

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF HIGH SCHOOL ELLS: WHAT WORKS AND HOW  
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS ALIGN RESOURCES AND BEST  
PRACTICES TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS**

**A Doctoral Research Project**

**Presented to**

**Assistant Professor, Robert J. Reidy, Jr., Ph.D.**

**Doctoral Committee Chair**

**The Esteves School of Education**

**The Sage Colleges**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the**

**Requirements for the**

**Degree of Doctor of Education**

**In Educational Leadership**

**Melody Kellogg**

**November, 2017**

**MEETING THE NEEDS OF HIGH SCHOOL ELLS: WHAT WORKS AND HOW  
SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS ALIGN RESOURCES AND BEST  
PRACTICES TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS?**

We represent to Sage Graduate School that this thesis/dissertation and abstract are the original work of the author(s) and do not infringe on the copyrights or other rights of others.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DD 11/22/2017

Melody Kellogg

Date of Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
11/22/17

Robert Reidy, Ph.D.

Date of Signature

Assistant Professor of Education

Doctoral Research Committee Chair

© 2017 Melody Kellogg

All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a result of the efforts and support I have received from a number of individuals. I first thank Dr. Robert Reidy, without whose support I would not have completed this dissertation. Not only did you spend countless hours working with me on revisions, you also knew when to push me, when to give me space, and most importantly when to be there when I faltered and needed your help. Your expertise, guidance, and support have been invaluable and I am eternally grateful to have had you as my chair. I want to thank Dr. Zakierski for her continued support and direction during the course of my time at Sage and with this dissertation. Your feedback and knowledge have been instrumental in my ability to present this work. I sincerely thank you for your support, your tireless effort, and for being someone I knew I could count on. I thank Dr. Castillo for taking on the task of being my third reader. Knowing the work you do and the commitment you have to ELLs set a standard for me as I engaged with this work.

I want to express my gratitude to the educators that participated in this study. You all gave your time and shared your knowledge. Having the opportunity to engage in the interview process with each of you has not only made this work possible, but has been an amazing learning process. I thank you all for sharing your expertise and making me a better educator through your shared knowledge.

This dissertation has been a time consuming process and one that would not have occurred without the support of my family. I know you all have taken up the “slack” for me on the home front and despite the extra work have continually encouraged and supported me. Tina, as always, you are my rock and my foundation without which I would never have had the courage to begin or finish this process. I thank you with all my heart. I also thank Dr. Joel

Heckethorn for being my partner throughout this process. You were the reason I began this program and my constant companion throughout this process. You inspired me, supported me, and challenged my thinking. I am extremely blessed to have you as a friend and colleague.

Finally, I want to thank my husband. You have been in this process with me since the beginning. You helped me frame my thoughts. You read and proofed my work (over and over). You listened to my complaints and frustrations and always keep me grounded, despite way to much coffee and lack of sleep. I would not have completed this dissertation without you being there for me. I am exceptionally grateful for you and for you “hanging in there” with me.

## **ABSTRACT**

# **MEETING THE NEEDS OF HIGH SCHOOL ELLS: WHAT WORKS AND HOW SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS ALIGN RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS?**

Melody Kellogg, Doctoral Candidate

The Sage Colleges, Esteves School of Education, 2017

Dissertation Chair: Robert J. Reidy, Jr., Ph.D.

Fairness in educational structures, identified as a major aspect of educational equity means that on a fundamental level all students receive the resources they need to graduate and be prepared for success in their post high school endeavors. Simply put, such educational equity is not occurring for English language learners. In the United States, national achievement data evidence substantial disparities between the performance of ELL and non-ELL students.

Through the use of qualitative methodology, this study documented practices of multiple high schools in a single large urban school district specific to high school English as second language students (ELLs). The research examined infrastructures in high schools as a mechanism for defining consistent practices for ELL learning, and consequently examined relationships that exist between school structures, school models, and administrative beliefs. The researcher also examined NYC school achievement data.

Findings indicated that model hybridization is occurring in response to the diversity of ELLs entering the systems and interviewees indicated that for older entry ELL students with

limited language, English only models were the favored instructional choice. Findings indicated that a core of practices were consistent across all schools and that belief systems are a primary motivator in decision-making surrounding choice of instructional models and infrastructure supports. Findings also indicated success in ELL instruction is not determined by a singular item but rather a composite of aligned education practices coupled with multiple support services resulting in a holistic methodology of targeted ELL instruction.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS                 | iii |
| ABSTRACT                         | v   |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS                | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES       | xiv |
| CHAPTER ONE                      | 1   |
| INTRODUCTION                     | 1   |
| Overview of the Problem          | 1   |
| Statement of the Problem         | 2   |
| Conceptual Framework/Assumptions | 3   |
| Research Questions               | 5   |
| Significance of the Study        | 7   |
| Definition of Terms              | 11  |
| Scope of the Study               | 13  |
| Limitations of the Study         | 13  |
| Delimitations of the Study       | 14  |
| Organization of the Study        | 14  |
| CHAPTER TWO                      | 16  |
| LITERATURE REVIEW                | 16  |

|   |      |
|---|------|
|   | viii |
| Introduction  | 16   |
| Historical Perspective  | 19   |
| Models of Instruction and Need Alignment for Secondary English Language Learners      | 23   |
| Professional Development and its Role in Instructional Outcomes                       | 30   |
| Parent Support Services and their Role in Instructional Outcomes for English Language | 34   |
| Supplemental Student Services as Educational Supports                                 | 36   |
| Belief Systems  | 41   |
| Summary   | 44   |
| CHAPTER THREE   | 45   |
| METHODOLOGY   | 45   |
| Introduction  | 45   |
| Research Design   | 46   |
| Sample and Sampling Procedures  | 48   |
| Instrumentation   | 49   |
| Data Collection   | 50   |
| Data Analysis   | 52   |
| Reliability and Validity  | 53   |
| Bias Reduction  | 54   |
| Summary   | 54   |
| CHAPTER FOUR  | 55   |
| PARTICIPANT RESPONSES AND THEMES  | 55   |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction  | 55 |
| Purpose of the Study  | 55 |
| Participant Demographics  | 57 |
| Research Question One   | 60 |
| What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students? | 60 |
| Theme 1.  | 62 |
| Theme 2.  | 67 |
| Theme 3.  | 74 |
| Research Question Two   | 79 |
| What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?              | 79 |
| Parent Engagement   | 80 |
| Theme 1.  | 81 |
| Theme 2.  | 83 |
| Theme 3.  | 85 |
| Theme 4.  | 86 |
| Supplemental Student Support Services   | 87 |
| Theme 1.  | 88 |
| Theme 2.  | 89 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
|   | x   |
| Theme 3.  | 91  |
| Professional Development  | 95  |
| Theme 1.  | 96  |
| Theme 2.  | 97  |
| Theme 3.  | 99  |
| Research Question Three   | 102 |
| What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and<br>how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success? | 102 |
| Theme 1.  | 103 |
| Theme 2.  | 108 |
| Theme 3.  | 114 |
| Document Review   | 116 |
| Research Question One   | 117 |
| Research Question Two   | 119 |
| Summary   | 119 |
| CHAPTER FIVE  | 120 |
| SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS   | 120 |
| Introduction  | 120 |
| Research Questions  | 122 |
| Summary of Findings   | 123 |
| Research Question One   | 122 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students? | 122 |
| Research question one, finding one.   | 123 |
| Research question one, finding two.   | 124 |
| Research question one, finding three.   | 125 |
| Research Question Two   | 125 |
| What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary EL students?               | 125 |
| Parent Engagement   | 125 |
| Research question two, finding one.   | 125 |
| Research question two, finding two.   | 126 |
| Research question two, finding three.   | 126 |
| Research question two, finding four.  | 127 |
| Supplemental Student Support Services   | 128 |
| Research question two, finding one.   | 128 |
| Research question two, finding two.   | 128 |
| Research question two, finding three.   | 129 |
| Professional Development  | 130 |
| Research question two, finding one.   | 130 |
| Research question two, finding two  | 130 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Research question two, finding three.  | 130 |
| Research Questions Three   | 131 |
| What commonality exists in beliefs systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?                                    | 131 |
| Research question three, finding one   | 132 |
| Research question three, finding two   | 132 |
| Research question three, finding three   | 132 |
| Conclusions  | 133 |
| Research Question One  | 133 |
| What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELLstudents? | 133 |
| Research Question Two  | 135 |
| What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary EL students?              | 135 |
| Research Question Three  | 138 |
| What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?                                     | 138 |
| Recommendations  | 139 |
| Recommendation One   | 140 |
| Recommendation Two   | 141 |
| Recommendation Three   | 141 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Recommendation Four                              | 142 |
| Recommendation Five                              | 143 |
| Recommendations for Further Study                | 144 |
| Recommendation One                               | 144 |
| Recommendation Two                               | 145 |
| Recommendation Three                             | 145 |
| Closing Statement                                | 146 |
| REFERENCES                                       | 147 |
| APPENDICES                                       | 160 |
| APPENDIX A                                       | 160 |
| Letter of Introduction to Potential Participants | 160 |
| APPENDIX B                                       | 163 |
| Interview Questions                              | 163 |
| APPENDIX C                                       | 165 |
| Informed Consent Form                            | 165 |
| APPENDIX D                                       | 168 |
| NYC DOE IRB                                      | 168 |
| APPENDIX E                                       | 170 |
| SAGE IRB   | 170 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Participant Demographics  | 60  |
| Table 2: Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question One  | 61  |
| Table 3: Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question Two, Parent Engagement                     | 81  |
| Table 4: Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question Two, Supplemental Student Support Services | 87  |
| Table 5: Supplemental Supports Summary   | 94  |
| Table 6: Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question Two, Professional Development              | 96  |
| Table 7: Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question Three                                      | 102 |
| Table 8: Document Review-Achievement Data Results  | 107 |

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview of the Problem**

We have been and continue to be a nation of immigrants. As a country whose initial populace was significantly comprised of immigrants, many of our successes have been through the innovation and hard work of individuals who left their own countries to help birth a new nation. While immigration patterns and countries of origin have changed, and despite current controversy over immigration, the United States continues to attract the largest number of immigrants in the world (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). According to the PEW Charitable Trust, “migration to the United States will become the primary driver of the nation’s population growth between 2027 and 2038” (p.1). Migration patterns indicate that immigrants enter singularly and as families, and in recent years as part of family immigration, children whose primary language is not English have become the fastest growing student population in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017; Wixom, 2015). In 2014, 93 percent of 5 to 6 year old ELLs and 98 percent of 7 to 13 year old ELLs were enrolled in elementary or secondary school. In that same year, 68 percent of 18 to 19 year old ELLs and 38 percent of 20 to 24 year old ELLs were enrolled in a secondary school or postsecondary institution (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017).

Estimates place the immigrant population in the United States at nearly 50 million, of whom over 10 million are English as second language students. These data reflect a percentage increase of over 200 % in the immigrant population in the last ten years, indicative of a continuing trend of national immigration. Embedded in this growth is a 53.25% increase in ELL

public school enrollment and the consequent increased demand for educational services for ELL students (Migration Policy Institute, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

Seventeen states have percentages of ELL public school enrollment between 6.0 and 9.0 percent of their populations. These states include Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington (Migration Policy Institute, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2017). Entering ELL students vary in age, grade entry, and levels of English and native language literacy and are consequently entering the system at multiple grade and skill levels. Considering the above information, it is incumbent upon educators to ensure that current immigrants have the same opportunities as every child in our public schools regardless of their country of origin.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As large numbers of ELL students enter the system it has become startlingly apparent from the performance data that education systems are generally unprepared to provide the instruction and educational services needed to ensure their success (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017; National Migration Institute, 2017). In addition to the increasing number of ELLs entering the United States, nationwide data indicates an alarming drop-out rate for ELLs and a failure of school systems to adequately address the needs of second language students. Statistics show consistent patterns of below average scores on achievement tests for students identified as English language learners and a troubling diversity in the instructional models and support systems used in the United States to support ELL instruction (NYSED, 2017; Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009). In New York State, the focus state of this research, the overall high school graduation rate for the 2014- 2015 school year was 78%, with



32% of these graduates receiving Advanced Regents Diplomas. The graduation rate of ELLs for this same period in New York City was 34 % with 4% of ELLs achieving Advanced Regent's diplomas. The 2015-2016 graduation statistics reflect the same pattern with a graduation rate of 80% for all students with 31% achieving an Advanced Regents Diploma and ELLs evidencing a 27% graduation rate with 1% of graduates achieving an Advanced Regents diploma (NYSED, 2017). Graduation rates across the country reflect this same disparity in performance and student achievement as evidenced in graduation rates ranging from as low as 24% in Nevada to a high of 73% in New Hampshire (NCES, 2017). The disturbing element about these data is not only the lack of student achievement, but the consistent discrepancy in the rates of ELLs graduating compared to overall graduation rates.

Given the performance data for ELL students, coupled with the continued influx of second language students into our educational systems nationwide and in New York State, it is incumbent upon school and system leaders to identify effective practices that improve performance of our ELL students. An inability to create educational structures and systems that promote success for ELL students deprives them of opportunities, impacts the nation as a whole in terms of productivity, and violates a fundamental principle of educational equity. It is apparent that educators and political leaders need to identify the flaws in our current educational structures specific to ELL instruction and to modify and possibly recreate structures systemically to improve outcomes.

### **Conceptual Framework/Assumptions**

This study was based on the assumption that ELL students, regardless of their entry level into the educational system, can and should be able to evidence performance data and graduation rates that are equivalent to non-ELL students. Given environments that are aligned to the needs

of ELLs through the use of appropriate instruction, adequate resources and supports, and targeted challenging learning, there is no reason that ELL students cannot be successful. The basic premise of this research was that the defining element in the success equation is the explicit identification and implementation of structures and services that most effectively encourage ELL success. This research study was based on the following four facts.

- As a Nation we are currently unsuccessful in educating the majority of English language learners.
- In the state of this research, significant disparity exists between the performance of ELL and non-ELL students in graduation rates and dropout rates.
- There are schools that are evidencing significantly higher performance data for ELLs than the national and state averages.
- There are relationships between practices and structures that exist in educational settings and the performance of ELL students.

The research is also grounded in the following three assumptions.

- Structures and supports that promote ELL success need to be identified and provided to school leaders for utilization in schools with ELL populations.
- School and district leaders can have an impact on the performance of students in their schools and they wish to engage with their schools in developing structures and supports for ELL students.
- School and system leaders learn through increased knowledge and information. Given the necessary tools they will be able to improve ELL performance and address the lack of equity that currently exists in our educational structures.

This study, through the lens of the facts and assumptions identified above, took an in-depth look at the educational practices and beliefs of eleven schools in a large urban school district with >10% populations of ELL students. These sites were examined in the context of school practices, structures, and administrator beliefs. This information was used to identify if there was a consistency of practices across schools, examine the role administrator beliefs play in decision making, and explore the alignment of school design and practices to student needs and performance. Data was evaluated specific to the populations of identified sites, all of which were high schools. No middle and elementary schools were included in the study.

### **Research questions**

Through the use of qualitative methodology and operating under the facts and assumptions presented above, this study documented practices of multiple high schools in a single large urban school district specific to high school English as second language students (ELLs). The research examined infrastructures in high schools as a mechanism for defining consistent practices for ELL learning, and consequently examined relationships that exist between school structures, school models, and administrative beliefs. The researcher also examined NYC school achievement data.

The research enables educators to develop insights into what models, practices, and supports are being utilized to effectively address the needs of high school level second language students. Study results provide information for school and system leaders' decision-making concerning ELL programs and support practices and increases the efficacy of system leaders specific to ELL achievement. It should also be noted that since all participants in this research study were administrators (assistant principals or principals) of schools with ELL populations, they all contributed to expanding the knowledge base on this particular student population.

It is important to note that although the school system researched (New York City Department of Education) is organizationally structured by districts, schools operate independently and decision making rests primarily within the purview of the school leader. As a result, obtaining data from the individuals (in this case high school administrators) who are immersed in the work and have working experience with the population provides experiential, evidence based knowledge regarding ELL instruction.

In summary, this research addresses the following questions.

RQ1- What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

RQ2- What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

RQ3- What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?

The overarching purpose of the research was to support educators in their quest to improve the outcomes of high school entry ELL students through contributing to the knowledge base that exists. For leaders, working with ELL students is often a “calling”. Dedicated educators devote substantial energy and time exploring and developing ways to support their students and improve their outcomes. Through analysis of instructional models, levels of professional development, parent engagement, supplemental support services and leader’s belief systems it was the intent of the researcher to provide informational resources to the dedicated and hardworking administrators and leaders who have committed to serving ELL students.

## **Significance of the study**

Based on increasing national and state legislative actions such as Every Student Succeeds Act/ No Child Left Behind and accountability measures and compliance practices, namely Annual Yearly Progress; Effective Annual Measurable Objectives; and Progress reports there is little doubt that politicians and educators nationally are aware of and appear to be committed to improving performance for ELL students for ethical, equity and practical reasons (NYSED, 2017). Governmental agencies at all levels have taken note and implemented outcome targets for school districts and school leaders to ensure that English language learners are making significant academic progress each year (Moughamian, Rivera & Francis, 2009). However, to create effective educational systems, politicians and system leaders must be aware of what is and what is not working. A meta-analysis of literature done by Moughamian et al.,(2009) indicated that no compelling evidence exists to link a specific model of instruction to strong academic performance, and that mixed results were evidenced for the efficacy of any one instructional program. However, while the study did note that certain models evidenced slightly stronger results with elementary students, no outcomes for high school students were found or cited. The study also stated that “given the paucity of research on instruction for ELLs, reaching decisions about the best instructional programs for ELLs is increasingly difficult. We need further research to clarify which instructional programs best promote ELLs English development, literacy, and academic achievement” (p.21). This statement speaks to the need for additional research specific to identifying educational and structural components conducive to schools’ and districts’ provision of quality instruction for ELL populations. It is also of value to note that while a small majority of states have passed laws outlining the type of ELL programs to be offered, most states, including the state that is the focus of this research, evidence no clear

methodology in the choice of instructional models for ELLs for any level or specific to needs (Haas, Tran, & Huang, 2015; NYC DOE, 2017).

English as second language students enter our schools hopeful and wanting to learn. Based on research by the National Educational Center and supporting data, the educational system is continuing to fail this group of students (NCES, 2017). National and state studies cited above consistently evidence sub-standard achievement results for ELLs in schools. While there is agreement on the importance of improving educational outcomes and success rates for ELLs, there is a lack of a singular identified methodology that accomplishes this. Literature reviews and studies, and subsequent recommendations regarding models and practices for improving ELL achievement evidence a range of recommendations that not only differ but are at times contradictory. Slavin and Cheung (2004), in their literature review state that “the debate between advocates of bilingual and English-only reading instruction has been fierce, and ideology has often trumped evidence on both sides of the debate” (p.4). This statement highlights the need for a deeper understanding of model choices.

Despite the current volume of literature focused on identification of best practices for ELLs, the literature specific to high school level ELLs is limited and lacking in consensus regarding model alignment. There is also limited research that examines instructional models for high school ELLs through the lens of situational factors unique to older entry ELLs. As per Slavin & Cheung (2004), “the literature predominately focuses on educational practices with elementary and middle school populations and is limited in its evaluation and recommendations specific to high school level ELLs”(p.5). These factors punctuate the significance of the research. Recognizing that the majority of research and studies look primarily at achievement and model performance with elementary and middle school ELLs, logic dictates that an

exploration of high school level ELLs, particularly within a comparative framework specific only to high schools, is valuable. The importance of identification of best practices and success factors for high school level ELLs is compounded when considered within the context of statistics indicating low levels of achievement and simultaneous increases in enrollment for ELL students at all levels. Narrowing the focus to look at high school level enrollment data further punctuates the need for and significance of a study based on high school ELLs. From 2000 to 2014, the overall enrollment rate for ELLs in the age range of 18 to 19 years of age increased from 61 to 68 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). The combined factors of underperformance and increased enrollments cannot and are not being ignored by educators, system leaders, or policy makers (NYSED, 2017). Responsive mandates justifiably place additional pressures on school leaders to create learning environments that engage in practices conducive to supporting ELLs, and consequently also support the significance of this research.

Educational success is not predicated exclusively on the model of instruction (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2015; Center for Public Education, 2017). Additional components potentially impacting academic success for students include the type of socio-emotional and supplemental academic supports provided students, parental engagement, teacher training, and college and career readiness support. Studies focused on evaluating the influence and impact these factors have in fostering student achievement indicate that these supports are generally beneficial in improving ELL learning (Mora, 2009; Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2015). However, again, evaluation of these factors looked primarily at data specific to elementary and middle school students and provided minimal targeted recommendations specific to high school level ELL students (Slavin & Cheung, 2004).

Research focused on identifying common practices within high schools with significant ELL populations and alignment of instruction choices to student needs, within a framework of outcome data, provides valuable information to the educational community. A review of student entry needs, specific instructional practices and instructional methodologies, coupled with a comparative analysis of choices of instructional practices and supports to student outcomes is contributing information. Evidence of increased entry of older second language students directly into high school settings coupled with the data evidencing consistent low performance identifies a gap that needs to be addressed. Targeting high school level ELLs specific to chronicling strategies for improved outcomes makes this study significant and relevant, and the choice of the study location also adds to the relevance of the research.

National data evidence increasing numbers of ELL students across the country and New York State is identified as one of the top twenty states in the nation in terms of the numbers of ELL students in their public schools (NCES, 2017). Additionally, the New York City school system evidences diversity in its racial composition of ELLs; New York City is a system that evidences a range of instructional models for ELLs (NYC DOE, 2017) and NYC allows for administrator selection of instructional models and discretionary decision making regarding structures and practices. By conducting the study in New York City there was a diverse pool and range of models and practices for study. It also lent to exploring the alignment of belief systems to school decision-making. Using an interview process targeting administrators within an urban school district with significant ethnic diversity and large percentages of ELL students allowed for a compilation of information from vested experts. Finally, since all NYC schools are evaluated by consistent outcome indicators, the practices and structures within each school were examined using standardized success indicators.



To summarize, limited research exists that delineates commonality in practices for high school level entry ELLs and explores the alignment of instructional practices and models to success for high school age ELL students through the lens of administrator beliefs and student achievement data. This research provided insights into the alignment that exists between policies, practices and instruction models utilized as well as insights into how administrator belief systems and knowledge bases impact design choices. In light of the comparative performance of ELL students versus non-ELL students, the significance of this research was the role it will play in providing additional information specific to improving outcomes for ELL students.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are embedded in this research and may not be commonly recognized or they are specific to New York City. Definitions are included to facilitate understanding within the context of this dissertation.

*College and Career Readiness Standards:* The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) provide a consistent, clear understanding of what adult learners are expected to learn, so teachers and administrators know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that adult learners need for success in college and careers. These standards are translated into an evaluative metric for school performance (New York City Department of Education, 2017).

*Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA):* A legislative mandate that provides federal funds to improve elementary and secondary education, and replaces the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Proposed regulations under ESSA require each state to develop a plan describing the design and implementation of a single statewide accountability system to improve student

academic achievement. The proposed regulations also require state accountability systems to be based on challenging state academic standards and academic assessments, to include all public schools in the state (including public charter schools), and to improve student academic achievement and school success (New York State Education Department, 2017).

*English Language Learner (ELL):* A student whose home language is not English and has scored below a cut score on the New York State Identification Test for ELLs. These students continue to be ELLs until they reach proficiency on the NYSESLAT or a combination of NYSESLAT scores and ELA/ELA Regents scores (New York City Department of Education, 2017).

*Graduation Rate:* The graduate rate for the four-year graduation-rate total cohort is the percentage of cohort members who earned a local or Regents diploma by August 31 four years after entering grade 9. The graduate rate for the five-year graduation-rate total cohort is the percentage of cohort members who earned a local or Regents diploma by August 31 five years after entering grade 9 (New York City Department of Education, 2017).

