need the additional time on learning to catch up with their more advantaged peers. A study of English Language Learners from kindergarten to eighth grade (with a nationally representative sample of first-time kindergartners) showed that ELLs who were proficient by first grade had modest gaps in reading and math achievement compared to native English speakers (Halle et al., 2012, p.1).

Addressing the problems of chronic absenteeism and student mobility are paramount to improving performance for kindergarten students. A 2009 study showed that “all (ELL and non-ELL) children enrolled in full day kindergarten made greater language gains when they missed fewer than 10 school days” (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009, pp.25-26).

The perceptions of the participants in this study were consistent with the current research that time on learning i.e. full day kindergarten is essential for their students, particularly for those learning to speak English. Therefore, it is not surprising in this age of accountability and with the urgency on closing the achievement gap for all learners that the participants would adamantly support the need for mandating kindergarten and improving transportation so that attendance would improve and social mobility decline.

**Implications for Practice**

It is the researcher’s hope that the findings that emerged from this study will provide an incentive and model to examine the existing kindergarten model in cities and towns with high poverty and growing ELL populations. There has been increased emphasis in recent years re-
garding the importance of early childhood education. In the past, kindergarten was viewed as a program where students had opportunities to explore, learn social norms and play. Research shows that in order for a child to read fluently by grade 3, they must be ready to learn at the start of kindergarten (Lee, V. et al., 2002). However, this research has revealed that there are several factors affecting the efficacy of the kindergarten model. Federal and state policymakers must examine the lack of a mandate making kindergarten compulsory. Teachers should not be held accountable for student learning when students are not legally required to be there.

The current model of transportation for ELL students is not working as well as it could. Systems of support need to be strengthened for families who rely on school busing to transport their children. All of the participants in this study maintained that improvements in transportation would increase time on learning by improving student attendance, reduce tardiness and help reduce student transience.

**Implications for Future Research**

The participants in this study supported full day kindergarten as a valid model to educate young learners. Time on learning increases second language acquisition. However, in order to improve its efficacy, they all agreed on some key areas in which the model needs to be supported. This study was conducted with six participants. The study could be expanded to include all district schools or all urban districts throughout Massachusetts. The body of research on English Language Learners in kindergarten is small, particularly in New England. The research could be expanded to examine the readiness of ELLs entering kindergarten. It could also focus on the social-emotional wellness of children and how well does full day kindergarten meet their needs.
Classroom Supports

In reference to the theme of classroom supports, two important findings emerged:

3. Limiting class size would improve supports for ELLs and regular education students.

4. Parent support/engagement needs to be improved.

Theoretical Framework

These findings are consistent with the socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1984). Both share similar theories on how language acquisition in young learners occurs. Vygotsky maintains that during the learning process a child follows the example of adults while Krashen believes that people acquire a second language through relationships with a native speaker.

The central component of Vygotsky’s theory on cognitive learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs through the mechanism of social interaction. His developmental theory stresses the inherent social nature of all human activity. The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (L.S. Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). In other words, the ZPD is regarded as the range of potential that each person has for learning and that learning is culturally shaped by the social environment in which it occurs. In order for the ZPD to be successful, scaffolding must occur. Scaffolding is the instructional strategy through which children learn i.e. tasks are provided by the teacher to structure and guide learning.
With the exception of one classroom teacher, the participants expressed their frustration with the large class sizes. The teacher who was the exception taught the newcomers class, which had eighteen students. In the classroom, trying to scaffold instruction for large numbers of students was their greatest daily challenge. The student enrollment had increased dramatically over the past few years and teachers were struggling with trying to meet the needs of their young learners. Classroom support was inconsistent at best because ESL teachers and instructional aides were used for other duties when needed. Teachers found it difficult to scaffold lessons and provide instruction to small groups within the classroom.

According to Krashen, there are three sorts of input that affect second language acquisition: foreign talk, teacher-talk (foreign talk in the classroom) and interlanguage talk (the speech between second language acquirers). The student will reach his/her potential through interaction in a non-threatening environment where the student is allowed to take risks.

