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The demographic composition of the American classroom reflects the diversity of society as a whole. The cultural, language, and ethnic diversity of students is often celebrated, but it also presents challenges for educators responsible for providing instruction for the students. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which some educators have prepared to address language diversity and the strategies and techniques they have used to create equitable learning environments for English Language Learners (ELLs).

A comparative case study was conducted to gain insight into the characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and the practices school principals, English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers, and regular education teachers use to foster and create equitable learning environment. Data were collected through individual interviews and document reviews of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the Title I plan of each school site. Analysis of data resulted in four premises. Characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs create a sense of belonging for students and their families and increase engagement. Equitable environments offer professional respect and support for teachers and include respect for student and family learning opportunities. Outcomes for ELL students improve when deliberate strategies to provide access to resources and the curriculum are in place. Ultimately, equitable environments empower ELL students, their families, and educators to fully participate in the teaching and learning process and support the improvement of outcomes for all students.

CREATING EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE AGE
OF ACCOUNTABILITY

by

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Approved by

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To Mama, Joseph, and Granddaddy Ero

Mama you are the rock of our family and because of you, we are who we are today.
Joseph, you have supported and loved me through this process and in turn helped me
become who I am. Granddaddy Ero, you are and will always be forever in my heart and
mind.

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The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why. —Mark Twain

My doctoral journey has followed a path that was different from my original plan. But a wise person once said, “We make plans and God laughs at them.” This could not be a truer statement when I reflect on this process. Although the path that I set out to follow was altered, I still arrived at the desired destination. I have learned that for me it was not the destination that taught me the most, it was the pathway to the destination where I learned my most valuable lessons about myself and this thing called life. I am thankful for the lessons I have learned so far in my life, and look forward to learning so much more.

Thank you to:

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Thank you for always praying and believing in me even when I faltered.

Thank you for always having faith in me.

- My Lord who is my help, life, strength, and source.
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For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. —Jeremiah 29:11 KJV

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. —Philippians 4:13 KJV

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The demographic composition of the American classroom reflects the diversity of society as a whole. The cultural, language, and ethnic diversity of students is often celebrated, but it also presents challenges for educators responsible for providing instruction for the students. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which some educators have prepared to address language diversity and the strategies and techniques they have used to create equitable learning environments for English Language Learners (ELLs).

Purpose of This Study

Currently, there are many research studies and articles pertaining to ELL students, immigrant and refugee students, their needs and experiences. My intent is to further the discourse on this topic by examining this phenomenon from an equity perspective with a focus on accountability. Specifically, I intend to inquire about the characteristics of an equitable environment for recently resettled ELLs in the English as a Second Language program within the selected host district. I also intend to explore the practices and strategies of school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers who are recommended by the Director of the English as a Second Language program as being school principals and educators who promote and work towards equity for the newly arrived ELL students in their schools. In addition, the School Improvement Plans (SIP),

which includes the Title I plan, will be reviewed to identify strategies to promote equity for recently resettled ELL students. Recently resettled or newly arrived ELL students are defined as students who have been resettled or have transitioned to America within the last five years.

Using what Cole and Knowles (2001) refer to as the topic coming to the researcher, the need for this research emerged out of many interactions with school principals in the area. As the principal of a school that serves ELL students in grades three through twelve, who have just come into the country, I have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with elementary, middle, and high school principals as they prepare to receive the recently resettled ELL students from my school. This research study connects with the day-to-day work school principals do as they lead schools with increasing enrollments of ELL students.

Methodology

This research used a qualitative comparative case study design with a sampling of three schools in Promising County Schools district. A qualitative design allows me to make meaning from the participants' interactions with the researcher. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative methods encourage researchers to engage in the data and "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (p. 23). The three schools were selected after recommendations and data were collected from the Director of the ESL program for the district.

Each site enabled me to examine the support provided to the ELL students by the principal, ESOL teacher, and the regular education teacher working collaboratively to

promote equity for the students. Using the three schools in the district allowed for cross-case examination by factors of size, location, and linguistic diversity of students served.

Prior to the scheduled interviews, a review of each school's School Report Card for the 2013-2014 school year, the 2014-2016 School Improvement Plan (SIP), and Title 1 plan was conducted. At each site, an interview was conducted with the principal, ESOL teacher, and a regular education teacher. Multiple visits to each school were scheduled to collect interview data from the participants.

Research Questions

The goal of this comparative case study is to provide insight into teaching, learning, and leading schools that have been recognized by the district's Director as working for equity for ELLs. The research questions guiding this comparative case study are:

1. What are the characteristics of an equitable environment for recently arrived English Language Learning students?
2. What practices do school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ when planning for an equitable school environment for recently arrived ELLs?

In this comparative case study, I used the existing data from the 2013-2014 school report card, the 2014-2016 SIP, and the Title 1 Plan to compare strategies each site uses to address the needs of the ELL students enrolled in each site. At the beginning of data collection, an interview with the Director of the ESOL program for the host district was conducted in order to obtain recommendations as to which schools throughout the district

promote equity for ELLs. After the recommendations were received, interviews were scheduled at the sites recommended by the district's leader.

Significance

With the number of ELL students increasing, it is imperative that school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers develop strategies and plans to address the needs of this growing population. The challenges faced by school districts and school principals are multi-faceted in that the district and the individual school principal must prepare to address the unique needs of the recently resettled ELL students; ensure an environment of growth and achievement; provide professional development and growth opportunities for teachers; and create an equitable environment for the students.

The role of an educator is multi-faceted and requires a broad skill set, and this study will add to the knowledge base of educators who read the study. This research study is significant because it will expand the conversation about creating equitable environments to address the unique needs of ELL students, especially if they have recently arrived into the United States and their educational backgrounds are as diverse as their languages. This study highlights the impact of strategies and practices used to address and meet the needs of ELL students. I hope to discover what strategies and practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to address and meet the needs of ELL students in the age of accountability. This study contributes to the educational discourse for equity for all students.

Once school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers understand the educational needs of ELL students, they can begin to think about ways to meet those needs to promote and create a more equitable environment for all students. As the researcher, I hope to prompt school leaders and other educators, with increasing numbers of ELL students to include the needs of these students when making decisions about educational practices and programs in the school setting.

As the primary researcher, I am hopeful that the information from the participants will contribute to the field, thus increasing knowledge and experiences to the educational community at large. My research and findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge for educators and hopefully lead to increased knowledge for schools with increasing populations of ELLs.

Terms Referring to Students Who Are English Language Learners

For the purposes of this study, the terms English as a Second Language (ESL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), English Language Learners (ELLs), English Limited Proficient (ELP), and Limited English Proficient (LEP) have been defined and clarified to enhance the comprehension of this study. The terms ELLs, ESL, LEP, ELP, and ESOL are frequently used interchangeably to describe the students for whom English is not their first language. Although the terms are very similar, they are used for specific purposes to identify students or programs. To aid in increasing the comprehension of this study, I have described and provided a description of each term used in this study. See Table 1 for an explanation of terms used in this study.

Table 1

Terms Used in This Study

| Term | Acronym | Used to describe | Applies to |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| English as a Second Language | ESL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and adults • Classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who is learning English in a country where English is the dominant language • Classes designed to teach English |
| English for Speakers of Other Languages | ESOL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and adults • Classes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who is learning English and has acquired two of more other languages • Classes designed to teach English |
| English Language Learner | ELL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children/Students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person in the K-12 educational system learning English |
| English Limited Proficient | ELP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subgroup classification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis for students in this subgroup |
| Limited English Proficient | LEP (Most commonly used) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subgroup classification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis for students in this subgroup • Reporting of data to local, state, and federal agencies |

Description of Terms Used in This Study

ESL can be used to describe adults, students, and/or classes. When describing adults and children, ESL is used to refer to a person learning English in a country where English is the dominant language. When referencing classes for adults and children, ESL classes are services provided for people desiring to learn English.

ESL does not accurately describe a person who is fluent in two or more languages; so the appropriate term for the people in this category is English for Speakers

of Other Languages (ESOL). Students and adults in this category may be fluent in their home language and may also have acquired additional languages. The students referred to as ESOL have a first and second language; and English is an additional language. ESOL can be used to describe the teachers and programs in which children and adults are enrolled to acquire English language. The teacher in this program is also referred to as the ESOL teacher.

ELLs, which stands for English Language Learners, is a term used to describe students in the general K-12 education setting whose first language is something other than English. School aged children in school settings are referred to as ELLs. In American schools, the ELLs are enrolled in ESOL classes.

ELP and LEP terms describe the subgroup categories of students who qualify for the services of the ESL or ESOL program and teachers. These designations are used to disaggregate data and other data analysis functions. The ELP or LEP designation is not designed to be a permanent designation (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). As the ELL student acquires more English language, the ELP or LEP levels of service may decrease due to the increasing English ability of the student. The desired goal of school programs that serve ELLs is for students to eventually exit the program and that they will no longer qualify for services of the ESOL program and teachers. For the purposes of this study, students, whose first language is not English, who are enrolled in schools will be referred to as ELLs, teachers and programs will be referred to as ESOL teachers or classes, and references to data will be discussed using the LEP designation.

English Language Learner Population in American Schools

American schools and classrooms in the 21st century largely mirror the global society. Classrooms across the United States are filled with students who represent various cultures, languages, diverse backgrounds, and varied life experiences. In the most recent report available from the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), in the 2010-2011 school year, of the 54,876,000 K-12 public school students, 9.1% of the students, or 4,389,325, participated in English Language Learner (ELL) programs across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). The percentage of students participating in ELL programs increased from 8.7% of students in the 2002-2003 school year to 9.1% in the 2010-2011 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). According to the 2011 enrollment data, 5,377,848 students currently enrolled in American schools are students for whom English is not their first language (U.S. Department of Education, 2011b). These students are classified Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. A distinction between the terminologies used to describe ELLs and the associated programming was discussed in Table 1.

According to Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008), the number of students enrolled in American schools whose first language is not English continues to rise. For example, according to Echevarria et al. (2008) from a study conducted in 2005, North Carolina experienced a 500% increase in the number of ELL students between 1993 and 2003. Other states such as Nebraska, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Georgia, and Indiana have experienced more than a 200% increase in the enrollment of ELL student population. If the trends in the data remain, then the number of ELL students will continue to increase,

and educators will need to be prepared to address the student's academic and language needs.

Nightly news reports on stories of war, terror, and other occurrences in various parts of the world every day. People from around the world are seeking a safe haven in which to live and raise their families without fear of persecution, war, trauma, and death. Prior and Niesz (2013) state, "over 300,00 men, women, and children are currently seeking asylum or have been granted refugee status in the United States . . . that number more than triples when we look at refugee migration globally" (p. 1). As unrest and wars persist and become more prevalent in our global society, the diversity of languages represented by the student population in American schools continues to grow. These students may be classified as an immigrant or a refugee, and their academic backgrounds may vary along with their language abilities.

Refugee and immigrant students participate in ELL programs throughout American schools. Refugee students in particular may have extensive needs, especially as many have experienced traumatic, complex situations that impact the students socially and academically. School leaders and school districts must prepare to meet the challenges that immigrant and refugee students bring with them. This can be extremely challenging when student backgrounds are unknown. ELLs who are immigrant or refugee students may come to American schools with limited or interrupted educational histories, which further complicates the goal of providing an optimal educational experience in schools.

Growth of the ELL Population

Families will continue to seek refuge in peaceful countries as long as there are periods of unrest in their homelands. Historically, families seeking a safer haven and refuge came to America and settled in cities. According to research,

In 2000, the geographic distribution of immigrants is concentrated in urban areas, primarily in six states that account for three-fourths of all immigrant children: California (35 percent), Texas (11.3 percent), New York (11 percent), Florida (6.7 percent), Illinois (5 percent) and New Jersey (4 percent). (Echevarria et al., 2008, p. 6)

As the enrollment of students whose first language is not English increases nation-wide, traditional immigration states are no longer the only states that experience rapid growth in the ELL population. The states experiencing rapid growth in the ELL population must prepare teachers and administrators to work with linguistically and culturally different students because many of the states do not have adequate programming, training for teachers, and resources (Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2008). States experiencing rapid enrollment of ELL students are pressed to develop programs to address the academic achievement of these students since their academic progress often lags behind their same aged language majority peers (Short et al., 2008).

ELL students who are classified as refugee students require additional supports to receive a quality education in the American education system. School principals operating from an equity standpoint are presented with challenges when preparing the school environment to support and address the needs of refugee students. According to Prior and Niesz (2013),

The large population of immigrant and refugee students in the United States, as well as around the globe, creates challenges for educators as they determine the best ways to embrace immigrant and refugee students and adapt their teaching and learning practices to provide an education that meets the needs of all students. (p. 1)

Keeping in mind that not all recently resettled ELL students have the same experiences and needs, educators should consider that many of their newly-arrived ELL students may have refugee status and quite possibly may have experienced traumatic events, including persecution, torture, and unsettling experiences, which will impact their academic, social and emotional health. For example, refugee students who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) may have violent outbursts due to past experiences with violence, death, war, and/or traumas (Kugler & Price, 2009), and educators must be prepared to provide resources or access to resources to address the emotional barriers that may impact the experiences of these students in schools.

Across the United States, young children of immigrants account for more than 30 percent of school aged children in seven states (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaundry, 2010). According to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2,389 refugees were resettled in North Carolina in 2012, which makes North Carolina 16th in the nation for refugee resettlements (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2013). The new North Carolinians will add to the growing enrollment of ELL students and will need a supportive environment as they settle into their new communities.

Educators, Schools, and ELLs

The focus of this study is to identify the characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs, and on the practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and

regular educators use to promote equity and to meet the academic needs of recently resettled ELL students in their schools. In the age of accountability in North Carolina, ELLs are required to take the state assessments and the data from those assessments are factored into the overall grades the schools receive. The North Carolina General Assembly passed the Excellent Public Schools Act in 2013, which legislated that each school receives an annual performance grade (A-F). The school performance grades are based on a formula: 80% of the performance grade is based on end-of-grade tests, end-of-course tests, graduation rate, and college/workplace readiness measures; and 20% of the performance grade is based on school growth as measured by the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), which gathers data about student growth on state assessments and teacher effectiveness (G.S. 115C-83.15). Under the law, each school is required to report the performance of students in each category or subgroup by using the targets set by the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO).

The AMO targets were set to reduce the gap in performance of students identified in subgroups by one-half percent within six years (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), AMO targets are set for the following subgroups:

- School as a Whole (All Students)
- American Indian
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic

- Two or More Races
- White
- Economically Disadvantaged (ED)
- Limited English Proficient (LEP)
- Students with Disabilities (SWD)
- Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG).

AMO targets are set for performance as well as participation in the assessment program.

For schools to meet the participation target set forth by the AMOs, schools must have at least 95% of their students participate in the state tests. Student performance AMO targets require that each student subgroup meet or exceed the state's proficiency target.

AMO targets are also in place to monitor the graduation rate of schools, and if the school does not have a graduation rate, then schools must show improvement in their attendance rate data (NCDPI, 2015).

According to the North Carolina State Board of Education testing policy as it relates to ELL students, the accountability model omits the scores on state assessments for first year ELLs on the End of Grade Math and Science tests. First year ELL student scores are omitted from the AMO measurement, and ELL students are exempt from the End of Grade Reading assessment in the first year of schooling in America. However, the achievement results from ELLs in their second year and beyond of schooling will be included in the AMO measurement and in the overall school accountability model (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as*

Limited English Proficient, 2013). As discussed later in this chapter, the research shows that it takes five to nine years to become fully fluent in academic language.

For school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers this poses a huge challenge to provide an environment and instruction for the students when the students are still acquiring the language. Considering the needs many ELLs bring with them to the educational environment as discussed in Chapter II, educators will be required to act and think about the situation in great detail. Consideration must be given to the accountability of the entire school, as well as the needs of the students, and the professional development needs of the teachers in the building who are charged with providing instruction for students.

At present, there is little information available on the strategies and practices of school principals pertaining to providing an optimal educational environment for recently resettled ELLs with varying academic backgrounds. Recent reports from the NCES show that the number of students in ELL programs is 9.1% of the total student population and many of those students are classified as refugee or immigrant students. The exact number of students with the designation of refugee or immigrant is unknown and protected by The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). FERPA does not mandate the disclosure of citizenship or immigration status to schools by families of students enrolling into American schools (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2004). Immigrant or refugee status is not information that traditional school leaders can easily access. According to the Office for Civil Rights, immigration or citizenship is not relevant in establishing residency in a school district nor

should the district engage in practices that ‘chill’ the access to public schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). To protect students’ rights, citizenship and immigration status information are omitted from documents used to enroll students in school and are a prerequisite for entry into the school. This protection means that school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers will not have access to information that could inform the planning of the educational environment, and enhance the instructional program planning for ELL students enrolled in school. The lack of information about student’s backgrounds can be an obstacle when planning an environment that is equitable for all students-especially ELLs.

Research studies (Brinegar, 2010; Cairo, Sumney, Blackman, & Joyner, 2012; Curtin, 2005; Fortuny et al., 2010; Friedlander, 2001; Gahungu, Gahungu, & Luseno 2011; Kugler & Price, 2009; Prior & Niesz, 2013) have outlined some barriers and challenges refugee students have experienced and how those experiences may impact the students in the academic and social settings of the school environment. However, the gap in the research exists in the area of school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers’ implementation of practices they use to address the needs of recently resettled ELL students-especially when the academic background of the students is limited or unknown.

School principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers recognize that not all ELL students enrolled in ESOL programs are immigrants or refugees. According to Short et al. (2008),

Fifty-seven percent of English Learners (ELs) in grades 6-12 were born in the US . . . the fact that large numbers of second and third generation LEP adolescents are not proficient in English indicates that many LEP student are not learning the language well. (p. 5)

Any assumption about ELLs' designation by school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers may be erroneous. The question raised by this issue is how school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers should plan to effectively address the differing needs of ELLs when pertinent information about the student's academic background is not accessible but factor into achievement and academic progress. Acknowledging the constant fluidity of the American school population, educators nation-wide will need to make sure they are abreast of the laws pertaining to immigrant and refugee students and families; and make the necessary preparations to address and meet the needs of ELL students.

Court Decisions and Policy

Educators must be knowledgeable about the laws that govern public schools to ensure that they are following the laws in order to avert litigation actions. In circumstances where students' rights are in question, it is best that the school principal be aware of the basic legal concepts concerning student rights. According to Cambron-McCabe et al. (2004), “. . . many teachers and administrators harbor misunderstandings regarding basic legal concepts . . . they are uncertain about the legality of daily decisions they must make in the operation of schools” (p. xiii) thus leaving them open to the possibility of legal action being taken against them. In the current climate of the United States, knowing and following the laws governing immigrant and refugee students is

especially crucial. News reporters discuss the heated debates surrounding immigration reform, and school principals and educators must know the laws pertaining to immigrants and refugees to avoid litigation.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), Section 1703(f) a school district must provide services that will enable LEP students to “overcome barriers that impede equal participation by these students in the district’s instructional programs” (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). An additional legal provision for students classified as LEP is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—Title III—the ‘English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act’ Section 3102 (1), which states the purpose of the Act is,

To help ensure that children who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

With the current news reports about children at the border, immigration policies and laws, and the refugee crisis in Syria, a discussion of federal immigration reform is outside the scope of this study and will not be a focal point in the literature. Although many students who are classified as ELLs may not have the appropriate documents to enroll in school, it is outside of the legal scope of the duties of a school administrator to be responsible for immigration law enforcement. School principals are to focus on providing equal access to meaningful education programs for students, and know educational laws pertaining to schools. Educators can refer to the court cases *Plyler v.*

Doe (1982) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) for background information about the laws and subsequent policies as they relate to ELLs.

***Plyler v. Doe* (1982)**

In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, “. . . school districts could not deny a free public education to resident children whose parents had entered the country illegally” (Cambron-McCabe et al., 2004, p. 74). More generally, the Supreme Court ruled “. . . undocumented children and young adult have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do US citizens and permanent residents” (Mason, Hite, & Rodriguez, n.d.). This protection clause was put into place to prohibit school districts and school leaders from refusing to enroll children who could not produce documentation of citizenship or legal status. Documented and undocumented children were granted access to a free public education and possessed rights within the educational system—the right to an education. The students were not only granted access to an education but were required to attend school until they reached a legally mandated age. This case was brought to the Supreme Court because a school district in Texas refused to enroll students in school who entered the country illegally. Under the *Plyler* (1982) ruling, schools must admit students without requiring social security numbers, and the student is assigned a number by the school.

The *Plyler* (1982) case also extends to practices that schools or school districts may employ to ‘chill’ or discourage enrollment in schools by undocumented, documented, or any school-aged student in the United States (Mason et al., n.d.). School personnel cannot treat any student differently in an attempt to determine residency, and

they cannot require parents to disclose their immigration or citizenship status during the enrollment or intake process. An immigrant student's right to participate in the instructional program cannot be denied or diminished based on citizenship or residency status.

Lau v. Nichols (1974)

Once enrolled in school, students should be granted access and be allowed to participate in meaningful educational programs and if language is a barrier to access, then the schools and school districts must address the barriers. In *Lau v. Nichols (1974)*, the Supreme Court ruled, “. . . Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach; . . . therefore, students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (Cambron-McCabe et al., 2004, p. 164). This case was tried before the Supreme Court on behalf of Chinese-speaking children in San Francisco schools. The court ruled in favor of the Chinese children because the children were not able to participate in educational program due to the lack of remedial instruction in English. According to *Lau (1974)*, schools were to provide programs and instructional practices that eliminated the language barriers. Schools and school districts are required to provide students whose first language is not English with the access to the instructional program and to take appropriate action to assist students to overcome language barriers that exclude ELL students from the educational program.

Academic Supports for ELLs

Many ELLs who are new to American schools are entering schools with weak or non-existent academic backgrounds. The student's educational background is important

for school personnel to know because students with limited formal schooling, interrupted educations, and below grade-level literacy skills are more at risk for educational failure. The academic failure of these students impacts the accountability measures for the school as well as its impact on the student's academic progress. Equity minded school principals and assigned teaching staff must consider the needs of students with interrupted educational backgrounds and find ways to support their academic growth. The new arrival ELL students will most likely be assigned to various levels of ESOL classes to receive instructional support without consideration of the amount and quality of previous educational experiences. All ELLs will be assigned to ESOL classes to acquire academic language without a distinction their previous exposure to school. This can be very problematic when the needs of ELLs vary greatly. ELLs can be immigrants, refugees, and native to America students with different needs and levels of previous schooling. As ELLs enter schools, school principals are working to foster an environment that emphasizes rigorous, standards-based curricula in the high-stakes assessment era (Short et al., 2008).

ELLs can be native born American students, immigrants, or refugees. For the purposes of this study, an immigrant is a person who chooses to move to a different country for a myriad of reasons. Some reasons include economic opportunities, educational opportunities, or family reunification. In contrast, a refugee is a person who leaves his/her country under duress. Many refugees are seeking asylum from political, religious, and/or economic persecution; war and destruction; and, certain death. The

major distinction between the two groups is choice: immigrants voluntarily leave their countries and refugees flee their countries for safety reasons (Prior & Niesz, 2013).

Programs Designed to Provide Equal Access for ELLs

Under the Bilingual Education Act, which was reauthorized in the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-297), the federal government gave states more flexibility in the use of funds to address the needs of the ELL and other disadvantaged students. Flexibility was granted in the types of programs designed to provide an equal education to ELL students. According to the US Department of Education and the Hawkins-Stafford Amendment P.L. 100-297 (1988),

The diversity of the LEP student population both in language background and in previous education has led to a pluralistic approach to educating these students. This approach allows local student districts to provide the instructional program that best serves their particular LEP student population. States are encouraged to take local flexibility, creativity and innovation to meet the needs of the LEP students. (P.L. 100-297, Sec. 4321)

The need for various levels of support for ELL students brought about a change in the law and policies that govern the states and school districts when planning and designing programs to address the needs of specific students.

According to Genesee (1999), there are five structures for instructional programs for LEP students: Sheltered Instruction in English, Newcomer programs, Transitional Bilingual programs, Developmental Bilingual programs, and Two-way Immersion programs. Each program is designed specifically to address and meet the needs of LEP students to be able to access the instructional program. More specific information about program design will be discussed in Chapter II Literature Review.

School Principals and Schools

With increasing enrollment rates of ELL students in American schools, schools and educators are confronted with growing pressures to address a variety of concerns, needs and cultural differences in the educational environment and communities. School principals must be prepared to go beyond the status quo and embrace a new vision of leadership grounded in equity and social justice for all students. Before the creation and facilitation of equitable school environments where large numbers of ELL students attend-some of whom may be an immigrant or refugee students-school principals must define and examine the strategies and practices they use to address and meet the needs of these students.

Of major importance in the accountability age, is the challenge to ensure academic success for the all students enrolled into their schools. The flattening of the world demands a shift in the way school principals perceive and construct equitable school environments and adapt their leadership styles and skill and knowledge sets to meet the standards of accountability. According to Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007), “it is the principal who is in a position to ensure that good teaching and learning spreads beyond a single classroom and that inclusive effective practices are fostered in the learning environment and ineffective practices aren’t allowed to fester” (p. xx). Principals must be prepared to lead in schools with students from diverse cultures, ethnicities, and experiences. They must also foster inclusive teaching and learning programs for their staff and students. School principals must be ever mindful that ELLs are not a monolithic group. The characteristics of this group are often over-

generalized and under-served because of the lack of factual knowledge concerning pedagogical issues related to the development of academic language, literacy and cognitive development (Center for Public Education, 2007).

School principals are tasked with leading schools that address the well-being of the whole child. Principals of schools are in the position to necessitate changes in their school environments for the advancement of all students. According to Theoharis (2009), “exemplary leadership helps create the necessity for change” (p. 8). School principals must develop systematic approaches for meeting and addressing the needs of the students, staff and communities in which they serve. According to researchers at the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA (2011), “developing a comprehensive system of interventions which is fully integrated into school improvement policy and practice enhances a school’s focus on addressing barriers to teaching and learning and re-engages all disconnected students” (p. 12). Effective school leadership is essential for schools to successfully develop and sustain programs and practices the benefit all students- especially language minority students. According to Senge (2001), “the attributes of change leadership within ‘learning organizations’ be concerned with the capacity to sustain change that brings forth new realities” (p. 2). School principals with a growth-minded philosophy recognize the opportunity for creating new realities for themselves, the students and the faculty of the schools they lead.