*Monolingual Students-* Individuals who know or speak one language. In the NYC school system this term generally applies to native English speaking students.

*New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL):* Examination that determines ELL status. It is administered throughout the school year as necessary to all students entering grades K to 12 who are first time entrants and re-entrants (New York Department of Education, 2017).

*Over age and under credited (OA/UC):* A student is considered overage/under-credited based on criteria that align age, entry year, regents passage and credits as part of an entry and yearly student transcript evaluation. The designation is intended to identify students that are at risk. In

the NYC DOE, the criteria for being identified as OA/UC is: age 16, under 11 credits; or under 22 credits and zero Regents passed; age 17, under 22 credits, or under 33 credits and zero Regents passed; age 18 under 33 credits and four or fewer Regents passed; age 19 or older, under 33 credits or under 44 credits and four or fewer Regents passed (New York City Department of Education, 2017).

*Students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)*: English language learners who have entered a US school after second grade; have had at least two years less schooling than their peers; function at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics; and may be pre-literate in their first language (New York City Department of Education, 2017).

### **Scope of the study**

This study included eleven high schools in a large urban school district with significant populations of ELL students. Data was evaluated specific only to the identified sites and site identification criteria targeted locations with ELL populations equal or greater than ten percent or one-hundred plus students. The location for this study was New York City and all participating schools were public high schools located in one of four boroughs in New York City.

Interviewees agreed to participate based on researcher outreach and interviews were conducted with school principals and assistant principals. Populations evaluated were specific to high school sites only and did not include middle and elementary school data.

### **Limitations of the study**

This research is specific to the New York City Department of Education. Interview choices included only administrators since they are the primary decision makers in schools. It does not include the perspective of other staff members in schools. Student achievement information was public data and was reviewed only within the context of school controllable

factors and did not factor in external elements that impact student performance (socio-economic and environmental factors). The pool of schools participating were primarily composed of schools whose ELL populations were recent entry students, identified as having four or less years in the system and entered the system defined as over age and under credited.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The research is specific to high school level institutions and did not include any analysis of middle or elementary high schools. The sample size reflected a small portion of the schools in New York City that serve ELL students and while providing data on consistency of practices and links to achievement data does not conclusively connect specific models or practices to achievement data.

### **Organization of the study**

The dissertation was organized into five chapters with subsections within each chapter. Chapter one was an introduction to the dissertation and is sectioned to provide information on the background of the identified issue, conceptual and theoretical assumptions surrounding the issue, the research questions, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and the scope and limitations of the study. Chapter two was the literature review. The literature review was divided into topic specific sections that reflect the varied interview questions and foci of the research questions. The theme based sections discuss the research specific to model choice, professional development, parent engagement, student support services and administrator beliefs. Chapter three explained the methodology of the study, the study design, rationales for subject selection, data collection, storage, analysis, and discussed the reliability and validity of the study. Chapter four reported the finding of the research and was structured to report findings aligned to the interview and research questions. Organizationally, subject responses

were recorded into the same topic specific sections identified and broken out for the literature review. These topic sections included: model selection; student support services; professional development; parent engagement; and administrator beliefs. The final chapter, chapter five, included a summary of the findings focusing on consistency of practices, interpretation of the structures and model choices specific to student needs and achievement, and an analysis of how administrator beliefs are connected to school design. Chapter five included closing conclusions and recommendations for further study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The National Center for Educational Statistics states that in the 2013 to 2014 school year there were approximately fifty million students enrolled in public schools across the nation. Of this number, approximately four and a half million students were identified as ELLs. Additionally, current educational data indicates that nationally, success rates specific to the education of English language learners is significantly lower than that of general education students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Data also indicate a consistent growth of ELLs enrolled in public high schools (NCES, 2016). Considering the achievement data, and the trends reflecting continued national growth in percentages of English language learners, it is incumbent upon educators, system leaders and state and local legislators to improve the outcomes for students identified as English language learners. With the continuing numbers of immigrants entering the country and the limited capacity of current education systems to provide structures that result in academic success for them, an obvious critical task for educators is to improve outcomes for this population.

Independent of improved success in educational outcomes and graduation rates for ELLs, our nation is potentially faced with an increasing number of individuals poorly prepared or unable to enter the work force or post-secondary educational structures. The potential economic implications of this are significant. Additionally, earning data indicate that individuals without high school educations earn less than those who graduate high school and significantly less than those who enter and complete college (Cheeseman- Day & Mewburger, 2002). These income data highlight the responsibility educators and system leaders have to

create systems that provide for ELL success in purely economic terms. Of equal importance is the responsibility we have as citizens and human beings to advocate for educational systems that allow for equal access to educational success for all, and the consequent right of, and opportunity for, all citizens to create a quality life for their families and themselves (Mann, 2014; Rothstein, 2017; CEP, 2016). Accomplishment of these tasks entail an in-depth understanding of the needs of this population and a data based selection and implementation of instructional models and practices that evidence proven success in addressing the needs of ELL students.

This research study is directly linked to the needs and issues identified above. It was the intent of the researcher to develop insight into what models, practices, supports and administrative actions were emerging to successfully address the needs of high school level second language students, the role belief systems had in administrative decision making, and given the research results, what were the implications for the role district leaders might play in improving school and district success, and ensuring an alignment of instructional practices and policies to need. Moughamian, Rivera and Francis (2009) state that “administrators and educators must seek to find and use the best types of instruction for English Language Learners in their communities, districts, schools and classrooms....taking into account the available empirical evidence and how it relates to their circumstances” (p.3). Current literature has numerous studies specific to identifying the practices and models that are successful in addressing this population.

However, despite the significant quantity of articles and research studies related to the success of ELLs and the consequent recommended models and approaches, there continues to be no consensus on definitive practices for ELL instruction. Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez, (2011)

state that “although the federal government requires districts to provide services to English learners, it offers states no policies to follow in identifying, assessing, pacing, or instructing them” (p. 104). Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis (2009) identify Florida, Massachusetts, Arizona, and California as the only states that mandate a specific model of instruction for ELLs. The lack of consistency in model choice is additionally punctuated by the dearth of research connecting models and practices specifically to success with older high school ELLs. This is particularly evident in relation to students entering high school as over age and under credited or identified as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). Additionally, there is little discussion of how ELL instruction may need to be differentiated and individualized for this specific population (Moughamian, et al., 2009). The implications of this gap are of significant concern since data indicate that the largest growth in ELL student populations has been in grades seven through twelve (Calderon et al., 2011). While varied studies discuss and advocate for different models and practices identified as addressing the current low performance of ELLs nationally, the consistent thread throughout the literature is the inconsistency of recommendations and the variance on what are the most successful practices for ELLs (Parrish, 2006).

In response to this gap, the purpose of this research was the identification of characteristics that are consistent within high schools, and consequently provide information regarding what impact infrastructures, model choices, and belief systems may have on academic achievement. This research was intended to inform practitioners in the field and serve as a framework for system leaders to evaluate their current modes of instruction, existing systems and school practices when engaging in decision making specific to the education of secondary level ELL student.



In designing and creating educational structures for students, regardless of their ethnic designation, it is important to emphasize why change is necessary, what the historical context is, and what experts have identified as successful and non-successful practices. The following section provides a brief overview of the key historical legislation surrounding the evolution of educational and legislative actions specific to ELL instruction.

### **Historical Perspective**

The United States is a nation of immigrants. As this nation has grown, perspectives on immigration as well as the composition of immigrants has changed with the single constant being the continual tide of immigrants migrating to this country. As this pattern of immigration has transformed, both in terms of the countries of origin and in the perceptions of who the immigrants are, so have social and legal structures evolved to address the needs of immigrants. Initial groups of immigrants primarily came from European nations. Current immigrants include much more diversity in their countries of origin and in their ethnic and racial backgrounds (Migration Policy Institute, 2016; New York City Department of Education, 2017). Also, while early immigrants were integrated into an educational system that was itself developing, current immigrants enter into an established system that appears ill equipped to be responsive and to provide for the needs of non-English speaking students. Consistent with a country espousing a democratic philosophy and political structure, legislative policy has developed in response to the needs of this ever changing population. In looking at the educational philosophies and structures that have prevailed historically, there is clear evidence of intent to address the education needs of immigrants through a chronology of legislation and educational philosophies surrounding the method of instruction (Mora, 2009; Wright, 2016, Zacarian, 2012).

During the 1920's through the 1960's the dominant education model for ELLs was best described as a "sink or swim" policy. The majority of schools employed what is identified as an immersion model, interpreted as students being placed in mainstream English classes with no unique or special practices used to support them in either language acquisition or development of content knowledge (Wright, 2017; Zacarian, 2012). In 1963, the success of bilingual programs for new Cuban refugees spurred the interest of some educators who began experimenting with alternative models of instruction for ELLs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided a platform for ensuring the rights of immigrants through its prohibition of discrimination based on race, color, or national origin for all institutions receiving federal funding. During the late 1960's the first piece of legislation specific to ELLs was enacted. The Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, created mandates establishing budgetary allocations for bilingual education of students that were minority students and economically disadvantaged (Mora, 2009; Zacarian, 2012). The intent of this legislation was to recognize the unique needs of second language students and create a platform for schools to develop programs aligned to the needs of immigrant students. Subsequent legislation built on the foundational directives of The Bilingual Education Act.

In 1978, the Bilingual Education Act was modified to expand eligibility to all second language students. This expansion also introduced the expectation that supports for ELL students should be transitory in nature with an expectation of students progressing to ultimately "exit" ELL programs (Zacarian, 2012). Embedded in this expansion amendment was the expectation of outcome- based educational programs, a precursor to the current accountability mechanisms that exist for ELL education in public educational settings. Additional amendments to Title VII in subsequent years included the 1982 amendment providing funding for native

language supports, ELL students with special needs, teacher training and family literacy, and the 1988 amendment that emphasized increased funding for state educational agencies, innovative programs for ELLs, and fellowship programs for educator training (Wright, 2016, Zacarian, 2012). It should also be noted that this amendment quantified the time limit for a student to participate in a Title VII program. The Bilingual Education act continued to be the primary socio-educational legislation supporting ELL instruction until the mid- 1990's (Wright, 2016, Zacarian, 2012)

In reviewing the historical timeline of ELL education legislation, 1994 could be reasonably identified as the beginning of a turning point in recognizing and responding to the need for targeted and accountable practices aligned to the needs of ELLs. In 1994 legislators, based on a recognized need for educational reform, engaged in major revisions of The Bilingual Education Act. The revisions very definitely targeted the areas of professional development, language instruction and funding but with an increased depth and more accountability for outcomes (Mora, 2009). The process of mandating quality instruction for ELLs was further strengthened through the implementation of the 2001, Title III amendment of the No Child Left Behind Act (Wright, 2017). The final act of relevance is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This act was intended to consolidate numerous programs and provide opportunities for innovation in educational programs. It also established clear accountability mechanisms for states for all students and more specifically disaggregate groups such as ELLs (Education Week, 2016).

In reviewing the above history of legislation for ELLs it appears that legislation not only focused on a social need to support ELLs, but also was an effort to respond to the statistical evidence of outcomes for second language students in the nations' education system. The

chronological overview of the history of ELLs, while clear in its intent to improve ELL outcomes, still provided little more than a framework for accountability and funding. It was the belief of the researcher that the key to equitable and effective instruction stemmed from the structures and methodology of instruction for which funding is used. In translating the intent of the funding and mandates to outcomes, a critical first step is to examine the most commonly identified educational practices associated with quality schools and instruction.

There is substantial literature focused on what factors are priorities in creating successful schools. The literature indicates that quality of instruction and leadership, supplemental supports and extracurricular activities, and school culture and community are determinates of school success and are of critical importance to school success (Lezotte, 1993; Marzano, 2003; New York City Framework for Great Schools, 2017; Northeast Regional Laboratory, 2005; Shannon, 2017). Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies (2007) also specifically break out and identify parent engagement as a primary factor in school success. However, while these categories represent key indicators of school success, a necessary ingredient in the success quotient is the delineation of how one would define each of these elements and equally important, what are the implementation methodologies and strategies for each of these categories.

In light of this situation, the following portion of this dissertation examines the literature on the various beliefs and information surrounding best practices for ELLs and creates a foundational information base for future reference. The review targeted prevalent components consistently identified as indicators of, and aligned to, success in educational sites serving mainstream and ELL populations. These factors were examined for consistency in implementation, alignment to administrator's beliefs and through the lens of academic

achievement specific to the core group of New York City high schools. The literature review also examined the dichotomy that exists regarding the selection of educational models and supplemental support for ELLs as well as research concerning the weaknesses of current education models in successfully addressing the needs of ELLs. The literature review was structured specifically with the categories associated with quality instruction identified above. Sections of the literature review sequentially include: models of instruction, support services, and belief systems.

### **Models of instruction**

A critical component of effective instruction is the methodology of delivery. Historically, a standardized classroom involved a single teacher taking the dominant role in instruction, and information being delivered in a lecture and/or teacher dominated format. Evolution of instruction has more and more reflected a belief that engagement is of significant relevance in student learning and many institutions have adjusted their instruction to utilize the teacher as a facilitator (Center for Post-Secondary Research, 2007; Lee, 2014). School instructional models have continued to develop based on beliefs concerning how students learn best, and there are many instructional methods that exist in schools today (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Parrish, Merickel, & Linqanti, 2006). Despite the variety, it is arguable that a defining component of model choice is making learning accessible for all students. (Echevarria, 2013). In New York City, administrators, while being accountable to their superintendents, usually determine how instruction occurs in their schools. This autonomy in instructional model selection is a critical decision making choice when it comes to ELL instruction and at times has been heavily debated. The following section identifies types of

models associated with ELL instruction and examines the varied rationales for model utilization as well as the dichotomy that exists in the literature.

Given the large population of ELLs currently served in the United States, coupled with the predictions on the continuing trends for immigration, it is important in determining model efficacy to at least have a foundational understanding of the most prevalent models used in schools. While the underlying theories of language acquisition and its alignment to each model is not within the scope of this study beyond a cursory review, it is incumbent upon practitioners, educational leaders and curriculum developers to familiarize themselves with this information in the quest for instructional improvement. The review of the dominate models will also be an evaluative component of the dissertation's focus.

In examining models of instruction, the literature indicates that there are two general overarching theories of ELL instruction that manifest themselves in varied instructional models with different structures, implementation, and usage. These two methodologies of instruction are bilingualism and English only models (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011). Generally, bilingual models are structured with instruction partially in English and partially in the student's language and English only models present the majority of instruction in English.

The two most prevalent models of bilingual instruction include dual language and transitional bilingual programs. Dual language programs standardly develop student skills in two languages simultaneously, and enrolled students may be either ELLs or monolingual students. In dual language programs, the purpose is to develop a student's ability in both languages by devoting equal amounts of time to each language. An underlying belief of this instructional modality is that development of one language facilitates development of a second language through both transference and reinforcement, specifically when similar cognates are

involved (U.S Department of Education, 2015; New York City Department of Education, 2017; Moughamaim, et al., 2009). However, Moughamaim, et al., (2009) remind readers that although there are numerous high schools with significant ELL populations utilizing dual language models, the original intent of this model was to teach English speaking students a second language and the model was designed for kindergarten and first grade students (p.7). In its application in school systems currently, dual language models' subject content is primarily taught in English and selected entering students are generally homogeneous in their native language (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

A second bilingual model is transitional bilingual. In a transitional bilingual model, similar to a dual language program, the curriculum revolves around inclusion of the second language in the curriculum. In the case of a transitional bilingual program, classes in the student's native language, while not always offered in equally split time ratios (50/50), are still explicitly scheduled on a student's program. Additionally, in transitional bilingual programs, content classes are intended to be taught partially in English and partially in the native language of the homogeneous student population. The theory behind a transitional bilingual program is that use of a student's native language is the most effective way to teach English to ELLs (Moughamaim, et al., 2009; Parrish, et al., 2006). The intention of transitional bilingual programs is a gradual scaffolding of students' language ability so that students will, after a certain amount of time based on entry level language levels, transition from a bilingual program to a English only program. Moughamaim, et al. (2009), citing varied authors, states that research indicates ELLs in transitional bilingual programs often evidence decreased academic outcomes during this transition period. They also indicate that "secondary school students may find the transition to English instruction especially difficult" (p.8).

While dual language and transitional bilingual are the two most dominant models of bilingual education, there are further variations on these two models. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will use only the primary models of each instructional methodology for reference and coding. In their study, Calderon et al.'s (2011) findings indicated no conclusive model of instruction was specific to ELL success. They reported that recent policy changes have discouraged bilingual education, and their findings indicated that success was more specific to the quality of the instruction that occurred versus the instructional model. However, August and Shanahan (2006), in a meta-analysis concluded that although there were mixed results, their overall finding seemed to favor bilingual instructional programs and that programs that invest time in the development of first language literacy are more effective than those that are English only based programs. August and Shanahan (2006) also noted that while bilingual instruction was favored, the research gave no indications regarding what components of the model were aligned with success and their findings made no delineation between elementary, middle or secondary education. Other authors have supported the belief that bilingual education is a more effective model (Genesse, et al, 2006; Willig, 1985; & Wong, 1986). However, Rossell et al., (1996), cited by Slavin (2004) claimed that "most methodologically adequate studies found bilingual education to be no more effective than English-only programs" (p.53). Finally, the American Institute for Research and WestEd, (2006), based on a five year evaluative study of proposition 227 in California concluded that "based on the data currently available, that there is no clear evidence to support an argument of the superiority of one ELL instructional approach over another" (p.9).

The second general method of ELL instruction is identified as an English only model. In English only models all instruction is offered in English with limited or no explicit teaching



using students' native language. English only models were developed based on the underlying tenet that literacy development should be the most important focus area for ELL instruction. A second theoretical rational for English only models is the belief that they increase students' fluency rapidly through repetition and exposure to English language (Eschevarria et al., 2010; Calderon, et al., 2011). The choice of this model may be more frequent in settings where ELL students enter with varying languages. Haas, Tran, Huang and Yu (2015) discuss how older entry ELLs have less time to develop fluency and recommend that students work in mixed groups in a cooperative learning model to maximize effective learning. Calderon, et al. (2011) also mention that "newcomers with prior schooling and background knowledge need intensive accelerated English programs" (p.113), both practices utilized in many English only models. Short and Boyson (2012) speak directly to the specific needs of "newcomer students" and the importance of intensive language develop for this population.

In English only models, content material as well as literacy development is taught in English. English only programs, similar to bilingual programs, are implemented in schools in varying forms and models. The most dominant of the English only models are immersion, second language pull out or push in, and sheltered English instruction. In an immersion model students receive instruction in all subjects in English (Echevarria, 2010). While some schools may include a component of native language instruction that is slowly decreased and removed as students improve in fluency and comprehension, there is standardly little to no explicit teaching or use of the native language. Within the context of immersion programs schools may teach language through curricula that embed language development into content instruction or models may create specific classes for language development independent of content instruction (Echevarria, 2010; Education Commission of the States, 2017). Calderon, et al, (2011) express

concern in regards to English only classrooms that do not place students by ELL levels or take into account their diversity, and “lump” all students into a single ELL classroom for instruction regardless of their entry age, and level of language proficiency. In English only pull-out or push-in models, the same English only standard applies. However, ELL students in push-in or pull-out programs receive support through having an additional teacher that is specifically assigned to the student for a designated time each day. During this assigned time, the teacher will work to provide supplemental learning support by pushing into the class or alternatively removing the student from the classroom for instruction (ECS, 2017; Echevarria, 2013).

Calderon, et al., (2011) express concerns with the use of a pull out program based on the limited time students work with the teacher and the lack of consequent support for students in their other classes, identifying it as a “sink or swim instructional situation”. A third model of English only instruction, often utilized in schools with mixtures of ELLs and native English speakers, is sheltered instruction (SIOP) which provides instruction through an inclusion model of ELL only classes. Students will be removed from classes for a portion of each day and attend classes only with their ELL peers (Echevarria, 2010, Moughamian et al., 2009). The sheltered instruction model is based on the belief that while language instruction should occur in all content classes, ELL students need explicit teaching of language in independent classes for a period of time daily.

In considering which of the above instructional models are more effective, Rossell & Baker (1996) found that transitional bilingual and dual language models were “no more successful at improving ELL student outcomes than English only instructional programs. However, Willig (1985) and Greene, (1997), both concluded that bilingual education programs evidenced more positive outcomes. Slavin & Cheung (2005) found that results were mixed and

inconclusive, with outcomes indicating no significant differences distinguishing between English only and bilingual programs. The American Institute for Research and WestEd (2006) mirrored Slavin & Cheung's finding but the U.S Department of Education's (2016) finding indicated slightly higher student performance with dual language programs.

Additional studies specific to state choices for model integration have also reported conflicting results. There has been a great deal of discussion and writing specific to Arizona's mandate for an English only instructional model, particularly in light of recent court challenges to the mandate. However, in their report Haas, et al. (2015) indicated that ninety percent of Arizona's English learners scored at or above a state identified level indicating proficiency. This statewide performance data supports advocates of English only models. In a comparable study Guo & Koretz (2013), when examining Massachusetts' statewide English only policy found that there was "no statistically significant impact of the law on student outcomes" (p 121).

The literature findings regarding choice of instructional models for effective ELL instruction, as initially indicated, are mixed in terms of model efficacy and research studies predominately focus on outcomes aligned with elementary and middle school program results. However, there does appear to be some consistency in recommendations for best practices across instructional levels as well as the importance of quality instruction being identified as a primary overarching factor in ELL success (Slavin, et al. 2011). Present in the literature was a discussion of the need for educators to begin considering instructional model choice within a framework of student entry levels, nationalities and level of diversity present in the site (Moughamian, et al., 2009; Slavin, et al. 2011; Brogadir, et al., 2011).

When examining the existing literature, while model choice is a primary factor in structuring ELL programs, there are additional elements consistently identified as factors in

creating effective ELL programs. The literature review will continue to examine these additional factors associated with effective ELL instruction. The next area of exploration and review will be professional development.

### **Professional development**

In the quest to improve outcomes for students, educators nationwide have adopted support structures that include professional development of teachers as a primary method of attempting to effect change and improve student outcomes. To quote, “Teachers have more influence on student learning than any other school factor” (Center for Educational Policy, 2016, p. 5). The rationalization for engaging staff in professional development and professional learning communities is based on the theory that teacher training and development will be evidenced in teacher instructional practices and pedagogy with an intended consequence of improved student performance and student outcomes. The inclusion of professional development is also a direct result of the previously identified legislative mandates. Calderon, et al., (2011) assert that “closing the achievement gap means, in part, closing similar gaps in teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development” (p.107). They also present conclusions supporting the belief that a primary indicator of student success is the degree of professional development and training that occurs for teachers and administrators.

While this is a logical assumption, the literature raises some questions about the validity of that assumption and evidences varied assertions as to what effective professional development looks like and the role it plays in improving student performance. Gammill (2013) examined the effectiveness of learning communities in improving the quality of teacher instruction and found that participation in a professional learning community did not necessarily affect teacher efficacy. Her findings indicated that personal learning communities were most effective, not

necessarily based on the professional development offered, but rather on the ability of teachers to be self-directed in their own learning. For self-directed teachers, professional development provided tools for them to continue their own self-initiated learning. However, Early (2012) when also evaluating the benefits of professional development that occurs in school based learning communities found that teacher practices could be affected through professional development if specific conditions were present. He identified these characteristics as a supportive environment, shared personal practice, and collaborative learning that is applied and utilized in the classroom. Lowden (2003) echoed the conditional nature of professional development as an effective student improvement strategy but also qualified effectiveness as predicated on pre-identified factors. Lowden (2003) spoke to identification of purpose as a key predictor of professional development success. His study indicated that professional development success was based on having clearly defined goals for the professional development and the degree to which the professional development was aligned to the goals and vision of the school. An additional finding of significance from Lowden's study was the identification of the necessity of teacher implementation of the knowledge and skill acquired into a classroom setting as the primary link to improving student achievement. Eye (2015) also found that a primary factor in improving student outcomes through professional development is the transference of learned material into the classroom. In his study, which supported many of Lowden's (2003) findings, Eye indicated that professional development specific to literary development was not successful because a minimum of teachers progressed from the initial stage of professional development (knowledge acquisition) to the application stage. The failure of teachers to implement the learned knowledge negated the purpose of the professional development as a mechanism to improve student achievement.