Krashen’s theory on language acquisition suggests that parents (caretakers) are crucial in developing fluency in their children. However, most of the participants in this study were upset at what they perceived as a lack of parental support for their children’s learning. Two participants recognized that cultural differences may affect the level of involvement by parents. Teachers found that many of their students struggled with English because they lacked context in their native language. They acknowledged that these parents also were not fluent in English. Some efforts were made to engage parents such as sending home notices translated into their native language and parent nights. However, outreach to parents varied between the two schools and between the teachers themselves.
Literature Review

The literature supports the importance of parent involvement for ELLs. Hildebrand (2001) in her study stressed the importance of parents in the literacy achievement of their children. Harper and Pelletier (2010) revealed in a recent study comparing parent involvement of English Language Learner families with those of English language first (EL1) families that frequency of communication varied between ELL parents and EL1 parents. However, their study suggests that although differences exist in “how often ELL and EL1 parents communicate with the teacher, the two language groups do not differ in the level of involvement in their children’s education” (p.133). Their study points to previous research that infrequent communication with the teacher may be caused by language barriers (Bhattacharya, 2000). Therefore, they stress that it is important that a lack of communication by parents is not confused by educators as a lack of interest in their children’s education.

The literature on the effects of class size is mixed. A recent study contends that “the efficacy of full day kindergarten intervention was contingent upon class size as students in smaller full-day classes had faster literacy acquisition rates than students in larger full-day class size environments” (Zvoch et al., 2008,p.105). This research is supported by a similar study that concluded that class size reduction increases not only achievement for all students on average but decreases the variability in student achievement in kindergarten and first grade (Konstan-topoulos, 2008). A study conducted in Canada concluded that ELLs in the higher grades often perform poorly because they cannot access curricula because they lack the essential vocabulary (Roessingh&Elgie, 2009). They suggested that in order to challenge the student to move along the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky), children must work in small groups, be exposed to new vocabulary, and be practicing continuously.
Conversely, another study in 2008 in California found that reducing class size in kindergarten results in a very small effect on student achievement in reading and math and showed no effect in language and spelling on second grade performance (Funkauser, 2008). These results support both Vygotsky and Krashen’s theories that students acquire language from peers who are more fluent than them. Therefore, class size would not impact language acquisition.

**Implications for practice**

A lack of classroom supports was vocalized by the participants in this study. The teachers felt overwhelmed by the recent increases in class size, the inconsistency of additional supports, the high needs of their students and the demands placed on them for student achievement. While the research is mixed on the long term effects of smaller class size on student performance, teacher perceptions are that it affects the efficacy of the kindergarten program. There needs to be consistency in the school supports for teachers. While financial constraints may prevent significant classroom reduction, other supports need to be implemented with fidelity. Each kindergarten class needs to have an instructional assistant consistently in the room so that teachers may deliver scaffolded instruction. There needs to be an ESL teacher assigned to work with kindergarten ELLs frequently and regularly.

Efforts to involve parents must become part of the school mission and culture at each school. Schools need to ensure that all information communicated to parents is translated into the home language of students. Parents who do not have transportation to the school should be supported. Teachers need to call parents regularly to communicate their child’s progress. In certain instances, home visits should be conducted to identify and support family needs. In response to the high percentage of chronically absent children, a task force was established to help remediate this problem. This researcher is a co-chair of this group. The task force is made up of school per-
sonnel, community-based workers, university officials, and members of the business community. Task force members created a slogan on the importance of good attendance that is visible throughout the city. They have reached out to local doctors and hospitals, to local housing authorities and most importantly, to families struggling with getting their child to school. The work of this group is on going and progress is slow. However, this attendance issue has garnered the support of the community who recognize its urgency.

Finally, based on research and teacher perceptions of parent involvement, there needs to be training provided to all school personnel on cultural differences and how to adjust to them. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the cultural expectations of their students’ parents regarding education.

**Implications for Future Research**

The current research on the effects of class size reduction in kindergarten is mixed and studied six years ago (Funkhouser, 2009; Konstantapolous, 2008; and Zvoch et al., 2008). The body of research was conducted in states outside the Northeast. In Massachusetts, the urgency to improve student performance has increased as have the number of ELLs attending school. The effects of class size reduction could be examined in urban districts across the state of Massachusetts.