Accountability and ELLs

With an emphasis on accountability from the *2001 PL 107-110*, federal and state policies require school districts to ensure that all students are making academic progress

and that students are proficient on the required assessments. *PL 107-110* requires that students in Grades 3–8 be tested annually and their progress monitored by school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). According to the letter from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, states were invited

. . . to request flexibility regarding specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. (U.S. Department of Education, 2011a)

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), ESEA proposes to

. . . continue to provide significant formula grants to help states and school districts implement high-quality language instruction educational programs to improve the education of English Learners. Grantees may provide dual-language programs, transitional bilingual education, sheltered English immersion, newcomer programs for late-entrant English Learners, or other language instruction educational programs. Grantees may also provide effective professional development for all teachers of English Learners, including teachers of academic content areas, that is responsive to demonstrated needs identified by evaluations. Districts that are not improving the performance of English Learners will lose flexibility around the use of funds under this program, and must work with the state to implement more effective strategies. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 20)

ESEA and ESEA Flexibility require schools to monitor the academic progress of students in different sub-groups. There are ten subgroups in North Carolina and one of the monitored subgroups of students' is the LEP category. In order for a school to have a subgroup, at least forty students must be enrolled and meet one of the nine classifications. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2012). NCLB 2004 mandated that all students classified as LEP within a school district make Annual Measurable Achievement

Objectives (AMAOs) in language acquisition and requires students to meet the set targets on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Consortium (WIDA) to ensure that all students were making academic progress.

ELLs' Test Scores Implications on Accountability

NCLB 2004 mandated first year LEP students to be included for participation only in the states' testing programs, and the scores received by the students are exempted from the accountability formula (Batt, Kim, & Sunderman, 2005). This means that the student must take the state mandated tests and are only included in the participation rate for schools. However, after the first year in school ELL student scores are included in the state testing program, and the scores received by the students are included in the analysis of the school's performance as well as student accountability (Batt et al., 2005).

North Carolina omits first year LEP student End of Grade Math and Science scores from state test from the accountability model, and the students are exempt from the End of Grade Reading assessment. The state of North Carolina does require that students participate in the testing program. The participation rate of a school is included in the overall accountability grade for each school and school district. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient* (2013),

Per State Board of Education policy GCS-C-021 (16NCAC 6G.0312), all students identified as limited English proficient must participate in the statewide testing program (i.e., standard test administration or standard test administration with accommodations) with the exception of students identified as limited English proficient who score below Level 4.0 Expanding on the reading subtest of the

WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) and are in their first year in U.S. schools. These students are exempt from being assessed on the NC READY End-of-Grade English/Language Arts/Reading Assessment, the NC READY End-of-Course Assessment of English II, or any associated alternate assessments that measure reading comprehension. Therefore, students who are in their first year in U.S. schools and who have score below Level 4.0 Expanding on the reading subtest of the W-APT shall not be included in the AMOs. For purposes of determining participation for English Language arts/reading, the annual administration of the ACCESS for ELLs reading subtest will be used for the students identification in this section. (p. 5)

NCLB has undergone several revisions and updates since its inception; however, the goal for ELLs has always been to provide the students with access to the content with equal educational opportunities. School districts with ELL students registered in ESOL programs should consider the impact second year and beyond LEP student test scores could have on the overall school district and individual schools. School principals must strategically and deliberately plan to address the needs of newly arrived or resettled ELL students due to the impact their test scores may have on the overall school and community at large.

A Case for Equity

The current role of a school principal requires focusing on instructional leadership, with an emphasis on data analysis and data driven decision making, as well as possessing expertise in instruction, curriculum, and assessment all to improve students' achievement and the teaching and learning process while ensuring the success of every student. "In an era of higher standards and greater accountability, it is critical that schools have leaders who are prepared to do everything necessary to improve teaching and learning" (Fry, O'Neill, & Bottoms, 2006, p. 3).

Nordstrum (2006) states, “equity speaks for honesty and integrity . . . equity is not equality, but [equality] is the goal of equity reforms” (p. 722). Equity in education promotes learning that is structured so that all students are able to acquire the skills they need and to strengthen their proficiencies. School principals working for equitable environments work within a sense of justice and fairness as opposed to sameness or equality. According to Nordstrum (2006),

Equity takes into consideration that past circumstances may not have been equal, and implies just action from school leaders in needed to restore fairness into the situation. It is equity, not equality, that suggests targeting poorer school and districts with extra funds and resources may be necessary to even the playing field. (p. 722).

In *Other People’s Children*, Lisa Delpit (1995) asserts that if we are to address issues of equity and social justice in schools, we must start by listening first and seeking to understand. School principals must strive to provide an equitable environment so that all children might benefit from the educational system they have inherited. Understanding and meeting the needs of every student presents unique challenges for school principals with large ELL student populations. School principals require a commitment to and an understanding of the access and inclusion issues faced by schools in the accountability era. School principals will not only use data to inform decisions, but they must ground their analysis and questions relating to data in an equity lens.

According to Theoharis (2011), “school leaders with an equity orientation require skepticism about the state of schools and their continual failures and struggles and a persistent work ethic to improve schools at a fundamental level” (p. 361). Students in

highly impacted schools have many barriers that impede access to education and school principals striving for equity must be prepared to address these. Equity leadership encompasses a wide range of programs, strategies that may lead to unequal outcomes for some students in the population. In the Hidden Curriculum (2014), “equity is a process; equality is the outcome given that equity may not lead to equal distribution, application or allocation in the process of educating students” (p. 1).

Students from diverse cultural backgrounds may encounter inequitable educational practices due to their unfamiliarity with the American school system, customs, cultural references, and social expectations. Recently arrived students and their families may face difficulties in navigating the educational system and advocating for their needs (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). Linguistically diverse students or students who are not proficient in English may be held to lower academic expectations and may receive a lower-quality instruction as a result of their language differences in environments lacking a focus on equity.

Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) describe equity-oriented leaders as persons who conduct their work through an equitable attitude, avoid demonizing any particular group; initiate courageous conversations; demonstrate persistence; remain committed and patient; maintain an asset attitude; and maintain a coherent focus. Equity-oriented school principals pursue activities which work to remove the barrier to education for all students, provide rigorous educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, disability or nation of origin, provide rigorous educational opportunities for underserved and underrepresented populations, and they promote the

possibility of equitable results for every student (Skrla et al., 2009). When planning to lead equitable schools with large number of ELL students, school principals must develop a comprehensive system of interventions for recently resettled students to address the barriers they face which impedes their learning. Those systems must provide and enable equity of opportunity for all students, including the marginalized and disenfranchised English-speaking students as well as ELLs.

Friedlander (2001) summates that school principals in schools with a significant ELL population must develop processes to ease the transition into United States schools, develop orientation processes to assist new families and students, be knowledgeable about a wide range of counseling services for parents and families, possess access to information about referral services, have access to bilingual personnel, have resources to address transportation needs, and be able to provide assistance with required immunizations and other health services for refugee students.

According to Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012), “principals are being held accountable for the continuous growth in student achievement, closing the achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, and increasing college or workplace readiness among disadvantaged students” (p. 26). School principals and educators need to have access to the resources to meet the needs of all students and families to positively impact the teaching and learning and educational outcomes for all students, including refugee students to meet the increasing demands made of them.

School principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers with significant ELL populations need to examine and reflect upon their knowledge, or lack of

knowledge, about ELLs-especially students from immigrant or refugee populations- and the resources needed to best serve these students enrolled in their schools. School principals also need to examine and reflect upon their beliefs about equity and inclusion for ELL students when leading their schools. The research questions posed in this study will require the school leader, ESOL teacher, and regular education participants to identify and examine the strategies they use and the practices they employ to address the needs of the newly arrived and recently resettled ELL students in the central part of North Carolina.

Recent accountability standards from the federal *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* policy mandates require school principals to address a myriad of needs from staff development, family and community involvement, student achievement, and a customization of the learning environment for students using the available data. Current research studies discuss effective practices of equity minded school principals (Barbara & Krovetz, 2005; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 2000; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Nordstrum, 2006; Theoharis, 2011). However, there is an absence of literature focused on school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers' practices in relation to recently resettled ELL students and equity.

Summary of Chapters

In this chapter, I stated my intention of exploring the characteristics of an equitable environment for ELL students who have been in the country for less than five years and to explore the practices the school principal, ESOL teacher, and the regular

education teacher use to create equitable environments for these students. Through the interviews and document reviews, I gained a sense of their commitment to the work of promoting equity for ELLs and I relayed their stories about the practices and strategies they use to reach the goal of an equitable environment.

Much of the literature reviewed for this study centered on accountability, immigrant and refugee students, the trends of immigration and migration in the United States, the educational needs of ELLs, the instructional approaches used with ELLs, and equitable education practices. The research on the needs of immigrant and refugee students will provide the background information to examine the strategies and practices of school principals when addressing ELL students and their academic and other needs.

Chapter II

My review of the literature attempts to provide the background knowledge that will provide a better understanding of the data collected from the participants and how it relates to their practices. The literature begins with background information about migration in the United States, school principals working towards equity in their schools, instructional approaches for ELLs, and programs specifically designed to address the needs of ELLs.

Chapter III

The qualitative research design is discussed in Chapter III. A comparative case study was used to gain insight into the practices of the school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers from three schools in the selected host district. The Director of the ESOL program for the host district described the characteristics of an

equitable environment and recommended three schools working for equity for ELLs. Descriptions of the schools and the participants are also included to give the reader a better understanding of the research sites. Interviews and a document review were conducted to collect data.

Chapter IV

In this chapter, I begin to relay the data collected from the participants. The analysis of the descriptions of the characteristics of an equitable environment led to the identified themes and the seven categories emerged: inclusion, care, shared vision and mission, professional respect, access to resources, access to the curriculum, and culture of trust. Interesting information from the interviews was discussed to provide a full description of the environment. The participants shared their experiences and their experiences were analyzed and themes emerged and they were placed in the appropriate categories. In this chapter, I begin to show the comparison between the three schools.

Chapter V

Finally, I discuss the findings from the study regarding the characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs and the practices used by educators in the three sites. I discuss the implications for practice for other schools and districts when working for equity for recently arrived ELLs.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Public education in the United States has seen numerous reforms and initiatives in the name of accountability to increase the academic performance of students in American schools. School leaders have the responsibility to ensure that all students enrolled in their schools receive an education that prepares them for the future lives the students' desire. All educators have the responsibility to facilitate learning environments where students are active participants in their learning. The term 'All' students is inclusive of ELLs and school leaders and educators must work to create equitable environments to support ELL students. In the age of accountability, school leaders, educators, and students are required to meet proficiency standards. For example, ELLs in North Carolina schools in their second year of school are held to the same performance measures as their English-speaking peers. Historically, the performance of ELLs has not been equivalent or comparable to that of native English speakers due to cultural, linguistic and instructional variables which schools are left to address (Fratt, 2007). Developing instructional strategies and practices to address and meet the needs of the growing population of ELLs is a challenge for educators. The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the characteristics of an equitable environment for recently arrived English Language Learning students?

2. What practices do school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ when planning to an equitable school environment for recently arrived ELLs?

The review of literature provided the foundational knowledge for the beginning of the research study.

The following is a review and synthesis of related research studies and articles found in various databases. The databases found to be most beneficial to the researcher were ERIC and ProQuest Education Journals, and the information from the UNCG Jackson Library. The keywords that proved most fruitful in the searches of the database included school leadership, equity, English Language Learners, and instructional practices for ELLs. The articles selected for review were directly related to the research questions for this study. Emphasis was placed on articles published in educational journals by scholars in the field and authors who were cited regularly throughout the review of literature.

The literature review is organized into the following sections: (a) background information of ELLs, many of whom are immigrants or refugee students, (b) school leaders working for equity, (c) instructional approaches for ELLs, and (d) programs designed for ELLs. Additionally, the literature on the needs of ELLs, some of whom are immigrant and refugee students, will provide the background information which will outline some of the barriers faced by ELLs.

ELLs Who Are Classified as Immigrant and/or Refugee Students

As immigrant and refugee students have made their way into American schools and into ESOL programs, schools must assess their readiness level to support their new community members. Researchers Pinson and Arnot (2007) provide research on refugee student schooling with a focus on policy issues rather than instructional programs and practices that have increased academic performance or achievement. According to Hoot (2011), most of the literature focuses on the needs of refugee and ELL students and provides advice for classroom teachers to best meet and address the needs of these students. Research studies by McBrien (2011), note how schools can work with refugee families as they resettle into their new communities. However, research is limited in the area of strategies and practices used by elementary school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers collaboratively working to meet and address the needs of second year ELL students.

Immigrant and refugee students are sometimes categorized as one in the same. However, the two groups are vastly different. The major difference between immigrant and refugee students is that immigrants choose to leave their homeland, whereas refugees often leave due to persecution and to escape death (Prior & Niesz, 2013). Immigrant students often leave close relatives in their home countries and their trip to their new home may be grueling and filled with challenges; whereas some refugee students travel with other family members who were also able to escape and/or survived persecution in their homelands. Immigrant and refugee children account for 30 percent of students identified as economically disadvantaged (ED) in American schools (Fortuny et al.,

2010). Both of these groups of students may struggle with poverty, emotional and behavioral issues. However, educators need to address the needs of each immigrant and refugee student individually since no case is exactly identical, and the needs for each group can be vastly different (Cairo et al., 2012). Equity minded educators must consider the needs of every student and develop a plan to meet academic needs of immigrant and refugee students.

Trends in Immigration and Migration to the United States

Historically, refugees have come to the United States making the population more ethnically and racially diverse. The influx of diverse cultures and languages required a different approach to educating the youth of diverse cultures. Major waves of migration to the United States occurred at the beginning and the ending of the twentieth century. According to Passell (2011), “large-scale migration, mainly from southern and eastern Europe, changed the face of the United States at the beginning of the 1900s before being brought to an end by World War I and the restrictive legislation enacted shortly thereafter” (p. 20). As the migration to the United States of America continued throughout the Twentieth Century the number of immigrants and refugees continued to grow. As stated by Peterson and Ladky (2007), “by the early 1900s the United States had experienced high levels of migration for more than half a century; immigrants and refugees represented 13-15 percent of the population from 1870 through 1920” (p. 885).

In the later years of the 1900s, the demographics of the United States shifted from receiving immigrants and refugees from southern and eastern Europe to students who were from other parts of the world. “In 1960 Hispanic, Asian and mixed race youth made

up about six percent of all United States children; compared to today that share is about 30 percent” (Passell, 2011, p. 19). With the passage of landmark immigration laws in 1965, migration resumed with an increase in new immigrants and refugees from Latin America and Asia, which continued through the end of the century (Passell, 2011). This shift in diversity required schools to make adjustments to their educational programs.

Currently, immigrants and refugee students account for the one-fourth of the more than 75 million youth and children in the United States (Marcellino, 2012). The current diversity represented in American classrooms requires educators and school principals to reflect and evaluate their understandings and perceptions of the needs of refugee students.

Immigrants

According to Fortuny et al. (2010), many immigrants have chosen to leave their home countries in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families.

Immigrants may have family members and other support systems awaiting their arrival to support them with the transition to their new homes making the move to their new homes a more manageable journey. Some immigrants enter their new countries without the necessary documentation, and may face the challenge of obtaining documents to become employable. Many immigrant families are met with resistance due to political factors.

According to Cairo et al. (2012), in the U.S., “a struggling economy, a national focus on Islamic terrorism, and national policy debates about legal and illegal immigration contribute to the suspicious, if not hostile anti-immigration climate” (p. 55).

Undocumented immigrant students and youth also struggle with fear of deportation and

feelings of invisibility. All of these factors contribute and impact the educational progress and experience of immigrant students.

Refugees

Refugee families leave their homelands under duress and/or out of dire necessity. Many refugee families can never return to their homelands for fear of persecution and/or death. “Refugees are admitted to the United States on a well-founded indication that they have cause to fear persecution in their home countries” (Center for Mental Health in Schools in UCLA, 2011). Refugees may work with a resettlement agency to make the transition to their new homes in the new country and may have asylum, which entitles them to government aid and support for a short time during the transition period. Even without the fear of persecution or death, many refugees cannot return to their homelands due to the destruction of their homes by the war. Some refugee students and their families were from a higher socioeconomic status in the home countries before arriving in their new countries, and have difficulty adjusting to the new lifestyle and limited access to resources. If students identified as refugees previously lived in a refugee camp, their new lifestyles will be vastly different from the norms and cultural expectations of their new homes; and their access to resources in their new countries may be greatly improved.

According to Gahungu et al. (2011), some refugee students may lack literacy in their first language and have limited knowledge as to how the school systems work outside of a refugee camp. At the onset of resettlement, refugee students are most vulnerable to school failure and negative consequences due to the emotional scars of being victimized in their country of origin. Many seem to feel and suffer a personal loss,

which they are grieving to a greater extent than the non-refugee immigrant counterparts (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2011). Each resettlement case presents a unique challenge and must be addressed on an individual basis.

According to Strelakova and Hoot (2008), many refugee students have internal ethical conflicts and are struggling to make sense of them, such as ‘don’t kill’ and ‘love your fellow man’ when many of them have witnessed loved ones and strangers maimed and killed during wars and persecution. Many refugee students suffer from the side effects of witnessing violence and need support to negotiate their feelings and emotions. Refugee students often have greater difficulty adjusting to the unfamiliar school environment and new school and societal cultures than their immigrant peers.

School Leaders’ Reform Efforts on Behalf of ELLs

The mixed methods study conducted by Klar and Brewer (2013) examined the way three middle school principals used the tenants of comprehensive school reform to improve the outcomes for all students. The three middle school principals varied in levels of experience, age and gender. The three principals were successful in ‘turning around’ their schools by following key leadership practices. The principals in the three schools were successful at setting the direction for the culture and climate of the school. There was an emphasis on building positive relationships and a shared vision and mission to create a sense of community. The principals also devoted time to professional development specifically tailored to address the needs of their respective schools. The outcomes for students were improved by the elimination of excuses for teachers and students and the creation of supports and stability in the teaching and learning process.

The principals also worked to redesign the organizational structure of their individual schools. The principals reached out to the community to build relationships and create a collaborative environment with the home, school, faith-based organizations, and the community at large to improve the sense of togetherness for the students and families. Lastly, the principals in this mixed methods study monitored the instructional programs of their schools. They worked to recruit the most qualified teachers, used data to guide instructional programming decisions, and allocated the resources in ways to have the greatest impact on student outcomes.

The findings from this mixed methods study provide insight into strategies and practices that benefit students in need of improved outcomes. Klar and Brewer (2013) suggest that not only should school leaders be knowledgeable about improvement strategies, but that “. . . it is the understanding of *how* to lead in concert with knowing the context determines the success of improvement efforts” (p. 801). Knowing the context in which leaders work will not occur overnight. Leaders will have to learn to listen to internal and external community members, school personnel, students, and families in order to understand the nuances of the context in which they work.

The qualitative study conducted by Elfers and Stritikus (2014) examined the ways in which school leaders in four school districts created systems of support for classroom teachers who were responsible for educating linguistically diverse students and the impact of the supports put in place. A notable finding from this study is that “the field is increasingly clear that leaders play a key role in shaping and improving learning” (p. 307) for students. The study sought to find a strong correlation between principal actions and

student learning when principals focus on instruction, create and maintain a community of trust, clearly communicate the mission and vision, and sets goals for instructional practices in the context of ELLs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014).

Findings from this study suggest that school principals who worked to embrace the challenge of creating high-quality learning environment, and systems of support specifically designed to support ELLs maximized the learning opportunities for ELLs. An important factor was the blending of the professional development for the teachers and the simultaneous creation of equitable learning environment for students, which fostered a learning environment for teachers and students. An effective practice of school leaders to improve the outcomes for ELLs was to help the teachers “. . . make connections between their ELL students and instructional practices [while] offering staff support, provide greater access to appropriate curriculum and materials, and provide opportunities for collaboration among teachers” (p. 337).

Elfers and Stritikus (2014) also discussed how school leaders who worked proactively to be inclusive of families and community members in the school improved the outcomes for ELLs by capitalizing on the linguistic and cultural resources the students and their families brought to the environment (p. 336). The researchers of this study believe that when school leaders purposefully, and intentionally work with district leaders to support teacher development in the areas of instructing ELLs, and build practical images of how ELLs can be educated, then the outcomes for ELLs will improve.

The case study conducted by Theoharis and O’Toole (2011) desired to better understand the leadership practices required to create socially just schools for ELLs. The

case study examined two urban schools' principals and the reform approaches used to create collaborative, inclusive learning environments for ELLs. This study suggests that effective programs for ELLs involve comprehensive, school wide efforts inclusive of principals, teachers, staff, and students (p. 650). The two principals involved in this case study “. . . placed a high value on ensuring that the school is connected to the ELLs' families and these families are connected to the school” (p. 652). According to Theoharis and O'Toole (2011), each principal changed the instructional programs at their schools to be inclusive of ELLs, provided professional development opportunities for teachers since all teachers were responsible for educating ELLs, created ongoing systems of communication between the school and families, and made inclusion of ELLs a larger part of the vision and mission of the school. The finding of this qualitative study suggest that outcomes for ELLs were improved when school leaders possessed an asset-based orientation towards language diversity and worked to create inclusive environments, when school leaders believed that the responsibility for educating ELLs was the responsibility of all educators, and when school leaders developed a mission and vision centered around the need of ELLs (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

In Reyes and Garcia's (2014) longitudinal case study of a school principals' efforts to reform a failing school with a high population of ELLs, they found that the principal was essential to leading the reform efforts and his strategies were key in improving the outcomes for all students. The findings from this longitudinal case study, which occurred over a four-year time span, found that in the school of 700 students, 63% of the students were ELLs, and 96% of the students were economically disadvantaged

(ED). The principal observed, interviewed and collected information about the school before developing a plan to make needed improvements. The major three strategies he used were to reshape the school culture by removing teachers who were resistant to change and antagonistic towards children. This strategy led to improved professional behavior and the development of professional learning communities where teachers worked collaboratively toward one mission. The findings produced a second strategy which was to create a culture of high expectations for students. Teachers were required to meet weekly, to monitor student data, and to develop plans for improving student data. This was also coupled with including professional development for teachers in the school's budget. During the first year, the principal worked to create a dual-language program to the school, but first the teachers would need training and instruction on how to effectively instruct in such a manner. An arts program was also integrated into the school to provide multiple ways students could engage in the school community. The last strategy found in this study was to include the parents in the education process of the students. Including the parents of ELL students was critical in the success of the school. Parents had access to the school through a parent engagement center where all parents could receive information about the school in a way they could understand. Parents were provided with access to ESOL classes and general educational development (GED) test preparation classes. Parents were frequently surveyed and invited to give input into the progress of the school. This helped to create a sense of belonging for the students and their families. At the conclusion of this study, student achievement was ranked among the highest achieving schools in the state of Texas.

Educational Needs and Instructional Strategies and Practices for ELLs

School districts and educators must inquiry about and prepare to meet the unique needs of the immigrant and refugee population. School principals must determine if an assessment of available resources to meet the needs of the immigrant and refugee students should be conducted. School districts and school principals must assess if the staff and other leaders have received proper professional development to address the unique needs of the immigrant and refugee students. These are a few issues raised which school principals must be prepared to face when accepting an appointment at a school with diversity of culture, language, background and educational experiences.

According to Bringear (2010), the diversity of English language ability, educational background, and socioeconomic status within the ELL student population requires school principals to create successful networks of resources to address the psychological, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural needs of the students; as well as develop meaningful, relevant learning experiences for the students. Many newly resettled ELL students carry with them the visible and invisible scars of personal trauma or hardships that most of their same-age peers can hardly even envision. Because ELL students' languages, cultures and values differ from those of many educators—and from one another—school districts and educators face challenges and opportunities as they strive to meet every student's diverse needs.

At the most fragile time in an adolescents' life, ELL students who are immigrant and refugee students of a certain age are forced to divorce themselves from something that has been with them since birth—their ability to communicate with others—and move

to a new place where they are usually unable to effectively communicate with others (Bringear, 2010). ELL students who are immigrant and refugee students may demonstrate behaviors, such as sitting quietly in the room without acknowledging the adult speaking to them-called the silent period, responding in the affirmative when asked a question regardless of the appropriate response, avoiding eye contact with adults, and demonstrating an indifference to their academic settings while they are dealing with the obvious linguistic and curricular differences between the two cultural styles. Some students may seem disengaged and uninterested in school assignments and class work. However, the students may have deeper emotional issues that are not verbalized due to the struggle within to adjust to their new environments (Bringear, 2010). Educators must be equipped with the knowledge and sensitivity to cultural diversity to have a positive impact on this delicate situation.

According to Kuger and Price (2009), newly arrived ELL students who are immigrant and refugee students who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) may have violent outbursts in schools due to past interactions with violence, death, war and/or traumas. Kuger and Price (2009) also noted that, many recently resettled ELL students have experienced suffering, isolation, alienation, grief, and/or loneliness, which can undermine their sense of self and contributed to reduced self-confidence. Recently resettled ELL immigrant and refugee students are coping with the stress of learning a new language and a new culture. In many cases, they face a less than welcoming reception, perceived and real racism and discrimination, and a school and community which may be ill prepared to address their many needs. Supporting the claims of Kuger and Price is

Friedlander (2001) by stating, “New arrival immigrant and refugee students . . . face the challenges of language limitations, less than age-appropriate education, lack of familiarity with the United States school system, and personal trauma and low self-esteem” (p. 1). The transition to a new country and new life is challenging for many newly resettled ELL students, and the students may need additional supports to make a successful transition.

Instructional Approaches for ELLs

The Federal government mandates that students with limited English be able to access and receive a meaningful education program while they are enrolled in school. To address the needs of students whose first language is not English, school districts and schools have created programs and strategies to address the language needs of the students. As previously discussed, some programs are designed to provide extra support within the mainstream classroom, while other programs follow a self-contained pull-out model. No one approach has been proven to be more effective than the other; usually, the needs of the students determine the most appropriate delivery of services model.

Programs Designed to Educate ELLs

Due to the rights of ELLs, the federal government mandated that all states that receive federal funds abide by the guidelines to provide equal access to education. Under federal and state laws, undocumented and documented ELL students are entitled to the same rights as citizens and permanent residents, and cannot be denied equal access to instructional programs. To address the specific language and learning needs of ELL students, states and school districts have developed a series of programs to support the

learning of their language minority students. There are five types of programs specifically designed for ELL students: Sheltered Instruction in English, Newcomer programs, Transitional Bilingual programs, Developmental Bilingual programs and Two-way immersion programs (Genesee, 1999). Each program has specific language, cultural, and academic goals; and is designed to address the needs of a specific group of ELL students.

Genesee (1999) implies that the structure and design of the Sheltered Instruction in English program is intended to address and promote academic English proficiency. The classroom instruction is conducted in English with the language presented in a manner in which it is comprehensible to the students. The cultural goal of this program is to integrate the students into the mainstream classroom with their English-speaking peers or with a mixture of native and nonnative English speakers. This program serves students, who have limited or no English and are literate in their first language that have the foundational principles for reading and writing. Many schools provide Sheltered Instruction in English in all classes using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for the ELL students. The SIOP Model will be discussed in-depth later in this chapter.

According to Genesee (1999), the arrangement of a newcomers program is designed to address and promote English proficiency in nonnative English speakers. The program is specifically designed to introduce students new to America to the operation of American schools and to promote an understanding of American culture. The students enrolled in a newcomers program usually have limited to no English skills and have limited literacy in their first language. Many students in newcomers programs are able to

verbally communicate in their first language, but may not read or write in their first language. The absence of basic reading and writing skills in their first language increases the difficulty of learning to the basis for literacy in their second language. The cultural goal for ELL students in newcomers programs is to understand and integrate into the American school culture. The academic goals for ELL students in newcomers programs vary. However, in the age of accountability, school districts and educators must give consideration to academic goals which impact school accountability.