Thayer (2004) identified the features of high quality professional development as: focusing on content; creating opportunities for active learning; creating alignment and coherence with the other learning activities; and professional development not being provided as a singular activity. Independent of meeting these criteria, the question of the value of the professional development was raised. Dufour, Eaker & Dufour (2005) echoed the importance of professional development occurring over a period of time, involving real classroom interactions and centering on professional learning communities (PLC's). Fullan (2005) stresses the importance of professional development that is "relevant and useful", supports instruction, and is on-going and McLaughlin et.al., (2006) identifies strategies for creating PLC's that are effective and directly tie to improved instructional competence of teachers. In a contrary outcome, Robinson's (2013) study unequivocally confirmed the connection between professional development and teacher effectiveness and Brown's (2007) findings indicated that teachers generally felt positive about professional development. Brown (2007) further indicated that professional development appeared to have met its goals of preparing teachers to work with English Language Learners. Finally, Harutunjan (2007) found that his results suggested "professional development dramatically improved the teachers' understanding of the needs of English language learners and contributed to the teachers' professional growth as educators" (p.183). However, Harutunjan later stated that his research determined that while advancing teachers' knowledge base regarding ELLs, the professional development "minimally changed the teachers understanding of the students' instructional needs" (p.185).

The question of if and how professional development serves its primary purpose of improving student outcomes is of importance in evaluating school practices for improving outcomes of all students, specifically those with substandard performance results like ELLs. An

additional factor for consideration when evaluating the effectiveness and value of professional development is the cost factor. Professional development, depending on its amount and frequency, can have a major impact on a school's ability to fund other services and programs necessary for ELL success. In his 2004 study, Thayer analyzed the cost effectiveness of professional development in a school district. His findings indicated that the costs incurred for the district were significant in terms of teacher and coaching time. He also found that design and implementation of the professional development was not aligned to identify features of high quality professional development thus reducing or negating the benefits of the financial investment. Odden, Archibald, Fermanich & Gallagher (2002) created a structure that identified cost elements of professional development. The categories of elements included teacher time; training and coaching; administration; material, equipment and facility costs; and if applicable travel, tuition and conference fees. Consideration of these identified cost factors is an additional element in evaluating the role and benefits of professional development as a component in improving ELL outcomes.

When considering the best methodology to improve outcomes for ELLs it must be remembered that all choices have costs and in most educational environments, funding is a finite item. Consequently, if professional development is identified as a primary method to improve student outcomes, it is incumbent upon educators and system leaders to ensure that the financial commitment is worthwhile, and that the underlying purpose of improving student learning occurs. The literature seems to indicate, despite some disagreement, that professional development can have an impact if delivered effectively with appropriate alignment and with the key component of implementation of learned strategies (Brown, 2007; Dufour et al., 2005; Eye, 2015; Fullan, 2005). When conducting this study, interviewee questions included having

participants identify their beliefs regarding the value of professional development, the model of provision and implementation, and the perceived impact of professional development on teachers and consequent student outcomes. In continuing to explore factors that positively support ELL learning another area discussed in the literature is the impact of parental engagement in student outcomes. The following section of this chapter examines the literature surrounding the perceived value of parental engagement.

### **Parent Engagement**

The literature appears fairly consistent in advocating for parent involvement in students' schooling. Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies (2007) identify parent engagement as a primary factor in school success. Calderon, et al. (2011) echo this with an added caveat specific to ELLs stating "Parent support for children's success in school is always important, but it is especially so for the children of immigrants" (p.115). Niehaus, Adelson and Ameriaco (2014) released findings that establish a clear correlation between higher levels of parental support to reduced socio-emotional concerns and problems linked to higher achievement. Jung and Zhang (2016) discussed a similar finding. Jung et al.'s (2016) research found that a parent's involvement with their child's education was positively related to academic achievement and cognitive development. It is of value to note the author's research also highlighted the connection of high levels of parental aspirations to success outcomes as a consideration in parental involvement. However, Baydoun (2013) presented findings that indicated no significant correlation between reported parental involvement and students' academic achievement and averages. Her work was contradicted by Shi (2014) who found that "statistically significant direct effects were found from parent expectations and parental involvement" (p. 93).



Despite a few additional articles and research evidencing a lack of connection between parent involvement and success, the literature generally is supportive of and links improved student performance to parent engagement. It is important to note that the literature appears to cite low parental engagement rates for ELL students and much of the literature includes work focused on responding to varied factors unique to engaging ELL parents, the challenges associated with engagement, and consequent recommendations for maximizing ELL parent engagement as a tool to improve student achievement (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2014; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007). Fuga (2016) discusses the importance of viewing parents as partners. He speaks to the belief systems that exist in schools and the role these belief systems play in either encouraging or discouraging parent involvement. Fuga (2016) also emphasizes the need for regular communication with families. He indicates that the lack of involvement of families is often directly related to the schools lack of outreach and interaction. He believes this occurs for one of two reasons. First, limited on- site services make translation difficult and become a rationale for teachers to forgo reaching out to ELL families. A second reason for failing to communicate may relate to teachers' association of parents lack of communication skills and/or faulty language skills with a lack of educational competence and a consequent assumption of inability to support student learning. Ferlazzo & Hammond (2014) argue that when working to improve parental involvement of ELLs one has to "think outside the box" and employ different methods to effect parental involvement. They first recommend that educators reframe the concept of involvement to engagement, emphasizing the importance of the active nature of parent engagement. It is their contention that if schools operate from a mindset focused on perceiving ELL parents as active participants and stakeholders, this perception will

translate into more active encouragement and engagement, and ultimately provide opportunities for parent to become leaders versus bystanders.

A primary takeaway from the literature on parent engagement is that while parental involvement is predominately identified as a positive element in student success, it is important that the engagement be such that it impacts and fosters improvement in ELL achievement. The literature also punctuates the importance of educator beliefs and the role they play in school culture and school success (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2014; Fuga, 2016; Henderson, et al., 2007). The underlying question, specific to parent engagement, is what are the best practices and methods educators are using to work with and motivate their parents, to frame their engagement, and to make their role productive and meaningful in supporting students' achievement.

In continuing to holistically examine best practices in ELL instruction, the next identified element for examination is supplemental supports. The following section of the literature review focuses on practices that are identified as effective supplemental supports and the role they have in improving ELL outcomes.

### **Student Supports**

In reviewing the literature, a key element in discussions surrounding successful schools is the value of supplemental student supports (Adelman, & Taylor, 2006; Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004; Gandara & Rumberger, 2003; Short & Boyton, 2012). This section reviewed the literature regarding which supplemental supports are linked to improving the quality of student learning experiences and consequently lend strength to creating and maintaining strong outcomes for students.

The literature noted that recommended supports consist of both additive time practices and re-configuration of existing day schedules to allow for targeted support, intervention and

extended time for students (Adelman, & Taylor, 2006; Gandara & Rumberger, 2007).

Additionally, the focus of the recommended supports included academic, socio-emotional or a combination of both (Adelman, & Taylor, 2006). Considering supports in the context of ELL instruction, the importance of these supports is once again, magnified. ELLs entering educational systems as newcomers, specifically at the high school level, face many challenges (Calderon et al., 2011; Short & Boyson, 2012). Not only are they usually held accountable for meeting the same graduation requirements that students who have been in the country since birth, (although in New York City while not systemic, some schools have received waivers for Regents exemption), they are expected to do so while learning the language of instruction. High school entry ELLs, of which NYC has a significant amount (44, 871/ 32% of 139, 843 enrollment) often enter the ninth grade at higher than standard ages (New York City Department of Education, 2014). This late age entry adds another level of challenge to achieving a high school diploma and is a potential causative factor of substandard graduation rates for NYC. A final consideration is the stress and pressures many high school entry ELLs experience. Entering any new system is a challenge for adolescents. Entering a new system as individuals with potentially different beliefs, culture, and behaviors when unable to speak the dominant language and communicate is a daunting task (Calderon et al, 2011; Gandara & Rumberger, 2007; Short & Boyson, 2012). This information lends itself to recognizing the value and importance of additive measures for ELL students and substantiates the need for these supports to be targeted and pro-active in addressing the achievement gaps. It also raises an additional need specific to ELL students, the need for work around acculturation and socio-emotional issues, and the consequent importance of support systems for immigrant youth (Short & Boyson, 2012).

Socio-emotional supports in schools can include the provision of counseling services from guidance counselors and social workers, the inclusion of student mentoring programs, advisory programs, or practices associated with acculturation or norming through experiential activities (DiMartino & Clarks, 2008; Dimmitt, 2003; Gandara & Rumberger, 2003; Short & Boyer, 2012). Dimmitt (2003) speaks to the value of counseling supports as a means of addressing academic failure in high school. His arguments state that on-going interventions from counselors allow for identification and remediation of student difficulties that negatively impact student success. For high school level ELLs these issues may be singularly emotionally based but also may be a direct result of economic pressures, family structures or issues specific to acculturation. Another identified practice is the use of advisories (DiMartino, & Clarke, 2008). ELL students, particularly individuals that are new to the country, are often in living environments that are isolating or unfamiliar. The use of an advisory system as a means of removing some of the potential invisibility or lack of connectivity experienced is a viable option for creating social networks and helping ELLs navigate the system and DiMartino & Clarke (2008) present strong evidence of the value of incorporating advisory programs into school settings. They identify specific criteria related to the structures of successful advisories and argue for the value of advisories in creating peer networks as well as academic supports. Socio-emotional supports often extend beyond the student and focus on providing whole family support through engagement in activities ranging from referrals for human services, health care provision, parental training, and information based workshops. Socio-emotional supports could also involve very pragmatic practices such as offering ESL classes for parents, and/or creating student clubs and counseling groups specific to the needs of students, all of which are practices supported by Cosden et al. (2004) and Aneess & Ort. (2002).

Academic supports have a similar range regarding a possible menu of services. Identified practices include supplemental tutoring for students independent of, or in excess of the regular school day, supplemental classes and/or afterschool instruction; peer to peer tutoring, and homework centers (Gandara & Rumberger. 2007).

In identifying best practices within the category of supplemental student supports, the literature provides a targeted range of practices within the above identified categories with some authors advocating more strongly for specific supports based on their research.

In examining after school programs and projects and their connection to school academic performance, Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke (2005) concluded a consistent element within high performing schools was the inclusion of enrichment programs. An additional component they linked to high performing schools was the use of after-school programs as a means of intentional relationship building. Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown (2004) also discussed the importance of after school support within the context of developmental and socio-emotional needs of students. Their research found a significant link between utilization of afterschool programs and school success across the general population but emphasized the necessity of after school programs for specific groups of children. They define one of these groups as “latchkey” children who operate in many instances independently without consistent adult supervision. This is relevant to ELLs students since some new immigrants, while living with distant relatives or family friends are often for all intents and purposes operating independently (Short & Boyson, 2012).

Vaughn and Roberts (2007) framed the need for additional student supplemental supports within the context of reading interventions. Their argument centers on the value of offering “intensive interventions” that are structured to provide supplemental support in literacy

development. Vaughn and Roberts (2007) findings lend support to the value of additional literacy based developmental practices for ELL students. Again, while literacy is a common area of focus for all students, the development of literacy skills for ELLs are of critical importance in both skill and language acquisition, particularly if the entering student is not literate in their native language. However, in a surprising finding, Harutunjan, (2007) indicated that additional support services for ELL students had a negative effect, citing reduced academic achievement and high levels of socio-emotional concerns associated with additional supports.

Despite Harutunjan's findings, the general consensus from the above literature review was that supplemental supports are valuable and are a factor in student outcomes. As has been the case with each of the prior examined categories, the unanswered question is: What are the most effective supplemental services for high school ELLs? While strong arguments exist for the need for both academic and socio-emotional supports, budgetary considerations require that administrators prioritize how their funds are spent. Independent of unlimited funding, is it feasible to offer a high level of academic supports simultaneously with an extensive socio-emotional support structure inclusive of counselors and social workers? These are decisions that educators make and that are reflected in their model and program structures and are a direct reflection of what they have prioritized. This process of prioritization is a decision making process that reflects knowledge, experience and individual beliefs. The following section examines the role belief systems play in administrator decision making and consequently student outcomes.

### **Belief Systems**

Individual belief systems become internalized thought processes and are manifested in actions, behaviors, and decision making processes. Educators must be particularly aware of their

internal belief system to avoid belief systems that impact their educational policies and potentially have consequent negative side effects on the students they serve. In many ways, it is the belief systems of educators that are the binding element for creating successful schools (Bennis et al., 2008). Truebridge (2010) writes extensively about how individuals' beliefs influence classroom practices and student success. Additional research also discusses the importance of belief systems and the impact belief systems have on performance and behaviors (Drake, G. 2000; Elmore, 2000; Fang, 1996; Karabenick et al., 2004; Karabenick, Cassidy, & Eachus, 2000; Seales, 2011).

When considering decision making regarding instructional models, student and staff supports, and parental engagement, it is important to understand how belief systems and existing norms may impact student performance. This is critical in the context of ELL instruction in New York City because of the autonomy administrators have in model choice and in utilization of funding. In this district, budgets are school specific and are comprised of tax levy and reimbursable funding. While some reimbursable funding may be specific to ELL instruction, building principals have the ultimate authority in determining how those monies are distributed and spent (New York City Department of Education, 2016; Short & Boyson, 2012). Within the context of this budgetary structure it is incumbent upon educators to understand not only what methodologies and structures are most effective in educating ELL students, but also to be self-reflective specific to their own belief systems. Elmore (2000) discusses how belief systems and internalized norms regarding instructional practices and roles have significant implications in student outcomes. He ties the lack of effectiveness of practices to what he describes as "loose coupling" and the rigid systemic internalization of individual beliefs and norms. Elmore (2000) argues for self-reflection but also argues for changes to what he terms "self-created institutional

structures” that reflect a composite of antiquated and ineffective personal norms. Independent of this self-reflection educators run the risk of making decisions that are not supportive of the needs of their students and are potentially a reflection of institutionalized personal biases. Hakuta (2011) expressed similar thoughts, indicating that ineffective ELL programs need to be examined and revised through the lens of their guiding assumptions and processes, again acknowledging the role beliefs play in educational decision making. In an operational example of the impact beliefs have on outcomes, Fuga (2016) analyzed parent engagement through the lens of belief systems. Fuga (2016), discussed how, if underlying belief systems attach limited benefits to engagement of ELL parents, those beliefs will be reflected in structures and practices related to outreach, impact the choices that are being made to support ELL students, and potentially result in limited inclusion of ELL families. This same methodology of decision making can be operationalized to apply to budgetary allotments specific to professional development, supplemental support services, and staffing. As previously stated, professional development is a significant budgetary investment and if the results of that investment are not perceived as being valuable or resulting in improved outcomes for ELL students, then decisions will limit the training teachers receive, potentially reducing instructional effectiveness (Center for Public Education, 2016).

Belief systems of administrators are also of significant importance in the area of instructional models and practices. In such high stakes areas as ELL instruction for high school students, the decisions made by administrators have the real potential of determining whether an ELL student becomes a graduate or a drop out. While administrators theoretically make data based decisions, an equally valid argument is that decisions are belief based and as per Bennis, Goleman & O’Toole (2008) may be part of our unconscious internalized belief systems. If



administrators do not believe that their students can be successful, or that success is externally determined, then there is an increased probability that the students will not become graduates. Evan's (2012) study definitively found that principal beliefs had a direct impact on student outcomes. His research looked at the impact principal beliefs had on retention rates for students. His finding indicated that the beliefs of principals regarding retention were "significant correlates and predictors of schools' retention rates and that principals who held more positive beliefs regarding retention evidenced higher retention rates and retained more frequently than their colleagues who thought of retention less positively" (p.122).

Belief systems and internalized thoughts and feelings are often both conscious and unconscious motivators (Bennis et al. 2008). When administrators make decisions, because of the high stakes implications of these decisions and potential repercussion for populations being served, administrators must ensure that these decisions are student centered and evidence based decisions. This requires reflection and examination of belief systems, and of the role of unconscious and conscious belief systems (Bennis, 2008; Truebridge, 2010). Through the lens of this study, the researcher looked at how belief systems aligned with educational choices. The intended outcome was to add to the literature regarding the role personal belief systems can play in student outcomes, and the consequent importance of deeply examining belief systems specific to decision making.

## **Summary**

The importance of this study was to provide information for practitioners and system leaders specific to the education of ELL students. The literature review encompassed in the previous pages was but a small sampling of the work that has been done in the area of ELL achievement. After reviewing the literature and conducting interviews, and based on national

and state data, it is clear that we need to address the inequities that exist in our education structures and that instructional model choice, selection of supplemental and support services, and teacher preparation provide entry points for improving ELL success. It is equally clear that given the tools and information present in the literature, coupled with the commitment and knowledge evidenced by the interviewees, that the means to address these inequities for high school ELLs exists.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will outline the methodology employed during the research and its rationale in relationship to the research study. Information imbedded in the chapter will be specific to the design of the research, the intent of the research, and the questions the research was intended to answer. Additionally, this chapter will provide an overview of the type of model the researcher employed, the sampling and data collection methods used, and a discussion of how the researcher assured reliability and validity of the research.

The purpose of the research was to provide insights into the alignment that exists between policies, practices, and instructional models utilized in high schools that serve ELLs. The researcher, through a comparative methodology examined sites for consistency of practices, and links that exist between school infrastructure and models, educator beliefs, and achievement data specific to high school ELL populations.

Characteristics of school infra-structures (instructional models, support structures and administrative belief systems) were identified for each site, evaluated for frequency and consistency of practices across schools and then examined through the lens of administrator beliefs and school achievement data. Study results provide information to school and system leaders that will hopefully inform decision making regarding ELLs. It was the intent of the researcher to gain knowledge that would add to the existing information base and would be useful for educators who are committed to serving ELLs. The information and data obtained was used to respond to the following research questions:

RQ1- What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

RQ2- What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exist between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

RQ3- What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?

### **Research Design**

The fundamental purpose of a research design is to delineate logistically how one may test the theories presented and/ or research the questions of the study (Vogt, Gardener, & Haeffele, 2012). This study utilized a qualitative design to research questions surrounding ELL learning, and to uncover patterns specific to school practices, models, and beliefs of administrators and their potential impact on and connections to school achievement for high school level ELLs. The choice of a qualitative model was determined based on the perceived value of said research to the study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), “Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon” (p. 28). As indicated in the literature review, current education models and practices have yet to effectively address the needs of ELLs. Using an in-depth interview process to gain knowledge specific to unanswered questions surrounding ELL instruction adheres to the tenets of a phenomenological study (Vogt & Johnson, 2011) and uses individuals’ engagement with the process to create knowledge. Administrators were asked to examine the phenomenon of ELL instruction within

their schools. When examining the practices of schools, it was the belief of the researcher that this type of knowledge was best obtained by looking at a multitude of factors at a limited number of sites with depth, versus looking for general practices from a large population segment. A qualitative methodology was also chosen because it enabled the researcher to look at the process of ELL instruction through the perspective of its meaning to each school leader, allowing for knowledge to be constructed through their understanding of the processes they engage in. This research, through the use of a qualitative model resulted in recommendations grounded in data and theory that offer potential resources for practitioners and school and system leaders. The use of a qualitative methodology, through the creation of knowledge, additionally lays a theoretical foundation for future research.

This research is a qualitative interview based study and began with an identification of high schools in New York City that had meaningful (>10 % or 100 students) percentages of ELL students. The initial stage of the research, through a literature review, established the below standard achievement of ELL students (both nationally and for New York State), and the consequent need for more consistent and effective methodologies for educating high school ELLs. The research design was structured to explore the sub-standard achievement through the lens of identification of best practices in high school ELL education as evidenced through consistency of practices and alignment of achievement data. Interviews were conducted with a core group of NYC principals and assistant principals. These interviews included targeted questions aligned with literature identifiers of successful school components. Information obtained through the interviews was coded for consistency and frequency of practices and beliefs and then aligned with individual school achievement data for pattern identification

### **Population, sample, sampling method**

The initial pool of high schools were identified through a city wide analysis of NYC Department of Education schools with meaningful percentages of English Language Learners (>10 % or > 100 students). New York State and New York City public data was used to identify schools that met the enrollment standard. Identification and categorization of ELLs in New York State is determined through a two- step process. Entering students, through a mandated protocol using entry interviewing and completion of a form identified as a home language survey are initially identified as potential ELLs. All students who individually self -identify or were identified by their families as English language Learners in step one of the school based identification process are next required to take the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners(NYSITELL) to confirm their eligibility as English language learners. For purposes of this study, the researcher accepted the New York City Department of Education's use of the NYSITELL for identifying students as ELLs (NYSED, 2017) and consequent citing of school demographics specific to the percentage of ELLs at each site (NYSED, 2017; NYCDOE, 2017). NYC DOE reports and web searches produced a core of high schools identified with ELL populations within the study parameters. Twenty- two schools were randomly selected and contacted regarding participation in the study. Once the initial pool of potential study sites was identified, outreach to the sites commenced. Twelve of the twenty- two schools responded to the invitation to participate. Of the twelve, eleven resulted in interviews. Scheduling conflicts prevented the twelfth potential participant from participating.

One administrator from each site was invited to participate in the study. Only principals and assistant principals were identified as potential interview candidates. The subject selection criterion for interviewees was based on the role NYC DOE administrators have in decision

making in their schools. In the NYC DOE, despite emphasis on collaboration, school administrators have relative autonomy in decision making surrounding instructional models, budgetary spending and the consequent prioritization regarding spending on supplemental supports for students and staff. In essence, participating administrators were the primary decision makers specific to instructional and infrastructure choices at their site.

The initial outreach to participants, via e-mail, included the IRB approval form, participant consent form, and was coupled with information on the purpose of the study along with the request for participation. The researcher also provided information regarding the confidentiality of each participant in the request for participation e-mail.

### **Instrumentation**

Once a researcher has determined what his/her research questions and/or hypothesis are, the next step is to determine what data collection instruments will be utilized. The most common form of data collection instrument for qualitative studies is the use of interviews, the primary method that was employed by this researcher (Voght, Gardener, & Haeffele, 2012). Interviews were conducted on a one to one basis and were approximately sixty minutes in length. Interview questions were researcher developed consistent with and aligned to the research questions of the study. Research interview questions were specific to the categories of school leaders' selection of instructional models, support structures and practices, and administrator belief systems. The twenty-five interview questions were a combination of open and closed ended questions allowing for a range of responses and providing an opportunity for the interviewee to expand on information given. The interview questions were the primary information source for the study and provided the researcher the opportunity to deepen understanding in each of the pre-determined areas of analysis.

The interview questions also provided the researcher (dependent on need) with clarifying information and information regarding administrators' rationales for their model design and selection of their systemic structures within the context of their beliefs regarding educating high school level ELL students. The researcher believed that the voices of the individuals who are charged with, and held accountable for the outcomes of the ELL instruction in their schools were an invaluable component to the research. Questions were chosen to provide context for the study and have relevance as potential impacting factors not under the prevue of this study. Interview questions were grounded in theory specific to the areas of the study, were reflective of issues identified in the literature, and fundamental to the data collection of the study.