There needs to be more research into the differences in cultural expectations between ELL parents and school personnel and ways to reduce them. Work in this area would be beneficial to all involved: children and their families, school climate, teacher satisfaction and local communities.
The participants in this study clearly expressed their frustration at what they perceived as a lack of supports. This study could be furthered to examine these perceptions on teacher retention.

The last finding to emerge that effects the efficacy of full day kindergarten for ELL students was connected to the theme of kindergarten readiness:

5. Prekindergarten programs are necessary to prepare students for kindergarten.

**Theoretical Framework**

Language acquisition, as explained by the theories of Vygotsky and Krashen, occurs when a student receives multiple opportunities to learn and practice with a native speaker. The central component of Vygotsky’s theory on cognitive learning is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which occurs through the mechanism of social interaction. His developmental theory stresses the inherent social nature of all human activity. The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (L.S. Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). According to Vygotsky, learning is progressive and language is a tool to develop thought and at the same time, language is acquired through cognitive development.

Similarly, Krashen’s Input Hypothesis states that language acquisition occurs when a person is exposed to language beyond his/her “current level of competence” (1982, p.21). He refers to this process of acquisition as the $i + 1$. The “$i$” refers to the current level of competence and
the “+1” as structure a little beyond the current level. In other words, the student improves and progresses along the natural order when he/she receives second language ‘input’ that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. The student reaches his/her potential through interaction in a non-threatening environment where the student is allowed to take risks.

Viewed through the theoretical framework, this finding is consistent with preparing students for kindergarten and beyond by providing them with structured opportunities to acquire English. The efficacy of full day kindergarten for ELLs is impeded by their lack of language fluency. Many regular education students enter kindergarten more ready to learn. The participants contend that prekindergarten programs would level the playing field for English Language Learners and prepare them to access the kindergarten curriculum. The participants unanimously agreed that much time at the beginning of the year is spent preparing students for kindergarten, not only ELLs but regular students who lack the basic skills in literacy, numeracy and social interaction that impedes their progress.

**Literature Review**

In the book *Inequality at the Starting Gate* (Lee et al., 2002), substantial differences were found in literacy and math by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status exist as children enter kindergarten. The factors that influence children’s readiness are present in the district in which this study was conducted: high poverty and increasing numbers of ELLs. Developing fluency in language is essential for school success not just for ELLs but for all learners. Children living in poverty have heard 32 million fewer words by age four than children living in professional families (Hart & Risley, 2004). Therefore, in order to level the playing field for all learners and prepare children for kindergarten and beyond, universal preschool programs must be implemented
for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research shows that higher income and parental involvement also predict the development of nonacademic readiness skills of kindergarten children (Le et al., 2006).

**Significance for Educational Practice**

It is the researcher’s hope that the findings that emerged from this study will provide an incentive and model to examine the existing kindergarten model in cities and towns with high poverty and growing ELL populations. There has been increased emphasis in recent years regarding the importance of early childhood education. In the past, kindergarten was viewed as a program where students had opportunities to explore, learn social norms and have fun. Research shows that in order for a child to read fluently by grade 3, they must be ready to learn at the start of kindergarten (Lee, V. et al., 2002). Children, particularly those that are disadvantaged by poverty and language, need prekindergarten education to help level the playing field with their more advantaged peers. Children who enter kindergarten not ready to learn do not have ready access to the curriculum. They need to begin kindergarten equipped with the tools essential for success.

**Implications for Future Research**

The research could be expanded to examine the readiness of children entering kindergarten in this district and in other urban districts throughout Massachusetts. This summer, some ELL students attended programs to help them gain fluency and prepare them for kindergarten. The effects of this early intervention program should be examined over the next year. One of the participants in this study, an ESL teacher, recommended that summer programs should be the norm for all ELLs.
Conclusion

In this era of accountability and urgency to close the achievement gap, and due the needs of working families and immigrant families, full day kindergarten is a necessary model to promote student learning. The full day kindergarten model provides extra time on learning and extra time for socialization, which is essential to student success and wellness. Children disadvantaged by poverty and lack of language fluency need this additional time on learning to catch up to their more advantaged peers. Several studies support the full day model for all learners, in particular fragile learners (DeCosta & Bell, 2000, Le, V. et al., 2006, Lee, V et al., 2002, Larson, J. 2003, Hall-Kenyon et al., 2009). Their research shows that additional time on learning in kindergarten helps boost academic performance and language acquisition. However, this study sought to capture the perceptions of teachers on the efficacy of the full day model for mobile English Language Learners and ways it may be improved.