The Transitional Bilingual programs are specifically designed for ELL students at the elementary level in grades K-2. According to Genesee (1999), students are enrolled in classes with students who all speak the same language and have limited to no English speaking, but they may be literate in their first language. The teacher delivers instructional material in the student's first language with a gradual transition into only English towards the conclusion of the year. The academic goal of this type of program is similar to the state and district academic goals. The cultural goal of the Transitional Bilingual program is to promote and cultivate an understanding and integration of American schools and culture. This type of program builds on the literacy skills the student possesses at the time of enrollment. Transitional bilingual programs require that instruction be delivered in the student's first language. Considering budgetary constraints and the lack of trained teachers, this type of program can be difficult to manage and fund (Genesee, 1999).

Developmental Bilingual programs are structured to promote bilingualism and have the same academic goals as the state and school district. Students can enter these

types of programs at any age, but it is recommended that early enrollment at the Kindergarten level helps to achieve program goals. Developmental bilingual programs group the students by the same language and instruction is delivered in English and in the student's first language. The ELL students enrolled in this type of program have a foundation in literacy in their first language, which provides the basis for second language acquisition. The cultural goal of this type of program is to promote integration into American culture while maintaining a connection with the student's first culture. The ELL students will be encouraged to maintain their heritage while learning a new culture (Genesee, 1999).

Like the Developmental Bilingual programs, Two-Way Immersion programs are developed and designed to promote bilingualism. The ELL students receive instruction in English and their first language. Typically, students are enrolled in this type of program with native English speakers and students with limited to no English. Classroom instruction is supported with visuals to increase student access to the content material since the curriculum is slightly modified for these programs. The academic goals for this program are the same as the state and district goals. ELL students are encouraged to enroll in Two-Way Immersion programs during the early elementary school grades to increase the likelihood of success (Genesee, 1999).

Separate Setting Model for ELLs

Dr. Cristina Igoa (1995), conducted research and found many ways to provide instructional support for students enrolled in her ESOL separate setting or pullout classes. In her research, Igoa discovered a foundation principle on which she has based her

classroom instruction-nurturance. Igoa (1995) stated, “nurturance is what they [immigrant students] need, but not the kind of nurturance that weakens them or fosters dependence on the teacher, thereby perpetuating childish and dependent behavior rather than allowing the children to grow and become self-reliant.” (pp. 5–6). Igoa (1995) found that the environment of her classroom was a key factor in the success she would have with her immigrant students. She made the environment warm, inviting and respectful for the students to encourage their participation in learning and to reduce the silent period experienced by many ELL students upon entering a new school environment. She wanted the students to know and feel that just because they were uprooted from their countries that they were valuable and accepted in her classroom and that their values and beliefs were not ‘thrown to the wind’ just because they were in a new culture (Igoa,1995).

Igoa (1995) realized that different cultures have different norms and expectations, which shape the students’ expectations of school, community and the world. Igoa (1995)

realized that there really is no formula, the most effective approach was to become a teacher-researcher . . . to find out first who my students were, where they were from, how much education they had experienced, and how I could move them forward. (p. 7)

The research conducted by Igoa in her classroom led her to use the dual-dialogic retrospection method of instruction for her ELL students. Dr. Igoa’s research was supported by the leadership in the school building giving her the freedom and flexibility to design specific programs for the immigrant students in her class.

An instructional and research approach used by Igoa was based on a combination of principles from Paulo Freire (1984) and Charles Kieffer (1981) named the dual

dialogic approach. Igoa's (1995) instructional approach was designed to ". . . give a voice to the voiceless [and] acknowledge them as a human being capable of knowing" (p. 72). This method allows the students to show you who they are and sheds light on their experiences and allows the teacher to have an idea of the needs of the students—it is a collaboration between the participants and the researcher. Igoa (1995) states, "if we can see their inner worlds, we discover a wealth of information about what the child's experience has been and what his or her needs are" (p. 54). Using this method allows the students to show you who they are while participating in the educational environment without losing important cultural values in the classroom.

The dual-dialogic retrospection methodology fosters participatory research where the research comes from the individual participants and is not imposed by the researcher (Igoa, 1995). Students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and values through this method and the teacher is able to ascertain what is important to the students. Throughout her research and writing, Igoa stressed the importance of immigrant students knowing that the teacher believed that they were lovable just as they are, the teacher preserved their cultural identities, and the students felt and were academically challenging classrooms (Igoa, 1995).

An important factor for educators to stress to ELL students-immigrant or refugee- is that learning a second language means that they are able to communicate in more than one way and that ability is a strength and an asset. At the conclusion of her book, Igoa (1995) states, "If it is possible to learn from past mistakes, perhaps we can begin with the

immigrant children to ‘heal our society’ and to develop in all children ‘peace, harmony, respect for cultural difference and cooperation towards common goals” (p. 174).

Inclusion Strategy for ELLs

Echevarria et al. (2008) developed The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) which is in use in all 50 states of the United States and was developed specifically to address the need for comprehensive instruction by teachers for ELLs. The SIOP model is used in the mainstream classroom and in the separate setting classroom. The SIOP model is an instructional model for planning and delivery lessons as well as an observation instrument for assessing the fidelity of the development of lesson plans.

According to Echevarria et al. (2008),

The SIOP model has eight components: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment . . . instructional practices that are critical for second language learners as well as high-quality practices that benefit all students. (p. 16)

The SIOP model is a structure and tool for classroom educators to use when planning and delivering lessons to ELLs and if used with fidelity can increase the chances of academic success for students. The theoretical underpinning of the model is that language acquisition is enhanced through meaningful use and interaction of material that is relevant to the students’ schooling. Teachers in classrooms with mixed English language abilities who use the SIOP model offer multiple ways for students to demonstrate their understanding with an emphasis on academic concepts. This model does not require teachers to discard previously used teaching methods and adapt only use the strategies outlined in the SIOP method; it brings the knowledge the teacher has of the standards

with researched proven strategies for how to teach the standards—district, state and ESL—to the students (Echevarria et al., 2008).

According to Echevarria et al. (2008),

The SIOP model offers a frame work for organizing classroom instruction with clear language objectives in every content area, the development of background knowledge, the acquisition of content-related vocabulary and the emphasis on academic literacy practices to support the developmental language needs of LEP students. (p. 13)

One technique used by SIOP trained teachers of ELL students is to provide visual aids of vocabulary words and concepts to make the content material comprehensible for the students. Teachers of ELL students are encouraged to use strategies to build vocabulary and make connections with background knowledge when delivering instruction through the SIOP model to develop and advance literacy skills.

Differentiation as an Instructional Strategy

According to Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) in *Differentiating Instruction and Assessment for English Language Learners*, “. . . differentiation allows teachers to take into consideration the readiness of each learner while facilitating instruction and assessment rooted in the same content standards for all students” (p. 2). While Marzano, McTighe, Tomlinson, and others have researched differentiated instructional strategies, Tomlinson best defines differentiation as “individually student centered, with a focus on utilizing appropriate instructional and assessment tools that are fair, flexible, challenging, and engage students in the curriculum in meaningful ways” (Rock, Gregg, Ellis, & Gable, 2008, p. 32).

Differentiated instruction has been proven to increase student achievement and is beneficial for all students. However, according to Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010), “without ELL-specific knowledge, even the most willing and eager teacher will struggle needlessly with understanding how to implement differentiation for ELLs” (p. 2). To effectively differentiate instruction for ELLs, teachers need to have an understanding of cultural and linguistic factors that impact each student's learning and language. Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) further state, “effective differentiation for ELLs cannot take place without first knowing the basics of both intercultural communication and the language acquisition processes, including the characteristics of each stage of language development, essential for the teachers of ELLs” (p. 2). If teachers receive the appropriate professional development and use the strategies learned to differentiate instruction for ELLS, the result will be that the students have the opportunity to learn the content and language simultaneously thus contributing to academic progress.

Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) like Igoa (1995) discuss the importance of a teacher knowing the backgrounds of the ELLs in the classroom. Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010), state, “understanding the student's background, recognizing its role in the learning process, and tailoring instruction to meet the student's needs are necessities if the student is to feel comfortable in his or her new learning setting” (p. 21). The authors offer suggestions as to how an educator can take steps to get to know the backgrounds of the ELL students enrolled in their classes. Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010) suggest that teachers can make home visits, can review the student's cumulative folder if it is available, and can communicate with the students directly to gain additional information.

During a home visit it is recommended that the teacher be mindful of gestures and body language and to be very mindful of the cultural differences that may be present. During any interaction with ELL students and their families, teachers must be aware of the individualistic vs. collectivistic cultural differences—since either orientation may often be reflected in our communication (Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010). When planning the learning environment, the school principal and other educators must consider many factors when developing class lists, personnel and other resources to support the academic and well-being of the ELL students enrolled in their schools.

According to Brinegar (2010), “Immigrant families in the United States have increased seven times faster than native born families since 1990 and as of the year 2000, there were 2.8 million foreign-born United States residents under the age of 18” (p. 1). Immigrant and refugee children are the fastest growing population in the United States, and their presence is quickly changing the demographics of American public schools (Nur & Hunter, 2009). To address the needs of the changing demographics of American public schools, school districts must plan to meet federal and state guidelines; school principals must plan school environments, professional development for teachers, and assess the available resources needed for their schools; while classroom teachers plan instruction to address the needs of the students in their classes.

School principals have an important job and their attitude about the schools they lead can promote growth or their attitude can hinder growth. The attitude of the school principal where large numbers of ELL students are enrolled is especially critical in the success of the environment. The attitude, approach and delivery of strategies and

practices of principals with large numbers of ELL students heavily influence the entire school environment and the success of the students. “The principal’s attitude sets the tone for the value placed on what the students bring culturally, linguistically and for initiating efforts to communicate with families on a meaningful level about their child’s education experiences” (Wrigley, 2000, p. 4). Implementing practices grounded in equity, school principals can begin to create and maintain environments where all students, including ELL students, thrive, succeed and carve out a bright future.

Conceptual Framework

For this study, I drew upon the language and concepts from three of the established eleven Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards 2014 to describe equity within this study. The framework for this study guides the analysis of the qualitative research addressing equity in education for ELLs. ISLLC Standards One, Five, and Ten provide the language and concepts for analyzing equitable educational practices. Tenets from Standard One describe the purpose and functions of the mission and vision for a school for which an educational leader should strive. The language and concepts of ISLLC Standard One reflects equity in that the focus is on improving the outcomes for all students and maintaining a child-centered vision which should foster an environment of sustainable improvement for all students.

Tenets from Standard Five describe the purpose and function of creating a community of care for students for which an educator should strive. The language and concepts of ISLLC Standard Five reflects equity in that the attention is on creating and maintaining value and respect for all students and creating an environment where

students receive the supports they need to be actively engaged in the school community. Equity is also highlighted by the creation and fostering of a culture of trust throughout the school community. Educators will have to cultivate an environment where all families feel connected, valued, and engaged in the school community, and that may require a variety of strategies to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Tenets from Standard Ten describe the purpose and function of ensuring equity and being a culturally responsive educator and leader. The language and concepts of ISLLC Standard Ten reflects equity in that the emphasis is on equity and culturally responsiveness. Equity is stressed in that schools should be affirming places, educators should address and attack issues of marginalization, and an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures within the schools is emphasized.

Historically, there has been a gap in the performance of ELL students as compared to other subgroups (Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko, & Stuczynksi, 2011). In North Carolina, schools are graded on student performance on state assessments. ELLs, who have recently arrived in the country and have not acquired the language proficiency needed to perform proficiently on the state assessments, are asked to participate in high stakes testing. As previously mentioned, it takes five to seven years to acquire academic language (Echevarria et al., 2008). Low student performance has negative implications for schools. With the repercussions of low school performance grades looming over school principals and educators and negative perceptions of the public about school performances, school leaders and educators must develop practices to make the learning environment supportive for each students to maximize learning and to positively impact

student outcomes. The language and the concepts presented in the ISLLC Standards provide the basis where educators should begin to look for guidance.

The language and concepts of the ISLLC Standards outline effective leadership practices (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014). At inception in 1996, the concepts presented in the ISLLC Standards provided leaders with what they should know and be able to do. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the 2014 version of the ISLLC standards emphasize,

what effective leadership should look like in a transformed education system, envision public schools that empower every learner, emphasize the application of content knowledge and skills to real world problems, value the differences each learner brings, and leverage the rapidly changing learning environments to maximize learning (p. 6).

The ISLLC standards serve as a guide for school principals as they strive to set direction in the school by communicating a shared vision, providing support for the culture and practices to reflect the vision, and to build capacity of the school to support the vision and mission of the school (Scalan & Lopez, 2012).

The tenets of standard one—**Vision and Mission**—for school leaders are:

1. Child-centered vision
2. Collects and uses data to improve outcomes for students
3. Creates and uses plans to achieve desired outcomes
4. Monitors and evaluates program effectiveness
5. Fosters sustainable improvement

The tenets of standard five—**Community of Care for Students**—for school leaders are:

1. Fosters a culture of trust
2. Fosters a culture of value and respect for students
3. Creates and maintains an emotionally, healthy, safe environment
4. Supports students academically as well as socially
5. Fosters an inclusive environment where all students are actively involved

The tenets of standard ten—**Equity and Culturally Responsiveness**—for school leaders are:

1. Provides equity of access to support and social capital
2. Maintains school as an inclusive affirming place
3. Advocates for children and their families
4. Attacks marginalization issues; debunks deficit-based thinking; and limits assumptions
5. Encourages the participation of students in multiple cultures
6. Encourages understanding and appreciation for diverse cultures and resources

Equity does not mean equality. Equity goes beyond treating all students equally and giving the students fair access to resources. Equity is more intricate and complex. Equity researchers call for school principals to examine the educational supports in place in order to determine the best way to meet the unique needs of each student. Using equity as a guidepost, educators can do the work to ensure that each student has a unique learning experience to build and acquire knowledge. Cultivating equity for ELLs in the

academic learning environment will involve ensuring access to resources, access to the curriculum and supports, and ensuring that students are socio-culturally integrated in the learning environment.

Although there is a growing body of literature about equity and leadership, there is a gap in specific models to follow as educators collaboratively strive for equity. The theory is that the supports and environment are central to educational equity for ELLs. These factors compel school principals and educators to investigate how to support ELLs and to continuously work to create equitable learning environments.

Using the language and concepts from ISLLC Standards One, Five, and Ten; and the premise of being a culturally responsive educator working for equity, the conceptual framework for this study was developed to examine the practices school leaders, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to improve the outcomes for ELLs in their schools (See Figure 1).

Summary

The review of the literature provided the background knowledge needed to better understand the needs of ELLs. In this chapter, literature pertaining to school leaders and their reform efforts was discussed and findings from the studies were synthesized. Instructional approaches and instructional programs were discussed in the review of literature. The literature reviewed also sets the foundation for the conceptual framework for this study.

In the next chapter I will describe the research design; the research district, schools, and participants, and the analysis process which was used to gain insight into the

characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and the practices of the school principal, ESOL teacher, and regular education teacher of the recommended schools with equitable environments for ELLs.

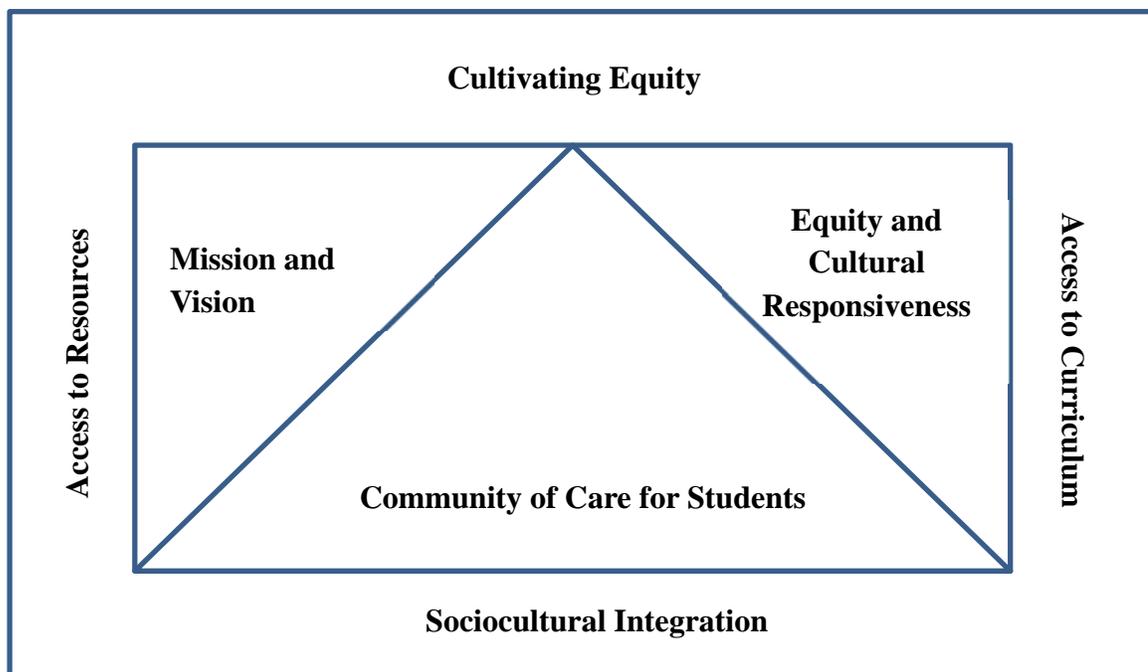


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Model Guiding Effective Practices for English Language Learners.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this comparative case study, I examined characteristics of equitable environments for recently arrived ELLs and the strategies and practices used by school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers to address the needs of newly resettled ELLs in their schools. Many of the new arrival ELL students are immigrant or refugee students, and the academic supports need to be deliberate and focused in order to have an impact on academic achievement. The goal of this study was to identify the characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and to explore the day to day operational practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ to address and meet the needs of recently resettled ELL students enrolled into their schools. In the era of accountability, the emphasis of this study is on strategies school leaders and other educators use to support programming goals for newly arrival ELL students, since the data from state assessments for ELL students are included in the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). The hope of this study is to provide additional insight into how school leaders can develop more responsive schools, and develop integrated networks of services to support the academic and social growth of the ELLs in their building.

Research Design

The goal of this study is to understand the characteristics of equitable environments for newly arrived ELLs; the processes school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use when planning equitable learning environments for ELL students; and how the strategies and practices are used to impact the educational experiences of ELL students. As stated by Merriam (2009), “the overall purpose [of a qualitative study] is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 23). I am looking for understanding about equitable practices for ELLs in the recommended school research sites. I chose a qualitative study so I could collect, analyze, and construct meaning from the data about the school principals and other educators’ experiences, practices, and strategies about creating equitable learning environments for ELLs.

In a comparative case study, the focus is on a small number of cases. Usually the cases are studied because they exhibit the characteristics under investigation (Collier, 1993). Researchers using this method look to identify similarities, differences, and trends in the data (Goodrick, 2014). In this comparative case study, I wanted to develop an understanding of the three schools and the work the educators were doing to work toward creating an equitable environment for ELLs. I also wanted to discover any similarities, differences, and the unique characteristics of each environment. To increase my understanding of the three sites, document reviews and interviews were conducted for this study.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument and an important part of the qualitative research process (Patton, 2003). My intent of this research is not to contribute to any deficit ways of thinking or practices used to educate recently resettled ELL students. My intent is to highlight the practices of school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers who deliberately and intentionally address equity for ELL students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of an equitable school environment for ELLs and to examine the practices used by school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create equitable environment for ELLs in their schools. Specifically, the research questions are:

1. What are the characteristics of an equitable environment for recently arrived English Language Learning students?
2. What practices do school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ when planning to an equitable school environment for recently arrived ELLs?

Research Setting

First, an interview was conducted with the Director of Promising County Schools' ESOL program to gain insight about what makes an environment equitable for ELLs. During the interview, Director Julie provided information about her experiences with ELLs and her expertise about Promising County Schools' ESOL program. During the interview, Director Julie was asked to describe the characteristics of an equitable

environment for recently arrived ELLs. She discussed several examples, which became the threads, and recurred in subsequent interviews.

The criteria Director Julie used to select the schools she recommended for this study is based on her experience as well as tenets from culturally responsive education and creating a culturally responsive environment. Director Julie described each of the environments as being inclusive schools, which deliberately designed the environment to be welcoming and inviting for ELLs and their families. Inclusion as an equitable practice for ELLs and their families is supported by the literature. Saifer et al. (2011) report “when ELL youth, family, and community culture are included in the classroom, students feel a sense of belonging, see purpose in learning, and are motivated to do well” (p. 11). Han and Love (2015/2016), convey that “research has shown that when parents are involved, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic status, children perform better in schools, stay in school longer, and onto to colleges and universities” (p. 25). Tenets of ISLLC Standards Five and Ten also supports the notion of inclusion as effective leadership practices for school principals (CCSSO, 2014).

Director Julie also described each equitable environment as a place that demonstrated care and concern for ELLs and all students. Care and concern are characteristics of a supportive environment for ELLs and is supported by the literature. Schulz, Hurt, and Lindo (2014) state that “a supportive school environment is not only nurtured in the classroom, but is built in the hallways, in the administrative offices, in the lunchrooms, and auditorium; student learning is enhanced when the academic environment is safe and supportive” (p. 25). Researchers Saifer et al. (2011) state,

“fostering a caring and nurturing environment is essential to encouraging students’ personal and academic development and requires careful attention to the interactions and relationships between teachers and children and among children” (p. 82). Tenets of ISLLC Standard Five support the notion of promoting a community of care for students where school principals are supposed to create environments where each student is immersed in a safe, secure healthy environment (CCSSO, 2014).

Director Julie discussed how each school she recommended operated from a shared vision and mission, which flowed from the principals of each school and permeated the entire school culture. Tenets of ISLLC Standard One describe what school principals must do in order to be competent in this area. A major function of school principals is to collaboratively develop, implement, and promote a shared vision and mission for quality teaching and learning in efforts to improve the outcomes for all students (CCSSO, 2014). According to Saifer et al. (2011), it is imperative for school principals to “get direct input and involvement of all stakeholders from the beginning, including students, family members, and community members” (p. 172) when making decisions and plans for the school community. In a study by Reyes and Garcia (2014), “the staff was transformed into a unified professional learning community working toward one mission” (p. 362), this helped to improve the outcomes for all students in the school.

Director Julie described the professional respect she witnessed between the ESOL teachers and the school principals of each school. She discussed how the ESOL teacher was seen as the expert and was often in the position to be the decision maker for the

programming for the ELLs in the schools. Teachers are energized and more willing to try new ideas and techniques when they feel supported and respected by the school leaders and community (Saifer et al., 2011). Professional respect between school principals, educators and the community is supported by the tenets of ISLLC Standard One. ISLLC Standard One describes how school principals should collaborate to create, implement, monitor, and evaluate plans to achieve goals for the school community (CCSSO, 2014). Schulz et al. (2014) discuss how “professional competence and development will flourish in a school climate of trust, mutual respect, and consistent valuing of each other . . . healthy principal-teacher and teacher-student relationships support and enhance student learning” (p. 25).

Director Julie described the equity of access to resources and equity of access to the curriculum as two characteristics she has personally experienced at the three schools as a basis for her recommendation of these schools. As the director of the ESOL program for the school district, she is in charge of professional development for all of the ESOL teachers, and she provides the structures for training and participation. She has ensured that all ESOL teachers in Promising County Schools has received professional development to support ELL student learning by providing SIOP training for all ESOL teachers, and entire school faculties if invited by the schools to provide the training. She also witnessed and was a part of the decision making process to support the individual needs of families with the school principals. In the area of curriculum, according to researchers, making the curriculum more relevant helps to bring depth to learning and the students begin to develop critical thinking skills to be used in real-life situations (Saifer et

al., 2011). Researchers Lee and Walsh (2015/2016), state that “ELLs need and deserve access to rigorous academic content . . . educators should approach their education from an asset-based perspective that builds on students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (p. 50) to provide access to the curriculum. Pertaining to resources, researchers suggest that asking parents what they want for their child and asking how the school can support the children begins to bridge the home school gap and the gap in access to resources (Saifer et al., 2011). ISLLC Standard Ten also describes actions school principals should take to ensure access to resources and the curriculum. The CCSSO, 2014 in ISLLC Standard Ten suggests that school leaders should be advocates for children, families, and caregivers as well as to ensure equity of access to social capital and institutional supports.

The final criterion Director Julie used to identify schools was the one she deemed as most important, a culture of trust. She discussed the importance of building trusting relationships with the new families because trust will be the foundation of the relationships throughout the child’s school career. According to Saavedra (2015/2016),

. . . adjusting to a new culture is a trying and confusing process . . . empathizing with students in this position helps build meaningful relationships with them . . . and creates the conditions for rigorous learning . . . because students allow themselves to learn from people they trust. (p. 69)

Saifer et al. (2011) describe how educators and families can work together to build community and how important it is to remind ELL parents that they have something to offer to the school community. In time by working together, educators can gain the trust, and the participation of the family to create an environment which promotes promising futures and improves the outcomes for youth and the community. The first tenant in

ISLLC Standard Five is that school principals work to “ensure the formation of a culture defined by trust” (CCSSO, 2014, p. 18).

Director Julie did not focus on the results or test scores in her criterion for schools working toward equity for ELLs because the data from the state assessments did not reflect the efforts of the educators working in the schools, and her belief is that it takes more than five years to acquire academic language. Therefore, the scores from the tests are not a valid measure of what the students know. At the end of the interview, Director Julie recommended three schools for this study. After the interview with Director Julie, a document review was conducted of the three schools’ school report cards looking for performance data, and a review of each school’s SIP was conducted. Each school was given a pseudonym.

School District

Promising County School district is a large school district in the southeastern region of the United States and among the 50 largest districts in the United States. During the 2013–2014 school year, the district served almost 72,000. Promising County Schools has 127 schools within the district. Of the 127 schools in the district, there are 69 elementary schools, 23 middle schools and 28 high schools, and nine alternative schools (one alternative school is specifically designed to support students who are new to the country).

During the 2013–2014 school year, Promising County Schools had students representing about 100 countries and about 120 different languages and dialects. The student ethnic composition for the 2013–2014 school year is shown in Table 2. The

county in which Promising Schools is located had almost 67% of the families living below the poverty level and qualifying for reduced or free meals.

Table 2

Promising County Schools 2013–2014 Ethnic Subgroups

| Ethnic Subgroup | Percent of Total Student Enrollment |
|------------------------|--|
| Black | 40.9% |
| White | 34.4% |
| Hispanic | 14.3% |
| Multi-racial | 3.9% |
| American Indian | 0.45% |
| Asian | 5.9% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.16% |

(Promising County Schools, 2014)

Promising County Schools employed around 10,000 full and part time employees during the 2013–2014 school year. Of the 10,000 employees, 122 of them are ESOL teachers. A number of the ESOL teachers are shared between schools with lower numbers of ELLs enrolled.