Questions were reviewed by ELL specialists, school leaders, and a university professor with research expertise for their validity, reliability and relevance to the study research questions prior to beginning interviews. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and transcripts returned to interviewees for member checking.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study included employment of information gathering methods specific to the study purpose, participant permission procedures, development of processes for documenting and storing data acquired, and development of structures designed to ensure confidentiality for all participants. In essence, and as per Creswell (2014), this portion of the study is solely about the process of information gathering that ensures ethics, confidentiality and supports the integrity of the study. Through a literature review, the researcher used national and state data to highlight the below standard achievement of ELL students. Use of public data removes potential researcher bias and legitimizes the premise of low achievement as a study rational. Upon identification of the issue, the researcher began researching schools in NYC that



had meaningful populations of ELLs and obtained participant permission. IRB protocols for informing participants regarding the purpose of the study, the rights of each individual, and the procedures specific to confidentiality and ensuring anonymity were adhered to. The initial school pool was based on the percentage of ELL students present in each site (<10 % < 100 students). Public enrollment data specific to NYC and NYS was used to identify these sites and ensure random sampling. Subsequently, the researcher engaged in a program analysis of each site through interviews with participating administrators. This qualitative research used the interviews as a means of data collection to gain an in-depth understanding of each site's practices, models and administrator beliefs. The interviews were audio recorded and the interviewer also took notes during the course of the interview to ensure accuracy. Interviewees were given pseudonyms and then submitted to a professional transcription service for transcription. Upon completion of the transcription, transcripts were shared with the interviewees for member checking. Once the accuracy of the transcripts was verified, the researcher began analyzing administrator responses. The researcher used Creswell's (2014) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* as a foundational guide.

During the data collection, all participants and sites were de-identified. All recorded and transcribed information was kept in a secure area, and in the case of electronic data bases, kept password protected on a private computer. The privacy and confidentiality of the research subjects was assured by de-identification of all obtained information, assigned pseudonyms, and strict adherence to both Sage and IRB codes of conduct regarding confidentiality and security. Throughout the course of the research, data analysis and dissertation completion, all data was maintained on a private computer (and flash drive) in a private residence with a secure passcode. Upon completion of the study all files will be destroyed based on mandated timelines. Audio

tapes were stored in a locked cabinet in a private residence during the duration of the study with the exception of the transcription stage. The transcriber operated under a confidentiality agreement within the parameters for securing the recording.

## **Data Analysis**

Once the interviews were identified, the researcher began a two-stage data analysis process. These qualitative interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and analyzed through researcher coding specific to the categories of instructional models, support mechanisms for teachers and students, and administrative beliefs surrounding ELL instruction. These school factors were analyzed to identify similarities and differences between school sites and consequent consistencies of practices. The data acquired from the interviews was coded through researcher work to identify a composite of consistent practices, and alignment of belief systems. The second step of the data analysis was a document review and entailed examining achievement and state indicators for each study site. Data was examined on a whole school basis (specific to ELL performance) and not reviewed on an individual student basis. In the case of this study, the achievement data provided additional context for exploring school practices for consistency, alignment to belief systems and student outcomes. Achievement data reviewed included graduation rates, career readiness indicators, and culminating examinations. Additionally data collection was a two stage process with stage one (site specific data diving) being a micro level data collection and analysis of performance indicators being a macro level data analysis. Outcomes for this study included identification of consistency of practices and models prevalent in high schools serving ELL students, connections between beliefs and instruction models and supplemental supports choices, and patterns evidencing alignment between administrative decision making and school performance.

## **Validity**

Validity in a study relates to the degree to which the research measures reflect the underlying construct or research questions. Qualitative validity centers on the researcher's check for accuracy of the finding (Alemu, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Vogt et al., 2012). For the purposes of this study, validity was ensured by the following processes. Prior to engaging in the interview process, initial interview questions were vetted to ensure relevance of the questions to ELL research as well as validity of the questioning process. Validity was also ensured through the consistency of the questioning during the interview process. Member checking of interviews post interview transcription provided opportunities for correction of any errors and inclusion of misinformation. Interviews were recorded and the researcher took notes as a secondary measure to ensure accuracy and the recording of the interview validates the researcher's note taking. Also, while validity is often more associated with quantitative studies, in the research specific to this dissertation, step two of the research, categorically looking at school specific performance data would address validity through triangulation. The use of public state and city data sets would also add to the validity of the study.

## **Reliability**

Reliability relates to the degree to which the same results found in a specific research methodology would reproduce themselves in repetition (Alemu, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Vogt et al., 2012). This research, as a qualitative study, was validated through the consistency of procedures used for interviews and the consistency of questions presented to the interviewees. Analysis of achievement data evidences reliability through the usage of the same criteria, public data sources and state performance indicators for review of each school. Finally, use of multiple sources for data that are intended to corroborate each other is identified as triangulation and can

serve as a means of ensuring research validity. The use of triangulation also allowed for increased validity and reduced the possibility of outcome impact.

### **Bias Reduction**

In qualitative research, bias can affect the validity and reliability of findings. Bias can be reflected in questions posed, selection of samples, or through reporting of data. The researcher eliminated potential question bias by having the interview questions reviewed by experts. Sample selections were randomly chosen based on self-selection, and consistent criteria were utilized for selection choices and therefore justified. All interview data was coded to determine findings. This process removes any interpretive element to the data analysis. All findings and conclusions were based on data and the frequency of repetition, again reducing the potential for researcher bias and the potential for generalization. Using state and city data as determinants for achievement again removed any researcher bias since the information being cited is existing data from reliable sources, therefore removing any mechanism for prejudice.

### **Summary**

The process and methodology of this study was intended to produce information that was reliable and valid. The intent was to also, through appropriate research methods, explore an area of interest and value to others in the field of education. The researcher adhered to all mandated IRB and recommend protocols to ensure the rights of the participants and the integrity of the research.

This chapter has described the research method utilized in the study. The following Chapter Four presents the information obtained from the interviews. This data is presented within the context of the research questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PARTICIPANT RESPONSES**

#### **Introduction**

This study documented practices of multiple high schools in a single large urban district specific to English as second language students. The research examined infrastructures in high schools as a mechanism for identifying consistent practices for ELL learning and consequently examined relationships that exist between school structures, school models, administrator beliefs, and school achievement data.

Chapter Four of this dissertation presents and documents the information collected during the interview process thereby generating a series of consequent findings. The chapter provides the reader with an analysis of the responses provided by participants during the interview process relative to instructional model choices, professional development, parent involvement, and support services. Interview responses are presented consistent with the interview format, which followed the same categorical sequence utilized in the literature review. Within the context of the research questions, based on the categorical topics, Chapter Four includes general findings and analyzes interview responses. All response information is presented anonymously to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

National data indicate that graduation rates for ELLs consistently lag significantly behind graduation rates for non-ELL students. Moreover, data indicate higher drop-out rates for ELL students than for their non-ELL counterparts (NCES, 2017; NYSED, 2017). Given the consistent increase in the numbers of ELLs entering the educational system, determining how to

address these graduation and drop-out rate disparities has become a critical educational, political, and equity issue.

Although ELLs nationally evidence below average performance statistics in contrast with their non-ELL counterparts, there are clearly schools, districts, and states that are meeting or performing above the state and district averages and standards for ELLs. There are also numerous cases of ELL students who enter schools with similar educational backgrounds and personal circumstances that evidence dramatically different outcomes. The question is why? Why do ELL students with comparable educational and personal backgrounds differ in their success within the educational system? Arguments have been made that external mitigating factors are a defining element of this incongruity and, while this may be plausible in some instances, graduation and drop-out rates normed for large populations of ELLs indicate wide differences in educational outcomes. Given this information, coupled with the need to improve outcomes overall, it makes sense for educators to establish clarity on what practices and instructional methodologies are consistently aligned with stronger student outcomes. Also, as mentioned above, the importance of such clarification is amplified because the entry of older ELL students into the United States and particularly into certain hub states, like New York, is increasing (Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

While considerable research exists surrounding these issues, there is still a great deal of ambiguity in identifying what practices evidence improved outcomes. Moreover, current literature, while including numerous studies and research on elementary and middle school students, is limited in its analysis of high school entry ELLs and what practices and models best support their learning and success. It is of value to identify practices that evidence consistent

success across schools and understand how they support high school ELLs. As discussed in detail in chapter two, the literature is ambiguous.

The purpose of this research was to provide insights into the alignment that exists between policies, practices and instructional models utilized in high schools that serve ELLs. The researcher, through a comparative methodology examined sites for consistency of practices, and links that exist between school infra-structure and models, educator beliefs, and achievement data specific to high school ELL populations.

The research was intended to provide school and system leaders with information that supported and helped inform their decision making regarding structures that are consistent and connected to positive outcomes for all ELLs, but particularly for high school level ELL populations. The research for this study was specific to high schools within the New York City Department of Education. The New York City Department of Education is an urban school district that currently serves 1,034,625 students spread across five New York City boroughs, is one of the largest educational urban school districts in the country, as well as one of the most diverse (NYC DOE, 2017).

### **Participant Demographics**

This dissertation is a qualitative interview based research project. Initial study parameters included ten to fifteen sites (schools) for participant interviews. Outreach occurred to twenty two sites with eleven responses. Interview sites were from four of the five boroughs within the NYC Department of Education. The fifth borough had no high schools that met the criteria for the study. All study participants were administrators of New York City Public High Schools and their schools were identified for interview purposes based on the percentages of ELL students in their high schools. Invitations were e-mailed to possible interviewees and

participants were included based on their willingness and availability to participate in the study. The selection of high school administrators as study interviewees occurred because of their knowledge base, their experience, and their decision-making authority. Administrators that work with significant numbers of ELLs, through their exposure, have deeper and more experiential understandings and knowledge bases than individuals whose experience with ELLs is through singular students or small groups. Each interviewee was asked a series of standardized questions specific to their practices and the instructional decisions they made regarding ELL instruction. Interview protocols included the consistent use of a prescript. During the prescript the interviewee identified the title and purpose of the study as well as the relevance of the interview to the purpose of the study. Participants were then asked a consistent series of questions directly taken from the interview document. At the end of the interview all participants were thanked for their participation and informed of the protocol for returning the transcribed document for member checking. Interviews were structured to occur within a period of approximately sixty minutes. Interview times ranged from forty-seven minutes to one hundred sixty minutes based on interviewee responses. Once completed, recording of interviews were transcribed, returned to interviewees for member checking and coded.

Interview participants included a variety of administrators with a range of instructional experience. Of the participants, three were male and eight were female and interviewee ages ranged from the mid-thirties to sixty plus years. There was a similar range of administrative experience with participants having between one to twenty plus years of experience in the New York City Department of Education. All participants had prior educational experience, primarily as assistant principals and teachers, although two participants were guidance counselors at one time in their careers.



Backgrounds of the interviewees were also varied. Of the eleven participants, six identified themselves as entering the system as ELLs and having experiences that aligned with the issues facing current ELL students. Seven interviewees indicated actively choosing to work with an ELL population and two others discussed how it became a natural fit with their professional trajectories. One interviewee indicated that work with ELLs was a random occurrence. Of the interviewees, nine individuals indicated proficiency in at least one second language and in two cases multiple languages. Nine of the interviewees indicated prior exposure to, or training for, working with ELL students before becoming administrators. The following table provides a summary of the demographic information about the participants. Table 1 information includes: identification of individuals speaking more than one language; identification of individuals who actively chose to work with an ELL population; years of working as an administrator; the date of the interview; identification of participants who self-identified as immigrants or members of immigrant families; and participants training on ELL instruction prior to entering their administrative roles.

**Table 1**  
*Participant demographics*

| <b>Respondent Pseudonyms</b> | <b>Second Language</b>                    | <b>Active Choice</b> | <b>Immigrant</b> | <b>Years of Experience</b> | <b>DI</b> | <b>Prior Training</b> |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| AIA                          | Y   | N                    | N                | >5                         | 3/9/2017  | Y                     |
| AIB                          | N   | Y                    | N                | >15                        | 3/11/2017 | N                     |
| AIC                          | Y   | Y                    | Y                | >10                        | 3/30/2017 | Y                     |
| AID                          | Y   | N                    | N                | >10                        | 4/3/2017  | Y                     |
| AIE                          | Y   | Y                    | Y                | >5                         | 4/3/2017  | Y                     |
| AIF                          | Y   | Y                    | Y                | <5                         | 4/5/2017  | Y                     |
| AIG                          | Y   | Y                    | Y                | >10                        | 4/6/2017  | Y                     |
| AIH                          | N   | N                    | N                | >10                        | 4/27/2017 | N                     |
| AII                          | Y   | Y                    | N                | <5                         | 7/27/2017 | Y                     |
| AIJ                          | Y   | Y                    | Y                | <5                         | 7/27/2017 | Y                     |
| AIK                          | Y   | N                    | Y                | <5                         | 8/15/2017 | Y                     |
| Immigrant-DI-                | Immigrant experience<br>Date of Interview |                      |                  |                            |           |                       |

Chapter four explores the information presented from each interviewee within the context of specific categories surrounding instruction. Research findings are presented in the following section.

### **Research Question One**

**What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?** Participant responses included their rationale for choices in instructional models primarily from a perspective of alignment to student needs and their belief

systems surrounding student learning. Interview questions specific to research question one included:

- What instructional model do you use in your school and why did you choose the model?
- Why do you believe this model supports learning specific to high school ELLs, and what might be the weaknesses of the model?
- What are the specific instructional practices and structures that teachers consistently use in classrooms to support ELLs?
- What are your beliefs about how older ELLs should receive instruction?
- What do you identify as budgetary priorities for supporting ELLs?

There are three themes surrounding model selection for ELLs.

**Table 2**

*Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question #1*

| <b>Themes</b>  | <b>Number of Leaders With a Related Response</b> |
|--|--|
| Instructional structures reflect a hybridization of models in response to student diversity. | 9/11   |
| English only models were the dominant model identified for older, late entry ELLs.           | 10/11  |
| Consistently identified curricula and practices within models.                               | 11/11  |

The sections that follow provide an overview of interviewee responses for research question one. The following three sections sequentially address the three themes. Section one analyzes responses specific to the uniqueness of students, the importance of responding to the myriad of student needs, and the consequent hybridization of models as an instructional response

strategy. Section two presents administrator responses and beliefs surrounding model selection and general advocacy for an English only model for high school level students. It also includes interviewees' opinions on perceived model strengths and weakness. The third section explores the findings for research question one specific to consistency of instructional practices.

**Research question one, theme one, hybridization of models in response to student diversity.** Decision making choices by all interviewees strongly emphasized the importance of recognizing that high school entry ELLs presented unique challenges. These challenges are a result of the distinctions in their educational needs and cultural orientation and the limited time available for these ELL students to pass required courses and exit examinations while simultaneously mastering a new language. Nine of eleven administrators raised these factors as an issue, speaking to the variations in the types of ELL students present in high schools and the challenge of responding to their needs. Administrator AIK stated:

On the most basic level we need to understand that ELLs as a population have very specific needs versus other students....needs have to be delineated and you also have to understand where they're coming from, their country, the role of education and the education systems there and respond to it. Meeting students where they are and then trying to get them to graduation is very different if you are talking about a child from Ecuador versus a student from Mexico versus a student from Dominican Republic or a student from China or Bangladesh.

Administrator AID mirrored some of the same realities. He indicated that students entering from some cultures place a high value on education and other students enter from cultures that have very little formal educational structures and place less value on formalized education

In the U.S. when we talk about language, we're also talking about literacy. It's not just to speak and understand ... but it is also about learning how to read and to write at a very high level. And if your home culture doesn't have reading and writing, then this is a very new experience. Some cultural groups immigrate and they hit the ground running and some culture teenagers have... issues.

Seven interviewees identified the varied entry points of students as impacting factors in model alignment. AIF spoke to the lack of alignment between grade assignments and grade level curricula and how entering ELLs, because of diversity in cultural backgrounds, skill sets, and educational exposure and beliefs do not always fit standardized grade levels. AIF, in analyzing the NYC DOE structure stated, "We're talking about putting kids into age-appropriate grades but not knowledge appropriate grades. So they are missing out. This gap is tremendous."

Five administrators talked about how having students with varied entry language ability, formal schooling, and literacy development all "lumped" under an ELL designation impacts student learning and creates significant challenges for both teachers and students. Some programs delineate placement based on age or language acquisition levels which may result in a wide range of needs evidenced in the same classroom. AIF stated, "In one class you may have kids of all different levels...within our classes they're all mixed together. We don't have a separate class for the beginners or emerging." AIC shared that he adapted his curriculum and model in response to the recognition of these realities. AIC, while identifying his school as a dual language school offers free standing English only classes within what could be described as a transitional bilingual model. Based on his data, AIC adapted his instructional model to accommodate his student needs. In describing his instructional structure and his three categories of programs, AIC explained that ELL instruction was stand-alone for students who want to

immerse themselves in English and don't want to speak any other language or have a lack of academic content in their own language. The other programs include a dual language one- way and dual language two- way. The dual language two- way is for a student who is at a high level of proficiency in both languages. Additionally, AIC specified that the dual language one way and two way differed in how content was taught specific to the alignment of language and skill needs, and differed in how students were transitioned through programs as their needs changed.

AIF uses a similar hybridized (mixed) model structure. In her school, beginning ELLs are taught in English in free standing ESL classes (an English only model). Students entering at higher proficiency levels of English are placed in classes that are co-taught through a push- in model. Her student placement is based on entering language levels and assessment of needs.

AII, whose school is identified as a bilingual program, rather than offering classes partially in the native language and partially in English, provides instruction for first year students primarily in their native language. Because of AIA's beliefs regarding the importance of initially supporting native language literacy and the value of creating environments that acknowledge students' native language and affirm their identities, she adapted her program model to reflect these beliefs.

Administrator AIJ also modifies her dual language model to offer all first year ELL entry classes in students' native language. Her rationale is consistent with AIJ but also has a primary purpose of supporting students' socio-emotional transition to a new country and language.

Sites that offered English only models evidenced the same variation in model application. Some sites offered free standing ELL classes while others taught language only through content classes. Methods for providing native language support varied as well. The consistent theme throughout the English only models regarding native language usage was to use the native

language as a support and for context as needed but emphasizing the use of English in conversation and practice.

As per AIA, “They [students] need to be using their native language, and be able to think in their native language and come up with the answer in English.” Prioritizing English usage appeared to stem not from a dismissal of the value of a first language in learning a second language but more from a needs assessment and adaptation of models to the time constraints of high school ELLs, particularly over age entry students.

AIE spoke to the varied levels of student ability and skill evidenced in a single class of students. She stated, “In one class you may have kids of all different levels. I mean, again, most of our kids are newcomers...but within all of our classes they’re all mixed together. So we don’t have a separate class for the beginners or emerging.” Her methodology of response within her English only model focused on using a strategy identified as differentiation to meet student needs. Instructional differentiation focuses on the presentation of consistency of material topics but within varied methods of access and skill levels. She did stress that this model’s success was dependent upon the ability of teachers to adjust materials for the varied language and skill levels within the classes and thoughtfully creating curriculum and projects that actively engage students in inquiry based work. She notes, “You really have to be trained to do that...you really have to think about how to differentiate.” AIH, also speaking to the unique needs of high school ELLs emphasized the importance of literacy development in her free standing ELL classes and the consequent structuring of her model and class design to emphasize literacy. Her ELL students all enter as over age under credited students and she feels learning needs to be challenging and include not just language development but literacy development and modifies her curriculum and model accordingly. AIH stated, “One of the things I want to say is about the

literacy strategy, that's something we espouse... you will see it in all the classrooms. We know that students come to us behind, we have struggles with literacy.”

The theme of instruction focusing on literacy development aligned to the needs of the student emerged in all of the interviews as a consideration in model design as did the importance of offering cognitively challenging levels of literature to students, maintaining high standards, and engaging in rigorous instruction. Administrator AIA, in supporting an English only model with free standing ESL classes emphasized the importance of structuring the model to allow for students to use the native language as a tool to frame content. AIA explained:

It's not about speaking in their [native language], it's about when you have an activity and clarifying to them and allowing them to discuss in their native language. But as long as the answer is in English, and you're giving them the language to speak for the final answer...kids need a minute to flush it out in their own language and then think about the structure in English.

For her, an English only model meant teaching all subjects in English while using the native language as a support for framing instruction.

Based on interviewee responses, it became apparent that singular model titles, while useful as general labels of a school's methodology, did not necessarily fully encompass or reflect the instructional strategies present in schools. As indicated in the themes, the hybridizing of models was a direct result of administrators prioritizing the needs of their students versus adhering to the “purity” of a single instructional model. However, in discussing the varied instruction model implementation in schools, it is important to note that if and when model modification occurs, it is in response to the needs of the students, and not a reflection of



budgetary or disjointed services. Administrator AIB spoke to diversity and hybridization of models with a cautionary emphasis. He stated there is:

A lot of variety in the way these services are delivered across the schools....so families see differences that may not necessarily be aligned in support of the needs of students....a sibling may be in a different school, receiving different services, but not necessarily because that's what that child needs, just what the school has to offer.

AIB also frankly discussed his belief surrounding schools choices in provision of ELL instruction and the weaknesses he has observed surrounding some sites' instructional choices for ELLs and the consequent provision of services. He also spoke to the importance of system and school leaders within the NYC DOE understanding what ELL services are, the distinctions between structures of instructional models, and how models are structured and implemented in the context of student needs specific to language acquisition. This mirrored AIA's belief that leaders need to understand model distinction and the methodology of language acquisition employed in each model to effectively align models, in whatever form they are structured, to student needs.

Consequently and not surprisingly, model selection and instructional structures were key elements identified in designing and ensuring adequate and equitable education for ELL students. In the cases of the study sites in this dissertation, however, such decisions often involved offering multiple model structures or hybridizing models to meet the needs of their students, and in some cases the limitations of resources.

**Research question one, theme two, English only models as a selection.** Nine administrators interviewed used either an English only model (EOM) singularly, incorporated structures from English only models into their framework, or verbally supported EOM's for use

with older entry ELLs. One participant indicated an EOM as his instructional model of choice but used a push-in model because of budgetary restraints. Ten administrators mentioned the value of an EMO particularly for late entry ELLs and over-age under credited students.

AIA indicated that her school uses an English immersion model with free standing ESL classes. She stated, “I do not believe in a bilingual model for high school ELLs.” This belief was supported by her personal experience in working with students in a bilingual model. Her criticism of the bilingual model revolved around the college and career readiness of students exiting a bilingual model. She cited examples of students graduating from a bilingual program who were unable to clearly express themselves or engage in English based conversations. For her, this weakness was a direct result of the lack of purity in the implementation of a bilingual model. The intent of a bilingual model is to teach students partially in the native language and partially in English with sequencing down of the native language. It was her experience that the courses often ended up being consistently taught in the native language to expedite content learning resulting in students being ill prepared for secondary education.

Reflected in AIA’s support of an immersion model was an underlying understanding of language acquisition and how she aligned her knowledge of language acquisition with model choice. This is reflected in her statement, “Students of a new language have to think cognitively in their own language ... and it is a process.” It was the belief of this administrator that educators need to understand language acquisition and respond accordingly with instructional supports that facilitate and enhance the process. In reflecting on model efficacy, administrator AIA indicated that while utilizing an immersion model and believing in the value of that model for her students, she also discussed the importance of student motivation and the importance of strong instruction. AIK also referenced the importance of English only models in developing

internal thought processes specific to language development and acquisition. Discussing her experiences as a former ELL student she states:

I very much believe that from the very beginning older ELL students should be receiving all instruction in English as much as possible. Even if they speak to me in [native language], speaking back to them in English not only exposes them to the language, but forces them to start having to think in the language ...they're hearing it, they're seeing it all around them...and they may not even know that they're processing these things.

Administrator AIE like AIA and AIK utilizes an English only immersion model but without free standing ESL classes. AIE states, "A lot of our kids come in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> grade. They have a very short time." In AIE's model student instruction occurs completely in English with native language supports. Language development occurs, not in free standing ESL classes but through a process that is simultaneously occurring with content acquisition in content based classes. She indicates that use of this model is linked with her beliefs that students learn best when there is heterogeneity and collaboration, and where curriculum is experiential and project based, and as per her model, all language acquisition occurs during content based lessons. As per administrator AIE, "Every teacher is a language teacher." AIE's rationale for this model is that high school entry ELLs because of their age and deficits in English, "don't have a lot of time," and consequently language and content need to be taught simultaneously. In reflecting on this model, AIE felt that it most closely aligns with and meets the needs of older entry high school ELLs. She did stress that this model's success was dependent upon the ability of teachers to differentiate material.