Attendance, enrollment and assessment data was used to inform the interviews with the teachers. The student data revealed that poor attendance and mobility among English Language Learners impede their progress in the classroom. The interview participants’ responses were consistent with the literature regarding the need for full day kindergarten. However, the data and interviews revealed that changes needed to be made to improve the efficacy of the model in order for kindergarten children to make progress, particularly mobile ELLs. The participant interviews revealed the frustration of teachers who are trying to help their students succeed and become proficient in English but are hampered by what they perceive as lack of supports from policy makers, district and school officials and parents.
The participants in this study want their students to succeed; they want them to come to school regularly and ready to learn. First and foremost, in order for ELLs to be successful in kindergarten and acquire the literacy skills essential for success in later grades, kindergarten needs to be given the same importance as the later grades i.e. it needs to be compulsory. Although early childhood education is receiving more consideration and support from federal and state policy makers, until it is mandated regular, consistent school attendance will always be a problem. Pre-kindergarten programs particularly for ELLs and children of poverty also need to be mandated. Keeping class sizes manageable for teachers is also essential to the efficacy of kindergarten. Children acquire a second language with guidance and instruction from an experienced teacher (Vygotsky, Krashen). Smaller class size will enhance learning. Support from parents and engagement in their child’s education is essential. However, successful and meaningful parent engagement is one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish in schools, particularly among immigrant parents. Building trust between parents and teachers is hard work but crucial to the well-being of young learners.

Ultimately, the results of this study are positive and encouraging. The findings support the current kindergarten model as the best model but provide meaningful suggestions on ways to improve it so as to improve the educational experience for fragile learners. As supported by the problem of practice, research questions, theoretical framework and the research methodology, the data shows that if improvements are made to the current kindergarten model, ELLs will be more successful. Compulsory kindergarten, improved student transportation, prekindergarten programs to improve kindergarten readiness, manageable class size and engaged parents will increase the efficacy of the model and learning for all students and in particular, for ELLs. The researcher hopes that by contributing to the existing body of literature, that further research will
be undertaken to examine ways to improve the educational model for English Language Learners so they may be successful.
References


DeCicca, P. (2007). Does full day kindergarten matter? Evidence from the first two years of


Hildebrand, C. (2001). *Effects of three kindergarten schedules on achievement and classroom*
behavior. PhiDeltaKappa Center for Evaluation, Development, and Research.


[www.mariamontessori.org](http://www.mariamontessori.org)


Reedy, S. Does the effect of kindergarten school day length on academic achievement among student groups endure through third grade? HLM analysis of K–3 growth rates among racial and socioeconomic student groups. M.A. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, United States -- New York.

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. (Fall 2011). *A Revolving Door: Challenges and Solutions to Educating Mobile Students*. MA


of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.


Appendix A

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: Superintendent of Schools

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program

Investigators: Margaret S. Ryan and Dr. Margaret Dougherty

Title: Teacher Perceptions of Mobile English Language Learners in Kindergarten

May 15, 2012

To: Superintendent of Schools

Dear Superintendent,

I am writing you to request permission to conduct my educational research in the two of the elementary schools in order to fulfill my doctoral requirements. The purpose of this case study is to examine the effectiveness of kindergarten programs in educating English Language Learners who are mobile. It is the intent of this study that teachers can make suggestions and offer insights into ELLs and the problem of student mobility. There has been little research in this field and policymakers in Massachusetts have recently begun to examine the issue of student mobility.

This case study will take place at two of the elementary schools, which have the largest number of ELL students in the district. In order to conduct the study, I will need access to enrollment and assessment data of kindergarten students in these schools for 2011-12 and 2012-13. I will also need to interview the kindergarten and ESL teachers about their perceptions. The interviews will be followed in early fall with a focus group to allow participants to review research data and member check.