Research Schools

Director Julie recommended three schools in the Promising County Schools as equitable environments for ELLs. The analysis of data from the three school's North Carolina School Report Cards reports each school's performance on state assessments, and was included to provide a complete picture of each site. The data results of student performance are not the focus of working toward equity in the three sites for two reasons.

This study focuses on ELLs who have been in the country for five or less years, and as discussed in Chapter I, it can take five or more years to acquire language proficiency. The recently resettled ELL students are still on the continuum of language acquisition, and the results they receive on the state assessments is not representative of their growth or knowledge of academic concepts. The language on the state assessments is the barrier for students, and will produce unreliable results for ELLs who are still acquiring the language.

Also, I analyzed and included the data from the 2013–2014 school year, which was the first year schools in North Carolina were issued grades based on the Excellent Public Schools Act (2013) that was discussed in Chapter 1 (p. 12). Data from previous years, 2012–2013 and before, were calculated, normed, and reported using a different formula. Under the previous formula, data were reported using four levels. Under the previous formula, students scoring a level three and four were deemed as proficient, and students who scored a level two with one standard deviation away from level three were also considered proficient. Data from the 2013–2014 school years and beyond were calculated, normed, and reported using the formula based on 80% proficiency and 20% student growth and were reported using five levels. The current formula identifies students who scored a level four and above as college and career ready, and students who scored a level three as proficient but not college and career ready. To include multiple years of data from each school's report card hindered my analysis because the data were calculated and normed using different formulas. Any comparison would not be valid. Therefore, I chose to include only the data from the 2013–2014 school year.

The three schools in this study were recommended by the Director of the ESOL program for the district as being equitable learning environment for ELL students. The three schools were in various parts of the county and served a total of 1,636 students. The total number of ELLs served in these three schools was 294 students. The ELLs in the three research sites totals 17.9% of the total population of the three schools. The allotment of ESOL teachers varied from research site to research site. See Table 3.

Table 3

Research Schools' Student Membership, ELL Membership, Regular and ESOL Teacher Assignments

| Name | Total Student Membership | ELL Student Membership and Percentage | Number of Regular Education Teachers | Number of ESOL Teachers |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Turning Point Elementary School | 561 | 115/20% | 38 | 2 |
| Pinedale Elementary School | 477 | 50/10% | 37 | 1 |
| New Roads Middle School | 598 | 89/15% | 50 | 1 |
| Total | 1636 | 294/17.9% | 125 | 4 |

(Promising County Schools, 2014)

One elementary school is located in a rural northeastern area of the county and the ELL population was approximately 20% of the total student population. The second elementary school in this study was located in the northern suburban part of the neighboring city. The ELL population makes up about 10% of the total student

population. The secondary school in this study was located in the urban central part of Promising County Schools. The total student population for the 2013–2014 school year was 598 students with 15% of the students identified as ELLs.

Turning Point Elementary School. Turning Point Elementary is located in the rural part of the county and served 561 students during the 2013–2014 school year. Of the total student population 115 students or 20% are ELLs. Turning Point Elementary employed 38 regular education teachers and two full time ESOL teachers. One ESOL teacher served students in the K–2 grade levels and the other ESOL teacher served students in the third through fifth grades. According to the document review of the school report card 2014, Turning Point had a performance composite of 45%. The performance composite for schools that serve elementary and middle school students is determined by the number of students who score a Level 3 (Grade Level proficiency), or Level 4 or above (College and Career Ready) on the North Carolina End of Grade (EOG) tests, and the number of students in each subgroup that meet or exceed the proficiency score. The students are categorized into the appropriate subgroups. Students may be in one or more subgroups. Students will be included in as many subgroups that apply to them. The eleven subgroups are:

1. All students
2. American Indian
3. Asian
4. Black
5. Hispanic

6. Multi-racial
7. White
8. Economically Disadvantaged (ED)
9. Limited English Proficient (LEP)
10. Students with Disabilities (SWD)
11. Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG) (Promising County Schools, 2014)

Turning Point Elementary School received a school performance grade of 'D' for the 2013–2014 school year. For elementary and middle schools, school performance grades are based on student achievement (80%) and student growth (20%). The grade is calculated by the number of students who score Level 3 and above on the annual reading, math, and science (grades 5 and 8) End of Grade tests (Promising County Schools, 2014).

For students in grades three through five at Turning Point Elementary, the overall proficiency on all EOGs for the 2013–2014 school year was 36.7% and the performance for the LEP students in the same grade levels was 13.1%. Further disaggregation of the available data showed a comparison of the overall proficiency of 'All' students to the "LEP" subgroup in grades three through five that the gap in performance persists. In Grade 3, the overall proficiency performance for 'All' students was 45.3% and for LEP students the performance was 22.7%. In Grade 4, the proficiency score for 'All' fourth grade students was 30.1%, and for the LEP subgroup it was <5%. For all students in grade five the overall proficiency was 34.5% and for LEP students in grade five the score was 11.1%. See Figure 2 for the comparison of the overall proficiency performance of 'All' students and the 'LEP' subgroup on the reading and math EOG tests.

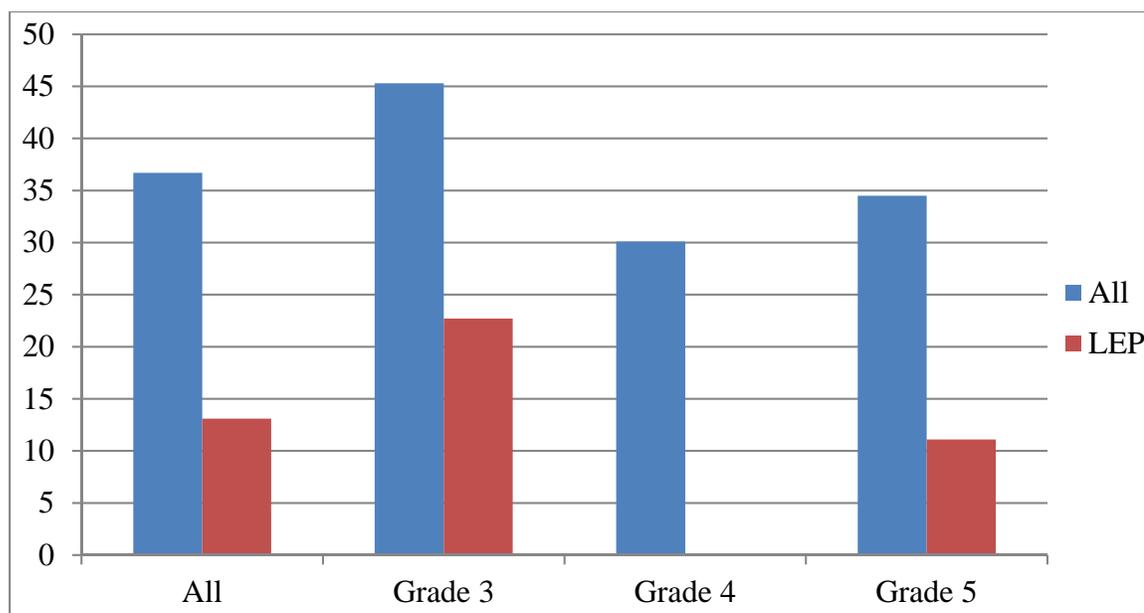


Figure 2. Comparison of Proficiency of All and LEP Students and Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5.

Additional document review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for Turning Point Elementary showed that the school incorporated strategies to improve the outcomes for all students and there were specific strategies to address and improve the outcomes for the ELL students enrolled in the school. One strategy used specifically to improve the outcomes for ELLs and their families was to provide written and verbal communication in various languages. Another strategy specifically designed for ELLs was to allot \$7,500 to increase the cultural and linguistic diversity of the books available to students in the Media Center. One important strategy designed to improve the outcomes for all students was to provide transportation for families to the school to increase participation and attendance in school meetings and scheduled events (Promising County Schools, 2014).

Pinedale Elementary School. Pinedale Elementary located in the northern suburban part of the county in a neighboring city and served 477 students during the 2013-2014 school year. Of the total population 50 students or 10% are ELLs. Pinedale Elementary employed 37 regular education teachers and one full time ESOL teacher, who served students in Kindergarten to fifth grades. According to the document review of the school report card 2014, Pinedale had a performance composite of 52%, and received a school performance grade of 'D.' The performance composite and the school performance grades were calculated in the same manner as Turning Point Elementary.

For students in grade three through five at Pinedale Elementary, the overall proficiency on all EOGs for the 2013–2014 school year was 48.2% and the performance for the LEP students in the same grade levels was 25%. Further disaggregation of the available data showed a comparison of the overall proficiency of 'All' students to the 'LEP' subgroup in grades three through five that the gap in performance persists. In grades three, the overall proficiency performance for 'All' students was 55.1% and for LEP students the performance was 50%. In grade 4, the proficiency score for 'All' fourth grade students was 46.5%, and for the LEP subgroup it was < 5%. For all students in grade five the overall proficiency was 43.3% and for LEP students in grade five the score was 8.3%. See Figure 3 for the comparison of the overall proficiency performance of 'All' students and the 'LEP' subgroup on the reading and math EOG tests.

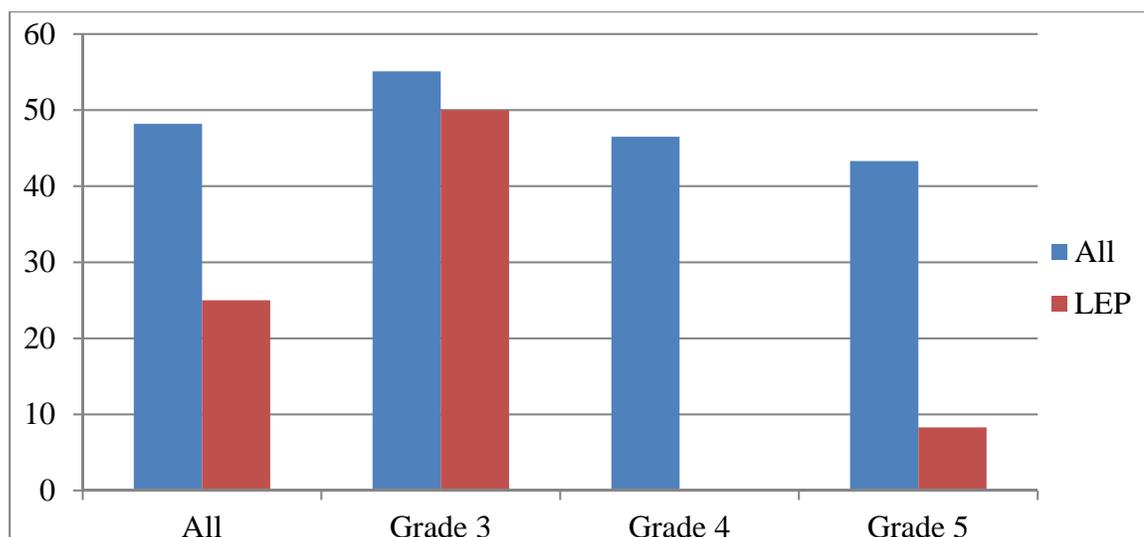


Figure 3. Comparison of Proficiency of All and LEP Students and Students in Grades 3, 4 and 5.

Additional document review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for Pinedale Elementary showed that the school incorporated strategies to improve the outcomes for all students and there were specific strategies to address and improve the outcomes for the ELL students enrolled in the school. The ESOL teacher was a member of the School Improvement Team (SIT). One goal written in the SIP for Pinedale Elementary school was to increase the proficiency of the LEP subgroup by five percent. One strategy used specifically to improve the outcomes for ELLs and their families was to provide the same programs for ELL parents that were provided for English speaking parents, and to ensure that teachers and families had access to the same information. Another strategy specifically designed for ELLs was to provide training for parents, in their language, on the specific resources at the school to support student learning. One important strategy designed to improve the outcomes for all students was that all teachers were trained in

using strategies from *The 27 Equitable Classroom Practices* to support inclusion and to promote a successful learning environment (Promising County Schools, 2014).

New Roads Middle School. New Roads Middle School is located in the urban central part of Promising County Schools and served 598 students during the 2013-2014 school year. Of the total population 89 students or 15% are ELLs. New Roads Middle employed 50 regular education teachers and one full time ESOL teacher, who served students in sixth through eighth grades. According to the document review of the school report card 2014, New Roads Middle had a performance composite of 46%, and received a school performance grade of 'D.' The performance composite and the school performance grades were calculated in the same manner as Turning Point and Pinedale Elementary Schools.

For students in grade six through eight at New Roads Middle, the overall proficiency on all EOGs for the 2013-2014 school year was 38.4% and the performance for the LEP students in the same grade levels was 8.7%. Further disaggregation of the available data showed a comparison of the overall proficiency of 'All' students to the "LEP" subgroup in grades six through eight that the gap in performance persists. In grades six, the overall proficiency performance for 'All' students was 40.1% and for LEP students the performance was 17.9%. In grade seven, the proficiency score for 'All' seventh grade students was 36.1%, and for the LEP subgroup it was 9.5%. For all students in grade eight the overall proficiency was 38.8% and for LEP students in grade eight the score was <5%. See Figure 3.3 for the comparison of the overall proficiency

performance of ‘All’ students and the ‘LEP’ subgroup on the reading and math EOG tests.

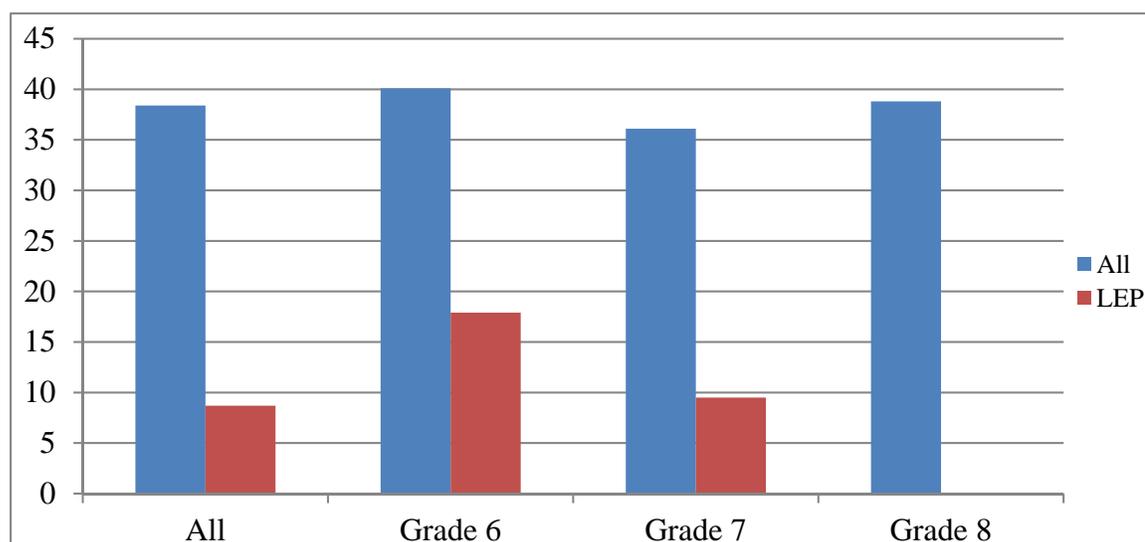


Figure 4. Comparison of Proficiency of All and LEP Students and Students in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

Additional document review of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for New Roads Middle School showed that the school incorporated strategies to improve the outcomes for all students and there were specific strategies to address and improve the outcomes for the ELL students enrolled in the school. The ESOL teacher was a member of the SIT. The school reported more than one level of positive growth in all language domains on the language tests administered to all ELLs. The vision statement included a statement about the meaningful incorporation of global diversity. One goal written in the SIP for New Roads Middle was school was to increase the proficiency of the LEP subgroup by 4.5% in reading and 9.1% in math. One strategy used specifically to

improve the outcomes for ELLs and their families was to provide content area readers in various languages for students. Another strategy specifically designed for ELLs was to provide training for parents during parent nights on the specific resources at the school to support student learning. One important strategy designed to improve the outcomes for all students was the access to all resources. All teachers and students had electronic access to a leveled reading program which was designed to promote and develop student literacy skills, as well as a math program designed to individual supports in the areas where students demonstrated the most need for support (Promising County Schools, 2014).

Research Participants

The study participants of this comparative case study are current employees within Promising County Schools at various levels with varying levels of experience. The Director of the ESOL program for Promising County Schools, the school principal, the ESOL teacher, and a regular education teacher from each site were interviewed for this study. The years of experience in education range for the participants range from four years to 39 years. The years of experience in educating ELLs for the participants range from three years to 20 years. The years at each site for the participants range from three to ten years. The regular education teacher at New Roads Middle School was a lateral entry teacher coming from the business world, and teaching was a second career choice. See Table 4 for a comparison of the participants' years of experience, years in current assignment, and the years of experience working with ELLs.

Table 4

Research Participants' Position, Site, Years at Current Site, Years of Experience, and Years of ESOL Experience

| Participant Name | Position | Site | Years at Current Site | Years of Experience | Years of ESOL Experience |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Julie | Director of ESOL program | County Office | 10 | 20 | 20 |
| Richard | Principal | | 3 | 39 | 3 |
| Bob | ESOL Teacher | Turning Point Elem | 3 | 29 | 29 |
| Sheila | Regular Ed Teacher | | 3 | 12 | 6 |
| Total | | | 9 | 80 | 38 |
| Michele | Principal | | 10 | 23 | 5 |
| Crystal | ESOL Teacher | Pinedale Elem | 14 | 24 | 24 |
| Louise | Regular Ed Teacher | | 20 | 33 | 12 |
| Total | | | 44 | 80 | 41 |
| Sarah | Principal | | 4 | 18 | 7 |
| Darryl | ESOL Teacher | New Roads Middle School | 10 | 22 | 22 |
| Jackie | Regular Ed Teacher | | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Total | | | 18 | 44 | 32 |
| | | | Total | 224 | 131 |

Data Collection Methods

The primary goal of this study is to identify the characteristics of equitable environments for newly-arrived ELLs and to explore the practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create equitable learning environments for ELLs. It was not to determine the effectiveness or successfulness of the practices, but rather to gain insight into how the implemented strategies and practices impacted ELL student learning and outcomes. The study used document review of the SIP, interviews, and aggregated student data from state tests as data sources.

Each school principal was contacted and asked for their participation in the study, and interviews were scheduled and conducted in the office of each school principal. Each school principal was given a pseudonym. During the interviews with the school principals, each principal recommended an ESOL teacher to participate in the study. In two of the three cases, there was only one ESOL teacher to recommend. Each ESOL teacher was contacted and asked for their participation in the study. Each ESOL teacher was given a pseudonym and two of the three interviews were conducted at the school site in the classrooms of each teacher. One ESOL teacher interview was conducted in the office of the researcher, due to the close proximity to the participant's home.

During each ESOL teacher interview, a recommendation for a regular education teacher to participate in the study was made. Each regular education teacher was contacted, and the one regular education teacher, who accepted the invitation to participate, was given a pseudonym and an interview was conducted at the school site in the regular education teacher's classroom. Two regular education teacher

recommendations came from the school principal since the initial regular educators did not respond to the request to be a part of the research study. Once the principals' recommendations for regular education teacher participants were received, each teacher was contacted and asked if they would like to participate in the study. Once the two regular educators agreed to participate, each participant was given a pseudonym. An interview was scheduled and conducted at the school site in the classroom teacher's classroom. Table 5 lists the dates, locations, and duration of all the interviews.

Table 5

Participant Interview Information: Dates, Locations, and Durations

| Participant | Date | Location | Duration |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-----------------|
| Julie | 6-6-15 | Participant's office- County Office site | 59 minutes |
| Richard | 7-7-15 | Admin. Office Elementary site | 62 minutes |
| Michele | 7-14-15 | Admin. Office Elementary site | 60 minutes |
| Sarah | 8-16-15 | Admin. Office Middle School site | 58 minutes |
| Bob | 8-10-15 | Researcher's Office- School site | 55 minutes |
| Crystal | 8-31-15 | Participant's classroom—Elementary site | 51 minutes |
| Darryl | 9-14-15 | Participant's classroom—Middle School site | 50 minutes |
| Louise | 9-23-15 | Participant's classroom—Elementary site | 45 minutes |
| Sheila | 10-8-15 | Participant's classroom—Elementary site | 35 minutes |
| Jackie | 10-12-15 | Participant's classroom—Middle School site | 30 minutes |

Lastly, all aggregated student data were reviewed and compiled. Student outcomes were not the focus of the interviewer since this study is about the strategies and practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create

equitable environments for ELLs, although during the interviews with the school principals, student data and outcomes were mentioned due to the nature of schools in the accountability era. Both the university's International Review Board (IRB) and the district's Research Review Committee (RRC) approved the study using this approach (Appendix A).

Interviews

All interviews were conducted on an individual basis and were scheduled for about one hour each. I used the prepared interview questions for district level, school principal, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers (Appendix B) as a guide to solicit responses from each participant. As the qualitative researcher, I did not control or manipulate the situation during data collection. Each participant could freely respond as naturally as possible. Specifically, in the first interview I asked the district level participant general questions about length of experience, length in current position, breakdown of staff in the ESOL Department, and experiences with ELLs. Study specific questions were asked to the Director about characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs, the importance of leadership in working towards equity, and specific school environments that promote and work for equity for ELLs.

School principal interviews were conducted on an individual basis, and the participants were asked to naturally respond to the questions. Specifically, school principals were asked general questions about length of time in education, length in current position, leadership experiences, demographics of staff and students, and the number of ESOL teachers on staff. Study specific questions were asked to each school

principal about experiences with ELLs, definition of equity for ELLs, the impact of an equity lens on decision-making, being a culturally responsive educator, structure of ESOL classes, and the professional development planned for teachers and staff at each school site.

ESOL teachers and regular education teacher interviews were conducted on an individual basis and the participants were asked to freely and naturally respond to the questions. Specifically, teacher participants were asked general questions about length of time in education, educational experiences, and length in current position. Study specific questions were asked to each teacher about experiences with ESOL students, definition of equity for ELLs, the structure of their individual classes, being a culturally responsive educator, the support received from school principals, professional development offerings to support the instructional program for ELLs, resources available to support instruction, and making the learning environment equitable and nurturing for ELLs.

Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed. I reviewed each transcript multiple times and coded them based on the identified threads and concepts. The analysis process consisted of gathering data, asking questions, and finding meaning in the participants' responses. I used the characteristics of a basic qualitative research study as described by Merriam (2009). I analyzed and interpreted the data from the interviews looking for the 'meaning' from the responses of the participants. According to Merriam (2009), "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (p. 23). Using the conceptual framework, the data were coded and placed in

categories. The categories emerged into threads. From the threads, themes emerged for this study. The threads that emerged from the school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers' experiences provided insight into how the participants create equitable learning environments for ELLs.

A comparison of the data collected to the literature and the conceptual framework was conducted to determine the connection of the identified themes and any gaps in this study. Seven threads emerged from the analysis of the data from the first interview with the district level employee. The finalized threads were placed in a matrix where each subsequent interview of the subjects' responses, which supported the threads, were placed, and notations were placed on the transcripts to note the line and the page number. After each school principal, ESOL teacher, and regular education teacher interview, the data was coded, analyzed and included in the matrix. From there, the information was organized and analyzed into themes. The themes which emerged from the data are discussed in Chapter IV. The themes provide insight in how the participants work together to create equitable learning environments for ELLs. Finally, I identified potential implications and recommendations based on the study.

Subjectivity

As a school principal in a setting in which all of the students are ELLs—with the majority of the students being refugee students, I have an interest in the people and programs used to support ELLs in this district. The ELLs that attend my school are enrolled for one year only and then they are transitioned to their attendance zone schools.

A portion of the ELLs enrolled in school at each of the research sites could have attended my school for their first year in American schools.

As a school principal we are called to district meetings throughout the school year, and on occasion, I had contact with the school principal participants during those meetings. However, I did not have close personal relationships with any of the participants outside of work. This limited interaction did not interfere with my ability to remain objective during the data collection process. During each interview, I acknowledged my positionality, as the principal of a school designed to serve ELLs, but I also stated that the study was designed to gather information about schools creating equitable environments for ELLs outside of the one school.

Although I interact with many ELLs, school principals, and some ESOL teachers, my familiarity with the school principals and ESOL teachers did not complicate my ability to conduct this study. I recognize that my positionality within the district may impact biases that must be addressed before an analysis of the data is conducted. As the principal of a school specifically designed to support the transition of the students and families into American schools, I have strategies and knowledge to best support students and families. I must limit and prevent any implicit bias from convoluting the data collected for this study. Participants were encouraged to provide open answers and were assured that their responses were valued and beneficial to this study.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, member checks, triangulation, and elementary and secondary school participants were selected for this study. Member

checks increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the raw data (Merriam, 2009). Member checks were used with each participant of this study. Raw data was collected, transcribed, and returned to the participants to determine if the transcript was accurate. After an analysis of the data, the data was returned to each participant to determine if they were in agreement with the information and to determine if there were any gaps, differing perspectives, or to offer a different perspective on the data.

The triangulation of the data between the director's interview, the aggregated student data and the SIP for each school, and the participants' interview responses allowed for a comparison of strategies and practices used at each site to create equitable environments for ELLs.

Using participants from the elementary and secondary school levels allowed me to identify a variety of strategies and practices that contribute to the creation of equitable learning environments for ELLs.

After each interview and review of the interview transcripts, each participant was encouraged to contact me if they had any additional information to contribute to the study or if they wanted to share any additional thoughts.

Benefits and Risks

One of the greatest benefits for participants in this study was the opportunity for school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers to have their work affirmed by the Director of the ESOL program in the district. Since the director provided recommendations for research sites, the school leaders and educators were acknowledged for the work they are doing at their individual sites. Another benefit included the

opportunity for school principals and educators to reflect on practices and beliefs about equity for ELLs. Participants were able to talk openly about the challenges and highlight the success they perceived in their practices.

One risk with this study is that schools could potentially be identified for their participation since only three schools were identified for their participation. To protect against this, the school district, each school, and each participant was given a pseudonym. Another risk could be that the variations of practices, supports, and strategies, when compared between the three schools within the same district, could be viewed as unfavorable.

Limitations

The Director of the ESOL Department made recommendations of schools with equitable environments for ELLs. The recommendations were based on the director's expertise and knowledge. The school principals recommended the ESOL teachers at their school sites, and the ESOL teachers recommended the regular education teachers. Two of the recommended regular education teachers did not respond to the request to participate in the study, and this impacted the regular educators who participated in the study. Two of the school principals recommended two of the regular educator participants and the teachers they recommended might not have worked directly with the ESOL teacher participant from their school site.

Some participants could view my positionality as one of power, since two-thirds of the participants were teachers. There were lighthearted conversations before each interview to encourage the participants to talk to me about their experiences.