Administrator AIK spoke to the value of an English only model in developing career readiness. She states:

Our ultimate goal isn't just to graduate our students but to make them college and career ready. And so to sort of immerse them in the language is really more real-life exposure to what they're going to have to experience once they do graduate from us. I think, specifically for a high school student, I think that the bilingual or the bilingual type model, it doesn't really support them for what they're going to experience after they leave the school and not providing them with the sort of a robust college and career readiness skill set. And that's really what we're trying to prepare our students for when they leave us.

However, AIJ in discussing her choice of a dual language model emphasized her belief regarding the importance of allowing students to engage with their native language at their discretion. AII expressed similar views but also felt that varied age entry of ELLs required differences in model selection, favoring an immersion model for older ELLs. AIH, whose model is a hybridized model which includes free standing ESL classes and push-in model practices indicated, "I think that older ELLs should be stand-alone ESL. I think that they only have two years maybe three to move on to college.... and need to learn English faster." Eight interviewees identified time constraints as a reality when dealing with high school ELLs and linked time on task to their support of English only models. Interviewees noted how the majority of high school ELLs (although a few schools have waivers) have the same graduation requirements as non-ELLs. In addition to their graduation requirements, ELLs have an additional requirement of language acquisition. These dual requirements exist within what is often shorten high school spans (based on age of entry) and lend themselves to an English only model of instruction. As per AIK:

Most of them [students] are coming to us at about 18... and then we have limited time working with them. Having this English language emerging model puts them in a place where they have to engage with the language, think in the language as much as possible...and in many ways to try to accelerate their learning.

In continuing to review administrator beliefs regarding model selection for high school ELLs, AIB utilizes a push-in model of ELL instruction. Students are scheduled in regular mainstream classes and then, consistent with a push-in model, an ESL teacher will be present in a specific class to support the student, pushing into the class and in his school, with a primary focus on literacy. In terms of bilingual models, AIB believes this model has the advantage of increased participation of ELL students with native speakers and general education students. He advocates for this model versus a pull-out model (which had been used previously in his school) because it does not result in students being excluded from any classes and missing any classroom learning. As per administrator AIB:

Eliminating the pull-out structure for ELL instruction has been very important because of the sense of isolation that comes with that model, I think [it] can lead to segregation of students by language, which can cause them to feel different, separate, other than all of the students in the school.

In assessing the push-in model for weaknesses, administrator AIB acknowledged that the level of support provided for any singular child may not meet the needs of the student through a push-in model because of the limited frequency of the ESL teacher/student time together. Since push-in, for his site was by grade and class, multiple students may be in the same class, further impacting the dedicated time for each student. Another consideration of this model structure as per administrator AIB is the additional work load of the primary teacher. In discussing his

selection of this model AIB indicated that budgetary limitations were a factor in selecting a push-in model. Administrator AIB stated he believed a primary determinant of the success of a push-in model was dependent on the level of collaboration that occurred between the push-in teacher and the regular classroom teacher. AIB states, “One of the things that we’ve done this year to support that is to strategically program teacher planning time, so that they are able to plan together, not just share lesson plans or communicate via email.” He strongly advocates for a co-teaching structure when utilizing a push-in model and created teacher schedules that include shared planning time for strategic lesson creation.

AIA expressed concerns around the use of a push-in or pull-out model. It was her belief that when only a few ELLs are present in the classroom, they just “blend into the wall.” Her thoughts were that having someone push in to the classes may provide some additional support but was often a singular daily experience for the student and may not result in any real ownership for the student learning. It was the belief of administrator AIA that use of a push-in or pull-out model was a factor in weak student performance and outcomes. Administrators AIF, AID, and AIK expressed similar concerns. AID, who currently utilizes a push-in model, spoke to his concerns regarding the model, “I don’t really believe that the push-in model works. I don’t believe it works as well as standalone ESL classes.” The weaknesses include, “Planning time, delivery of the services, sharing of the airtime during the lesson by the different teachers in the classroom, figuring out how to assess the learning, ownership of the children by the teachers. That’s a really big one.”

AID indicated he had previously used an English only model in his school but changes in mandates requiring additional services for “post ESL kids” resulted in him no longer being able to fiscally support stand-alone ESL classes.

In discussing the distinctions between dual language models versus English only models for high school students, three interviewees expressed a belief that while dual language models had strengths, they were not designed for older high school ELLs or ELLs entering with weak native language skills, over-age and under-credited, or as SIFE students. AII and AIJ emphasized the value of students' engagement with the native language as a causal factor in development of English literacy. AIA however, felt that dual language was a valid model but primarily for younger (elementary /middle) school students who wanted to speak a second language. She states, "Dual language I understand is half the day in your native language, half the day in English. But I think that's good for very small kids who want to speak a different language." Three interviewees spoke to the composition of dual language programs specific to student entry skill levels as a factor in success. AIC, in his hybridized dual language model indicated success for a two- way dual language model was connected to students entering with literacy in one of the languages served. He indicates:

The difference between dual language one-way [versus two-way dual language] is the model of a student who does not speak English, and is proficient in their native language.

The dual language two- way is for a student who has a high level of proficiency in both languages.

As mentioned previously, AIC in response to this belief, programmed students without strong literacy in one language into free standing ESL class.

Looking at what instructional model is being used in schools is valuable and a beginning stage for understanding what works for high school ELL students. However, as indicated by interviewee responses, model effectiveness is predicated on aligning model practices to identified student needs. It was the belief of the researcher that to have a clearer understanding

of the design of effective instruction for ELLs there was value in looking not only at the identified model choice but exploring in more depth the instructional practices consistently advocated for, and utilized by administrators.

**Research question 1, theme three, consistently identified practices within models.**

An important component of any model is how the curriculum is used to support the model and what instructional practices are evidenced as standard within the execution of the curriculum. Looking at models through the lens of curriculum also provides insight into additional beliefs individuals hold about ELL instruction. Curricular and classroom practices arguably provide structure to educational models and are fundamental to outcome achievement. The following section highlights those discussions and the elements prioritized.

A consistently identified high priority for interviewees was literacy development. Ten interviewees emphasized literacy development as a key factor in ELL success. AIB states, “We’ve targeted instruction particular around literacy,” and AIG explains:

Kids aren’t reading enough and there needs to be more reading.....amplifying their knowledge and amplifying their vocabulary and amplifying their repertoire of writing, so we spend a lot of time getting them to do more reading.... and we spent a lot of time around low–stakes writing.

Five administrators specifically spoke to lack of rigor in existing materials and curricula specific to ELLs. Administrator AIA discussed the importance of focusing on literacy development for her students and actively works with her staff to align reading materials to the state common core standards and the levels of her ELLs. She describes this as a multi-layered task and includes ensuring the alignment of the reading levels to prevent selection of literature that is not cognitively challenging for students. Administrator AIA, indicating her displeasure with the



reading materials present in her school, when assuming the principal's role revamped her reading pool. Her focus was on adding reading material that focused on diversity and cognitive engagement, even though a significant portion of her ELLs enter as beginners and non-speakers. She stated, "Now, I have people reading the Outsiders, doing speeches from Ghandi and I have a Dream also." AIA discussed her modification of existing curricula to ensure cognitively challenging instruction and cautioned others regarding reducing the rigor of instruction for ELLs. As per administrator AIE, a common mistake made in ELL instruction, is "the dummifying down of reading selections in an attempt to respond to the limited English language proficiency of ELLs." As per administrator AIE and echoed by administrators AIC, AIH, and AIK, lack of language is not equated with lack of executive functioning and higher level thinking skills. This fact was documented within the literature and echoed by administrators as a major error in the selection of materials for ELL students (Eschevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2013). Administrator AIE indicated that in her school all curriculums and materials are internally created. The reason for this directly relates to the lack of what she perceives as appropriately aligned and challenging curricular materials for ELLs. This administrator openly discussed her concerns over the centralized material presented as well as many vendor circulated ELL curriculums on the market. It was her feeling that much of the literature for ELLs was "watered down." Administrator AIC talked about having to purchase literature from foreign countries to get native language based reading that aligned with his literacy curriculum and supported students' cognitive levels. He indicated, "The other challenging piece is finding literature."

A second consistent practice recommended by all eleven interviewees targeted the importance of instruction, regardless of model choice, being project and inquiry based and the consequent minimization of seat time activities for students. The literature punctuates and

supports the value of students being both physically and cognitively engaged in tasks, a practice echoed in interviewees' responses (Jensen, 2008). Administrator AIG stated, "The use of project and inquiry based learning, as well as other identified ELL strategies is really at a fundamental level, just about good pedagogy for all students." However, AIG indicated that for students who do not have the language skills or vocabulary to engage in conversations or express themselves verbally, the use of project based learning provides opportunities to actively and cognitively engage in learning activities and transcend the language barrier. Administrator AIE spoke to the importance of student engagement as a key factor in fostering student learning and outcome achievement. Her school actively encourages teachers to use project based learning for the same reasons articulated above. AIA, AIF, AIG, and AIK all specifically advocated for project and experiential based instruction. AIE says, "Students are asked to work together to either solve a problem or complete a task." A principle (of our school) is "experiential learning project-based instruction." In promoting project based instruction all interviewees also discussed the importance of using a core of consistent techniques school wide. All sites used some combination of consistently identified core techniques. These techniques included: sentence starters, use of visuals, graphic organizers, Venn diagrams, literature circles, text coding, annotation, jigsaws, peer editing, pair-share activities, student stations, and Socratic seminars.

Among interviewees, five mentioned that project based and experiential learning while highly recommended, needed to include incorporation of the above identified skill based tactics and practiced consistently to support student access to project based learning.

In continuing to examine participant responses, another consistently identified instructional need for ELL students centered on creating multiple access points for student learning. Six participants discussed how the presentation of material needed to be introduced

through a sequenced process identified as scaffolding, to allow student access to and comprehension of material independent of language levels. AIG states, “You don’t have to make it easier, you just have to make it accessible.” Creation of instruction that presents material through a step by step learning sequence (scaffolding of instruction) was identified by interview participants as a key component of quality instruction for ELL students. Interviewees noted that the effectiveness of this instructional strategy was directly aligned to teacher pedagogy and effectiveness in implementing scaffolded lessons that challenged students both linguistically and academically. Interviewees also emphasized the importance of training teachers how to scaffold as a primary consideration in their professional development.

Aligned to scaffolding, eight administrators spoke specifically about the importance of classrooms tasks being differentiated to support the needs of students. As presented earlier, ELL classrooms often reflect a wide range of student abilities. Given this reality, these administrators cited the value of allowing students to engage with material at different levels and entry points as another determinate in student outcomes. Administrator AIE discussed how the ability to differentiate was a critical component of the model of instruction utilized in her school. In her site model, since all classes are taught in English with ESL instruction occurring in content based classrooms, this results in students of mixed language levels being in the same content based classroom. AIG using the same model structure as AIE identified differentiation of material as a primary instructional strategy for her as well. Both administrators discussed the importance of not only instructional differentiation as a foundational teacher skill but also the importance of structuring teacher teams specific to levels of students as another internal structural support. AIA, supporting the importance of differentiation, actively works with her teaching staff to ensure identification of the language levels of students and align entry points to the content

material based on language levels. She talked about the process stating “You need to pay attention to what they’re [teachers] are teaching at each level, like in global 1, or 3 or 4, you need to survey your kids to figure out what the ESL level is and try to fit that into the material you are giving them.”

In identifying successful practices for ELL instruction a fourth element prioritized by interviewees was the creation of student centered classrooms. While this links with recommendations for project and inquiry based learning, five interviewees also specifically noted this in their identification of practices. As mentioned in the literature review, current literature argues against teacher dominated classrooms, whether students are ELLs or non-ELLs (Eschevarria, 2008). Five interviewees spoke to the value of fostering structures that eliminate lengthy periods of teacher lectures and replace them with interactive learning structures that allow students to communicate in non-traditional forms. AIE states, “How can you think that students that don’t have language are going to learn through language.” Identifying language acquisition as one of the primary foci for ELL instruction, presentation of lecture based lessons to new or intermediate language learners minimizes their access points for learning. Consequently, interviewees AIA, AIC, AIE, AIG, and AIK, spoke to the value of classroom structures that they believe foster students’ social and academic learning through peer interactions. In creating student centered classrooms, AIE emphasized the value of using strategic groupings and pairings of students as an instructional strategy. Each of the above interviewees noted the value of model structures and curricula that allows students to learn from each other through guided practice. AIE identifying elements that contribute to student success stated:

I would say moving to a more student-centered approach and a collaborative approach. I mean, of course I'm biased because it works, what we do here, but I think where students can turn to each other, turn to their partner... and students can learn from each other.

In evaluating model effectiveness, responses indicated administrators identified a core of consistent practices that they believed evidenced positive outcomes for ELL students. In addition, administrators indicated a preference for use of an English only model for high school ELLs particularly when students are entering as over-age, may be under-credited, and evidence large gaps in their prior education. They based this preference on the needs of their student populations and their professional beliefs.

In continuing to explore factors that contribute to positive ELL outcomes there was a belief, supported by the literature and through the statements of interviewees, that additional key factors centering on ELL outcomes include the quality of the instruction, how gaps in instruction and skill are addressed through non-academic supplemental supports and the role of parent engagement in supporting students. The following portion of chapter four will examine the components specific to staff and student supports in response to research question two.

## **Research Question Two**

**What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?** For the purposes of this research, support structures examined for students included parental engagement, and support through supplemental services. Faculty support structures were examined exclusively through the lens of professional development. Results of participant interviews and findings for research question two will be examined and presented in the above identified categories of parent engagement, supplemental student support services and staff

professional development. Each sub-section of this chapter includes the interview questions asked, the themes specific to each topic, and interviewee responses.

**Parent engagement.** Interviewees had varied responses regarding the levels of parent engagement that exists at their schools and the role it plays in impacting student outcomes. Interviewees discussed their beliefs surrounding ELL parent engagement, their choices regarding how parents are engaged, and their thoughts on what factors impact parent engagement in their schools. Interview questions specific to parent engagement included:

- What does parent engagement look like in your school and what percentage of ELL families are active participants?
- How much of an impact do you feel parent engagement plays in academic outcomes for your ELL students and why?

Themes for research question two surrounding parent engagement for ELLs included the following:

**Table 3**

*Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question #2, parent engagement*

| <b>Themes</b>   | <b>Number of Leaders<br/>With a Related<br/>Response</b> |
|---|--|
| Parental engagement was viewed as a positive support for schools.                               | 10/11  |
| ELL parental engagement needs to be reevaluated and redefined.                                  | 7/11   |
| School perspectives of parental needs are reflected in the parent engagement models.            | 8/11   |
| A core of consistently used engagement practices for fostering parent involvement that include: |  |
| • Culturally based and celebratory events   | 11/11  |
| • Student award ceremonies  | 8/11   |
| • Parent ESL classes  | 6/11   |
| • Informational workshops specific to ELL issues  | 11/11  |
| • Family counseling services  | 9/11   |
| • Student performances  | 7/11   |

Ten of eleven interviewees advocated for the value of parental involvement, however they differed in their thoughts on generalized definitions, roles schools played in fostering parent engagement and in their levels of parent engagement as defined through the lens of NYC DOE reporting process of parents present at parent teacher monthly meetings. Administrators identified the purpose of family engagement through varied lens and the perspective administrators had regarding their role and purpose for engaging with families resulted in varied parent engagement practices and service foci.

**Research question two, parent engagement, theme one.** Varied perceptions on the foci of parental engagement had connections to service provision and parental engagement

structures. AIB defined parent engagement as, “the role families take in the education of their children,” and having families, “understand what we’re doing in the schools to support the student,” is a critical support for ELL students. AIB continued, stating that his belief is:

The more engaged our parents are, the easier it is for us to leverage that work with our students so, finding meaningful opportunities for families to connect with the life of the school is something we value.

Administrator AIC also identified parent engagement as a priority for his school as well as the importance of creating a community that included families. He states, “bringing the family on board” is one of his three top indicators of student success. Having family engagement, he believes, makes “the home-school connection strong and supportive.” His definition of parent engagement embraces the concept of parent engagement as a participatory process. AIC’s parent engagement practices include after-school and early morning parent sessions as well as workshops, and while including a focus on services to families, is centered around a celebratory dynamic focusing on parents as partners. Administrators AIB and AIC both discussed the value of parent engagement as leverage in student motivation and behavior. It was their belief that involved parents send a message to their child specific to the parent’s belief in the student’s capabilities. Involved parents also evidence to students a unified relationship between the school and the family. However, AIA, while emphasizing the importance of keeping parents informed, when asked about the impact parent involvement had on student success indicated her belief that the impact was minimal. As per AIA, “They [our families] know that we’re going to help them. Just ask and you’ll get help. That is our job.” AIA’s belief regarding the limited impact parent engagement had on student outcomes was supported by her



understanding of who her parents were in terms of their environmental circumstances and ability to contribute time.

Interviewee beliefs regarding the importance of parent engagement were also reflected in their structures for parent engagement, the types of entry points they created for parent engagement, and the resources that were devoted to parent engagement. The majority of administrators (10 of 11) expressed their desire to have parents more engaged in the school as active participants in supporting the school and the child. However, six indicated, based on NYC DOE measurements of participation, that their levels of parent engagement were less than desired. The interviewees also evidenced different perspectives about their school's approach to parent engagement and their beliefs regarding parental participation levels.

**Research question two, parent engagement, theme two.** Administrator AIA talked about the cultural differences she believes exists between the perspective of American educational institutions and educational structures in other countries and how that impacts parental engagement. She described conversations she has with parents around the importance of parents being involved in the school and how being involved is a completely opposite dynamic than had existed in the country of origin for the student and family. AIA believes that often parents of ELL students limit their involvement not just because of the demands of their work situations but also because of their inherent trust in the school to take care of their child and their lack of desire to engage within an American defined framework of engagement. As per AIA:

It's an idea they carry for school in their country which is, I'm going to give you my kid, and I don't have to come here. I know that you're the school and I trust you completely with my kid, and that's just culture.

Administrator AIE expressed some additional thoughts. She indicated that her parent engagement was low unless there was a special event night, (parent teacher conferences, performances, etc.) that the low engagement levels were not a reflection of their lack of commitment to the child and or the school, but rather a reflection of their personal financial situations. AIE stated, “Many of our families are hourly workers, when they have to come in they have to lose a day of work.” AIJ also identified the need to recognize the socio-economic needs of parents as a factor in student engagement. She states:

That [parent engagement] is also going to be very hard for any ELL school to have because oftentimes our immigrant parents are working so much. I try to do different scheduled times, maybe phone conferences because some of them many not be able to make it because some of them work two and three jobs....but...those parents are also engaged because if I call them ... they are going to follow up and make sure the behavior does not continue in the school.

The theme of recognizing cultural and socio-economic distinctions and consequent needs continued to emerge during the interviews and revolved around redefining what parent engagement really means and looks like, and centered on the need for expectations to look different from culture to culture and perhaps even from school to school. This need was framed with limited emphasis on engagement activities, and primarily within a framework of respect for differences in cultural dynamics of parents that are ethnically and culturally varied as well as recognition of the socio-economic realities of many new immigrants. AIK in discussing parent attendance related her families’ personal experiences indicating that her mother did not look forward to attending parent nights. She stated, “Even with translation, I think they [parents] are met with a lot of anxiety in having to come to the school so... I think many times they come for

compliance purposes.” AIK further spoke to the dynamic that exists within immigrant families of high school age children who, because of improved language skills take on adult family roles and the impact that has on parent engagement dynamics for ELL families. As per AIK:

Our population of students is older and I think a parent’s relationship with the school becomes different when the child almost becomes the spokesperson for the family because they’re a little bit older and they take on more responsibility. So there is an increased need for us to think outside of the box on how to engage parents so that they see how important they are to their students’ achievement.

AIF spoke to this same element in parent engagement. She felt parent engagement was highest for younger students or recent entry students but that, “By the second or third year a lot of our kids are already independent or they don’t want...the relationship is strained because they’re older...so by the third year it becomes difficult to bring in parents.”

**Research question two, parent engagement, theme three.** While advocating for the role of parental engagement, interviewees identified the purpose of family engagement through varied lens, resulting in differing entry points into parent engagement and service provision. Three lines of thought emerged on the role of the school and its primary purpose when engaging with families. One line of thought expressed by three interviewees emphasized the role of the school as a modality of support for parents. A second philosophy voiced by six participants centered on parents as a leverage support for students and the third viewed parents in a more holistic role with an inclusion of parents as active decision makers in the school (three administrators).

When speaking about parent engagement, a commonly interchangeable term used by interviewees was community, with nine of the interviewees independently referencing the term

community in some context. Not surprising, development of community took different forms within different school settings. For administrator AIA developing community revolved around “providing for the needs of her students and families.” Her school has a school food pantry that includes not only food but basic supplies that her parents can take as needed. They offer this pantry to parents who come for meetings or who are just in need. For AIC, AIF, AIH, AIJ, and AII, creation of community relied heavily on a celebratory dynamic and creation of a norm that included the school as part of the community and a larger family grouping. AIF indicates, “Everything was celebrated. Everything was a major production.... So it was done up like everything was in celebration of the families that came to us.” For AIC, creation of a family community involved unified celebrations of students success with a precursor of unified engagement to achieve success. AIF identified the creation of school community as a priority, as a key component in determining student success, and consequently as a budgetary priority as well.

**Research question two, parent engagement, theme four.** In examining activities and practices schools used to foster parent engagement, there was a commonality across the schools. The most frequently identified activities included: cultural based acculturation and celebratory activities; literacy workshops; language learning classes; external organization presentations specific to immigrant families; student award ceremonies; family counseling services, and student performances.

In creating education institutions that respond to the needs of ELL students, interviewees identified alignment of model choice and practices to student needs as a dominant factor in ELL success. Interviewees also indicate a value and commitment to engaging parents. Considering the additional challenges for ELL students in acquiring a high school diploma in New York City,

supplemental supports for ELLs were identified by interviewees as another key factor in supporting ELL learning. Of equal importance is determining how we address the steep learning curve and volume of knowledge and language acquisition embedded in high school curricula and its alignment to the shortened time on task older ELLs have. In essence, how do we supplement their academic learning to support outcomes? The following section will share interviewees' responses for research question two specific to student supplemental services as well as their rationales for their choice of services provided to their high school ELL populations.

**Supplemental student support services.** Interview questions specific to the supplemental service component of research question two included:

- Would you describe the additional ELL supports/services you have in your school and how they align and support student development?
- What would you identify as the most critical support services that need to be present in high schools to ensure success of ELL students?
- How do you acculturate and create community with entering students in your school?

Themes for research question two surrounding supplemental student services for ELLs included the following:

**Table 4**

*Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question #2, supplemental services*

| <b>Themes</b>   | <b>Number of Leaders<br/>With a Related<br/>Response</b> |
|---|--|
| The inclusion of supplement supports is a necessity in promoting positive educational outcomes. | 11/11  |
| Supplemental supports evidenced consistency across sites.                                       | 11/11  |
| The need for socio-emotional supports was prioritized.  | 8/11   |

The site interviews reflected a range of supplemental services offered to students, defined as services in addition to academic classes, and classes provided during regular school hours. Interviewees discussed their rationale for choices of supplemental services through a perspective of their alignment of services to student needs and their belief systems surrounding student learning.