Participants in the study have been assured of confidentiality and will not affect their professional standing. There is no direct benefit to participation. However, it is hoped that their contributions will provide insight and suggestions on how to support mobile ELLs in kindergarten.

Thank you for your support. I greatly appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Margaret S. Ryan
Appendix B

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: School Principal

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program

Investigators: Margaret S. Ryan and Dr. Margaret Dougherty

Title: Teacher Perceptions of Mobile English Language Learners in Kindergarten

May 15, 2012

To: School Principal

Dear Principal,

I am writing you to request permission to conduct my educational research in your elementary school in order to fulfill my doctoral requirements. The purpose of this case study is to examine the effectiveness of kindergarten programs in educating English Language Learners who are mobile. It is the intent of this study that teachers can make suggestions and offer insights into ELLs and the problem of student mobility. There has been little research in this field and policymakers in Massachusetts have recently begun to examine the issue of student mobility.

In order to conduct the study, I will need access to enrollment and assessment data of kindergarten students in these schools for 2011-12 and 2012-13. I will also need to interview the kindergarten and ESL teachers about their perceptions. The interviews will be followed in early fall with a focus group to allow participants to review research data and member check.

Participants in the study have been assured of confidentiality and will not affect their professional standing. There is no direct benefit to participation. However, it is hoped that their contributions will provide insight and suggestions on how to support mobile ELLs in kindergarten.

Thank you for your support. I greatly appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Margaret S. Ryan
Appendix C

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: Study Participants

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program

Investigators: Margaret S. Ryan and Dr. Margaret Dougherty

Title: Teacher Perceptions of Mobile English Language Learners in Kindergarten

May 14, 2013

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

I am writing you to request that you consider participation in my educational research in order to fulfill my doctoral requirements. The purpose of this case study is to examine the effectiveness of kindergarten programs in educating English Language Learners who are mobile. It is the intent of this study that teachers can make suggestions and offer insights into ELLs and the problem of student mobility. There has been little research in this field and policymakers in Massachusetts have recently begun to examine the issue of student mobility.

This study will involve three stages. First, you will be presented beforehand with assessment and enrollment data of kindergarteners in your school. Second, after having time to analyze the data, we will meet with you to ask you a series of questions in a one-on-one interview (25 minutes) about your interpretations of the data and your classroom experiences and practices. Third, a few weeks later, we will meet with all the interviewees in a focus group (1 hour). As part of this group, you will be presented with the research data to review and member check. If you think anything in the report is inaccurate, the results may be adjusted. The interviews and the focus group will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. The information that you provide will have no impact on your professional standing. Evaluation will play no role in this study. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, it is hoped that your insights may help provide ways to improve early education for mobile ELLs. Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Your responses will not be
shared with the school administration and any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you, the school or any individual as being of this project. All audio-recordings will be destroyed following transcription and analysis.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time. Your decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect on your standing at the school. You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at: ryan.marg@neu.edu, or email my advisor Dr. Margaret Dougherty at: m.dougherty@neu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Margaret S. Ryan

By providing your signature below, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study:

Participant’s Signature: __________________________ Date: ________________

Participant's Printed Name: ________________________
Appendix D

HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY

Dear Parents and Guardians: In order to help your child succeed in school, we ask that you please answer the following questions for each child in your family. Your answers will help us in creating the best possible educational program for your child.

Child’s Name (LAST)_______________________________ (FIRST)________________________
(MI)________

Date of Birth__________________________________ Gender: _____ M   _____ F

Grade________________

Birth Place____________________________________ If outside US -Date of Entry in
U.S._________________________

Current/Previous School________________________ Date first enrolled in any U.S.
School_________________________

1. What language did your child first understand or speak?
   _____________________________________________

2. What language do you use most often when speaking with your child at
   home?_______________________________________

3. What language does your child use most often when speaking with you at home?
   ___________________________________________

4. What language does your child use most often when speaking with other family members?
   ___________________________________________

5. What language does your child use most often when speaking with
   friends?_____________________________________

6. What language(s) does your child read? ________________  ________________
   ___________________________________________

7. What language(s) does your child write? ________________  ________________
   ___________________________________________

8. At what age did your child start attending school?
   ___________________________________________

9. Has your child attended school every year since that age? _______ Yes _______ No
   If no, please explain: ____________________________________________________________
10. Would you prefer oral and written communication from the school in English or in your home language?