Summary

The qualitative research design allowed me to gain insight into the practices and strategies school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create equitable learning environments for ELLs through interviews and dialogue. The data collected from the interviews were categorized into themes about vision and mission for educating ELLs, creating a community of care for students, and cultural responsiveness and equity for ELLs.

In the next chapter, I will tell the story of the three schools experiences, opinions, and thoughts about creating equitable environments for ELLs.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS: EQUITY AND THE EDUCATION OF ELL STUDENTS

In Chapter III, I discussed the two research questions that guided this qualitative comparative case study. The questions that were asked during each interview were designed to gather information about equitable environments for ELLs and to explore how school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers from the same site worked to create an equitable learning environment for ELL students. First, I explored the characteristics of an equitable environment through an interview with district level staff. She described the characteristics of the environments and gave examples of why the schools were selected. The criteria she used to identify the students were supported by literature a discussed in Chapter III. Next, the Director's recommendations of schools with equitable learning environments led to interviews with three school principals, three ESOL teachers, and three regular education teachers one of each from each site. From and analysis of the data, seven threads were discovered to be critical in the creation and maintenance of equitable environments for ELLs. The seven threads are:

- the inclusive nature of the schools
- the care and concern shown towards ELL students
- the shared vision for learning
- the demonstrated professional respect between colleagues
- the equity of access to resources and institutional supports

- the culture of trust in each environment
- the equity in access to the curriculum.

I organized Chapter IV based on the threads that emerged from this study. I began by describing the characteristics of an equitable environment as described to me by the district's Director of the ESOL program. Next, I used the information about the school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers' experiences to explore and determine how those strategies and practices were used to make their learning environments equitable for ELLs. Lastly, I compared the data from each site to determine the similarities and differences between each site. After the comparisons were complete, the themes emerged and were discussed in this chapter. All information, comments, insights, and reflections were provided in an honest manner.

Findings

Throughout this comparative case study, I gained knowledge and information about how educators view themselves as working towards equity for students. I was interested to learn how the ISLLC Standards One, Five, and Ten implicitly and explicitly impacted the strategies and practices of school principals working towards equity for ELLs, and how their leadership impacted the educators working in their schools. All school principals and ESOL teachers were very clear about the importance of equity for ELL students, and the passion of the regular education teachers for educating all students was clear from the beginning of this process.

District Level Viewpoint of Characteristics of an Equitable Environment for ELLs

During the interview with the district Director of ESOL, Director Julie discussed the characteristics of an equitable environment. Seven threads emerged from the data collection. The seven threads are:

- inclusion
- care for students,
- shared vision and mission
- professional respect
- equity of access to resources
- equity of access to the curriculum
- culture of trust.

When the seven components are explicitly and implicitly stated and used as a guide for educators, the outcomes for all students are improved. When deliberate strategies are in place for ELLs, their outcomes are positively impacted (Mayfield and Garrison-Wade, 2015; Saifer et al., 2011).

Inclusion. Director Julie is responsible for hiring and retaining the 124 ESOL teachers for the district. She works with the school principals in finding qualified ESOL teachers for each sight. Of the 124 ESOL teachers in the district, ten are African American, 15 are Hispanic, and the remaining teachers are Caucasian. There are 35 Community Liaisons/Interpreters throughout the district. Depending on the ELL student population and needs, some Community Liaisons are placed at one site, while others are shared amongst the schools. Director Julie discussed the importance of inclusion for all

students. She discussed the need for students to see a reflection of themselves in the building, a welcoming environment, and the need for a sense of belonging. She overly stressed the importance of students seeing themselves when they enter a school building, and how this provides affirmations to the students about their sense of belonging in the school. Julie recognized that the ESOL teaching personnel does not match the diversity of the entire student population, but that as a district leader she was working on the diversity of the teaching pool. Director Julie stated,

We really make sure that when our kids walk into the building they see their reflection, that's really important for us...we screen candidates and send them to the schools. We do not hire but we can recommend and we try our best to make sure that our candidate pool is as diverse as our kids.

Director Julie discussed the importance of the environment for ELLs to be a welcoming environment. As a district leader, Julie had the opportunity to work with school principals across the district. The most welcoming environments were the environments where there was an understanding of the needs of students and families and proactive people.

Care. Director Julie expressed how important it was for the school environment and personnel to demonstrate care and concern for the students enrolled in their schools. Julie discussed the importance for the school principal to be an advocate for all children, but especially for ELLs since many of the parents are from cultures where you do not question authority. She also discussed how many families are not familiar with the American education system and are unfamiliar or hesitant to contact the school when an issue or concern arises. Director Julie commented,

Some schools that are very welcoming, the principal understands it, they get it, they know what our students need, what the families need, and they're very proactive . . . and there are times when principals have to step in and be the advocates . . . our parents trust us and that is the accountability and we have to make sure we have done right by the children and their families.

Director Julie discussed the importance of demonstrating care and concern to the families of ELLs and to all students. The old adage, "students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care" comes to mind during this discussion. Director Julie also commented on the many responsibilities of a school principal and the demands of the position, but she commented about the ability of the principals to still demonstrate and show concern for students and their families. Director Julies commented,

There is, it takes time to develop relationships, it takes time to develop the culture of the school, and there are some cultures that are toxic but there's some cultures you walk in and you're just feel, just feel the respect and the love, just walking into the building and it's just, there's one particular place where from the garden all the way in to the door you can feel the love, you can feel the respect, you walk in, the principal, she's right there, she's walking, she's visible, and the kids are thriving and at this one particular school there isn't a silent period, because they're comfortable, they know, and they know that their teachers care about them and they, it's an amazing place.

Demonstrating care for ELL and all students is an integral component of creating equitable environments that support their academic progress and success.

Shared vision and mission. To promote an equitable environment for ELLs, Director Julies discussed how vital it was for school principals to be an advocate for all students and to work to make the vision a shared vision that permeates the culture. She discussed the importance to equity of school principals setting the course and leading in a way that leaves no questions about the purpose or direction of the school. The importance

of a child-centered vision when leading schools with ELLs was an important factor that was expressed by the director. Director Julie said,

If you have an administrator that stands up and says we are here for children, we are not here for adults, we're here to focus on what's best for kids, not just one child but all children that's just, that's the beginning of a positive culture. A culture that keeps all children as the main focus, and you can tell it's a well-oiled machine, it's amazing, but there's respect, there's common respect.

Director Julie discussed how the ESOL teacher and the school principal must share the same goals and vision when working for equity for ELLs. In her work throughout the district she has had the opportunity to observe, support, and manage the 126 ESOL teachers across the district. Director Julie spoke of the desired professional synergy needed to support the ELLs in equitable environments. She stated,

When the vision is clearly stated and you have buy-in from teachers about the vision and mission of the school, especially when teachers can tell that the leader has a heart to do the right thing for children and it is felt, the school becomes a great place for students and teachers alike . . . then the equity we are looking for has a chance to become the way the school does business.

Director Julie continued to discuss the importance of respect for the vision and mission of the school and how it contributes to the equity of the learning environment, and then she discussed the importance of professional respect, which was another thread throughout the data.

Professional respect. She continued to discuss the importance of a shared culture of respect among the entire community. Throughout the district, Director Julie has the opportunity to work with all ESOL teachers and encourages them to be advocates for

themselves and the students entrusted to their care. Director Julie stressed the importance of professional respect between the school principal and the ESOL teacher/s assigned to the school. She went on to say,

Well the principal and the ESOL teacher, there needs to be a chemistry and connection and when the ESOL teacher, a perception that an ESOL teacher does not what—does not know what they are doing it is detrimental to what happens in the building . . . our ESOL teachers have to be strong advocates, they need to know the program, and they need to know language acquisition . . . when the ESOL teacher and the principal in the building work together you can tell. There's huge respect and there's a huge difference in the building.

When an ESOL teacher may have a conflict with the school leader, she encourages them to speak to the school principal in hopes that a resolution can be found. She shared her viewpoint on conflicts when they arise between the school principal and the ESOL teacher. She commented,

I don't think there's any administrator that walk into the building and says I want to be awful today, they're busy, a lot on their plates, and it's a lot going on, and if you [as a school principal] are disconnected it's because, I believe and give the benefit of the doubt that there's a whole entire world that I don't see, but as far as every day, every day I get inspired by administrators that are amazing and do right by our babies. I encourage the ESOL teacher to communicate and advocate for themselves and our babies.

The importance of professional respect within a school environment to Director Julie was paramount in the success of ELLs enrolled in schools throughout the district. A respectful professional relationship between the school principal and the ESOL teacher is indicative that the ESOL teacher is supported to advocate for the ELLs in the building.

Access to resources. Director Julie was clear in her thoughts about an equitable school environment where the school principal sets the vision that all children will be served in the school and the students will have what they need. Julie defined equity as “everybody does not get the same, it is a person-by person, individual case.” Julie reflected,

With 60% of the children in the school district who received free or reduced lunch and breakfast, she stated that you have to think about the children enrolled in the schools who maybe on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale.

She discussed a school principal leading the staff to create opportunities to promote and increase equity within the school community. She said,

There’s a school principal that during the school year gets backpacks, filled every Friday [with food], goes out . . . takes them to a particular community, their community of children and spends time in the community and reads to the children . . . she brings her own children out there and they are in a neighborhood, they work with the parents, the connections they build is amazing.

She continued to share another example of school principals and their staffs providing equitable access to resources to the ELLs in their school communities. She shared a story,

Actually, two of our principals went to advocacy group with me asking for resources and when we could not get resources the principals gathered together and made sure, without telling the families, made sure that their needs were met not because they wanted anyone to speak great things about them, never once . . . not a word because they did not need that, they did it for the families.

She was convinced that the successful transition into American schools and the community for ELLs and their families hinges on the support and care students and their families receive from caring, willing individuals who act to serve.

Access to the curriculum. From the district level perspective, Director Julie stressed the importance of ELLs having access to grade-level content material in a manner that was comprehensible to them. Making the content comprehensible for ELLs was not the only consideration for school principals, ESOL teachers and regular education teacher, educators should be aware of the silent period many ELLs experience. The length of the silent period-a period where ELL students are reluctant to speak English-is totally dependent on the student. When planning instruction for ELLs, it is vitally important that the educators be aware of this phenomenon. Director Julie stated,

A lot of administrators, even the good ones, do not know about the silent period. The silent period is where our children will take one day to-could go on for two years, where they will not speak because they are really shy and they do not want to produce language just in case they make a mistake . . . as the educator, you have to know that it takes five years to build the social language and up to ten years to build the academic language . . . at the more equitable schools the administrators get it, they understand it, they know what the students need-time.

She continued,

Sometimes situations arise and the principals and ESOL teachers will say ‘I need help, I am struggling to support the teachers with what to do to for [a particular student]’ . . . I do everything in my power to support those principals because they are trying to make a difference. We will conduct SIOP sessions with all of the teachers to make sure that everyone has the tools and strategies they need . . . principals who want to make a difference . . . those are the ones you get the phone call from, the principals that want to make sure they are doing right by children and that’s really neat.

Director Julie commented that the entire school district was trained in using the SIOP method and that the results were that the teachers had a common language for providing instruction to ELLs, and the unforeseen benefit was that all students were able to benefit from the strategies in SIOP.

Culture of trust. Director Julie discussed the final component of an equitable environment for ELLs that is a culture of trust. She discussed the importance of the school administrator and the educators to gain the trust of the families of the ELL students. Since many of the families are new to the country and to the American school system, someone has to advocate for them. She said,

At some schools, the teachers work with the students to give them the tools to figure things out . . . there are parent programs as well as programs for the students. We try to make sure to support the families as well as the students . . . some of our students have to work to support their families and we do not leave them alone . . . some teachers Skype with the students to help them with their homework in the evenings. We have Saturday adult classes to help the families and to let them know we are here to support them. Some teachers hold classes in the community centers in the apartment complexes where the students live . . . being in the places where the families live helps to build the bridge between home and school and help to build trust for the families.

Another component of building a culture of trust was employing personnel at the school who could communicate with the families-community liaisons. The community liaisons are able to communicate with the families in their first language. A critical component of earning the trust of the families and ELL students is the ability to communicate. Director Julie commented,

We are very fortunate to have community liaisons [interpreters] and a lot of principals work closely with community liaisons . . . principals trade things for

community liaisons so they can have someone to help work closely with the families to gain their trust...they make phone calls, go on home visits, and when the principals go, the community liaisons go . . . they go on home visits . . . and when the families see principals standing up it speaks volumes for everyone . . . that is equity at its finest.

Building a trusting relationship between the home and the school is vitally important to the academic success and improved outcomes for all students-especially the ELL students and families whose past experiences with authority could have been negative.

At the conclusion of the interview with the director of the ESOL program for the district, she was asked to recommend schools where the school principal, ESOL teacher, and a regular education teacher worked together to create equitable learning environments for ELLs. She named three, Turning Point Elementary, Pinedale Elementary, and New Roads Middle School in the Promising School district.

Early in the individual interviews, each principal was very clear about the need to support the ELLs in their buildings. The principals also recognized that the ESOL teacher was critical to the success of ELLs, and that consideration was given to the regular education teachers working with the ESOL teachers and ELLs. The principals were also clear about their responsibilities in leading their schools in the age of accountability. A clear sense of community was ascertained from each participant.

I will now report the findings from the interviews with the participants which support the seven characteristics described by the director of equitable environments for ELLs. The data from the interviews was analyzed, categorized, and coded according to the threads which emerged from the interview with the Director.

Turning Point Elementary

Turning Point Elementary School was described as an equitable environment for ELLs by the Director. Turning Point Elementary School served 561 students and 15% of the students were identified as ELLs. The principal has 39 years of experience. There are two ESOL teachers and 38 regular education teachers. The combined experience of the Principal Richard-39 years, ESOL Teacher Bob-29 years, and regular education teacher Sheila- 12 years is 80 years of experience in education. Throughout the interviews, the characteristics of an equitable environment as described by the Director were recurring in each interview.

Inclusion. Principal Richard recognized the need to have the school staff reflect the students who attend the school. He discussed how he intentionally looked to hire and retain male teachers so that the young boys would have the opportunity to interact with positive role models. He shared that he deliberately, consciously looked to hire teachers from various backgrounds.

An inclusive strategy used at Turning Point Elementary School was to purposely include families in all evening and afterschool programs and being aware and cognizant of cultural differences while demonstrating how important the families are to the education process. At Turning Point Elementary School during evening programs, each family is treated as a special guest invited to the school. Principal Richard stated,

Anytime we have a program, I'm always at the door greeting each family-and the other thing we do is if we have food for an evening, I have the parents sit down and we serve them, they do not go through the serving line. We welcome them into our house and we serve them, and then I am always at the door, greeting them, and welcoming them.

ESOL Teacher Bob's strategy for insuring inclusion for ELLs and their families was to make sure communication was clearly presented in languages the parents can understand. Bob's viewpoint of an inclusion strategy that helped build the home-school connection was shared when he stated,

We try to be inclusive of the ELLs in our school by first respecting them and being aware that for most anything we do at the school there's probably going to be a little wrinkle for how that affects ELL kids, so when report cards go out a reminder [for teachers to] get your comments to the ESOL teacher to be translated ahead of time so that families can support their kids and the school.

Regular education teacher Sheila discussed the strategies she uses in her classes to promote inclusion for all students. Sheila's class is a cluster class where a significant number of her students are ELLs and she works with the two ESOL teachers in various capacities. She works with Bob on occasion, but the primary responsibility of educating the students in her classes lies with her. The inclusive strategy she used in her classroom was described when she stated, "I try to learn as much as I can about the children so that I can be a better teacher for them."

Inclusion for ELLs and their families was a common thread and recurred throughout the interviews of the participants from this school. The principal, ESOL teacher, and the regular education teacher recognized how positively impactful inclusion strategies were for all families especially the ELL students and their families.

Care. ESOL teacher Bob discussed how he showed care and concern for the students in the ESOL program and how he encourages other teachers in his building to show forth care and concern for the students. He shared a story about one student,

One boy was going home to an empty house and the teacher got on him about not doing his homework . . . he is in the third grade and basically his mother worked in South Carolina in a chicken plant and the boy slept on this couch or that couch never in one place, but I told her [the teacher] ‘I’m sorry, he’s just not . . . a lot of teachers still think that we’re you know, it’s kind of Ozzie and Harriet and they are going home to a table wiped off ready for them to do homework.

He continued,

I mean I get to know these kids and a lot of these kids are sleeping on the floor, they’re you know . . . we’ll do programs on Saturday and during the summer . . . we’ll knock on the doors and there’s the whole family sleeping in the living room on the floor, we try to show them that we care for them by getting them the things that they need.

Sheila a teacher shared her strategies to demonstrate care for the ELL students in her class and throughout the school. She shared,

I try to help them as much as possible . . . we talk about do you have this at home, do you have that at home, you know, do you have food on the weekends, thinks like that, clothing, I have gone out and purchased things and brought things in . . . to help support our families in need . . . I have done home visits . . . meet their families and it sheds a lot of light on their needs and what these children are working with, and working against . . .

Principal Richard shared his viewpoint of caring for all students. His belief, his core value is “you just have to be human and have the compassion to watch out and support people-all people.” A sense of community was felt through each interaction with staff of the school. Upon meeting the front office staff to conduct the interview of the principal and the regular education teacher, I was welcomed and greeted warmly each time. I did not display any identifying badges or tags, but the staff treated me as if I was a guest in

their homes. The sense of community can be contributed to the leadership by having a shared vision as a guide.

Shared vision and mission. Principal Richard shared that his goal was to create and cultivate a culture and climate that was good for all children and he believed it started with selecting his staff. He discussed that his vision for the school was a place where all students were accepted, nurtured, and supported to reach their potential. He encouraged all teachers to take ownership and responsibility for the students. He stated,

The children are our responsibility, so first of all I have to create that shared belief system with the staff and if we look at it from a leadership standpoint, I did have a vision of what I wanted our school to be like, and the kind of community climate that we would have here. So I tried to identify people who shared and had the shared belief system, or were open to being influenced and nurtured.

Bob took full ownership and echoed the responsibility sentiments of the principal that he felt towards the ELLs in his classes. He shared,

When we came together as a staff, we all shared our backgrounds and every staff member knows that I am an advocate for the ELLs and I let the staff know that nobody's going to mess with these kids unless I'm involved . . . don't let me find out two days later that there was an issue. These kids are my responsibility.

Sheila shared how she took ownership and responsibility for the students in her class,

I just try very hard to make sure that they are given the absolute best opportunity that there is, not an excuse, they are just given the absolute best from me and I expect to get the best from the class . . . we are a community . . . we all have special needs, different needs, some are the same and some are different and we are going to use those to try to meet everyone's needs the best we can.

Having a shared vision and belief system benefits the students of this school because the unified, focused efforts are centered on the students. The participants echoed the vision of the principal that ELLs are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities, services, and instruction they need in order to succeed.

Professional respect. Principal Richard discussed the respect he has for both of the ESOL teachers in his school and how vital their input and expertise to the decisions he makes about meeting the needs of the ELLs in the school. He commented that

We sit down in PLCs and the ESOL teachers are part of planning to give input on what we are seeing, what do we need, what steps to take, what pieces are going on-what pieces we need to add to what's already in place . . . the ESOL teachers say here we go, let's look at some specific strategies to address this concern and here's what we need to be aware of and what we need to focus on.

Bob, the ESOL teacher, stated that,

In general I think he [Principal Richard] has a good understanding and is mindful of the fact that there are special needs for the ESOL families that don't necessarily apply to everyone . . . he listens to the information coming from the ESOL Department and works to help the kids without dumping on us for not having the best scores.

First grade teacher, Sheila, commented,

Our principal is really trying to make a difference for our kids, but sometimes his hands are tied . . . if we go to him and talk to him about it, and we give him research based on the reasons and if we can hold our own in that argument, he will listen and he will try to let us try what we want to do in our classes.

The participants echoed the respect discussed by the principal that working together for the benefit of ELLs is important in this school. This school-wide culture of professional

respect enhances the opportunities for ELLs to receive the opportunities to learn, and the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Access to resources. Regular educator Sheila shared a situation where she served a student to make sure the student's basic need was met in her classroom. She stated,

Nothing surprises me; I have taken a child and given them new shoes right here in the classroom, tossed away their old shoes, and washed their feet, because it need to [be done], there was an issue and it needed to be fixed, and we took care of it and I don't think anyone outside of these four walls we're sitting in ever knew that, but it happened and we took care of it and made the child feel very good . . . I buy lots of secondhand items and just give them to the kids who need them.

Principal Richard discussed how he worked to provide access to resources for the students enrolled in his school. He said,

All of the groups that are in the regular education setting have ESOL kids, there are going to be some other kids that are in there, that' the other piece of equity . . . we cluster so that we're better able to target our resources and our support for the kids who need services . . . the teachers are very aware of who gets space and who has a seat and a voice at the table.

The participants echoed the sentiments expressed by the principal that ELLs need to have access and supports and that these are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities and services they need in order to succeed.

Access to the curriculum. Sheila discussed how she supports the teaching and learning in her classroom and how she deliberately provides access to the general grade level curriculum when ELL students' readiness levels vary. She shared her strategy,

I do a lot of small groups, and Bob pushes in [the classroom to support instruction] and pulls out other students to help support them . . . they are always

in the mix and they are leveled appropriately . . . I try to level things so that they can get what they need from me on a more individual or small group basis.

She continued,

I encourage them to try, I tell them that they are smart and I will give you all the tools you need, but you have to actually put it into place . . . everything that I am teaching them is constantly reviewed and we keep building on that, we keep working . . . a week goes by and I'm like tell me what we did last week . . . I try to keep it at the top of their brains . . . I do a lot of motivating with word and my body movements because your body language says a lot more than your words ever could.

Principal Richard shared how he supports the teachers in providing access to the curriculum in the classrooms. He said,

I can think of one particular classroom this year where I went and the teacher had six ELLs in the classroom and there were zero accommodations for the first 20 minutes of class . . . that's not supporting their learning . . . well alright, what are you going to do differently when you invite me back in a couple of days or a week that I will see that those needs are now being addressed all the time . . . that was 20 minutes of an introduction [to the lesson] that they lost . . . how much further are they going to be behind?

He continued,

We are going to have this tough conversation, and people are sometimes afraid of conflict . . . conflict is a wonderful tool to facilitate change and to increase accountability both ways . . . [accountability for instruction] it is one thing that I pay attention to when I'm doing walkthrough and observations.

ESOL teacher Bob discussed how he supported the students and the teachers with providing instruction in a comprehensible manner for ELLs. He stated,

I led a two-day workshop and one of the pieces of that was explicit vocabulary instruction . . . the workshop got to the core of, you know, these kids don't have enough language besides informal exposure, you've got to choose the words, you have to read the text carefully, choose a few words to focus on-the ones you think they will have trouble with and figure out how the kids will learn them best-by acting it out, drawing a picture, whatever it takes to help the kids learn.

The participants supported the curriculum programming discussed by the principal that all students need to be able to have access to the curriculum assure that ELLs receive the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Culture of trust. Bob, one of the ESOL teachers at the school, discussed how reaches out to the community of ELL students and their families. He stated,

The first things that's important is to learn what country these students are coming from, because I think most people's knee jerk reaction is to think they are all from Mexico and that is not the case . . . all of our students have different challenges . . . I've met with kids over the summer a whole bunch of my former students who are now going into college maybe have a little brother, sister, or nephew or some relative and I can use them as a voice and mentor to help make connections with the families and the new students.

Sheila shared, "I just try to meet their needs in every possible way . . . we talk about their culture because it is important and they need to hold onto that . . ."

Principal Richard simply stated, "I recognize that it is not just about what's in the books, rather how do I connect with people, how can we be immersed in each other's cultures so we can build a strong sense of community."

The comments shared with me during the interviews with each participant demonstrated how the teachers and the school principals viewed their work for creating equity for the recently arrived ELL students enrolled in their school settings. Comments

and statements were collected during the interviews that did not fit into one of the seven threads, but were interesting to consider for this study. The summary of the interviews and other interesting information for Turning Point Elementary are discussed and included in the next paragraphs.

During the interviews with the participants of this school, each educator was asked the questions developed for their job title, and they discussed their experiences with ELLs, their personal definition of equity, being a culturally responsive educator, and the supports they needed and provided for ELLs. Participants discussed their instructional supports they provided for ELLs ranging from program structuring to classroom instruction and materials. The school principal discussed monitoring the data that were produced on site to help make programming decisions and to help him provide coaching and support for teachers. What made this school unique is the incongruence of the principal's statement about equity and his actions and the perception of an authoritarian leader and the involvement of the ESOL teacher in certain decisions. An additional unique characteristic was the progress monitoring the ESOL teacher did on an individual basis with each ELL to empower the students to take ownership over their learning.

Interesting comments from the principal and ESOL teacher did not fit into one of the seven threads, but provided me with an insight into their daily work for equity. One such comment came from the principal when he was asked about being a culturally responsive educator. His reply was, "I have all types of children here, Exceptional Children (EC), ELLs, gifted . . . I work to make sure all of their needs are met." This led me to conclude that he did not specifically target students and their individual needs.

However, during the course of the interview, he discussed how when he observed a classroom teacher during a lesson, he noticed that the teacher did not engage the ELLs in her class. He deliberately and explicitly brought this to her attention and asked her to make adjustments to ensure that the ELLs were engaged. He explained that what he observed previously was unacceptable, and he went back into the classroom to conduct another observation to make sure the teacher made the necessary changes to her instructional presentation. The principal also appeared to use the authoritarian approach to leadership.

It was clearly understood that the ultimate decisions were his alone. However, during the interview with the ESOL teacher he stated, “. . . nothing was decided about the ELLs unless he was involved and notified . . . no one [ELL student] was suspended, failed, or anything without his involvement . . .” This is contradictory to the claims of the principal about being the final decision maker, and this led me to believe that the ESOL teacher’s perception was that he was influential in the decision about ELLs in the building. The ESOL teacher conveyed that he and the principal collaborated about ELLs, and he was a part of the process.

When the ESOL teacher was asked about building self-reliance in the students, he discussed the “progress-monitoring” he did with the students in his classes. The ESOL teacher discussed the individual conferences he held with students and showed them exactly how much progress they made and discussed what he expected them to do to take it to the next level. He referenced the need for many students to work hard to improve the

options they would have in the future, and the only way to take control of their outcomes was to learn to read and write.

Although definitive practices exist that are aimed at creating equity in the environment for ELLs discussed in the seven threads and the interesting information, the data from the school report card for the LEP students do not reflect the work of these educators.

Pinedale Elementary

Pinedale Elementary School was described as an equitable environment for ELLs by district level personnel. Pinedale Elementary School served 477 students and 10% of the students were identified as ELLs. The principal has 23 years of experience. One ESOL teacher is allotted to the school and 37 regular education teachers. The combined experience of the participants is 80; Principal Michele has 23 years of experience—ten years as principal of this site, ESOL Teacher Crystal has 24 years of ESOL teaching experience—ten years at the Pinedale Elementary, and regular education teacher Louise has 33 years of teaching experience—25 years at this same site. The continuity and stability of the staff created a synergy which the principal could use to accomplish the goals of the vision and mission of the school. Throughout the interviews, the themes described by district personnel recurred in each interview.