**Research question two, supplemental services, theme one.** In reviewing interviewee responses, a consistent pattern included the provision of supplemental support services for ELL students. All interview sites offered a combination of academic, socio-emotional and career and college readiness supports. Eleven of eleven sites offered extended learning periods specific to academic support either during post school times, on Saturdays or both. Academic supports included a combination of afterschool ESL classes, content support classes, Regents preparation classes and SAT preparation classes (see Table 5). The emphasis on multiple support services were in direct response to the need to accelerate and support student learning, particularly in light of the time restraints secondary level ELLs often have. School's menu of services identified as important for ELLs included eight sites who prioritized and emphasized socio-emotional supports and three administrators' who directly targeted career and college readiness as a priority socio-emotional support. Seven administrators referenced career and college readiness as an important supplemental support. Additional supplemental supports consistently identified in the menu of options administrators offered included: use of advisories, tutoring, students clubs, support groups for language acquisition, peer mentoring, theatre classes, arts classes, extended day classes, sports and sports clubs, and music clubs (see table 5). While some of the identified supports could be used by all students regardless of their ethnic identification, the rationale and structure of these supports were designed and implemented by sites with a clear intention

specific to English language learners. AID explains “ [We need] to make sure that the kids, the older ELLs are programmed to receive the support services....because oftentimes these are the kids who are most at risk of not graduating”.

**Research question two, supplemental services, theme two.** In addition to the above city services, eight administrators indicated that embedded in their acculturation practices was an intent to expose students to the environment they are currently in, norm them to the values and practices of the American culture, and create opportunities for students to make connections to each other. Advisories were incorporated into seven sites and identified as an effective supplemental practice for supporting ELL students as well as a mechanism for acculturation.

Advisories, while structured in different configurations and having varied curricula, were utilized in six of the schools with three additional schools indicating an intention to incorporate the practice. For administrator AIE, advisories were used to create connections from student to student and student to faculty. This administrator used advisory to define and operationalize community principles stating, “Students feel they belong and once they feel they belong they are much more likely to stay with you.”

In fostering student learning a theme that permeated many of the interviews was recognition of the impact environment has in effecting student outcomes. This commitment to creating supportive and caring environments was reflected in interviewees’ references to creating community and establishing parental relationships. As part of the continued pattern of establishing supportive environments, administrators also included the incorporation of the arts, clubs, and sports into their supplemental activities and justified their value in terms of budgetary commitments.

Administrator AIA discussed some of her active student clubs. One of the clubs was African drumming. Students of any ethnicity could join the club and it provided an opportunity for them to share their culture and collaborate with others in creating a community. She also discussed some of the other clubs the school offered, highlighting the importance of not only the student skill being developed but, equally important, the collaboration and uniting of varied cultures into a community. Additional clubs offered by sites and funded as supplemental services included: English, soccer, health and fitness, gay-straight alliance, photography, technology, content based (math, science, computer), dance, yearbook, and chess clubs. Two schools offered cooking classes. In one site it was an extra- curricular activity for students. In the second site, AIC had a clear vision and intention of using the class as a career/resume building opportunity for students. While encouraging students to be college bound and structuring his internal academic structures and classes as college preparatory, AIC also recognized the need to be responsive to students who choose not to attend college or whose circumstances preclude attending. Supplemental funding provided exposure to formal food preparation opening a potential post high school career opportunity for these students.

As mentioned in the initial list of cited supplemental activities, the importance of using the arts in both supplemental and direct instruction was clearly understood by administrators and the arts were therefore used either as a supplemental support or an embedded learning strategy. AIF described offering classes that combined music and social studies as a way of enabling ELL students to access content through engagement with an arts based modality. AIK's school offers theatre classes that are specifically designed for students to engage in reading, writing, and speaking through the creation of a performance, again engaging students in learning that transcends and develops language simultaneously. Of the eleven interviewees, four spoke



specifically to the value of the arts in fostering ELL learning and three additional mentioned supplemental activities that embedded arts as a learning strategy.

**Research question two, supplemental supports, finding three.** Administrators identifying the provision of socio-emotional supports as a key component in ELL support also stated their belief that these supports were critical for ELLs in their quest to acquire a high school diploma. In a summary statement expressing her beliefs about the critical role of supplemental support services, AII states:

Many of my ELLs are immigrants and many are transitioning to the New York City way of life so they need social-emotional support for their mindset to be at our level here and to understand our way of life and our system. But then they also need academic support. They need not only to learn consonant skills, and how to pass their classes and pass Regents, but they need to understand the rigor that's necessary for them to survive in high school.... So they need a lot of social-emotional plus academic support.

The prioritization of socio-emotional supports was reflected in services schools offered after school and in the budgetary commitment administrators made in hiring guidance counselors and social workers. Administrator AIE identified the provision of counseling and mental health services as a priority in her school stating it is "a critical component in student success".

Administrator AIA also prioritizes the importance of socio-emotional supports in her budgetary allotments and recently added an additional guidance position in her school. As per AIA this is a belief that has evolved and developed based on her experience working with ELL populations. Her inclusion of two guidance counselors and two social workers is tied to both her belief regarding the importance of this support and her experience evidencing it as a key factor in academic achievement of ELLs. AIE and AIG spoke extensively about the socio-emotional

needs of ELL students entering schools and the prior experiences they bring that impact their ability to academically engage independent of support services. When queried about the most critical support services for ELLs, AIG stated, “their counselors.” AIK in responding to the same question indicated, “Having a strong guidance staff and socio-emotional supports is extremely important.” AIF shared stories about her students and many of the traumas they experienced in their countries and during the immigration process. As per AIF:

I think most critical to me is the socio-emotional piece, because a child cannot survive in a classroom and learn when their mental health is not being addressed. You have children sitting in a classroom that have been through such horrible trauma and they’re being expected to perform at high levels but yet nobody is addressing these issues. That child is not going to remain in that classroom for long or is just going to zone out. So to me, you need to have that mental health piece. You need to have that support. They need to feel that somebody cares about them.

All administrators interviewed evidenced provision of socio-emotional support services through funding of either counselors or social workers however, as indicated, three site administrators talked about socio-emotional supports in relation to creating an awareness of college and career opportunities. Sharing her experiences as a second language learner, AIG spoke to the important role counselor’s play in developing awareness for immigrants of the career opportunities available to them and working with them to engage in the unfamiliar process of choosing the best college for each student. AIG, elaborating on her belief, spoke to the commitment her school makes in supporting ELL students and their families in understanding the educational system (both from a practical perspective and through the lens of culture), exposing them to options, preparing them for college entry, and in working with students and

families on the college application process. AIK mirrored this belief, talking about the role her guidance counselors played in developing an awareness of the value of and process for college admission with the families of her ELL students.

In sites with populations of immigrants, many students entering the schools are also brand new to the country. Entering a new school and country entails developing an awareness of the culture. Administrators fostered acculturation through a variety of methods, both experientially and academically. Administrator AIA talked about acculturation being an on-going process, beginning with how the parents are initially welcomed and included in the school. She discussed the importance of “getting the story of each student and family” and how the process of getting to understand the motivation of students and families, their experiences and their needs unfolds naturally if given the right environment. While not necessarily a factor in how classes or programs are structured, knowing why a student is there or how they got there lends insight into strategies for creating comfort levels for the students, increasing family and student engagement, and potentially reducing drop-out rates. AIB shared his belief that acculturation and making students feel comfortable was an important ingredient for student success and the subsequent budgetary commitment he makes to it as a supplemental service. He explains, “I think integration into the life of the school is the first step. If the student has a vested interest and feels a part of the community, she or he is going to be more open to participation in the classroom.” AIB routinely funds a summer program for entering ELLs that focuses on creating the foundations of community for his students. Administrator AIB also spoke to his belief that integration of a student into a school is one of the most important elements that contribute to ELL success. He emphasized that getting to know the student and identifying his/her needs is also of primary importance. AIK identified using experiential trips and exposing

students to the arts through attendance at Broadway shows, for example, as a mechanism for acculturating students. This provision of supplemental services was a significant budgetary commitment.

The following table lists a composite of supplemental services offered and delineates individual site offerings.

**Table 5**

*Supplemental support summary*

| <b>Sites</b> | <b>Sat School</b> | <b>RP</b> | <b>Advisory</b>   | <b>PM class</b> | <b>Tutoring</b> | <b>Clubs</b> | <b>Sports</b> | <b>GC's /SW</b> | <b>Art infusion</b> | <b>SAT prep</b> |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| AIA          | Y                 | Y         | Partial-beginning | Y               | Y               | Y            | Y             | 2               | Y                   | N               |
| AIB          | Y                 | NM        | N                 | N               | Y               | Y            | Y             | 3               | Y                   | Y               |
| AIC          | Y                 | Y         | Y                 | N               | Y               | NM           | Y             | 3               | NM                  | Y               |
| AID          | Y                 | NM        | Y                 | N               | Y               | NM           | NM            | 1               | NM                  | N               |
| AIE          | Y                 | N         | Y                 | N               | Y               | NM           | NM            | 3               | NM                  | NM              |
| AIF          | Y                 | NM        | Y                 | Y               | Y               | Y            | Y             | 2               | Y                   | NM              |
| AIG          | Y                 | N         | Y                 | N               | Y               | Y            | Y             | 3               | NM                  | NM              |
| AIH          | Y                 | NM        | N                 | Y               | Y               | NM           | Y             | 1.5             | Y                   | N               |
| AII          | Y                 | NM        | N                 | Y               | Y               | Y            | NM            | 3               | NM                  | Y               |
| AIJ          | Y                 | Y         | *N                | Y               | Y               | NM           | NM            | 4               | Y                   | Y               |
| AIK          | Y                 | Y         | Y                 | Y               | Y               | Y            | Y             | 2               | Y                   | N               |

NM - no mention

N - no advisory currently but planning on instituting

RP - Regents preparation classes

GC/SW - guidance counselors/ social workers

As evidenced by the above chart, administrators recognized and emphasized the incorporation of supplemental supports as an educational strategy for capacity building in ELL outcomes.

Continuing to explore the dynamics of support services for ELLs, a consistently identified factor linked to success by both the literature and the interviewees was quality of instruction and teacher pedagogy. The final support category examined in research question two was practices and beliefs surrounding support of teachers through professional development.

**Professional development.** Students are often grouped by grade and class resulting in the potential for multiple languages and levels of language ability within each class. Teachers in these classrooms need to provide multiple levels of differentiation for students if they are going to actively engage in lessons. This connects to professional development and a belief that quality instruction is directly aligned to teacher training and ability. Given the diverse needs of the ELL population, interviewees identified the quality of instruction teachers provide to students as a primary determinant of success. And, integral to the quality of instruction is development of instructional expertise through teacher training. The third and final themes for research question two specific to professional development are presented below. Interview questions centered on professional development included:

- How often do your teachers have professional development specific to ELLs and is there a primary focus?
- What is your belief about the role professional development plays in improving outcomes for ELLs?
- How do you ensure transference of professional development to classroom practices?
- What would you identify as the area teachers require the most support in when

teaching ELLs?

Themes for research question two specific to professional development for teachers of ELLs included the following:

**Table 6**

*Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question #2, professional development*

| Themes   | Number of Leaders<br>With a Related<br>Response |
|--|---|
| Teacher pedagogy is a critical determinant of ELL success.   | 11/11   |
| Effective professional development should include training in key areas for ELL instruction. Consistently identified areas included: |   |
| language acquisition   | 7/11  |
| scaffolding of material  | 9/11  |
| engagement and differentiation strategies  | 10/11   |
| Professional development should be offered in cycles of learning, collaboration based and accountable.                               | 8/11  |

**Research question two, professional development, theme one.** All those interviewed were consistent in advocating for the importance of professional development for teachers and manifested a shared common belief that the quality of classroom instruction is a fundamental determinate of student success. Sample responses included: AID, “Professional development is a primary budgetary priority in my school,” and AIF, “I totally believe that professional development does play a big role in improving outcomes for ELLs,” and AIK, “I believe professional development is super important.... It is a space for us to not only dig deeper into our practice as teachers, but also to innovate our practice.” Administrators’ verbal commitments to professional development were also reflected in their identified budgetary allocations specific to professional development. Ten of the interviewees indicated professional development was an important factor in ELL outcomes and allotted funds accordingly.

Embedded in their financial commitment was recognition of the importance of teachers developing effective pedagogy along with additional skill sets that are integral to ELL instruction. Many of the identified best practices for ELLs are just, as per AIE, “good teaching,” however, independent of their incorporation into classrooms, ELL students unlike their English speaking counterparts, cannot as readily access and engage in the material, which emphasizes the importance of teacher training. Administrator AIB spoke to the importance of teacher training specific to ELL instructional strategies stating, “It goes back to the planning and having teachers understand their role in relation to ELL students.” AIE linked her beliefs about the value of effective teaching and the low outcome results for ELL stating:

I don't think they [ELLs] are being served the way they should in a lot of schools...  
because the teachers aren't trained to deal with the kids so they don't. If they're not causing a problem, then they'll be ignored. And I don't know how you solve this because I think it involves a lot of teacher training.

AIA mirrored AIE's statement, also expressing her belief in the connection between current student performance and quality instruction. AIA believes that overall, a lack of training and its consequent emphasis on classroom skills negatively impacts student learning. She indicated that she did not believe that “there were a lot of good ESL teachers in the system” resulting in lack of alignment of instruction to student needs.

**Research question two, professional development, theme two.** Administrators, in addition to emphasizing the value of professional development identified a core of instructional practices believed to be priorities in teacher training. All interviewees mentioned the ability to scaffold material and create lessons that are engaging and challenging as an important skill for teachers. Ability to differentiate material for the varied level of language and skills sets present

in most classrooms was also an identified need for teacher training from a majority of participants. AIJ and AIK explicitly spoke to the need for teachers to understand assessment as a means of addressing the needs of ELLs.

Expressing another priority concern, AIC indicated that a key understanding for system leaders was to recognize the importance of teacher training specific to language development and acquisition. This need was echoed by seven of the interviewees and a key point of emphasis for four. AIA, AIB, AIE, and AIK all spoke to the importance of helping teachers develop an understanding of how language is acquired. They felt that many teachers did not understand the structure and function of language acquisition and without an understanding of how a person acquires language one must ask whether a teacher will be able to create lessons that facilitate language development. AIA expressed, “You have to understand how students learn a different language.” AIE in discussing teacher training regarding language development indicated, “Everything is a language opportunity and you need to kind of just isolate them.” AIB discussed understanding language development through the lens of when to provide and remove supports. He states, “The goal is a continuum of services ...as the student masters the language the supports should begin to fall away and evolve to support the student’s progress toward mastery.”

**Research question two, professional development, theme three.** When identifying characteristics of effective professional development, AIG emphasized the importance of linking professional development plans to the needs of students, ensuring the application of such plans in the classroom, and assessing their effectiveness through a study of student outcomes. AIG described her methodology for ensuring direct alignment between professional development and student outcomes. She states:



We have conversations around what are some of the most salient issues that our teachers are facing, what are the observation that we're making, and how do we design professional development to best support the needs of our students and teachers.

AIG then uses a collaborative teacher team structure to engage in cycles of learning with embedded assessment of student work. When working with teachers and empowering them to engage with tasks, administrators noted that an important factor in creating teams and effective professional development was teachers' perception of the value of professional development and willingness to "participate authentically." Administrators described the process they use to ensure that the learning is embedded within teacher pedagogy and ideally owned by teachers. AIG noted, "Professional development offered must be perceived as valuable and relevant to the individuals receiving training." AIG also talked about prioritizing the time teachers are out of the classroom for professional development and correlating it to the quality of the outcomes as a determining factor for decision making regarding the use of professional development. This practice speaks to the importance of evaluation of professional development in terms of its outcomes.

In contending that professional development should provide teachers with skills for facilitating student collaboration AIB discussed the importance of professional development in supporting engagement based activities for all students and being collaborative in nature among students as well as a collaborative activity for faculty. For his school, which utilizes a push-in model, he also spoke to the importance of teacher training having a foci on identifying teacher beliefs and as needed, helping teachers modify their beliefs, "ELLs are not a subset of instruction who are receiving services while everyone else receives the direct instruction." Administrator AIB indicates that for change and growth to occur, he feels teachers need to have

professional development that allows them to be reflective in their practices. He also strongly emphasizes that training on ELL strategies must be part of all teacher training, specifically content teachers. This belief is a key factor identified by administrator AIE and AIG. AIE indicates it is her belief that for ELLs to perform well, all teachers must be language teachers and professional development must be structured to provide opportunities for teachers to understand language development and be able to plan with both language and content objectives.

AIE was also a strong proponent of the use of teacher teams both as a means of professional development and in the creation of supportive and targeted learning environments for ELL students. She notes, “What we see here as professional development is all the teacher teamwork.” This emerging theme centering on teacher team and cycles of learning as a venue for professional development was extensively referenced in the literature review, and a consistently identified practice of nine of the interviewees. Embedded in this professional development structure was a belief regarding the value of structures that create space for teachers to learn from each other and engaging in honest peer feedback. AIG emphasized the value of her teacher teams and the cycles they engage in to ultimately result in improved student outcomes. She indicates that her school is based on “and run by teacher teams.” In continuing to discuss what professional development looks like for varied educators, AIA described her cycle. Her school utilizes a five week cycle during which teams look at student work, linking it to other elements of teacher pedagogy (lesson planning, curriculum, and data analysis). Her practices foster both collaboration and accountability for implementation. Administrators AIH and AIC both identified the use of teacher teams as a primary component of their professional development model and discussed engaging in cycles of learning as a professional development

strategy. AIA prioritized ongoing assessment of student work as a primary practice of her professional development cycle stating “each week a team of teachers will bring student work to look at.” Analysis of student work was also a reoccurring focus and identified as a professional development focus by administrators AIC, AIF, AIG, and AIH.

Interview responses indicated that professional development was identified by interviewees as a key element in improving ELL instruction and teacher effectiveness. The differentiating elements were the frequency of the interactions; how the PD was structured; how closely it was aligned to student outcomes; and the level of collaboration and accountability for implementation that occurred. When addressing the importance of professional development, six administrators spoke to the value of continuous professional development for themselves as well as for teachers. It is worth noting in this regard that the more open-ended nature of qualitative research approaches often encourages the unearthing of information that otherwise would have been missed. Administrator AIE talked about the value of inter-visitations for her teachers and for herself. She stated an important factor in her ability to support her ELLs came through a personal thought group of administrators that met routinely to discuss and share best practices. AIC shared his on-going personal learning experiences and his continued commitment to self-development as a method of supporting his school and students.

In discussing their choices regarding model selection and supplemental services, interviewees have consistently framed their decisions within the context of their beliefs. Research question three explores with more depth, the alignment of belief systems to administrator decision making. The subsequent portion of chapter four will present themes and administrator responses to research question three.

### Research Question Three

**What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning, and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?** When examining educational structure, another area of consideration and relevance is what role individual administrator beliefs play in the creation of learning environments. While statements surrounding the beliefs of the interviewees and their connectivity to decision making are embedded in many of the above sections, the following section will explore in more depth the beliefs administrators expressed. The following interview questions targeted belief systems for research question three:

- What are your beliefs about how older ELLs should receive instruction?
- Why do you believe that achievement and success rates for ELLs are systemically lower than for non-ELLs?
- What do you believe are the three most important elements that contribute to ELL success?
- What do you identify as budgetary priorities for supporting ELLs?

Themes for research question three include the following:

**Table 7**

*Themes that Emerged that Address Research Question #3*

| <b>Themes</b>  | <b>Number of Leaders<br/>With a Related<br/>Response</b> |
|--|--|
| Belief systems are both conscious and unconscious and influence decision making.                       | 11/11  |
| Personal beliefs, knowledge and experiences are reflected in instructional and infrastructure choices. | 11/11  |
| Belief in ELL students' capacity to be successful links to outcomes.                                   | 6/11   |

The relative autonomy NYC administrators have in decision making highlights the gravity of individual awareness of beliefs and the consequent role they play in decision making. Embedded in the above interview transcriptions are beliefs shared by administrators around the topics presented, many of which were directly cited as rationales for instructional choices. The following section more closely explores the consistency evidenced in administrator responses and the connectivity of administrator beliefs to their instructional choices and potentially student outcomes. These beliefs will also be touched upon since they were arguably of importance in understanding administrator decision making regarding providing quality instruction for ELLs.

**Research question three, finding one.** Administrator beliefs regarding what quality instruction looks like were aligned with their instructional choices and clearly connected to their decisions to hybridize models to meet the needs of students. AIB identified the importance of knowing “who the students are when they enter.” His belief was that quality instruction will only occur if you have clarity on what the background and entry level of each student is. He made the argument that ELLs are not just a group of students but rather unique individuals that are entering with varied skill sets, differing knowledge bases and skill sets, and a range of native and English language skills and familiarity. He states, “Students who are functional and literate in their home language have different needs than students who are struggling learners in the home language.” Administrator AIB makes the observation that school leaders need to recognize which content bases are more transferable for ELL students and which areas present more of a challenge, and how to provide instructions for students who enter with large gaps in their educational history versus being on track. It is a key belief of his that instruction for older entry ELLs must be based on who they are and where they are coming from. This theme “knowing who your students are” was a belief echoed by AIB, AIC, AIF, AII, AIJ, and AIH and

consequently was reflected in the programmatic changes they made in their model structures. In identifying key elements that contribute to student success, AIB states, “Actively identifying what students need and getting to know your students,” AIF talks about knowing students through their backgrounds and experiences sharing, “We know our students. This child lives in a shelter. This child is in foster care. Everyone has to know their students.”

Eight interviewees discussed how model frameworks aligned with their instructional beliefs although, as indicated earlier, administrators did hybridize models to address their perceptions of student needs. Two interviewees indicated their choice of model was financially based and one interviewee had inherited the model, and while intending to continue with the same model, shared changes she intended to make within the structure. In further exploring connectivity between model choices and beliefs, AIE, AIK, and AIA expressed strong convictions about the needs and realities of older second language students. Their arguments for ELLs reflected their internalized beliefs that older ELLs, despite time constraints could be successful if given the correct environments and academic structures. For them, aligned to their beliefs was usage of an approach that immersed students in the language through an English only model. AIH stated, “I think older ELLs should be stand-alone ESL, and AIK stated, “We are an English language immersion model, ...we have limited time working with our students...I think that [this] works for high school ELLs.” Their selection of this model was based on arguments they presented regarding model appropriateness but ultimately matched their stated beliefs about their priorities regarding ELL instruction. AII and AIJ, while having many of the same age entry students utilized dual language models that not only employed dual language structures but expanded the usage of native language inclusion largely due to their belief regarding the importance of students’ native languages being respected and acknowledged.

AII and AIJ, despite having similar time limitations for entering students like AIE, AIK, and AIA, made different model selections, and exhibited an almost opposite emphasis on needs identification surrounding native language usage, scheduling all first year student instruction in the native language of the students. AIJ, a second language learner herself, expressed strong beliefs regarding inclusion of native language stating:

I would never want to hear anyone saying you cannot speak in Spanish or Bengali or...I cannot stress enough how many good kids will drop out of high school because they don't feel valued or because however we have structured our school makes them feel dumb.

AIJ's conviction regarding the value of native language inclusion as a validator of culture as well as a method for creation of student comfort levels is clearly connected with her selection and modification of a dual language model. The use of native language instruction in students' freshman year also aligns with her beliefs surrounding creation of supportive student environments defined by her as being native language based. AII also has students' first year classes taught in the native language because of her belief that it creates a level of comfort for students. She expressed her belief as follows:

Being able to speak in their [native language] and show them all their resources in [native language] and even their Regents examinations..., so it kind of makes them feel at home in the beginning .... It's very comforting for them and acceptable when they come here to be served in their language.

She also expressed similar thoughts about valuing students' first language and having concerns about programs that are "intended so that the kid could lose the first language....they shouldn't

let go of the [native language].” For AII and AIJ, their choices of model practices appear to be experientially based and have connections to their ethnic and cultural identification.