Please specify language preference:

_____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________

__________________________________

______________________________

Signature of Parent /Guardian Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W-A PT Proficiency Level Testing Result</th>
<th>Mass Level - Placement Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Composite Proficiency Level</td>
<td>L1 Beginner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grade Adjusted Composite Proficiency Level</td>
<td>L2 Early Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L3 Intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L4 Transitioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L5 Not LEP (Reclassification Recommended)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix E

## Sample Codes for Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CURR-PROG</td>
<td>Describe the literacy program in your classroom/school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURR-TRANS</td>
<td>Do you modify your curriculum to help mobile students? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-CLASS</td>
<td>Do you receive supports in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-ELL</td>
<td>Explain how ELLs are supported in your classroom/school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP-MOB-ELL</td>
<td>Do you provide individualized support to mobile students? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS-CHALL</td>
<td>Explain the biggest challenges you deal with on a daily basis in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS-ELL-CHALL</td>
<td>What are the daily challenges for ELLs in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF-ELL</td>
<td>Is the data reflective of ELL performance in the classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF-ELL-OBJ</td>
<td>How much progress do you expect to make with ELLs by the end of the year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERF-ELL-FDK</td>
<td>Does FDK help ELLs make progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOB-ELL-ADJ</td>
<td>Is student mobility among ELLs an issue in your classroom? If so, how do they adjust?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOB-ELL-REAS</td>
<td>What are some of the reasons why students are mobile in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOB-ELL-SY</td>
<td>What happens to ELL students when they leave in the school year and then return?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

INTERVIEW OUTLINE

PURPOSE: The purpose of this interview is to discuss your analysis of the student data you received and to provide you and I with an opportunity to elaborate further on the performance of English Language Learners in kindergarten.

DATE: ____________

LOCATION:

INTERVIEWEE: __________________________

DURATION: 45-60 Minutes

The researcher will inform the participant that she would like to audio record the interview so that she can have repeated access to the data, and once the data is transcribed, the audio recording will be erased.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Describe the literacy program in your classroom/school.
- Do you receive supports in the classroom?
- Explain the biggest challenges you deal with on a daily basis in the classroom.
- Explain how ELLs are supported in your classroom/school.
- What are the daily challenges for ELLs in the classroom?
- Is the data reflective of ELL performance in the classroom?
- Is student mobility among ELLs an issue in your classroom? If so, how do they adjust?
- What are some of the reasons why students are mobile in your school?
- What happens to ELL students when they leave in the school year and then return?
- Do you modify your curriculum to help mobile students? If so, how?
- Do you provide individualized support to mobile students? If so, how?
- How much progress do you expect to make with ELLs by the end of the year?
- Does FDK help ELLs make progress?
Appendix G

FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE

PURPOSE: The purpose of this focus group is to give all participants in this study an opportunity to get together as a group and confirm, clarify or refute their perceptions and experiences about the performance of English Language Learners in kindergarten.

DATE: __________

LOCATION: __________

PARTICIPANTS: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

DURATION: 45-60 Minutes

The researcher will remind the participants that she intends to audio record the focus group discussion and ask whether anyone objects. The researcher will explain that the purpose of audio recording is to allow the researcher to have repeated access to the data and once the data is transcribed, the researcher will erase the recording.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. How do these findings capture the information given to the researcher during your interview?

2. Is there information that you shared during your interview that is not included but you feel strongly should be?

3. Do these findings suggest a pattern? If so, is this pattern reflective of the information you gave to the researcher during the interview?

4. Are any of these findings surprising? Please explain.

5. What major concerns do these findings raise?

6. Based on these findings, what classroom strategies are working well?

7. What do these findings suggest is not working in the classroom?

8. Based on the findings, how are the ESL programs at each school similar?
9. Based on the findings, how do the ESL programs at each school differ?

10. How can the schools and the district better serve the needs of these learners?