Inclusion. Principal Michele discussed her overall belief and how using those beliefs as a guide inform her practice to ensure that all students were included in her school. She shared,

In my ten years as principal, I have become more inclusive and equitable because I'm more aware now because when I first came, that was not on my radar, you know, that was among one thing among a thousand, but as I have spent time with families that are not of my culture—I mean they are just a part of our population, so I interact with ELL students all of the time.

She also stated,

I make sure that these kids are a part of everything, that they are not left out, that they are represented . . . like we go as far as when I'm making classes, to make sure there is someone in that class that either, can speak the language, or at least ESOL so that they don't feel different or isolated . . . we have moved students to a place where they felt more comfortable . . . it is a big deal because I don't do that so much for my other population of kids . . .

Crystal the only ESOL teacher in this site described how she made sure the students and her were included in the school population. She commented,

I attend one or two Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings at the beginning of the year and explain to the teachers that this is what I do with the students in my class . . . and invite them to come observe me if they want to see . . . I want to make sure that the students get what they need in the regular classroom since they are supported and I try to meet their needs in my classroom.

Louise, the 33-year education veteran, shared her experiences. She discussed a way to make sure the students in her class were supported. She shared,

I've been here 25 years there's been a real change from when I first started here. We didn't have many ELLs but within the last twelve years, that has really changed . . . in my classroom I pair the up with one of my higher level students that understands the difference between coaching and helping to make sure they have an additional level of support.

The participants echoed the vision of the principal that ELLs are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities, services, and instruction they need in order to succeed.

Care. Care at Pinedale Elementary School emanates from the office of the Principal. When asked how she meets works to address the needs, not just academic needs, of the students, Principal Michele told a story about her interactions with teachers on her staff concerning a student and his family.

They don't know what's going on at home the night before or that weekend to know that why that kid is not performing that day or doing what they're supposed to that day . . . we've forgotten that without understanding the cultural, how they learn, and what the attitude about education is period and their psychological things, that they're not gonna learn anything and it's not gonna matter what you teach them because they didn't eat last night or they got—and we had a kid that got kicked out of his house, and we didn't know it until we kept calling and finally got in touch with the mom and she was at the shelter and the kid was somewhere else and they went, you know, and then the teacher's fussing at me about why the kid didn't, I'm like I don't care why he didn't do that, he doesn't have a place to live. He's living in a shelter, he's not got a place . . . do you know what that's like, because I don't know what that's like, and so he doesn't care that the end of grade test is this week.

She continued with telling about the interaction.

[The kid] could care less, and his momma surely don't care, so don't call and fuss at her about why he didn't come to school. Couldn't come to school, she didn't have a way to get him here, so I think that, if we spent more time on the psychological needs of kids because they're not doing well, because there's something outside of this, that, and then they get here and we blow them up because they didn't have something signed when momma didn't come home last night, you know, so not understanding that that is part of what helps them learn is being safe and having things, needs, physical needs met, but also his mental health issues. If they'd give me more counselors I think I'd be good.

When asked about providing support for student's needs—not just academic needs, ESOL teacher Crystal shared, “I see the students as a whole human being and addressing all the needs that he or she has in every way . . . giving them the confidence to ask for help.”

Louise stated, “I make the students feel important and not different from everyone else, and whatever that takes.” The participants expressed the same care and concern as the principal. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the supports, opportunities, and services, they need in order to succeed.

Shared vision and mission. Principal Michele discussed her vision and mission for the school. Pinedale Elementary School is a Covey Leadership School, which promotes the various talents and strength each individual student possesses. She explained,

We are a Covey Leadership school, so we took the seven habits and, it's called *The Leader in Me* program and basically it teaches them . . . so the first four habits are about you, take care of yourself, making a plan, taking responsibility, being practical, so you get yourself together and then you can reach other people and so what we do, that's school-wide, when I hire people that you need to be on board with that, be prepared and willing to do that and to train people, and then I pay for five of us to be trained, to train, it's what keeps it going, so we've been doing it for four years, but I think that that builds in the self-reliance and having kids accountable for themselves and we talk about being proactive . . . I think that that makes the learning, the playing field level, everyone gets to be a leader at something, we—our goal is that everyone finds something they're good at and so you don't just have the little white, I mean the little blonde-headed white kid that gets to do everything, or you don't get the really smart kid that gets to do it, So it, it equals the playing field, so everyone get to have a leadership role at something

ESOL teacher Crystal explained how she supports the vision and mission of Pinedale Elementary School, where everyone gets to showcase their leadership and what they can do well.

We have a multicultural night here and it's a big event, and like I usually, I teach the kids some dances, cultural dances after school, and they find me people to help me with that . . . it's a big event, we've had 400 people in the gym, sometime we gotta even limit it . . . and the parents supported a lot . . . the children get to show what they can do and it is great . . . they are so proud to be a part of showing us their stuff.

Louise commented, "I've been here with this principal for 10 years and I support what she is trying to do with the kids. It's not all test scores and such . . . we have a good place."

The participants echoed the vision of the principal that ELLs are important in this school. This school wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities, services, and instruction they need in order to succeed.

Professional respect. Throughout the interviews with the participants of Pinedale Elementary School, one sentiment was present throughout, the respect that was given to the ESOL teacher Crystal. On more than one occasion the comment was made about deferring decisions about ELLs to the ESOL teacher. This was the only research site where this was expressed. Crystal shared,

She [the principal] comes and observes what we do and she lets me, like if I have a new idea, let me apply with this and do my own research in a way, giving her some advice if I see that something needs to be done with certain students, she gives me a voice, you know, to come and talk to her about certain situations that, and listens to me, and if she thinks something that needs to be done she supports me all the time. She lets me give workshops, train teachers, she's asked me, if she sees that something works, like observes me and sees something new she lets me and other teachers come and share with the staff and train other teachers with things that we've learned, invites me to the meeting with teachers, so I feel like she really gives me a lot of support and respect.

Principal Michele expressed the respect she has for her ESOL teacher,

. . . She comes up with some little body movement or acronym or something, and she, I'll see her do it, I'm like Crystal, go teach it to them, and so she's had multiple times where she's in front of them [the teachers] and it's good stuff for all kids but she's also said now when my kids do this, this is what they're doing and it's supporting what you're doing, and so helping the regular classroom teacher . . . she knows what helps them and so that's gonna help the teacher and the teachers that have been here with me know Crystal's way, we're gonna do, and sometimes they'll even embrace that and have her kids teach their class what to do . . . but I have Crystal on staff so I just use her more than anything.

She continued,

I tend to give her what she wants, and the teachers know that . . . she has created all kinds of things and she'll present them to the staff and like she won't, she's not gonna come and brag, she would sit—if she sat here right now, the most humble spirit, she would not ever say, she'd be oh, Ms. Michele, she'd give me all the credit, it is not me, she does it all, but she—I'll say you're gonna present that to the staff, I need you to share that with them because this is phenomenal and I have said I will cover your classes so you can go watch her do it, because when she talks, it's different. When you see her do it with kids, I mean it is . . . she is phenomenal, she is phenomenal, she may create a little video for end of year strategies and her kids acted it out. She taught it to me and she, she is a Governor's Education Network for teachers, she was one of those people, she did just the most phenomenal things with the kids and videos to show her work and—but, you know, the truth is she could work with any kid.

Louise reported,

We have a wonderful—Ms. Crystal is an excellent English as a second language teacher, so she gets real involved in things and Ms. Michele, we both recognize she knows what she's doing and has, yes, so we kind of, you know, defer to her and will talk about things and it's approved by Ms. Michele, she'll support that as long as we've talked about it with Ms. Crystal.

At Pinedale Elementary School it was evident that the expertise, skills, and knowledge of the ESOL teacher has about working with ELLs were relied upon heavily. She was seen as the true master of her craft and an expert with her work with the ELLs in the school. The participants echoed the respect discussed by the principal that working together for the benefit of ELLs is important in this school. This school-wide culture of professional respect enhances the opportunities for ELLs to receive the opportunities to learn, and the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Access to resources. Pinedale Elementary School experienced limited funding and was designated as a Title I school. However, the limited funding did not impede the school's ability to provide resources for their ELL students. Principal Michele stated,

Well, because I've worked with Ms. Crystal so long, when she says I need this then she gets it. She gets it, because—and her track record and not, her test scores are great, and she's phenomenal and historically our Hispanic population has always scored, done well, and our disparity is sometimes, our—my Hispanic kids are outscoring my white kids . . . so when she wants it I get it for her, but I—I treat them, like if there's something that she needs because they need it then we're gonna get that, but I don't, I don't not get it for them, like if everybody's getting it, everybody's gonna get it. If it's something I can get for somebody in the classroom then I don't, I don't go well, nothing that we bought is going to exclude them, does that make sense, but typically if I were completely honest, because Crystal is so wonderful in how she does what she does, they actually get the good end and sometimes the other two kids that aren't in ESOL are getting the short end of the stick.

The same comments about resources were made by Crystal and Louise, they shared how resources were provided for all students, but because of the trust placed on Crystal, the resources were always available for the ELLs in the building. The participants echoed the sentiments expressed by the principal that ELLs need to have access and supports and

that these are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities and services they need in order to succeed.

Access to the curriculum. Academic growth and improvement are very important to Principal Michele, but that is not her only focus. She stressed how important it is for her to have children grow up and be successful in their own right.

. . . You're not that great at math but you know read, you're not gonna be penalized for that. Now that's a work in progress, so you know that I'm talking like that, and that's where my heart is, is that we give kids the foundation of—I want them to be smart and I want them to learn, but let's be honest, they're not all gonna be fives and fours, they're not, they're not, we weren't created to all be the same . . . that one, we've got to find something for that level one kid that that's not the definition of them, that does not define them, and so you work really hard in finding what does, what does define them, and it could be something like that you never even thought of,

She continued,

. . . Like we're so focused on this that that kid could be the next, I don't know, whatever, he could be the next president but he scored a one for everything he ever did, you know, we could look back at people, other people and they flunked out of school and did stuff and then some of the very smart, top of the class kids dropped out later and are bums on the street, you just, that cannot be the defining factor of a kid because I think we are, we are setting them up for failure when they leave us and all—they know, we don't have to tell them, they know this, I have a little kid who scored a one every year, all three years he was third, fourth, fifth, every year, but could sing like nobody's business. He knew he was a one and he—well he worked so hard to get above that . . . but he knew he was a one.

Louise discussed how she ensured access to the curriculum in her classes for the ELLs.

She stated,

. . . I try to, like I said work with the partners, we talk about, you know, don't do everything for them, don't tell them everything, you know, just kind of help guide

them along and let them try to pick up. Most of the kids that I've had, I mean they're very attuned to, I mean they just—they look and they watch and they see what everybody else is doing, and they move along with that, and I, we try to, you know, we'll encourage and praise . . . if they can know, you know, five out of the words we're building great, that you're doing good, your, you know your, last week you could only do this, now you're doing this, so try to show them the growth that they're making, that praise and that goes for all of the kids, you know, and not just the English as a second language kids, just, you know, when they get a lot of praise, they're gonna keep working and keep making effort,

She continued,

Some just flash cards with letters and pictures, a dictionary, picture dictionary, books with very short stories with just the basic, basic beginning sight words in it, and a CD that goes with it, so I've been using that and several websites that have—they'll read a story and one even where it'll read a story in different language and then read it in English and some books, too, that are from different cultures, and we have some in the library, too, that we try to use.

ESOL teacher Crystal discussed how she supports the students academically. She shared,

Like I have what they call team time, which is a time when the kids can get like remediation in math and reading and all that, it's about 30 minutes or so, and that helped me in the last years to work on—the special needs, the specific needs . . . kids get so stressed that they really don't, sometimes they don't show what they really learned, so I try to calm them . . . I shared the scores with them individually, and I said you're here, where do you want to be next time, what do you need to do, let's make a plan, and let's see what we can do and then after the next quarter or something we came together again as a group, not telling the scores, you know, to—on the whole class, but individually do you think you went up or down, and we gave like the colors...are you on green or on red, how do you feel about that, do you think you work hard or you can do something else, and making them aware, and here we have the data notebooks too that help a lot because they can set a goal for them and see if what they did and the—how hard they worked, get them to the goal or not, and what changes we can make. So doing that really, really worked because the students were aware that if they got this score or this grade, and they wanted another that they had to work hard.

The participants supported the curriculum programming discussed by the principal that all students need to be able to have access to the curriculum assure that ELLs receive the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Culture of trust. The professional respect and trust, which were discovered through the interviews of the participants at Pinedale Elementary School, contributed to the outcomes for the ELLs in the school. Principal Michele shared,

I really love it here, and there's lots of advantages to being here this long. I know the families that the families—I know that and I understand that, and the parents feel real more comfortable coming and so it makes a big—I think that makes a big difference the longer you can stay, and I hope that somebody would say when my time is up that it's time for you to go, you've done all you can do here. But I really love, I love it here, and my own kids are here, that helps the school and the community to trust me.

Crystal commented, “The parents rely on us to help their children and it is helpful that I can communicate with them in Spanish. They like that.” Louise stated, “I start where the kids are and help them move along without making them feel bad and my kids feel safe and learn.”

The comments shared with me during the interviews with each participant demonstrated how the teachers and the school principals viewed their work towards equity for the recently resettled ELL students enrolled in their school settings. Also in this setting, comments and statements were collected during the interviews that did not fit into one of the seven threads, but were interesting to consider for this study. The summary of the interviews and other interesting information for Pinedale Elementary is discussed and included in the next paragraphs.

During the interviews with the participants of this school, each educator was asked the questions developed for their job title, and they discussed their experiences with ELLs, their personal definition of equity, being a culturally responsive educator, and the supports they needed and provided for ELLs. Participants discussed their instructional supports they provided for ELLs ranging from program structuring to classroom instruction and materials. What made this school unique is the incongruence between what the principal believed and goals written in the SIP. Another uniqueness of this setting was the way the ESOL teacher helped the students take ownership of their learning and how she told the teaching staff how to support the ELLs as they worked toward improvement. Also, the regular education teacher participant also made an interesting point.

The principal explicitly provided teachers with information about *The 27 Equitable Classroom Practices* and the expectation was that each teacher would daily use the recommended strategies. The principal also discussed her indifference toward state assessment results and emphasized that each child was special, and how the school used the *Leader in Me* program. She said, “. . . my supervisor would kill me if he heard me say that I do not care about test scores . . . instead I focus on what the kid is good at . . .” However, a goal on the school’s SIP is to increase the performance of ELLs by five percent. The incongruence of what the principal and leadership team decided as a goal for ELLs did not coincide with what the principal said about her efforts of identifying student strengths. She also discussed providing opportunities for students to showcase their strengths and talents, and she was surprised to see how the talents the students possessed.

An additional unique characteristic was that the ESOL teacher gave the students a strategy to help them access the curriculum in every classroom, not just the ESOL class. She discussed how she encouraged each student to progress monitor their growth, but she took it one step further. She taught the students strategies while they were in her classroom, and she provided professional development for teacher on the strategies she taught the students. She explicitly told the students that every test was an opportunity for them to “show what they know” and each teacher used the same language in their classrooms. Her expectation was that the students were empowered to engage and participate in every class, and if the student were reluctant the teacher could remind them to use the school-wide strategy to “show what they know.” She also held individual conferences with students and explained what strategies they could use to move to the next level.

The regular education teacher, Louise, worked at the school for 20 years and in education for 33, and commented that she “. . . had seen the population change . . .” This led me to believe that she did not embrace the changes in the demographics of the school over time. However, during the interview, she discussed how she viewed her classroom as the best place for ELLs and how they flourished in literacy. She discussed how she fostered independence in the new ELL students by paring them with a student who could assist.

Although definitive practices exist that are aimed at creating equity in the environment for ELLs discussed in the seven threads and the interesting information, the

data from the school report card for grades four, five, and the all student subgroup do not reflect the work of these educators.

New Roads Middle School

The Director described New Roads Middle School as an equitable environment for ELLs. New Roads Middle School served 598 students and 15% of the students were identified as ELLs. The principal has 18 years of experience. During the 2013–2014 school year, one ESOL teacher is allotted to the school and 50 regular education teachers. The combined experience of the participants is 44; Principal Sarah has 18 years of experience—four years as principal of this site, ESOL Teacher Darryl has 22 years of ESOL teaching experience—ten years at New Roads Middle School, and lateral entry regular education teacher Jackie has four years of teaching experience.

Inclusion. Principal Sarah discussed how she ensured that the environment was inclusive for the ELLs in the middle school. She discussed how she has witnessed the shift in the culture since her arrival. She shared,

. . . To watch my LEP students from day one in this building to now, they are comfortable, they are happy, they are vocal, they are dancing in dance units in PE when they would sit in a corner, they were nobodies when I got here . . . that's how I felt, I said why are these kids, they did not feel like this was home, but they are welcome here, they know it, they are, they have come out of their shells, trust me. When I saw them do a unit in PE and it was a dance unit, and a group of LEP students they did not dance together, they broke off into, and I was like oh my gosh they have come out of their shell, I had to call the LEP teacher, I said I need you to come to the gym at second encore, I want you to see this. And so just embracing what they bring to the table and allowing them to experience other cultures and respect them.

ESOL teacher Darryl, shared his viewpoint on being an inclusive environment for ELLs,

I first have the obligation to, and the commitment, to make their cultures valid, to showcase their cultures here in the school, to make people aware of the different cultures that we have here, and make them aware of the diversity that we have, that we are a very rich school in terms of diversity, to share information about my students' culture with my peers, with different members of the school community, to reach out to families and let them know that there is someone who speaks their language, and to make home visits and try to reach out to parents when they cannot come to school so just to let them know that the school can make it to their homes, and somehow we make it known we're for them as well. But I have the responsibility to learn about their cultures, to learn a little bit about their languages and their family backgrounds, and for them to feel that it is essential, that it's important, and that it's worth it, that it's not just about content, but it's also about themselves.

Regular education teacher Jackie described how she made her classroom an inclusive environment. She stated, "I want them to feel a bit more part of the class than separate, we are reading a book and it has a lot of Spanish words and the children now it and can teach it to other students." The participants echoed the vision of the principal that ELLs are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities, services, and instruction they need in order to succeed.

Care. At New Roads Middle School, care and concern for students were expressed on a personal level as well as school-wide supports. ESOL teacher Darryl expressed how he supports and cares for his students on a personal level. He said,

I feel that I've been very protective of my kids, I don't know, it's probably because maybe I feel that to some of them, and maybe to not, to most of them I'm the only person that they can count on, I mean sometimes, and just because of that kind of close bond we create, and because of the mentoring, because of the constant talks that we have in class that whenever they're out there and then participating in something, like I'm going to be there, and I'm going to be supporting them, and then they come and tell me, Mr. Darryl are you going to be

at our game tonight, or are you going to be at our game tomorrow, or will you be able to be there next week for a game, so I try to do my best to be there and at least to see a familiar face, so—because I know that their parents might not be able to attend, so at least they know yes, I mean my teacher is here.

Principal Sarah discussed how she make sure the students in her building are cared for by putting structures and supports in place throughout the building. She said,

Well, you know, middle school is just a weird time, so I guess putting I guess systems in place where kids can, where they know if I'm struggling here I can go to this person or this club or this, I mean we have campus life, oh my gosh, the clubs, I can't even name all the clubs we have, it's ridiculous. Campus life is a Christian-based organization, they meet before school every Tuesday, and they go in, I mean, and it's student led, it's awesome, it is awesome, they have adult sponsors, but it's student led, and the sponsors are just there for supervision purposes, but the kids, you know, they pray for the school, they pray for each other, they pray for whatever big is coming up kids can put in requests for prayer, they know who their campus life reps are, they have fun, it's not all prayer, but they have fun, they do games, that kind of thing, So I think setting up structures, my LEP kids-so just systems in place that they know that they can connect, So that's just kind of like the culture here . . .

The participants stressed the importance of caring for the ELL students the same as the principal. Demonstrating care and concern for the ELLs and their families was a school-wide focus and demonstrates that ELLs are important in this school. This singular focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities and services they need in order to succeed.

Shared vision and mission. Principal Sarah spoke to the vision and the mission of the school, which is to make the school a thriving community where global diversity is celebrated and the learning environment promotes academic excellence. In reflecting on her population and the challenges with proficiency data, she questioned the equity in the building and shared her vision for all students. She said,

My goal and mission for is school is to make the playing field equal, and so whatever that means, depending on the student, I'm really big on underdogs, and so I will take a bullet for an underdog, now you're not going to treat the underdogs bad in this building, whoever the underdog might be in those scenarios, in some cases it's the LEP students because of their language barrier . . . I mean it just depends, so to my goal is just making the playing field equal for all, and I have all kinds of different things under disability, and I mean physical handicaps, students with cancer, with no legs, the elevator, we have to, I mean like you name it, and so my mission is just making the playing field equal for all.

Jackie shared her experiences with the shared mission and vision of the school by saying, "When she [the principal] comes in to observe me, she will ask what are you doing for the ESOL kids, she knows and comes in looking to make sure we are doing for the students."

Darryl shared that he mirrors the mission and vision set by the leadership of the principal:

I mirror the direction of the school, because I feel that for a long time my students have been invisible, to the school community, to the classroom community, and to the community in general. And it's my role as an ESL teacher just to help them be out there, to put themselves out there more, to make them feel that they're part of the community and that they're an important part of the community, that their families count, that their voice, that their thoughts or opinions or ideas can be expressed and have to be expressed. And in—as part of my role, supporting the vision of the principal is what I want to do since she makes it a point to work so hard for all of the kids—especially the ELLs.

The participants echoed the vision of the principal that ELLs are important in this school. This school wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities, services, and instruction they need in order to succeed.

Professional respect. Jackie is currently a regular education teacher, and this is her second career. Her initial career was in the business world, but she had a change in

career for personal reasons. Since she was the candidate with the least amount of experience with ELLs, her principal encouraged her to work with Darryl, the veteran ESOL teacher. Jackie stated,

The principal always suggests that, she brings that up a lot, especially if she doesn't see us specifically catering to the needs of an ESL or an LEP student, she'll say well have you talked to Mr. Darryl about this, because I've seen him do this, so she's very involved with it, she's always looking for ways to get us to work together, you know, because I'm not an ESL person, you know, so I don't always have all the resources and I don't always know how to deal with every single situation, but she definitely suggests that we work as a team.

Darryl the ESOL teacher expressed the level of respect he receives from the school principal, teachers, and the staff. He said,

I'm very happy and love working with her, because she's been very open and very welcoming, very flexible in terms of ideas, she's willing to accept, and any ideas that we might have to help our ESL population, she's willing to help, to listen to me, and to accept suggestions, and whenever we have a chance, we work to make sure that all teachers are able to work with the ESL kids. I feel very supported and respected by the principals.

Principal Sarah discussed her viewpoint of creating a respectful, supportive environment for the students and staff of the school. She strategically used her knowledge about the staff and the students to deliberately improve the outcomes for the ELLs in the school. She discussed how she knew she could rely on a few individuals to accomplish the goals that were set. She stated,

. . . Because working with LEP student in Language Arts and Social Studies was a big strength for him [Darryl] that I knew he could help support because we had a goal to increase achievement of LEP students, and I felt like in the School Improvement Plan that would be you know, because he had a great skill set with

language arts, social studies, and he had the LEP focus, so I thought using the strengths and the talents of the staff members to tap into the student needs, so we did that—we've done that for three years now.

The participants echoed the respect discussed by the principal that working together for the benefit of ELLs is important in this school. This school-wide culture of professional respect enhances the opportunities for ELLs to receive the opportunities to learn and the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Access to resources. New Roads Middle School experienced a reduction in funding for the 2014–2015 school year, which impacted the number of allotted teachers, and the amount of dollars available to support programs for students. For the current school year, 2015–2016, New Roads Middle School experienced a further reduction of funds further impacting the school's overall budget. Even though funding is minimal, Darryl shared that, “. . . if we're lucky to have some funds to invest, so then we can meet and discuss some ideas and some things that we can you know, maybe carry out here in the school for their benefit.” Jackie shared,

I asked about going to the Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESOL) National Conference this year, and whatever the budget arrangement is, it's not an option for us right now, but I feel like I learned so, so much when I attended last year.

Principal Sarah referred to the human resources in her building more than monetary or physical items. The middle school participated in the district-wide 1:1 personalized learning environment, and each student received a tablet to use at home and at school. She discussed the funding her school received. She said,

That's like a science tech department with no technology. So we had a—we, when I came I said okay, let's think with the end in mind, five years from now what do we want to see, and we had to chunk it, so every year I bought things for every year, I'm like okay, we'll get this many this year, we'll get this many this year, we'll do this, because you mandate a magnet program and don't fund it, and I have two magnet programs and I get one pot of magnet money. One pot to share between two programs.

She continued,

There was some federal funding available for the district to address disparities in schools, and so certain schools were designated as focus schools for one of two reasons, for their LEP population or their EC population. If that gap was significant, was significant from other subgroups, and for us LEP three years ago was very—it was a very significant gap, and so we were identified as a focus school for our LEP students which means we receive additional funding, and that additional funding I would say has been a blessing to our students because we have been able to provide them a tutor . . . just for LEP students, he was a daytime tutor and an afterschool tutor, I mean the man was superman . . . focus money helped us provide all SIOP training, all SIOP materials, you name it, readers for the content areas, for social studies and science for LEP students, we have a plethora of materials, every and anything that they wanted or needed got it these last three years.

The participants echoed the sentiments expressed by the principal that ELLs need to have access and supports and that these are important in this school. This school-wide focus assures that ELLs receive the opportunities and services they need in order to succeed.

Access to the curriculum. Jackie, the regular education teacher, discussed how she tried to provide and support ELLs in her classroom. She stated,

I try to incorporate little bits and pieces of their language in assignments that's helpful for everybody. Everybody gets to learn something new while they feel comfortable and familiar with whatever it is that I'm giving them, and the Internet is always a wonderful resource, and they can use their tablets to translate things as well, and so can I, if they wanted to write something in their own language I can

use, you know, all these other apps and things to translate it, so everyone is involved.

Darryl discussed how he provided supports for the teachers to help the ELLs gain access to the curriculum. He said,

I don't work with specific group of teachers, I support all of the teachers that need me the most and I think the communication channel is always open, I try to put the information out there for them to share it, they know that if they need me, that—and to the extent of my possibilities that I can be in the room, there are teachers that like to share their concerns more than others, and there are actually teachers who like me to check their work . . . they show a higher level of interest in terms of working with the ESL students. I've worked with teachers who, for example, modify all their activities and modify all their assessments, and even before I'm administering these assessments they shared them with me . . .

He continued,

I love working with them because at least they're showing me that they're constant and they're just committed to not only their regular population but also the ESL population, so it all depends, like I feel like you know, and also the number of ESL students in their classes, you know, some teachers might have one student, some others have, you know, larger numbers. This year I've not yet aware of the number of ESL kids in every class, but I'm getting there, because I'm trying to visit every class just to make sure that.