AIK, when identifying priorities for student instruction advocated for a different model based on her identification of what needs to prioritize, and her beliefs regarding language acquisition and college readiness as a primary foci for ELL instruction. Speaking to her beliefs she states we need to “accelerate their learning of English language through being in a place where they have to engage with the language and think in the language....maximizing their time speaking and thinking in English...and make them college and career ready.” Her decision making reflects a connection to her beliefs regarding what should be emphasized in instruction and ultimately results in different instructional structures than those chosen by AII and AIJ. In continuing to explore model practices and beliefs, AIA’s choice of an English only model reflected not only her belief specific to educational structures and how they support ELLs but directly reflected her strong beliefs about students being active participants in learning and not being marginalized. When asked about her beliefs regarding how older ELL learn best, AIA responded by stating, “I believe that students learn best when they are engaged. I believe you have to build in opportunities for student to grapple with language because you are not learning unless you are struggling,” thus legitimizing her choice of an English only model. AIA when reflecting on other instructional models expressed the concern that in mixed classrooms, “ELLs in the room just become blended into the wall. They’re not focused on...and they get lost.”

AIE, coming from a family of immigrants indicated that her school’s population was “very close to her heart,” and discussed some of her instructional decisions through the lens of her beliefs as a former ELL and her personal beliefs about what a high school experience should feel like for an ELL. AIE articulated her instructional choices within the context of her beliefs



and experiences as an ELL stating, “The big thing is, we want our students to feel like they belong.” Equally emphasized by AIE was instruction that reflected student engagement, collaboration and was cognitively challenging. Her prioritization of engagement and inclusiveness was a key consideration in her instructional methodologies and creation of classroom environments. AIE’s model was an English only model with no free standing ESL classes. In describing her model choice she expressed that:

We believe that students work best, or learn best in heterogeneous groupings, where they’re asked to collaborate with each other to either solve a problem, complete a task.... and [that’s] the best way for students to learn in context.

In linking her beliefs to her instructional model, AIE continues stating, “So, the language and content integration I think is the key piece of having them work with others, collaborate and experiential project-based work I think is where you can really integrate the language content in a meaningful way”.

AIE, like other administrators who chose an English only model, expressed her beliefs regarding students’ need to immerse in the language but for her, as per the above quote, it meant structuring her classes to reflect her beliefs about integrating content and language and not creating independent ESL classes for language acquisition.

In continuing to explore consistency of beliefs regarding ELL instruction, AIA, AIG, AIF, and AIK also spoke explicitly to their beliefs regarding instruction for ELLs being cognitively challenging and engagement based. AIF indicated,

So the idea was to get the student talking while working on a project. The instruction had to be project based. It wasn’t about just giving information but they had to work on

something together, build something, problem- solve and in the process of creating that project, the learning took place.

Consequently their model structures also emphasized the incorporation of project and inquiry based learning as a fundamental instructional necessity.

**Research question three, theme two.** Administrator beliefs were evidenced not only in their model and instructional practice choices but also in their admission policies and their generalized approaches to serving ELLs. It is of note that in some instances interviewees clearly articulated the connections between their beliefs and their admission policies and decision making. AIA is quoted as saying, “I have certain beliefs that I carry, and I believe that all students should have a chance. This belief is reflected in my admission policies.” Given state and city accountability systems, AIA’s adherence to an open admission policy is a clear statement regarding prioritization of student centered decision making and her focus on insuring equity of access. Entry of over-age, under credited, or SIFE students increases the probability of student non-completion of high school with the corresponding impact on a school’s performance rating. Consequently, some schools set admission standards that require a specific entry average, language fluency, completion of Regents classes, or prior credit accumulation. Speaking to her strong belief in an open admissions policy, AIF indicated, “So we never turned anyone away. We took anyone who came to us, even if they were 18 or 19 and the superintendent or whoever was telling us think of your chances of graduating that child.”

AIB’s admission policy, similar to AIA’s and AIF’s was directly related to his belief about equity in access. Despite the option his school had of not serving ELLs, he deliberately choose to accept ELLs because of his beliefs and experiences. AIB states:

It's important to me that we serve the ELL population. I think my early experiences were watching ELL classrooms where student really did succeed. Where they did bring prior experience and prior knowledge to the table. I think if the ELL student is as valued as every other student, then that is real equity in the way that a school is providing education opportunity.

In continuing to explore connections between belief systems and school practices, when discussing parent engagement, the perceptions administrators had were reflected in their beliefs about the role of parents. AIC and AIF's strong belief in the value of parents as partners and active parts of the school community resulted in large budgetary commitments to supporting and engaging parents. AIF and AIC also translated their beliefs about the celebratory nature of parent engagement into their creation of parent communities.

AIA's parent engagement practices revolved around providing supports for parents through food pantries, informational and language learning sessions and workshops for parents on how to interact with their children. These structures were connected to her beliefs that families were part of her community and her focus on helping and supporting them. While indicating she did not feel parent engagement had a significant impact on student learning, she worked to create structures that would address basic needs of her families on a survival level. As an educator who had experience working in education in other countries, AIA appeared to have filtered her beliefs through some of these understandings and experiences. Her perception on family engagement was also grounded in her beliefs about what parents wanted, believed, and preferred versus how parent engagement may be envisioned in a non-ELL based framework.

AIK, when speaking about the experience of parental involvement in school noted the differing perspectives her mother had and the need to acknowledge the cultural preferences and

needs of families. AIK's parent, while actively engaged with her education, would not have chosen to be engaged in a model focused on attendance at school conferences and meetings. AIK's parent did attend despite her preference but did so only because of her perception of attendance as an expectation and obligation. AIK's school, like AIAs worked with parents from a resource framework. This view of parental engagement connects to her experiences as a student from an ELL family.

All interviewees evidenced consistency in their beliefs that professional development for teachers was pivotal in ensuring student success. While all administrators engaged in some form of professional development for their staffs, their focus evidenced nuanced differences. These differences aligned to model choices as well as other belief based factors. AIE, AIF, and AIG, all sites that used an English only model with ESL taught through content, focused on professional development that was teacher driven, involved teacher teams, and included cycles of learning. Focusing on this design of professional development aligned with their beliefs that adult learning should be collaborative in nature. AIC, who hybridized his model to include English only structures within his dual language model used a significant portion of his budget to fund co-teaching models and identified it as the number one factor in ELL success. This aligned to his belief in the value of "meeting students where they were" and aligning classes and programs to their educational needs, thus operationalizing his belief into an educational structure. AIC, a second language learner spoke to his experiences learning and the parallels he sees with his students as a rationale for his choice of model and the consequent structures and training he engages in with teachers. Additionally, AIC in response to his belief that ELL instruction is not always cognitively challenging and his strong personal ethic regarding continual personal growth, created Advanced Placement (AP) classes for his students. He heavily invests funding

in training his teachers how to engage students in AP classes and funding teacher participation in additional college level classes and classes for additional certifications specific to instruction of ELLs. AIF expenditures of “tons and tons of money” on teacher development is directly aligned to her beliefs regarding their needs. As per AIF:

I totally believe that teachers don't mean to not provide proper instruction. I think a lot of them they just don't understand what it is their students need and they have to be trained in those areas. And a lot of the times they have to be trained repeatedly because there's just so much information coming at them that they don't know what to apply and when. And it has to be reinforced. They have to be reintroduced to the methodology and to the practice.

When discussing supplemental services for ELLs all eleven administrators spoke to the necessity of the provision of such services and their beliefs in the value of said services. However, while there was consistency in some of the services provided, there was also a variation in the foci of the support, method of implementation of the support, and budgetary prioritization of services based on administrator beliefs. All sites offered extended day services. These included a mixture of academic and cultural activities. The variation about which services to emphasize was connected to what administrators identified as important. In identifying extended day offerings, AIF spoke first about the clubs in her school. Her site had a multitude of clubs that allowed all of her students to be engaged. This, of necessity, required a budgetary commitment of funding teachers to supervise activities post contractual times. She linked her choice to her belief surrounding student acculturation needs and creating levels of student to student connectivity and comfort.

While using her extended time as a mechanism for content acquisition, she primarily structured the learning through a club dynamic as opposed to giving students after school classes to make up failures. Her structure was based on her belief specific to the value of student acclimation and comfort, its connection to student academic success, and her personal values regarding the importance of feeling safe and welcomed. In his selection of support services, AIC also identified acculturation as a primary focus of his support service. While speaking to the value of acculturating students, AIC emphasized academics as a focus for his extended day and Saturday school. AIC stated, “By [doing this] I actually increased the graduation rate.” This was based on an extensive data analysis of his students’ needs, performance and individual circumstances. AIA, AIC, AII, AIJ, and AIK while emphasizing acculturation as primary focus for their supplemental services also identified test preparation as a heavily funded supplemental service. This allocation of funding appeared to be more of a pragmatic decision specific to improving Regents passing rates than a belief driven choice.

A consistently identified supplemental option administrators cited was inclusion of socio-emotional supports. All administrators funded either guidance positions, social work positions, and in some instances, both. Nine of the administrators spoke to their beliefs that inclusion of socio-emotional supports was a primary area of need for ELL students. Citing issues of family separation, immigration trauma, exposure to war and conflict, lack of familial support, cultural unawareness, and economic pressures as factors exacerbated for immigrant second language students, administrators stressed the need for mental health and counseling services. Embedded in administrators’ responses was also an emphasis on the need for creating a college and career awareness with ELL students. In examining the links between beliefs and experiences, AIG expressed strong feelings regarding the need for career readiness, identifying counselors as the

most critical support service for ELLs. She linked her choice of additional funding for counseling services to her belief surrounding college entry and opportunity. AIG states:

I believe regardless of whether you're older or not that you should receive a middle class instruction, that you should have access to middle class resources and that ....it should be challenging, provocative and obviously lead you toward a greater purpose.

AIG, a second language learner herself, shared how she had not been provided the supports she needed when selecting a college and the impact this lack of support had on her. She spoke to the poor advisement some students receive and how she had witnessed students choosing poorly in college selection with a consequent result that many had dropped out. AIG also spoke to her strong feelings about ELL students not always having the same access to “good colleges” as both an equity issue and a personal belief. As per AIG:

We take them [our students] on an unbelievable amount of college trips which is crazy, that's something that's very important to me and I take it personally because I had a horrible college advisor when I was in high school. Going to college is a humongous milestone. You don't walk into something like that not knowing what you're going to walk into.... And you don't mismatch kids.

Her personal experiences as well as her prior experience as a guidance counselor connected to her feelings about the value of guidance support, her emphasis on career counseling at her school and her budgetary commitment to the inclusion of the services. In continuing to express their beliefs about the value of socio-emotional supports, AID, AIE, AIF, and AIK linked their decisions to include advisories in their schools as another mechanism for socio-emotional supports. The choice of advisory classes was not seen as academic support but rather another avenue for administrators to actualize the stated value of students having safe spaces,

connectivity to others and a sense of safety and belonging. These are all factors identified by administrators as components they linked with student success.

**Research question three, theme three.** This section of chapter four has presented the connections administrator experiences and beliefs have to their instructional decisions. A final area of note regarding interview responses was their personal feelings about the role beliefs have, not just in relation to decision making, but to the inherent power of educators believing in the capacity of their students to be successful and setting high expectations as pivotal factors in student success. Six respondents spoke, often passionately; about the impact teacher and administrator beliefs and expectations have on students and the absolute necessity of all educators believing in students' capacity to achieve versus establishing internalized beliefs regarding their limitations. AIC when identifying priorities for ELL instruction stated his belief that it was "the connection with the teacher and the student, and what is going to be the expectation of the teacher." Regarding holding high expectations, AIE states:

It starts with coming from where students are, with their strengths, with what they're bringing into the classroom.... And having high expectation, believing that they can achieve and also understanding that just because they don't have language doesn't mean the they can't handle kind of higher level content... those are two separate things.

So...challenging them to be thinkers is the way to hold on to them.

Continuing with this theme, AIG noted that if "the teacher has low expectations, and there is no connections, then forget it. The student is going to leave...you have to believe in the child." AIG addressing educator perspectives also stated "I think that there isn't a high enough expectation for them [students] ... and so when you don't think that they could do it, then you don't really work to make them do it." A key consideration voiced by AIE was summed up by



her statement, “I think basically we need to just remind ourselves that these are intelligent young people who just happen to not speak English.”

AIK and AIG also expanded on the impact of beliefs, associating belief in students as an indicator not only of academic success but also student college selection. AIE cautioned educators supporting ELLs to never approach learning from a belief system that anticipated failures and envisioned students as “deficient”. Successful classrooms exist and foster higher performance when they view students from a strength based perspective and create learning environments that are asset based. In describing such an environment, a student from AIG’s school was quoted by AIG as saying “There is hope here.”

Shared beliefs are powerful, and when students, teachers and administrators all jointly believe in themselves and each other, it creates a dynamic that is motivating to all and highlights the critical importance of being self-reflective (Elmore, 2000). As reported above, administrators make decisions that are connected to their personal beliefs and experiences. Decisions surrounding model choices and allocation of budgetary funds for support services ultimately do impact student outcomes through either the provision of the right services and educational structures or through the lack of provision. On a simple level, this occurs because choices regarding investment in one area ultimately result in a lessened emphasis and outcome in another. A deeper impact occurs when the decision making is based on personal beliefs that may be biased or uninformed, consequently impacting student achievement negatively.

Prior information presented in chapter four included participant responses specific to the research questions. The following addresses the research question components that pertain to achievement data.

**Document Review.** A document review is intended to review additional sources of information that are relevant to the research questions. This portion of the chapter presents themes that are not interview generated and are the result of a review of documents, reports, and data files. For the purposes of this study, reports used were from New York State and New York City data bases (NYSED, 2017; NYCDOE, 2017). Information presented responds to the achievement portion of the following research questions.

RQ1- What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

RQ2- What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?

Table 8

## Document Review

The following data emerged during the review of achievement data for research questions one and two. Documents were reviewed from NYSED and NYC DOE data files.

*Document review of achievement connections*

| <b>Themes</b>  | <b>Number of Leaders<br/>With a Related<br/>Response</b> |
|--|--|
| Achievement data within the participant schools indicate schools using English only models are surpassing the average ELL graduation rate for New York City.   | N/A  |
| The multitude of varied supplement services at interview sites negated the ability to link any one service or combination of services directly to student achievement outcomes.  | N/A  |
| While generally believed to be of value and an identified impacting factor by interviewees, no direct evidence aligned parent engagement definitively to achievement indicators.   | N/A  |
| Despite administrators' beliefs regarding the value of professional development and teacher training as strategies to improve student achievement outcomes, no connections were discovered within the parameters of this research study. | N/A  |

**Document review. Research question one.** In examining the achievement data within the participant schools, this study used state and city data specific to ELL graduation rates, career readiness indexes, college entry data and average Regents scores. In reviewing graduation rates, NYS and NYC both evidenced graduation rates of 27% for the 2015-2016 school year (NYSED, NYC DOE, 2017). Using that rate as a reference point, graduation rates for four of the participant schools exceeded the 27% rate. Of these four, three were English only models and one was a dual language model. Additionally, the three English only models exceeded the average NYC non-ELL graduation rate with increases ranging from twenty to forty plus percentage points.

In reviewing schools' college readiness indexes, the average four year college readiness index cited for the city was 37% (NYC DOE, 2017). Of the participant schools, five schools exceeded the 37% readiness average. Of the five schools, four were English only models and one was a push-in model. For reference, the push-in model was the school with the lowest percentage of ELL students. The NYC Department of Education also, as part of their data analysis, tracks the number of students that enter college within six months of high school graduation. This is identified as the post- secondary enrollment rate. In examining the post – secondary- data, the highest percentage of enrolled students were in one of the schools with a push-in model. The subsequent ranking of percentages of students enrolled in college within six months of graduation included three English only model schools. Again, it is interesting to note the alignment of the school with the lowest percentage of ELL students to the highest post high enrollment rate.

Another evaluative statistic utilized in the data tracking model of the NYC DOE and cited on the NYC DOE school quality guides for each site is the Regents performance data. In examining this data, average passage rates for the 2015-2016 school year (determined through a composite average) evidenced a range of 52% to 80%. The two strongest performing schools included an English only immersion model and a push-in model. It is of note that not all schools offered all regents. Three of the participant schools only gave two Regents' examinations in their schools.

In drilling down further into the Regents performance data specific to passage rates on the English Regents examination, of the top five performing schools, three of the highest passage rates were directly linked to the three schools with the lowest population of ELL students.

However, the second highest Regents average from the participating schools was in a school using an English only immersion model.

**Document review, research question two.** The alignment of interviewees' beliefs to their inclusion of support services, coupled with their consequent financial commitments to teacher training, supplemental service provision, and parent engagement attests to administrators' perceptions of the impact these services have on student outcomes. Documentation of the consistency of administrators prioritizing professional development and the diversity and quantity of supplemental services at each school also lends support to administrators' belief in the positive impact these supports can have on student achievement. However, with the diversity and quantity of services offered, coupled with the varying emphasis and implementation of professional development, supplemental student services and parent engagement, this study did not evidence connections between any singular support or group of supports and student achievement data.

### **Summary**

In analyzing achievement data, while data in some instances demonstrates higher performance for English only model schools, it appears that no single factor is directly linked to academic achievement but that academic achievement is more of a composite of aligned services to identified student needs. Consequently, the belief based decisions administrators make in needs identification and program creation for ELLs, if not reflective of these needs, can negatively impact students' academic success.

The following chapter five will present a summary of findings; discuss the relationship of the findings to the literature, and present conclusions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Embedded in the purpose of public educational systems is the creation of structures that ensure that students' personal circumstances do not prevent their attainment of skills and knowledge and thereby negatively impact their achievement outcomes. Fairness in educational structures, identified as a major aspect of educational equity means that on a fundamental level all students receive the resources they need to graduate and be prepared for success in their post high school endeavors (Center for Public Education, 2017). Directly and simply put, such educational equity is not occurring for English language learners. In the United States, national achievement data evidence substantial disparities between performance of ELL and non-ELL students. In New York State, the focus state of this research, graduation rates of ELLs over a multiple year period have ranged between 44 to 53 percentage points lower than graduation rates for non-ELLs (NYSED, 2017). National data also evidence increasing numbers of entering ELL students across the country, and New York State is identified as one of the top twenty states in the nation in terms of the numbers of ELL students in their public schools (NCES, 2017). Considering the achievement data and the trends reflecting continued national growth in percentages of English language learners, it is incumbent upon educators, system leaders and state and local legislators to improve the outcomes for students identified as English language learners and ensure their fundamental right to educational equity.

Evidence of increased entry of ELL students into the country coupled with the data evidencing consistently low performance of ELL students also identifies a problem that needs to be addressed. The amount of research that has been conducted on ELL students in high schools

is limited, specifically in its attention to those students who enter high school over-aged and under-credited with limited literacy and English language proficiency. This deficiency in the literature is particularly concerning given the significant numbers of currently enrolled ELLs in secondary high schools as well as a continued trend of increasing enrollment (NCES, 2016; NYC DOE, 2017).

In response to this gap, this research examined infrastructures in high schools as a mechanism for defining consistent practices for ELL learning, specifically examining relationships that exist between school structures, school models, administrator beliefs, and school achievement data. This dissertation identified and described the variety of educational practices and structures relevant to ELLs employed within high schools; analyzed administrators' belief systems as rationales for their choices of specific structures and practices; and analyzed the connections between choices made and ELL achievement outcomes.

Through the use of qualitative research, this study on the education of secondary level ELL students, documented practices of multiple high schools with meaningful percentages of ELL students in a single large urban school district. This research was intended to inform practitioners in the field and serve as a possible framework for system leaders to evaluate their current modes of instruction and school practices. Through analysis of instructional models, levels of professional development, parent engagement, supplemental support services and leaders' belief systems, it was the intent of the researcher to add to the literature surrounding effective ELL practices. Documentation of practice consistency and identification of best practices across schools provides additional decision making resources to current practitioners who have dedicated themselves to serving ELL students.

## Research Questions

The following research questions were intended to explore and acquire information specific to effective ELL instruction and administrator beliefs.

1. What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?
2. What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?
3. What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?

## Summary of Findings.

The following presents a summary of the findings. It is intended to present a composite of the information in chapter four and through summarization highlight the information uncovered in the dissertation.

## Research Question One

**What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?**

Participant responses indicated consistency in recommendation and usage of a core group of instructional practices independent of model identification. Academic structures, while generally aligned to the identified ELL instructional model, reflected a lack of purity in model implementation in response to an identified priority of meeting student needs. Participants'



model selection indicated a preference for English only models for high school level ELLs, particularly students entering over-age with lower levels of literacy and English proficiency. Achievement data indicated participating sites that used English only models of instruction evidence higher student achievement data in some areas.

**Research question one, finding one.** In nine of the eleven sites, instructional structures reflected a hybridization of models. Hybrids were in response to the diversity of ELLs in terms of their entry levels in academic skills and knowledge, language, literacy, educational exposure and education perspectives of entering ELLs.

Students in NYC DOE high schools evidence a wide range of entry level academic skills and knowledge, language fluency in first and second languages, literacy, educational exposure, and educational perspectives regarding the role of school. Recognition of, and responsiveness to this diversity is of significant importance in providing quality and equitable education for ELLs. Interviewees' strategies for responding to the diversity of student educational needs often resulted in adaptation and hybridization of ELL instruction models. This hybridization was in direct response to prioritization of student needs and an awareness and responsiveness to the variables of diversity in creating education equity.

**Research question one, finding two.** Ten of eleven sites evidence model choices that were a reflection of interviewees' beliefs and experiences surrounding ELL instruction. English only models were the dominant model advocated for by administrators for high school level second language students, specifically late entry, over age under-credited students, and students with interrupted formal education

ELL students entering NYC DOE schools, particularly those entering directly into high school, have not necessarily had a sequenced building of skill development in preparation for

high school level study specific to NYC and NYS content standards. ELL students entering into high school as new immigrants with limited English proficiency also face a challenging environment that necessitates language acquisition in considerably shorter times than standardly attributed to new language acquisition. Given the combined needs of language and content acquisition, and career and college readiness within the context of entry age time constraints, English only models were the identified preferred instructional model for these ELL students. Selection of instructional models inherently reflect beliefs and experiences administrators have surrounding ELL instruction, but are also, at times, impacted by budgetary factors and numbers of enrolled ELL students.

**Research question one, finding three.** All eleven sites evidenced consistency in utilizing a core of instructional and curricula practices regardless of model choice. Student centered instruction that included project, inquiry, and experiential based learning were prioritized.

Within the context of student diversity, (with an emphasis on diversity specific to entry level English), and prioritization of students needs in defining educational practices, interviewees identified a core of instructional and curricula practices employed across sites, regardless of model choice. Embedded in the selection of consistently identified instructional practices was an underlying belief in the value of student centered instruction, and instruction that could transcend language capacity to challenge students cognitively. Interviewees uniformly identified student engagement as a prioritized instructional focus. There was consistency in participants' beliefs regarding the linkage of project, inquiry, and experiential based learning to student achievement and a consequent choice of curricula that reflected these engagement practices. Administrators advocated for these curricular practices based on their perception of the success of the practices

in cognitive development, executive thinking skills and alignment to the learning needs of students.

As presented in the document review, research specific to participant sites indicated the majority of English only models were exceeding the average state and city ELL graduation rates. Additional achievement data indicated slightly higher performance data for English only models. While not directly connectable to achievement data was the strong belief that administrators had regarding the adaptation of their models to the individualized needs of their students as a determinate in student achievement.

### **Research Question Two**

**What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?** For the purposes of this study three distinct areas of support services were examined, parent engagement, professional development of staff, and supplemental services for students. In discussing the three areas of support services specific to promoting ELL student achievement, findings indicated a unanimous consensus of administrators regarding the value of all three. However, while administrators shared a core of consistently offered supports, their individual beliefs and experiences resulted in distinctions in how they defined, implemented, and prioritized structures for parent engagement and professional development, and what student supplemental services were selected and funded.

**Research question two, Parent engagement, finding one.** In ten sites creation of a community through parental engagement was viewed as a positive support for schools and parent involvement with the school was generally perceived to be of value in student learning.

All participants actively engaged with families of their students and indicated continual efforts to increase the level of parental engagement in their schools. However, participants had different entry points into parent engagement.