Principal Sarah supports the teachers in providing access to the curriculum by examining the available data and by asking questions to support student learning. She said,

Okay, well I'll say we do a great job with the formal piece, the informal not so great yet, but practices I mean we have, we do PLCs, I mean it's the culture of the school, they know we're going to talk about kids and we're going to look at their data every single week, so that's I guess one practice [is] to make sure we're monitoring the data, and the AIMS web, SRI data, common assessments, I mean you name it, and so that's what I would say that we do, I mean the PLCs are about kids, about the data, how we're moving them, what's going on in math that's not

going on in language arts, well—how can we do cross curriculum planning, that kind of thing.

The participants supported the curriculum programming discussed by the principal that all students need to be able to have access to the curriculum assure that ELLs receive the instruction they need in order to succeed.

Culture of trust. Principal Sarah simply stated about her ESOL teacher, Darryl, “He is my liaison, he is my leader, he is superman, he was one of the finalist for teacher of the year for the district . . . I trust him with everything . . .” Darryl expressed how the students trusted him and how that impacted the learning environment. He shared,

They—I feel that they feel comfortable reaching out to me just because I’ve made as part of my job just to provide them with a safe environment, you know, I would say that first and foremost my classroom is a safe environment, and here they can feel at ease just making mistakes, so here they come, make all the mistakes they want, as long as they don’t make them out there, in the other classes . . . come to me and say I feel this or I feel that, or I think this is, you know, and they hear it from me, and I say if you feel that I’m wrong, you have all the knowledge and you have all the right to correct me if you feel that this is not the right way you have my permission to say no, that’s not the right way, or let me teach you a different way, and we use that, you know, as part of a class to—that there is always a different way to do things, and difference is valid here in this room.

He continued to share,

I have to tell you that I see myself as 30%, 20% teacher and the 70, 80% for me is more as mentor, and that mentorship that I do with them is mostly about empowering, it’s just letting them know and reminding them of the fact that they are lucky and they have a very big competitive advantage over their peers just because they speak one, two, three, four languages, that nowadays being multilingual and multicultural is one of the greatest assets in this globalized world, and just to reminding them of that power and of that opportunity that they have just to be out there with this knowledge and with this tool, to use it effectively.

Regular education teacher Jackie summed up the culture of the school by saying,

I'm new to this [teaching], but I love working with this group of people . . . I ask a lot of questions and no one seems to get annoyed (laughs), but I trust they know my intentions and I trust their answers . . . it is a great place to work.

The comments shared with me during the interviews with each participant demonstrated how the teachers and the school principals viewed their work towards equity for the newly arrived ELL students enrolled in their school settings. As mentioned about the two previous sites, comments and statements were collected during the interviews that did not fit into one of the seven threads, but were interesting to consider for this study. The summary of the interviews and other interesting information for New Roads Middle School is discussed and included in the next paragraphs.

During the interviews with the participants of this school, each educator was asked the questions developed for their job title, and they discussed their experiences with ELLs, their personal definition of equity, being a culturally responsive educator, and the supports they needed and provided for ELLs. Participants discussed their instructional supports they provided for ELLs ranging from program structuring to classroom instruction and materials. One unique and interesting point was that the students were allowed to participate in a club where they could submit prayer requests and have members of the club praying with and for them before school on club meeting days. This was mentioned by the principal during the interview and she commented about “. . . taking care of the total needs of the students including spiritual needs . . .” The principal also discussed how in previous years she was able to use funding to purchase an

additional ESOL teaching position. In prior years, the additional ESOL teaching position supported student achievement and the data she shared from benchmark exams showed the progress the students made with the two teachers compared to the progress of the students with only one ESOL teacher.

The regular educator from this site also was unique as a participant in that she was the teacher with the least amount of experience and teaching was her second career. She came to education after leaving the business world, and taught for four years. When asked about being culturally responsive, she referenced the books she borrowed to reflect the different nationalities in her room. She also desired to have more professional development in the area of teaching ELLs. She discussed meeting with the ESOL teacher for support when she was unsure of what to do to help students.

An interesting factor about the ESOL teacher from this site was that he saw himself as a mentor to the students and encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity education opens for them. He held the students accountable for their learning and his sentiment was that he “. . . did not accept not trying in class . . .”

Although definitive practices exist that are aimed at creating equity in the environment for ELLs discussed in the seven threads and the interesting information, the data from the school report card for grades six, seven, and eight for “All” students and the LEP subgroup does not reflect the work of these educators.

Comparisons of the Three Schools

I will now compare the three school sites for this comparative case study. Many components are similar throughout each school, which is why they were recommended

by the Director of the ESOL program for the district as sites to study. The comparison chart outlines the similarities and differences of the three study sites. See Table 6.

Table 6

Comparison of the Three School Sites

| Characteristics | Similarities | Differences |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Inclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The three schools worked to be inclusive places. • Appreciated diverse cultures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning Point and Pinedale Elementary Schools—made deliberate efforts to include parents |
| Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valued and respected students | |
| Shared Vision and Mission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicated the vision and mission of school. • Used data to improve outcomes for students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning Point Elementary—the school principal developed the vision and mission and others agreed to follow. • Pinedale Elementary and New Roads Middle Schools—vision and missions were collectively developed. |
| Professional Respect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciated and recognized strengths of colleagues and maximized those strengths for the betterment of the entire school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinedale Elementary and New Roads Middle Schools—demonstrated a heavily reliance on the expertise of the ESOL teachers. |
| Access to Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided access to school and community resources | |

Table 6

(Cont.)

| Characteristics | Similarities | Differences |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Access to the Curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided professional development for teachers. • Planned and monitored instructional practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning Point Elementary and New Roads Middle Schools—the principal was involved in instructional discussions about data (PLC meetings) and supported teachers in the teaching and learning process. |
| Culture of Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created and worked to maintain open communication with staff about improvement efforts. • Worked with families to improve outcomes for students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinedale Elementary School—the principal’s children attended the school. • The longevity of the staff contributed to the culture of trust and sense of belonging to the school. |

Similarities and differences. All three schools worked to be inclusive places.

Cultural and linguistic diversity was celebrated throughout the school, and efforts were made to include ELL students’ families in the school. The school principals were mindful of the need to create a sense of belonging for the entire school community. Teachers took an interest in the students outside of the school building and encouraged the students to engage in the school community.

The differences in how the three schools worked to be inclusive places were between the elementary schools and the secondary school. Both Pinedale and Turning Point Elementary Schools deliberately worked to include the ELL students’ families.

Parents were invited to participate in school activities as well as serve as the leaders in some activities.

The three schools demonstrated and developed a culture of care and concern for the well-being of the students. A culture of high expectations was coupled with the realities of the challenges the ELL students faced, and the educators in the school recognized and acted to remove and alleviate some of the challenges faced by the students. The students had strong advocates in the building and were not penalized for things out of their control. The ESOL and regular education teachers worked closely to address the needs of the ELL students.

The school principal and the faculty of each of the three schools worked for a common purpose. At each site, the teachers were aware of the expectations for student performance and behavior and created classroom environments that were aligned to the mission and vision of the school. During PLC meetings, the available student data was reviewed and the school principals assisted teachers in developing strategies to improve the outcomes for all students.

The differentiation in this area was between Turning Point Elementary and the other two schools. At Turning Point Elementary School, the principal spearheaded the development of the school's vision and mission, and staff agreed with the direction set forth by their leader. At the other two schools, the staff in conjunction with the school principal worked collaboratively to create the vision and mission of the school.

Professional respect was evident at each of the three sites. In all three schools, the school principals respected the expertise and knowledge of the teachers. The school

principals also respected the families of the ELL students and deliberately worked to demonstrate that respect throughout the school community. The teachers respected the leadership of the school principals and worked to support their principals. The teachers respected one another and relied on their colleague for expertise and guidance when working with ELL students. The school principals and teachers respected the diversity of their student population and that respect was evident in their responses.

The dissimilarity in this area was that Pinedale Elementary and New Roads Middle Schools depended on the ESOL teacher to be the expert and to make instructional decisions about the ELLs in the school. As compared to Turning Point Elementary School's ESOL teachers who were used in different capacities throughout the school. The teachers were explicitly asked to be a part of the decision-making process for the ELLs in the school. At Pinedale Elementary, the ESOL teacher was looked to for guidance about how to best serve the ELLs throughout the school. She would observe other teachers and offer support to the teachers to maximize the learning time the ELL students were in their mainstream classrooms.

With limited resources, the three schools worked to provide equity in the access to resources for their ELL students. The principals along with their leadership teams used the available resources to address the academic needs of the ELL students by providing instructional material that supported student learning. Resources were equitably distributed among the staff and students. In some cases, the ELL students were provided access to resources that were specifically tailored to address their needs. Overall, the

educators within the three schools worked to ensure resources were equitably available for all students.

Professional development was provided at each school to ensure that teachers were knowledgeable in methods to support and optimize the learning experience for ELLs. All ESOL teachers participated in district SIOP trainings to support student learning and to help provide access to the curriculum standards. SIOP professional development was available through the district if a school principal asked for their staff members to receive the training. The entire staff could have access to the knowledge and skills to support ELL student learning and the teachers teaching practices. School principals monitored the effectiveness of instructional practices and provided feedback to teachers to support improvement efforts and instructional planning. The variation in this area was that the school principal of Pinedale Elementary accounted for the other strengths the ELL students had and she provided other ways for students to show what they knew to the community. She explicitly recognized that the heavy emphasis on test scores and standards was just one part of the students' life and the school community.

Each school developed a trusting culture where communication was open and centered on improving outcomes for the students. Parents were invited to be a part of the school community, furthering the home-school connection needed for improvement of student performance and achievement. Parents were invited to be leaders in school activities at Pinedale Elementary and each school worked to communicate with parents in an understandable language. The Director also worked to promote a trusting environment

throughout the district in that communication and involvement was encouraged and supported by the interpreters.

The first distinction between the three schools was that the principal, teachers and staff of Pinedale Elementary were assigned to the school for the longest period of time. The longevity of school personnel helped to build the culture of trust because the community was very familiar with the school and the staff. For ELL families, this was instrumental in building trust within the school community. The last notable distinction is that the children of the principal of Pinedale Elementary School attended the school, and the principal trusted her teachers with the education of her own children.

Summary

Through individual interviews, with the district personnel, school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers the participants shared their perspectives on creating equitable environments for ELLs. The Director of the ESOL program for the district shared her expertise as to what characteristics were needed to create an equitable environment for ELLs and her recommendations of schools to study possessed the characteristics she described.

Throughout the interviews of all school level participants, they were clear about the need to provide an environment that was inclusive of ELLs and for the students to feel and be a part of the school community. Participants varied in how they demonstrated care for the students, but it was clear that the ELL students were cared for throughout the school community. The mission and vision of the school was supportive of the ELLs and the school principals, and educators worked to meet the goals of the mission and vision.

Professional respect for colleagues echoed in each interview, and the respect created a culture of trust between the teachers and staff of each study site. Each educator did their part to ensure the students had access to resources and to the curriculum.

In the next chapter, I will continue to discuss the comparisons of each site as well as the answered research questions, the implications for practice, further research opportunities, limitations, and share my final thoughts.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research study was to discover the characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs and to explore what practices and strategies school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create equitable environments for ELLs. I explored the responses from the two research questions for this study which allowed me to gather and explore information from district personnel, school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers. Chapter IV includes district level viewpoints about what makes an environment equitable for ELLs as well as the self-report of the school principal, ESOL teacher, and regular education teacher from each identified equitable site.

The data collection process occurred from June through the first of October during the beginning of the 2015–2016 school year. Most interviews were conducted on the research site. One participant agreed to conduct the interview in my office, and not in his school site due to the close proximity to his residence. The location of the interview did not interfere with the data collection process and actually allowed the participant to speak with more freedom to answer the questions. In this Chapter, I have discussed how the data from the interviews was analyzed through the equity framework discussed in Chapter II. I have also discussed how the research questions for this study have been answered. I have summarized, interpreted, and compared what the participants shared in

the next paragraphs. In the final section of this chapter, I have discussed the limitations of this study, the opportunities for further research, and the final thoughts about the conclusion of this study.

Using the Equity Framework

The school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers' responses coincided with the conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1, p. 61) presented earlier in Chapter II. Data from the participants showed how the participants worked to promote equity by understanding, supporting, and planning for the various nuances that ELLs may bring to the educational environment. In order for schools to be successful, the needs of all students need to be considered and addressed in environmental and instructional practices.

For this study, I drew upon the language and concepts from three of the established eleven ISLLC Standards 2014 to frame equity. The framework for this study guides the analysis of the qualitative research addressing equity in education for ELLs. As previously stated, using equity as a guidepost, educators can work to ensure that each student has a unique learning experience to build and acquire knowledge. Cultivating equity for ELLs in the academic learning environment will involve ensuring access to resources, access to the curriculum and supports, and ensuring that students are socio-culturally integrated in the learning environment.

District level personnel and school principals' answers to the interview questions reflected the characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs as related to their experiences. The language and concepts of ISLLC Standard One promoted the success of

every student through a shared vision and mission, which promoted quality teaching and learning, collection of data for analysis and improved organizational learning, and practices to improve the outcomes for all students. The equity focus is on improving the outcomes for all students and fostering an environment of sustainable improvement for all students.

The participants' answers to the questions echoed the language and concepts of ISLLC Standard Five which promoted a community of care and well-being for every student through the building of a culture of trust, the respecting and valuing of each student, promoting a safe, secure, and healthy environment, and providing the academic and social supports for each student. The attention to equity is on value and respect for all students and supporting students to be active participants in the school community. Cultivating trust is also a tenant of creating an equitable environment.

The participants' answers pointed towards the language and concepts behind ISLLC Standard Ten which surrounded creating an equitable and culturally responsive school through the equity of access to resources, the creation of schools as an inclusive, affirming place, the promotion of multiple cultural opportunities for student engagement, and the promotion of understanding and acceptance of diverse cultural resources. The equity emphasis is stressed on schools being inclusive, affirming places, and that issues that may disenfranchise and marginalize students and families are tackled. The equity focus in this standard also furthers understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures within the schools is emphasized.

The language and the concepts presented in the ISLLC Standards provide the basis where educators should begin to look for guidance. The language and concepts of the ISLLC standards serve as a guide for school principals as they strive to set direction in the school by communicating a shared vision, providing support for the culture and practices to reflect the vision, and to build capacity of the school to support the vision and mission of the school (Scalan & Lopez, 2012).

With the discussion of equity, the Director was able to candidly discuss and deliberately focus on the characteristics of an equitable school environment and school principals were able to focus on the strategies they used to promote equity for ELLs. The ESOL and regular education teachers' answers to the interview questions supported the principal's stated strategies for creating and promoting equity.

Based on the data from the interviews, the language and concepts of ISLLC Standards One, Five, and Ten explicitly and implicitly influenced the practices of the school principals in this study. The principals all agreed about the importance of creating an equitable environment for the ELLs in their schools. Although, the number of ELLs within each school varied, the experiences of the school principals varied, and the strategies they used in their schools varied, they all agreed that it was critical to the success of the entire school community for all students to be successful and to improve the outcomes for all students. The language and concepts in ISLLC Standards One, Five, and Ten also implicitly impacted the Director's description of equitable environments for ELLs because the criterion used to select the three schools to participate in this study

were a reflection of the of the three standards. Her descriptors of equitable environments were in alignment with the language and concepts presented in ISLLC Standards.

Comparison of Turning Point Elementary, Pinedale Elementary, and New Roads Middle School

Data collected from district level personnel indicated that equitable environments for ELLs were inclusive by nature; a shared mission and vision was held by the staff and leadership; there was a community of care for the students and their families; access to resources was supported and provided by school personnel; access to the curriculum was provided by the teachers and supported by the school principals; there was professional respect among the educators in the building; and the school's staff and faculty worked to create a culture of trust between the school and the families.

District level personnel recommended three schools as equitable environments for ELLs. The three schools that were recommended were Turning Point Elementary, Pinedale Elementary, and New Roads Middle School all situated in the Promising School district. Although the student population varied due to the location within the county, the needs of the schools and the students were similar since the Promising School district serves over 60% of the students who receive free and/or reduced price meals. All three cases provided insight into equitable environments for ELLs. The data collection produced a wealth of information about the strategies the school leadership, ESOL teachers, and the regular education teachers used to promote equity. This comparison will focus on the strategies outlined in the later part of Chapter IV. A table outlined the similarities and differences of the three research sites for this study (see Table 6). Although, specific professional development, classroom instruction, and the larger

community are relevant, they are not the focus of this comparison. All of the schools were situated within the same urban school district and faced similar challenges. In this section I will elaborate on the similarities and differences of the equitable environments for ELL students.

The comparison between the cases highlights the common elements of each school. The common elements are not a prescriptive list for creating equitable environments but serve as key features that three schools share as they work towards equity for their ELL students. The comparison also presents the way in which equitable ELL services within specific context differed in experiences and reality. These three schools were ordinary schools with strengths and blemishes. As described in the methods section, the three schools have work to do to improve the outcomes for all students, and their plates are full with improving proficiency for all students, but equity for ELLs was integrated into the work that needed to be done and it was deliberately addressed through the practices of the school principals, ESOL teachers, and the regular education teachers.

For these three schools, equity was not seen as one more thing to do but as an integral component of the overall success of the school and improved outcomes for ELL students. They took strides to promote equity for the ELLs by strategically using the available resources to be inclusive to all families, even if the barriers and obstacles required financial support to overcome. Limited funding was an issue raised by each principal participant in this study, but the amount of funding was not an impediment to the principals who worked to provide access to all families.

All three schools took steps to showcase the diversity of the students' cultures and their families, and encouraged participation in school activities. All three schools paced the curriculum and the instructional practices used to meet the needs according to the needs of the students. The district received pacing guides, but each school tailored the pacing of the curriculum to meet the needs of the ELL students. Since many students had limited formal schooling, the need to teach background information varied from student to student.

All of the participants of the three schools demonstrated professional respect for their colleagues. The school principals recognized that the success of the school required teachers who shared the same beliefs and were willing to do their part to improve the learning environment for the students. The school principals described the support they received from the district level ESOL personnel, and the teachers described the support they received from their school principals as they worked to improve the outcomes for the ELLs.

All three schools worked to build trust with the students and their families and throughout the community. The teachers, ESOL and regular education teachers, demonstrated to the ELLs and their families that the school wanted to support and help them without wanting or requiring anything in return. The schools desired to be places where families could come and receive the necessary supports and access to community resources to assist the families. Ensuring that parents were aware and had access to the desired resources helped to build trust between the school and the homes of the students.

To do the necessary work to create and maintain an equitable environment, school personnel are required to possess the beliefs, knowledge, and skills that enabled them to create and equity-oriented inclusive environment for ELLs. The creation of this type of environment speaks directly towards the leadership of the school.

Equity-oriented Leadership for ELLs

Ultimately, the leadership sets the tone and direction of the school. These three school principals created an environment that was supportive and inclusive of the ELLs in the school. These leaders had the skills to take action to accomplish an equitable environment for students. The leaders of the schools were committed to the belief that all students could learn and succeed with the appropriate and adequate supports, and their beliefs translated into their actions and the actions of their teaching staffs. They were knowledgeable enough to make well-informed decisions about the environmental and instructional practices for educating ELLs. These principals held the vision and the beliefs to keep the needs of the ELLs front and center in the daily operation of their schools and they valued and integrated the home languages of the students when available. They recognized the need for ongoing substantial connections with the families and the ELL students, and worked to remove barriers to inclusion.

The school principals demonstrated an asset-based orientation towards language and cultural diversity and believed that inclusion benefited the entire school community and supported the needs of the ELLs and their families. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) argued for the need for educational leaders to have practical ideas and strategies for working for equity for all students-especially ELLs.

Differences in the three schools' practices for equity for ELLs. Although the three schools worked towards equity for the ELL students and their families, there were differences in how they managed the day-to-day operations and programs aimed at meeting the needs of their ELLs. One of the characteristics of an equitable environment was inclusivity. All three schools worked to be inclusive of ELLs, but New Roads Middle School did not deliberately make efforts to remove barriers for parents to be included in school events. Turning Point Elementary and Pinedale Elementary Schools provided transportation for students and families to attend the events at the school. New Roads Middle School was inclusive for ELLs in other ways by encouraging ELLs to participate in the sports program and various clubs aimed at building students' sense of belonging at the school. Families at New Roads Middle School were also encouraged to visit the school, but needed to secure their own transportation to the school, if transportation was an issue for the families.

A shared vision and mission among the school community was a characteristic of an equitable environment for ELLs and this was a commonality for the three research settings, but the difference was in the inception of the mission and vision. Turning Point Elementary School's mission and vision was developed and led by the school principal, while the vision and mission of the other two settings were developed collectively with the leadership team. This is not to infer that Turning Point's mission and vision were not widely supported and shared by the staff, but it was clear of who was in charge and the leader of the school.

Professional respect was another characteristic of an equitable environment for ELLs. All of the research participants respected their colleagues and leaders, and there was a sense of community between the participants. In two of the research settings, the school principals esteemed the ESOL teachers so highly that they deferred many decisions regarding ELLs to the ESOL teachers, and lead their staffs to follow this practice as well. On several occasions, the principal at New Roads Middle School referred to the ESOL teacher as “her superman,” and the principal of Pinedale Elementary School followed the lead of the ESOL teacher. In both cases, the ESOL teacher was deemed the expert on matters pertaining to ELLs and the school principal and other teachers acted upon their suggestions and followed their recommendations and decisions. At Turning Point Elementary, the school principal discussed collaborating with the ESOL teachers, but the ultimate decision rested with the principal. He respected the teachers, but the final decisions were his.

Providing access to the curriculum for ELLs was also described as a characteristic of an equitable environment for ELLs, and two of the three research settings practiced this differently than the other setting. During the interviews, the principals at Turning Point Elementary and New Roads Middle School discussed the available data, and their discussions with teachers about improving the outcomes for ELLs and all students. During a data discussion in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, the principal of Turning Point asked teachers “what happened with this group of students?” He monitored the data to assist teachers in analyzing the data to make instructional decisions and provided supports if necessary. The principal at New Roads Middle School

discussed how she strategically used the teaching allotment to provide an extra ESOL teacher for the previous school year to improve the outcomes for the ELLs, and how she monitored the testing data for those students. Both of these principals worked to make sure that the ELLs were being served in their schools and that they supported the teachers' instructional practices. Pinedale Elementary School structured supports for the ELLs in the pullout service model and the ESOL teacher would provide supports to the students in her classroom. The ESOL teacher at Pinedale Elementary also provided professional development to help the teachers meet the needs of the ELLs in their regular classroom since she served the entire school and could not be in every classroom all day long. All three schools provided supports for ELLs to access the curriculum, but the supports varied and were situational to the school environment.

The last characteristic of an equitable environment for ELLs discussed in this study was a culture of trust. A culture of trust and professional respect are closely aligned; however, a culture of trust also includes the students and their families. At Pinedale Elementary School, the principal discussed her longevity at the school and how in the Promising School district that was not the usual practice of the district. The principal, ESOL teacher, and the regular education teacher worked together for the past ten years and the families knew and trusted the teachers in the school. Parents felt comfortable with the decisions the school made about their ELLs due to the reputation the school has in the community. Former parents of ELLs, who have been in the community, act as ambassadors for the principal and ESOL teacher because of their experiences with the school personnel. Not only do the teachers have a professional

respect for one another and have cultivated a trusting environment, the ELL student families within the community also place their trust with the school on the academic decisions for their children.

A review of each school's SIP and the 2013–2014 school report cards also demonstrated differences. In the SIP for Pinedale Elementary and New Roads Middle Schools, there was clear representation from the ESOL teacher. At these two schools, the ESOL teacher had a voice on the leadership team which is the responsible decision making body of the school. Having a voice at the table when decisions are made ensures that all perspectives and students are considered when planning and deciding on the direction of the school. The data from the school report cards from each school demonstrates that there is a performance gap between the performance of 'All' students and the students in the 'LEP' category. This does not directly reflect on the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of the practices the school principal, ESOL teacher, and the regular education use to meet the academic needs of the newly arrived ELLs in their schools. As discussed in Chapter I, it can take years for ELL students to become proficient in academic language and policies surrounding the state assessments do not account for the time it takes for students to be ready to perform on the assessments.

Between the three schools, there were subtle differences in the way each environment worked for equity for their ELLs. Some of the differences could be due to the geographical location of the school within the district; the close proximity to the public transportation system, and other differences could be attributed to the financial resources available to the school. All in all the three environments recommended by

district level personnel were striving for equity for their ELLs and the improved outcomes for all students. Although, the outcome of this study highlights the characteristics and practices of three schools working to create equitable environments for ELLs, the study does have limitations. From the analysis of the comparison of the data from the three sites, I identified four themes which are described in the next section.

Themes from the Data

I identified four themes from the analysis of the comparisons and the interesting and unique information from data collection and the document review. Using a combination of the seven threads and the interesting information the participants shared that did not fit into one of the seven threads, I found that the four themes recur at each site, and was expressed by one or more of the participants at each site. The four themes are:

- Developing a sense of belonging for ELLs and their families
- Cultivating professional relationships and support throughout the community
- Increasing access to resources for ELLs and their families
- Advancing the sense of empowerment for ELLs and their families

Sense of Belonging

Inclusion, community of care, and a shared mission and vision were characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and contribute to the sense of belonging for ELLs and their families. As the school level participants shared during the data collection process, they worked to make the recently arrived families feel welcomed and a part of the school community. Findings from the study conducted by Klar and

Brewer (2013) revealed that schools which create a sense of belonging for students and families is imperative to improve the outcomes for students.

ELL students needed to feel a sense of belonging in their environment. A sense of belonging will positively impact the climate and culture of the school, promote an environment that will encourage academic growth, and positively impact the outcomes for all students. To promote a sense of belonging the staff at each school worked to make the schools welcoming and inviting places. There was an effort by the district to provide diverse candidates for principals to interview and hire so that students could see someone that looks like them in the buildings. School principals worked to remove barriers which hindered parent participation in school activities by providing transportation. School principals and educators that encourage a sense of belonging and community reap the benefits of their work. This suggests that educators should deliberately and intentionally work to foster inclusive learning environments.

There was a shared mission and vision that helped to cultivate a sense of trust and belonging. The schools worked to have staff members who could communicate with parents and translate various school documents in the first language of the students and families. School principals and their staffs worked to ensure that parents felt welcomed by treating them like they belonged and were welcomed in the schools. Parents were invited and included to participate and lead school activities. As noted by Saifer et al. (2011) home-school relationships improve when ELL students and their families feel connected to the school and are valued. Students begin to see the purpose for learning and are compelled to engage in the learning process.

Professional Relationships and Support

Professional respect between educators and a culture of trust were characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and are essential to the improved outcomes and academic, emotional, and social supports for ELLs and their families. As the school level participants shared during the data collection process, they collaborated to share instructional practices, met during Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to discuss the available data, and collaborated to support the ELL students during the language acquisition process. Educators also shared how they socially and emotionally supported ELL students outside of the classroom. The professional respect and supportive environments are representative of a positive school culture. Authors Schulz et al. (2014) suggest that the byproduct of positive school climates and positive relationships is increased student academic success. Data collected from this study highlight how the teachers supported the mission and vision set forth by the school principal and leadership team of each school. Teachers often discussed how they knew that if they had a concern or problem with an ELL student that they could seek the assistance of the ESOL teacher and school principal.

The culture of trust each educator demonstrated for one another helped to promote a professional relationship that could focus on student needs and growth. The professional relationships promoted an environment in which the students could learn and grow. On numerous occasions, the school principals deferred decisions pertaining to ELLs to the ESOL teacher, and asked other teachers to observe the 'expert' in the building. The ESOL teachers provided professional development sessions for the entire

school to help the entire staff work to improve the outcomes for the ELLs. The school principals supported the teachers by giving the teachers latitude to try new ideas in their classrooms. The study conducted by Elfers and Stritikus (2014) concluded that when school principals and teachers to become learners along with their students increased the overall learning for teachers and students. Student outcomes were positively impacted when school principals deliberately worked to support teacher development in the area of providing instruction to ELLs.

Access

Access to resources, access to the curriculum, community of care, and a culture of trust were characteristics of an equitable environment for ELLs and contribute to the access to supports for ELLs and their families. As the school level participants shared during the data collection process, they worked to provide access to the available resources in the school and community for ELLs and their families, as well as the work the educators did to support the access to the curriculum. ELLs and all students need to feel cared for and to develop a sense of trust in the educators to increase the chances of improving their outcomes. The Klar and Brewer (2013) study revealed that when school principals garnered the support of the community at large and used that support to meet the needs of the students and their families that a strong sense of community emerged. Students and families were more engaged in the learning process, which improved the outcomes for students.

As shared by the school level participants in this study, school principals and their staffs worked to provide access to institutional supports, community supports, and the

school principals made personal efforts to ensure that students' needs were met. At the district level, the Director worked to ensure that all ESOL teachers had access to the instructional framework SIOP, which supports ELLs academically. School principals ensured that teachers had the tools they needed to support the learning of students. The Elfers and Stritikus (2014) study uncovered how four principals worked to provide access to the available resources and the curriculum to the ELL students and their families and fostered a learning environment for teachers and students alike to improve the outcomes for ELL students. By ensuring that the teachers had the tools they needed to provide an optimal academic experience for the students, the outcomes for students could be improved.

Students were provided access to the curriculum by their teachers so that their learning was supported and their outcomes could improve. School principals and teachers also ensured that families had access to the school environment and activities by removing transportation barriers and linguistic diversity barriers.

Empowerment

A final theme I identified from the seven threads, the interesting information, and the document review was empowerment. The empowerment theme could encompass two other themes, sense of belonging and access to resources and supports, but I discussed this theme separately. I chose to discuss this theme separately because of its importance to this study and the recently arrived ELLs and their families. The background information discussed in Chapter I discussed how recently resettled ELLs and their families may have experienced traumatic situations that were out of their control, and

may feel a sense of powerlessness and despair. Environments that are inclusive, caring, and supportive of the needs of ELLs and their families promote and foster a sense of empowerment. Findings from the Reyes and Garcia (2014) study showed that when parents of ELL students are empowered to be included in the education process of their children, that student performance and achievement improve and the outcomes for students are enriched.

Access to resources and the curriculum promotes and empowers students to be active participants in their learning. When educators support ELL student's access to literacy skills and the curriculum, they are actually providing the students with the access to power and privilege to improve their outcomes and improving the options the students will have in the future (Beers, 2003). Literacy rates are used as predictor measures for the outcomes of many students. Educators who promote and support students' access to resources and the curriculum help to improve the outcomes for students, and empower students to take charge of their futures.

The interesting information shared by the educators in this study discussed how students were empowered to take responsibility for their learning when they were provided access to the curriculum and other resources that met their needs. Parents felt a sense of empowerment when they were asked to lead activities throughout the school, and were made to feel welcomed in the school environment. Parents were encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with the school, and to participate in the school, which promotes a sense of belonging and adds value to the lives of the parents and the school.

Teachers were empowered to ask questions and to seek assistance to provide them with the tools they needed to improve the teaching and learning process for themselves and their students. Teachers were encouraged to share their knowledge with their colleagues which helped to promote a sense of acknowledgement and value for the teachers. A component of the SIOP framework empowers teachers with the knowledge and skills to provide an optimal education experience for ELLs, and gives the teacher a vehicle to improve their instructional practices (Echevarria et al., 2008). Principals empowered the school community by valuing the input of the students and their families, the teachers, and the community. Principals empowered themselves to be advocates for their schools and to take ownership of the outcomes for all students.

Research Questions Answered

The two research questions which guided this study are:

1. What are the characteristics of equitable environments for new to the country ELL students?
2. What strategies and practices do school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ when planning to an equitable school environment for ELLs?

As described in this study, the characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs are inclusive and welcoming to all families, and the students have a sense of belonging in the learning environment and throughout the school. In a study, Reyes and Garcia (2014) made known the importance of parents being engaged in the education of their children and the positive impact their involvement had on student achievement. Equitable schools

demonstrate care and concern by insuring the students are successful and that the families and students have opportunities to reach their desired outcomes. Equitable environments also have a shared vision and mission, which begins with the school leadership and permeates to all of the school community. As noted in the Klar and Brewer (2013) study, an inclusive environment promotes success for ELL students.

Professional respect is present between the school principal, teachers, and all school personnel in equitable school environments. The longitudinal study conducted by Reyes and Garcia (2014) found that student outcomes and achievement improved when the staff was transformed into a professional learning community focused on one goal, and working collaboratively as a staff treating each other with dignity and respect. The shared vision and mission of the school started with the school principal. The school principal communicated the vision and the mission to the teachers and staff of their schools, and each principal was sure to hire a teaching staff that shared the same vision and mission. Findings from the Reyes and Garcia (2014) study found that outcomes for ELLs improved when one mission and vision served as a guide for the school. In this study, one principal was assigned to the same school for ten years, the ESOL teacher worked at the school for fourteen years, and the regular education teacher worked at the same school for 20 years. The longevity of the teaching staff at the school helped to maintain a long term vision and mission, which allowed time for the cultivation and maturation of the vision and mission. Stability is beneficial for ELL students who have experienced instability in their home environments and are new to the learning environment.

Equitable school environments also provide access to resources, internal and external, for all families and recognize that families and students have different barriers that hinder them from fully being a part of the school and the school personnel work to remove or alleviate the impact of the barriers for families and students. Research conducted by Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) reported that ELLs thrive in an environment that is inclusive for the entire community, including parents, teachers, and the community at large, and when school leaders value and respect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the school. Access to the curriculum is another descriptor of equitable environments where ESOL teachers and regular education teachers use inclusive strategies such as, scaffolding, visual aids, and peer or partner supports in the classroom to provide supports for ELLs and student learning in the classroom. In the Lee and Walsh (2015/2016) study, the authors report that ELLs should receive academic instruction that is rigorous, and provides the learners with the opportunity to acquire English while in a supportive learning environment.

Lastly, a culture of trust was the foundation of an equitable environment for ELLs. Depending on the background information available to the school, the school principal and educators must be aware of the experiences of the newly arrived families and their home countries education system and government. Han and Love (2015/2016) state,

To develop effective practice and services that help immigrant parents acculturate into the dynamic United States education system, educators must first understand the needs of parents and with that knowledge, schools and districts can develop programs and services to meet the basic needs of the parents and build trusting

relationships where parents are equipped and empowered to become leaders in their school community. (p. 23)

The newly arrived ELL students and their families may have limited trust in governmental systems due to the negative operation of systems in their home countries, and fostering a culture of trust helps to remove obstacles that hinder the development of a sense of community.

As described in this study, some strategies educators use to create an equitable environment for ELLs include strategies for inclusion and empowerment in the school community were to greet every family at the entrance of the school during special events, invite parents to plan the annual festival, and ensure that the school provided the necessary materials for their part in the annual festival. Strategies to demonstrate care for students and families in this study were to meet basic needs of students by providing shoes, clothes, and other basic items. Care was also demonstrated by educators' involvement outside of the school day with the students and their families by taking an interest in the students' extra-curricular activities. A strategy showcasing professional respect was to ensure that the ESOL teachers had a voice on the leadership team, and when decisions were made about ELLs, the ESOL teachers were consulted as the experts. In some cases, decisions pertaining to ELLs were left solely to the ESOL teachers, and the principals supported the decisions the ESOL teachers recommended.

Strategies to ensure access to resources were demonstrated by providing transportation to school events for parents who did not have access to transportation. Another school principal provided access to the clubs and extra-curricular activities at the

school for the ELLs and encouraged their participation by providing communication about afterschool transportation in languages the parents could understand. In this study, one ESOL teacher held programs and summer programs in the communities where the students lived. Strategies to provide access to the curriculum were described by school principals when they supported teachers in the use of data to drive and support the instructional practices of the ESOL and the regular education teachers in their schools. School principals also addressed the academic needs of the ELLs in their schools by providing appropriate resources and materials for the ELL students to access the curriculum; and by strategically designing inclusion or pullout classes to support the ELLs in the classroom.

The district's ESOL Department required all ESOL teachers to attend district level professional development and school principals encouraged and supported teacher participation to enhance and improve the instructional practices of the ESOL teachers. Strategies for creating a culture of trust revolved around communication from home to school. Two educators reported going to the homes of their students and meeting with the families to build relationships with the families. Another strategy educators used to cultivate trust in their schools was to have meetings and other programs in the communities where the students lived.

Implications for Creating Equitable Environments for ELLs

This study offers reflection on the characteristics and strategies of educators working for equitable environments for ELLs. I believe that sharing strategies across the district will help improve the outcomes for ELLs since historically ELLs have been

identified as a group that does not have the same proficiency levels on state assessments as their English speaking peers. I believe that ELL students, who have experienced interruptions to their education, need additional supports to help them improve the educational outcomes and proficiency levels. Creating equitable environments for ELLs will address and help to improve the outcomes for ELLs. At the start of this study, the Director of the ESOL program for Promising County Schools shared her insights about the characteristics of equitable environments for ELLs. Her insights about equitable environments for ELLs revealed seven threads:

- Inclusive environments for ELLs
- Care and concern for ELLs
- Shared vision for learning
- Professional respect for colleagues and students
- Equity in access to resources
- Equity in access to the curriculum for ELLs
- Cultivation of a trusting environment

Throughout the interviews, the school principal, ESOL teacher, and regular education teacher from each school discussed the ways they worked for equity for the ELLs enrolled at their school sites. From the literature and the data from the interviews, four themes emerged from the data. The four themes that developed from a synthesis of the literature and the collected data are:

- Developing a sense of belonging for ELLs and their families
- Cultivating professional relationships and support throughout the community

- Increasing access to resources for ELLs and their families
- Advancing the sense of empowerment for ELLs and their families.

I believe that all schools can be equitable environments for ELLs and can work to improve the outcomes for all students. By deliberately and intentionally providing the necessary supports for ELLs and their families, schools can begin to address the needs of the students and their families. The studies of Elfers and Stritikus (2014), Fairbairn and Jones-Vo (2010); Han and Love (2015/2016), Igoa (1995), Klar and Brewer (2013), Lee and Walsh (2015/2016), Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015), Reyes and Garcia (2014), Saavedra (2015/2016), Saifer et al. (2011), Schulz et al. (2014), and Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) highlight the efforts and strategies used by educators working for equity for ELLs. The data collected from the Director of the ESOL program for the district and other participants showcase the equity efforts made by the educators in this study.

Compiling the information from the literature, data collection, and personal experience has helped to shape my understanding of the characteristics and strategies that should be used to create equitable environments for ELLs. When planning to create an equitable environment, educators should develop and cultivate an environment that fosters a sense of belonging for ELLs and their families, and ensure that cultural and linguistic diversity is respected and valued. Of most importance to a sense of belonging is the cultivation of trusting relationships between the families of the ELL students and the school. Educators should account for the strengths ELLs and their families have, capitalize on those strengths, and look for ways that ELLs and their families can become engaged in the school and community. Educators in equitable environments demonstrate

respect for their colleagues and work collaboratively to support student learning and other needs. The school community shares a singular mission and vision about the work of educating ELLs and all students. In equitable environments, educators should use the available data to make instructional decisions to support the learning of ELLs, and then provide the tools teachers need to begin the work of improving the outcomes for ELLs and all students. Educators working for equity should leverage community supports to provide access to resources that are available, and use available human and capital resources to provide access to the curriculum and to support communication throughout the school community.

Synthesizing the literature and the data from the study participants, I offer the following strategies for school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers in their work in the creation of equitable environments for ELLs. The following strategies should be given strong consideration when creating and planning for an equitable environment for ELLs:

- Inclusive environments- sense of belonging
 - Principals need to deliberately invite and include ELLs and their families to the leadership team of the school.
 - Principals need to include provisions in the budget for transportation to school events for families.
 - Educators can ensure that communication is in a form that is understandable to all parents.

- School educators can work with parents and families to showcase and demonstrate the value that they bring to the school community.
- Principals can ensure to hire staff that represents the school population.
- Communicate the shared vision and mission of the school.
- Post the mission and vision of the school in different languages to promote communication and inclusiveness.
- Purposefully communicate how parents can participate in the school.
- Professional relationships and support
 - Explicitly communicate the goals of the school.
 - Explicitly work to promote a culture of trusting environment.
 - Acknowledge and support new ideas and strategies.
 - Work to build community partnerships to provide the basic needs for students and their families.
 - Principals can provide instructional leadership during PLC meetings to provide direction and support to teachers for improving the outcomes for ELLs.
 - ESOL and regular education teachers should review the available data and strategize about how to positively improve the outcomes for the ELLs in their classrooms.
- Access
 - Principals can strategically and deliberately differentiate the structure of the service models for ELLs.

- Newer students requiring more supports have more contact with the ESOL teachers.
- School communities can provide materials in various languages.
- Principals should develop surveys in various languages.

The more deliberate the planning for opportunities for supporting and inclusion of ELLs and their families by educators, the likelihood of improving their outcomes increases.

Limitations

All research studies have limitations and offer opportunities for additional research. My research study has limitations and offers opportunities for additional research. One limitation is the sample size. The sample size for this study was three schools within the district, and included only one secondary level school. The three schools were recommended by the Director of the ESOL program for the district. The schools were purposefully selected upon the recommendation of district level personnel. According to Patton (2003), qualitative studies often have small sample sizes that are deliberately selected. The purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics of equitable school environments and to discuss the practices of personnel at schools with equitable environments for ELLs. Although other schools in the district may be working to create equitable environments for ELLs, this study relays the work of three school principals, their ESOL teachers, and three regular education teachers.

Finally, all participants were willing and agreeable to take part in the study. However, one participant participated at the request of her principal and this could have impacted her answers to the questions. The ESOL teacher participants were aware of the

position I held as the researcher, and this could have impacted the answers they provided to the questions during the interviews. Even though the sample size was small there are important characteristics and strategies for creating equitable environments for ELLs which can be useful in educational environments and school practices.

Further Research Opportunities

ELLs will continue to enroll into American schools and the schools will continue to be responsible for improving their academic outcomes. There are many aspects of equity for ELLs that can be examined further, and there are additional questions to be asked. As described by the participants in this study, equitable environments require proper and deliberate planning by school personnel. Some environments may be more equitable for ELLs, so further research that determines their effectiveness is an opportunity for further research. More specifically, what inclusion strategies are most effective in creating equitable environments for ELLs? At Turning Point Elementary, transportation was provided for parents to attend school events, would this service increase parent presence and participation at the middle school. Communication in languages that parents can understand increases inclusion. An additional research opportunity is to gauge the effectiveness of the forms of communication with the language diverse population and to determine the impact of communication on the outcomes of student performance and achievement.

Families and guardians influence student achievement levels. Examining how parents engage with the school is an opportunity for further research. Parents were not included in this study; a further research opportunity would be to find out how parents

view equity and their perspective on how schools are doing in creating equitable environments for their children.

Students were not included in this study. A further opportunity for research would be to ask ELL students about their needs to improve their individual outcomes and to create equitable environments and how schools can personalize the supports they provide.

Lastly, expanding the research to include more research sites throughout the county, in neighboring counties, across the state, and even the nation would allow the results of additional studies to be generalized is also an additional opportunity for research and further study.

Researcher's Final Thoughts

I began this research process hoping to solve all the problems in education when it pertained to ELLs. I found out, not so quickly, that there is no magic wand or silver bullet to “fix” the issues surrounding meeting the needs of ELLs in American schools. One thing that continues to surface is that ELL students need time and support. Throughout the research process, I waited anxiously to hear one thing that would be the ‘cure’ for the ills ELLs face in the American education system. Instead of just one thing, I heard several impactful things from all of the educators involved in this study. I had the opportunity to listen to dedicated educators willing to do whatever they could to make it easier for the students in their schools and classrooms. I learned about the school principals who ensures that the environment is welcoming and supportive of the newly arrived ELLs, and how he greets them and their families at special school events. I learned how another school principal helps all students realize that they are all talented at

something and they need to showcase their talents, because they are more than just a data point on a state assessment. I learned that there are ESOL teachers who have become the only person the ELL student may have in their corner advocating for them in schools. I learned that there are ESOL teachers who spend the majority of their time working with students and their families' afterschool and during the summer months to make sure the students are prepared for the upcoming school year. I also learned that there are regular education teachers with hearts of gold, who are willing to make sure each child feels loved and cared for in their classrooms. I learned that teachers will make sure that they find opportunities for students to share regardless of their language or ability levels.

As I analyzed the data from the available documents and the interviews, the data aligned to what the research says about equitable environments and the practices educators use to work towards equity. The characteristics were identified, and the data from the interviews aligned with the conceptual framework. This study was one that provided insights into practices school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to create equitable environments. This study provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their practices, and the opportunity for me to draw conclusions about what characteristics make their environments equitable. It is not just one thing that the educators do to create equity; instead it is all things working in unison that creates the synergy needed to accomplish the goal of equity for every student.

A magic wand or silver bullet does not exist to fix the challenges many of the ELLs face in American schools, nor does one exist for teachers and educators to use to fix the students. Instead of putting energy into finding a quick fix, the energy should be

directed into ensuring that every school is an inclusive environment-not just surface level inclusion- but true inclusion; where every student is considered and feels a part of something important. Our work should focus on creating school environments filled with people who demonstrate care for others and who are interested in building a culture of trust within our school communities. As educators, we should show professional respect for our colleagues and the educational community. There is enough opposition to public education, and as a system we should show the respect for educators so that one day it will transfer to those outside of the field of education.

This research opportunity met my goals as a continuous lifelong learner. The process helped to expand my knowledge of ELLs and ESOL teachers. Talking to other ESOL teachers allowed me to bring ideas back to my current staff and faculty to help us in our endeavors to provide the best learning experience for the students enrolled in my school. At times, school principals are challenged to overcome limited budgetary resources and the use of personnel allotments to make their schools operate effectively, and equity may take a back burner. Throughout this process, there were numerous occasions where my thoughts were consumed with questions, and I eventually could not think of any additional questions.

Based on subsequent unrelated interactions with the participants of this study, I believe they found their participation in this study beneficial and rewarding for them. Each interaction, ended with the participants asking if I needed anything else from them for this study and a smile. I have expanded my knowledge about ELLs and the educators

working for equity for them. This has been a rewarding process and I am a better educator for having gone through this process.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENTS AND APPROVALS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: School leadership in the accountability age for English Language Learners (ELLs).

Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor (if applicable): Candice Bailey and Dr. Carl Lashley

Participant's Name: ESL Director, School leaders, educators and ESL educators

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. There may not be any direct benefit to you for being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

What is the study about?

This is a research project. Your participation is voluntary. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the Inter-state School Leadership Licensure Consortium standards influence school leadership for English Language Learners (ELLs). As well as the support, practices, and strategies used to provide an equitable environment for (ELLs) in your classrooms and schools.

Why are you asking me?

The reason for selecting the participant to be included in this study is because as the Director for ESL for the entire school district, you have insight and expertise into the school environments which support ELLs and the strategies and practices school leaders use to create equity for all students. School leaders will be selected after the interview with the Director of the ESL program of the host district. ESOL teachers and regular education teachers will be selected from the schools in which the school principal was interviewed to gain additional data about the instructional practices and strategies in place to support an equitable environment for all ELLs.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

During the research study, you (ESL Director and School leaders) will be interviewed in a one on one setting, and the ESOL teachers and regular education teachers will be interviewed in a group. Through the interview questions, I will ask general information about your career in education, how you view teaching English Language Learners, instructional strategies you use with English Language Learners, and how you provide an equitable environment for the English Language Learners in your school. The interviews will be recorded and should last about one hour. At the conclusion of the interviews, the interviews will be transcribed and returned to you to ensure accuracy. The possibility for stress, pain (physical, psychological or emotional), or any other unpleasant reaction is very unlikely. Should you

Approved IRB
5/29/15

your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Candice Bailey.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Approved IRB
5/29/15

June 2, 2015

Candice Bailey
[REDACTED]

Re: 141542

Dear Candice Bailey:

The [REDACTED] Schools Research Review committee has concluded that your proposal *Principal Leadership and English Language Learners in the Accountability Age* meets the requirements of state legislation and the current research policy of [REDACTED] Schools.

Committee approval does not guarantee access to schools or to individuals, nor does it imply that a study can or will be conducted. School- and district-level employees decide independently whether they wish to participate and they may withdraw at any time. The committee expects that the identities of individuals, schools, and the district will remain anonymous throughout all stages of the project and thereafter.

Research activities cannot be conducted during the End-of-Grade or End-of-Course testing windows. Interviews must be conducted outside the instructional day.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Co-Chair, Research Review Committee



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 Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #216

To: Candice Bailey
 Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found
 [REDACTED]

From: UNCG IRB

Date: 6/03/2015

RE: Notice of IRB Exemption

Exemption Category: 4.Existing data, public or deidentified,2.Survey, interview, public observation

Study #: 15-0045

Study Title: School leadership in the accountability age for English Language Learners (ELLs).

This submission has been reviewed by the IRB and was determined to be exempt from further review according to the regulatory category cited above under 45 CFR 46.101(b).

Study Description:

My comparative case study investigates the practices school leaders, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, and regular education teachers use when planning and providing instruction to ELLs. I will interview the Director of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program from the host school district, school principals, ESL teachers, and regular education teachers from various schools within a school district to find out what practice are in place which are in alignment with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards.

Modification Information:

- The host district has approved for me to conduct my study within the district. The host district will be Guilford County Schools. See attached letter from Guilford County Schools Research Review Committee (RRC).

Investigator's Responsibilities

Please be aware that any changes to your protocol must be reviewed by the IRB prior to being implemented. Please utilize the most recent and approved version of your consent form/information sheet when enrolling participants. The IRB will maintain records for this study for three years from the date of the original determination of exempt status.

Signed letters, along with stamped copies of consent forms and other recruitment materials will be scanned to you in a separate email. **Stamped consent forms must be used unless the IRB has given you approval to waive this requirement.** Please notify the ORI office immediately if you have an issue with the stamped consents forms.

Please be aware that valid human subjects training and signed statements of confidentiality for all members of research

team need to be kept on file with the lead investigator. Please note that you will also need to remain in compliance with the university "Access To and Retention of Research Data" Policy which can be found at http://policy.uncg.edu/research_data/.

CC:

Carl Lashley, Ed Ldrship and Cultural Found

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

The Interview Protocol

My desire is to provide insight into how school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers create equitable school environments for all students- especially ELLs. The central research questions guiding this comparative case study are:

1. What are the characteristics of an equitable environment for recently arrived English Language Learning students?
2. What practices do school principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers employ when planning for an equitable school environment for recently arrived ELLs?

Interview questions have been developed for the Director of the ESL program to inquire about the characteristics of the most inclusive environments. School principal, ESOL teacher, and regular education teacher questions inquire about the practices they use to address notions of equity for ELLs. The interview questions are focused on the general information level, collaboration by educators, cultural responsiveness, and practices educators use to promote equity. Questions have been designed to gain information about the practices the principals, ESOL teachers, and regular education teachers use to support the recently resettled ELL students enrolled in their schools.

ESL Director Participant general background information:

1. How long have you been in education?
2. How long have you been in your current position? What other leadership experiences have you had?
3. Currently, what are the total and the demographic breakdown of your staff population?
4. In total, how many ESOL educators work in this district?

Study-specific questions for the ESOL Director:

1. Tell me about working with principals in the district in relation to working with ELLs.
2. Tell me about the importance of the leadership of the school working collaboratively with the ESOL teachers in schools.
3. Provide specific examples of school principals demonstrating equity in their school environments when they work on behalf of ELL students.
4. Provide specific examples where school principals have encouraged participation of all ELL students in school programs.
5. Tell me about school principals who promote an inclusive school climate throughout the district.
6. Are some environments more equitable for ELLs? If so, what makes them more equitable than others? Please name the environments and what makes them more equitable.

School Leader participant general background information:

1. How long have you been in education?
2. How long have you been in your current position? What other leadership experiences have you had?
3. Currently, what are the total and the demographic breakdown of your student population? Staff population?
4. How many ESOL educators work together?

Study-specific questions for the school principals:

1. What are your experiences with ESOL students?
2. How do you define equity for your LEP students?
3. What led you to structure the classes for the ELL students in the manner you described?
4. Discuss equity and how it impacts the decisions you make pertaining to ELLs.
5. Discuss cultural identity and being a culturally responsive educator.
6. Tell me about how you support the ELLs in your school.
7. As a school leader, what practices do you encourage to stay focused on students' growth and development as well as monitoring the data from formal and informal assessments?
8. What professional development have you scheduled or arranged for your staff to address the needs of ELLs? What was the purpose of the staff development-the desired outcome?

9. In regards to your ELL students, how do you coach teachers in balancing the developmental readiness of the students and the grade level expectations?
10. Referring to your ELL students, how do you plan to make the learning environment nurturing while building self-reliance in the age of accountability?
11. What resources are available to support the ELLs in your building?
12. What practices do you encourage teachers to use to address individual needs of all students?
13. How do you encourage teachers to address the cultural, academic and psychological needs of your ELL students?

ESOL and Regular Education Teacher participant questions:

1. How long have you been in education?
2. How long have you been in your current position? What other teaching experiences have you had?

Study-specific questions for teachers:

1. What are your experiences with ESOL students?
2. How do you define equity for your LEP students, how are the classes structured?
3. Discuss cultural identity and being a culturally responsive educator.
4. Tell me about how your principal supports you and the ELLs in your school.
5. What professional development have you participated in to address the needs of ELLs? What was the outcome?

6. Referring to your ELL students, how do you make the learning environment nurturing while building self-reliance in the age of accountability?
7. What resources are available to support the ELLs in your building?
8. How do you address the cultural, academic, and psychological needs of your ELL students?