**Research question two, Parental engagement, finding two.** Seven participants expressed thoughts about how parental engagement needs to be reevaluated and redefined to reflect cultural norms, family economics, and differentiated to address the varied preferences and needs of ELL families.

Entering ELL students have diverse educational needs and cultural backgrounds and norms. The same is evident with ELL families and guardians. ELL families bring their cultural beliefs into their perceptions of the role they should or wish to have specific to family engagement. ELL family structures may also not be reflective of the same dynamics that exist in non-ELL families with distinct parental figures or role. Additionally, ELL families often have socio-economic situations that make attendance at meetings difficult. Interviewees indicated these factors should be considerations in structuring and assessing parental engagement to negate an assumption that attendance of ELL parents at meetings and conferences is indicative of their level of commitment and engagement. Parental engagement models should be responsive to and reflective of family needs and situations versus a standardized expectation and structure.

**Research question two, parental engagement, finding three.** Administrator perspectives of parental needs were reflected in their parent engagement models in all eleven sites. One engagement perspective responded to perceptions of the school as a support for parents who at times operated in survival modes based on socio-economic situations. Another perspective saw parent engagement as a leverage based factor in student motivation and behavior and engaged with parents from that entry point. A final perspective focused on parents as

instrumental in creating school community, and more active participants in decision making. Administrator perspectives and beliefs surrounding ELL parental engagement were reflected in their approaches to parental engagement. Administrators viewed their purpose as either a support role for parents, saw parental involvement as a leverage factor for student improvement, or created parent structures that encompassed both concepts and saw parents as partners.

School administrators cited varied levels of parental attendance and engagement at their sites however, their parental engagement strategies were a reflection of how they identified the role of the school in relation to parents.

**Research question two, parental engagement, finding four.** There was a core of six commonly used engagement practices for fostering parent involvement that included: culturally based and celebratory events; parent ESL classes; informational workshops specific to ELL issues; family counseling services and student performances.

In reviewing practices used by schools to increase parent engagement, interview sites, while having differing perspectives on the role of the school in supporting families, shared a core of common engagement practices. The underlying goal of these practices was to improve family engagement through offering activities that would have an appeal to parents or support parents in areas specific to ELL families. While attempting to determine ways to “bring” parents to the school, administrators also noted that their experience indicated attendance was not a clear indicator of parental engagement.

As presented in the document review, participants committed personnel and budgetary resources to promoting ELL parent engagement, evidencing their beliefs in the value of said engagement. While schools that advocated for more comprehensive parental engagement programs evidenced higher percentages of parents in attendance at meetings, no patterns across

achievement data linked the engagement to consistency in performance or evidenced an identifiable connection between any singular parental engagement approach to elevated achievement.

**Research question two, supplemental student supports, finding one.** All eleven administrators indicated that for high school level ELLs, particularly late entry, over-age, under-credited, and SIFE students, the inclusion of supplement supports is a necessity in promoting positive educational outcomes.

Citing the time sensitive needs of high school ELLs, the simultaneous dual needs of content and language acquisition, and the importance of positive learning environments respondents offered multiple supplemental supports. These supports were provided in extended day sessions (and through some additional embedded day services) that focused on improving academics, acculturation, socio- emotional support, exposure to the arts, and a sense of community through activities and clubs. Participants' underlying motivation was the need to accelerate content and language learning and create environments conducive to ELL learning. Administrators indicated that for high school level ELLs, particularly late entry, over-age, and SIFE students, the inclusion of supplement supports was a necessity in promoting positive educational outcomes.

**Research question two, supplemental supports, finding two.** Supplemental support choices evidenced consistency in category selection across all eleven sites, and were specific to the categories of extended time academic supports, socio-emotional supports, community building practices, college, and career readiness, and the inclusion of acculturation and arts focused practices.

Interviewees' selection of support services evidenced a core of services that were provided in all schools. These services were identified as baseline necessities in supporting ELL learning. While there was consistency in a core menu of services provided, there were differences across schools in the emphasis placed on some services as opposed to others, with the varying emphasis reflected in budgetary commitments. The distinction in prioritization related to administrator beliefs and experiences specific to ELL instruction and need identification, and in some instances budgetary constraints. All sites had social workers and guidance counselors to address socio-emotional development.

**Research question two, supplemental services, finding three.** Eight administrators indicated that socio-emotional supports were a priority.

Administrators offered a range of services with all sites having either social workers, guidance counselors or a combination of both. Some sites devoted more funding to these positions. This was based on an identification of needs unique to immigrant students and a recognition of issues experienced during their entry or path to entering the United States. It was also a reflection of needs identification surrounding the weak support systems many students have and the academic challenges they face.

As noted in the document review, supplemental services offered to ELL's were extensive and included a wide range of activities such as acculturation and community building activities, academic and language support classes, socio-emotional supports, tutoring, and a multitude of service learning and club based activities and supports. The sheer quantity and diversity of supports provided at all interview sites negated the ability to link provision of specific services to specific academic outcomes. Administrators' stated beliefs, their consistent inclusion of supplemental services, and their acceptance of the consequent budgetary

commitments speak to the role they believed supplemental supports have in ELL student outcomes.

**Research question two, professional development, finding one.** All eleven interviewees identified teacher pedagogy as a critical determinant of ELL success and as a primary focus area by administrators in creating classrooms that ensured ELL success.

Quality of instruction was unanimously identified as a primary factor in ELL student achievement. Consequently, professional development was prioritized by participants and included in their budgetary decision making. Structures and foci for professional development were linked to identification of teacher and students needs as well as participant beliefs surrounding ELL instructional priorities.

**Research question two, professional development, finding two.** Administrators expressed that effective professional development for teachers should include training in key areas for ELL instruction. The four most commonly identified areas included: language acquisition; scaffolding of material; and engagement and differentiation strategies.

In identifying teacher pedagogy as a primary ingredient in ELL outcomes, interviewees also identified key foci for professional development of teachers. These foci were specific to instruction practices that ensured access to material for ELLs and supported teachers in creating cognitively challenging lessons for non-English speakers. Interviewees also identified the need for teachers to have a knowledge base specific to language acquisition and ELL teaching strategies.

**Research question two, professional development, finding three.** Eight interviewees discussed how professional development should be offered in cycles of learning, collaboration based, and accountable.



All interviewees prioritized professional development but varied beliefs surrounding the construction of ELL learning environments specific to professional development foci were evidenced. Despite varying emphasis on specific areas of professional development, administrators evidenced consistency in their methodology of implementing their professional development. Their belief was that professional development should occur in a circular learning cycle versus a singular event. Cycles of learning should include material presentation, implementation of learned material, observation, and feedback. Independent of these cycles, the value and benefits of professional development are minimized. The importance of these learning cycles being teacher generated and collaborative was also an indicated component of effectiveness.

As per the document review, administrator actions and budgetary commitments reflected their perceptions of the importance of professional development as a value added component. However, achievement indicators could not be aligned to the nuanced differences reflected in individual choices for professional development, nor were budgetary expenditures explored in sufficient depth within the parameters of this study to theorize about potential connections.

### **Research Question Three**

**What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?** Individuals have internalized belief systems based on personal experiences and knowledge acquisition and participant instructional decision-making were reflective of their beliefs. Rationales for decision-making were expressed within the context of participants' experiential and personal beliefs and their consequent prioritization of student needs.

**Research question three, finding one.** Belief systems are both conscious and unconscious and belief based decision making was evidenced in all eleven participant sites.

Interviewee decision- making and consequent budgetary allocations were a reflection of belief systems. Inherent in their decisions was a prioritization of student needs and choice of instructional structures that would ultimately be impacting factors on student outcomes.

**Research question three, finding two.** Administrators have differing personal beliefs, knowledge and experiences. This was evidenced in all eleven sites. Administrator beliefs were reflected in their instructional choices specific to model selection, definitions of parental roles and engagement strategies, staff professional development structures, and choices regarding supplemental services.

Participant beliefs were reflected in model and curricular decisions, in their hybridization of models, in their professional development focus, their perspectives on parent engagement, and their selection and prioritization of supplemental student services. These participant instructional choices were identified as belief and data driven decisions but also, at times, were reflective of cultural beliefs, norms, and prior experiences.

**Research question three, finding three.** Six interviewees indicated that a belief in ELL students' capacity to be successful and the consequent creation of challenging instruction and high expectations are key determinates of student success.

While articulating rationales and beliefs surrounding instructional decision making, participants shared a common belief specific to student learning. Interviewees expressed their convictions about the inherent power and importance of believing in the capacity of their students as a factor in student performance. It was their belief that environments that approached

learning from an asset based orientation and truly believed in the ability of high school ELLs potential for success would in fact have a higher potential of generating and fulfilling that belief.

## **Conclusions**

The intent of this study was to develop insight into educational structures and practices that were consistently utilized in schools working with ELL students because of their perceived effectiveness. Exploration of practices and beliefs surrounding ELL instruction was purposeful with intended outcomes specific to the provision of resources and information for educators and system leaders in their quest to improve ELL instruction. Conclusions specific to each research question include the following.

### **Research Question One**

**What instructional models and structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between selection of models and practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?** Students entering into secondary schools reflect diversity in academic skills and knowledge, language fluency in first and second languages, literacy, educational exposure, and educational perspectives. Selection of instructional models must be reflective of and responsive to the individual needs of entering ELLs. This responsiveness does not lend itself to a specific model, but rather necessitates adaptation of curricula and student programming to reflect the varied entry points of ELL students. Achieving education equity and improving outcomes for ELLs means acknowledging their diversity and creating environments that are truly responsive and aligned to their varied entry points and needs. ELL achievement is not linked to a singular model but rather a composition of appropriately aligned services and supports that respond to the unique needs of late entry students. Modification of structures for ELL instruction from a “one size fits all” perspective to creation of environments that are

reflective of the diversity of ELL students specific to academic skills and knowledge, language fluency, literacy, educational exposure, educational perspectives and age of entry is a significant step toward creating educational equity and improving outcomes for ELLs.

This finding aligns to Echevarria's (2013) recommendations that defining model choice is about making learning accessible for students. Study results also link to findings by Moughamian et al., (2009) regarding the importance of aligning instructional programs to the needs of the students. Moughamian et al., (2009) explicitly discuss the need to understand the differences in entering ELL populations and using an understanding of who they are to create program design that transcends individual model practices or identification. These findings directly support interviewee recommendations and practices regarding hybridization of ELL instructional models and links to additional findings by other researchers (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011; Collier, 1989; Haas, et al., 2015; Short & Boyson, 2012; Valentino & R Pearson, 2014).

Study participants also spoke to the value of an English only model for high school entry ELLs, particularly those that enter the system over-age with limited English. This finding, while consistent with prior studies' recommendations for alignment between needs and instructional curricula is also supported by work from authors identifying time restraints as a defining factor in selection of English only models for high school entry ELLs (Brogadir, et al., 2011; Calderon et al., 2011; Haas, et al., 2015).

While indicating the importance of model practices being differentiated to meet the needs of entering ELLs, participants also identified what they believed to be a core of essential practices. Embedded in their identified menu of practices was a recognition that model identification, while providing a basic framework, was transcended by the necessity of inclusion

of a core of classroom practices specific to supporting ELL learning. The identification of this core of foundational practices is supported in the literature. Moughamian, et al., (2009) mirror the belief in utilization of a core of ELL centered strategies citing a list of foundational practices for ELL classrooms. Echevarria, et al., (2014) also cite what they believe are fundamental ELL practices, many of which directly align to instructional strategies identified and utilized by participants. Other authors identify these same core strategies as well (Calderon, et al., 2011; Genesse, et al., 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Slavin et al., 2004; Wixom, 2015).

A final reference of note is the research presented by Genesse et al. (2006) and Parrish et al., (2006) directly identifying the need for model selection and instructional practices to evolve to support the changing beliefs individuals have regarding how ELL students learn best. Their recommendations punctuate and align with the findings of this research but of equal importance, highlight the need to continue to explore and adapt how educators respond to new understandings about student learning and the needs of ELL students.

## **Research Question Two**

**What faculty and student support structures are consistent in schools and what relationship exists between support practices and achievement data with secondary ELL students?** For ELLs to achieve academic success, administrators indicated that programs serving them need to be holistic in nature and include connections with families, and extended academic and socio-emotional supports. Moreover, administrators prioritized the importance of the quality of instruction received by high school ELLs as a key factor in improving outcomes.

Although practices varied, administrators' perspectives on parental engagement all fundamentally supported the need to be involved with parents and stressed the importance of re-evaluating engagement through the lens of how it aligns to families' cultural norms (and at times

their modified family structures), and the needs and preferences of immigrant families. Breiseth, Lydia, Robertson & Lafond, (2011) speak directly to this finding when they articulate the need to think “outside the box” when creating parent engagement structures and practices. It was their stated belief that an important step in fostering parental engagement was understanding who families are and what their cultural norms were. They argue that independent of this awareness, we are potentially forcing families to fit into engagement models that are reflective of non-ELL norms that are neither comfortable nor appropriate for ELL families. Henderson, Mapp, & Johnson (2007) also address the need to redefine parent outreach emphasizing that engagement should be redefined to be based on involvement versus attendance. This belief was reinforced by this study with participants highlighting that low meeting attendance was not reflective of parental engagement. Additional authors, while not all presenting findings specific to ELLs, advocated for the value of engagement as a strategy to meet the needs of the student populations they studied (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2014; Fuga, 2016; Jung, 2016; Niehaus, 2014; Shi, 2014).

Teacher pedagogy is a critical determinant of ELL success and was identified as a primary focus area by study participants in ensuring ELL success. The literature heavily emphasizes and supports the assertion that quality of instruction is a primary factor in, and predictor of, student achievement (Calderon, et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Wei, 2009; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003; Niehaus, 2014). Administrators identified foci for professional development that aligned to their beliefs regarding the optimal methodology of learning for ELLs. To ensure effectiveness, they believed that teacher training needed to evolve around student centered learning that provided multiple entry points for ELLs and inclusion of ELL instructional strategies. Within these categories, professional development for teachers should include training in language acquisition, scaffolding, engagement and

differentiation strategies, collaboration, cycles of learning, grounding in student work, and accountability. These targeted categories and focus on specific skill sets were echoed in the literature and by leaders in the field of education. Echevarria (2010), advocates for teacher skill sets inclusive of these tenets. She particularly targets development of teacher skill sets specific to student engagement strategies and student access to material. In their composite report Ballantyne, Saunders, and Levy (2008), cited the importance of teacher training being reflective of collaboration, teacher leadership, and cycles of learning, all components also identified by Short & Boyson (2012), Doubet, (2016), and Moughamian, et al., ( 2009).

A final topic listed by participants as a focus area for professional development was training for teachers in language acquisition. Although, Calderon et al. (2011) mentioned the importance of educators' understanding of model structures and linked practices, development of language acquisition awareness was not identified in the literature as professional development foci.

In examining a holistic approach to ELL instruction, a key element in the literature surrounding successful schools was the value of supplemental support services (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Cosden, et al., 2004; Gandara & Rumberger, 2007; Short & Boyson, 2012). The findings of this study affirm prior studies and spotlight the importance of supports for late entry ELLs, particularly students entering over-age, with limited English and literacy. Short & Boyson, (2012) stressed the importance of supplemental supports for this population, particularly if these students are newly arrived to the country. These authors, along with Calderon, et al., (2011), Cosden et al., (2010) and Gandara et al., (2003) also included responding to the socio-emotional needs of students as a priority in supporting ELL students and their subsequent achievement. These authors' conclusions were supported by participants' identification of socio-

emotional supports as a priority for ELLs and their subsequent budgetary commitments to provision of services.

Participant identification of consistently utilized supports included strategies identified in the literature as having positive outcomes for ELLs. These strategies include advisories, after school and Saturday extended learning, acculturation and community building activities, and college readiness activities (DiMartins & Clarks, 2008; Gandara et al., 2003; Vaughn et al., 2007). Considering that potential entry gaps in academics and language skills are often coupled with exposure to hardship and trauma, independence of both socio-emotional supports and academic supports, the capacity of ELL students to be successful is diminished. Both the literature and participants' responses supported the need to have these additive services for ELL students.

### **Research Question Three**

**What commonality exists in belief systems of administrators regarding ELL learning and how may these belief systems impact and align with ELL success?** Bennis et al., (2008) discuss how the belief systems of educators are the binding element in the creation of successful schools and decision- making is a reflection of both conscious and unconscious beliefs. Elmore (2000) expresses the same thoughts indicating that individual internal belief systems and norms are reflected in administrator decision- making and have significant implications for student outcomes. This connection between beliefs and decision making was evidenced by study participants in the alignment of their stated beliefs and the choices they made specific to model selection, definitions of parental roles and engagement strategies, the choices made regarding staff professional development structures, and choices regarding supplemental services. Belief based decision making was the primary component in interviewees'



explanations surrounding instructional choices and consequent budgetary expenditures. The alignment between beliefs and budgetary allocations supports Truebridge's (2016) assertion that principal beliefs influence prioritization of student needs and consequent budgetary allocations. Understanding the concept of belief driven decision-making punctuates the importance of administrators examining their beliefs in order to test validity and confront any bias they may hold that could be reflected in their decision making. In the NYC DOE school system the relative autonomy administrators have in selection of model choice and infrastructure design makes this reflection an even higher priority. Elmore (2000) speaks extensively to the importance of examining beliefs for faulty internal thought processes and Barnyak and McNelly (2009) speak to the impact of a lack of congruence between beliefs and behaviors independent of personal awareness. The authority NYC administrators have to engage in modification of instructional models or make decisions about support services offered are critical decisions that directly impact student learning, and faulty or uniformed belief systems will negatively impact student outcomes. Karabenick et al., (2004) in their study argued that educators' perceptions and expectations regarding students' ability to be successful linked to students' actual levels of success. Dissertation results supported his study with participants expressing their belief that educators' high expectations of students, and their consequent belief in students' capacity to be successful was a prominent factor in student success.

### **Recommendations**

Given the wide variance in skill levels of ELL students entering the educational system and the diversity of their needs, ELL success is dependent upon the system's ability to identify and address those needs in terms of academic programs and services. A significant first step is the expansion of the adaptation and alignment of learning environments to the individualized

needs of entering ELL students evident in the participant schools. Student needs must be addressed through targeted instructional practices in schools, and decisions about services and placement need to occur in response to the students' age of entry, English language level, prior educational exposure and schools' capacity to serve students. This is not an easy task given the size of the NYC DOE and would entail structural and funding changes within systems and departments that support ELLs.

**Recommendation one.** It is recommended that late entry, over-age students with limited or no English be placed in schools using English only models or in schools with significant enough numbers of ELLs to allow for a primary focus on ELL needs. While this is a researcher recommendation based on the study results, the recommendation is supported by the work of Moughamiam, 2009 and Short et al., (2012).

It is the belief of this researcher, substantiated by the beliefs of the study participants, that late entry, over age students, with limited or no English perform best in sites that are responsive to the situational time restraints these students face. This can occur when students are placed in sites that are structured for newcomers or sites that target the majority of their resources to the educational needs of ELL students. Independent of addressing placement concerns, funding structures for ELL students need to be modified for schools with small percentages of ELLs. While current funding structures within the NYCDOE allocate an additional budgetary weight for ELLs, it is the recommendation of this researcher that this weighting needs to be augmented specific to schools with small percentages of ELLs. Additional funding for schools with small populations will allow these sites to expand beyond the singular class or teacher they have dedicated to ELLs and more effectively align their programs to ELL needs. Independent of this additional funding, small populations of ELL

students within larger non-ELL populations may not be provided the resources they need and are entitled to, and become potentially, a secondary focus.

**Recommendation two.** It is recommended that placement and alignment of services for ELLs be supported and coordinated by a group of individuals that have a level of expertise in the needs of older entry ELLs. This recommendation is connected to Calderon, et al.,( 2011) recommendation regarding student placement being based on knowledge of student needs and alignment of site placement to those needs.

Embedded in the placement of ELLs into appropriately aligned settings is an understanding that collectively and individually, support staff and system leaders understand the practices and structures utilized in various models, know what services are being offered by what schools, and place students through a knowledge based process. This would entail the establishment of a core of experts within the city that could work with schools and lend expertise in placement independent of model bias, and ideally support schools in establishing programs that align to student needs. Within the NYC DOE there is an Office of ELLs. It is the recommendation of this researcher that this department becomes the housing unit for a core of experts. Based on the responses of participants, this office would need to move its focus from a compliance based interaction to that of an instructional support unit. It would also mean that any core of experts would view schools and student placement through the lens of student needs and not institutional model preferences.

**Recommendation three.** It is the recommendation of this researcher that teacher preparation programs mandate classes specific to ELL instruction and that internship requirements include placement at sites specific to participation in ELL classrooms. It is further recommended that teacher preparation programs include a course requirement specific to

language acquisition. While this is a researcher developed recommendation, it is supported by the actions of Massachusetts and their modification of teacher requirements to include an ELL certification (MTEL, 2017). Moughamian, et al., (2009) also discusses questioning students to understand individual circumstances as an element in placing students in settings that are aligned to their needs.

Creation of ELL learning structures are holistic and for success to occur no singular modification will accomplish the task. Rather, a systemic readjustment with an underlying intent of creating educational equity for ELLs is necessary and only effective if all its component parts are coordinated. Matching student needs to instructional supports is a valuable first step. However, if once those students are in classes if the quality of the instruction does not meet the needs of ELLs then the system will fail. As indicated by some of the participants, ELL instruction is really just about “good teaching”. While that is true, there is a core of practices that are critical in the instruction of ELL students including the absolute necessity of preparing teachers to engage with non-English speaking students. Teachers engaging with ELL students need to be aware of, and proficient in these core instructional and learning strategies. Admittedly, convincing colleges to change their requirements and course offerings is a difficult and time consuming process that may well produce inconsistent results. In order to encourage this shift, it is further recommended that NYS emulate Massachusetts in requiring an ESL extension for teaching certification or the alternative option of a TESOL endorsement.

**Recommendation four.** It is recommended that the NYC DOE and other educational systems modify their central professional strategies specific to teacher training in ELL instruction. This modification would ensure continued growth, support teachers who are currently in the system, and incorporate another effective practice into organizational structures.

In examining systemic change, Kotter (2012), and Senge (2007) speak to the need for change to occur not as a singular activity but rather to have its roots in culturally based, sequenced and organization wide modifications surrounding a shared vision.

Given the recommended changes in teacher preparation programs, entering teachers will have a grounding in basis ELL teaching and language acquisition strategies. However, as in the case with most learning, instruction usually involves sequenced skill and knowledge building. This should be no different for teacher training. After targeting a core of identified best practices, a series of professional development trainings should be offered sequentially to develop these skills, mirroring the scaffolded sequencing of course offering in college curricula. Embedded in this methodology of professional development should be a cycle of learning that includes application and reflection, which consequently fosters deep learning and skill development. While the NYC DOE currently offers a multitude of valuable trainings, utilizing a sequenced model would ensure more consistent exposure, as well as a depth of learning and consistency in development of teaching practices specific to ELLs. It would also provide a framework for schools to align their on-site professional development to the sequence of learning occurring at the central office level.

**Recommendation five.** Parent engagement models should be revisited to reflect involvement versus attendance and be aligned to, and respectful of the needs and preferences of the populations being served. This recommendation was supported by participant responses and is aligned with the work of Henderson, et al., (2007). Just as students enter evidencing a range of diversity, so do the parents. Parental engagement models should be reflective of families. A final recommendation embodies an affirmation of administrators' initiative in decision making as well as a cautionary note. Study participants have created learning environments based on their

beliefs systems and subsequently modified structures to support student learning. While stated beliefs are consciously held, school administrators need to continually explore the origins of their beliefs and confirm their validity in terms of outcomes. The notable responsibility placed on educators both systemically and socially for student success is hefty. The results of administrative decision-making can be the difference between a student remaining in school or leaving. The gravity of these potential outcomes punctuates the necessity of deep reflections regarding personal beliefs. It also highlights the absolute importance of administrator and teacher beliefs regarding ELL students' capacity to learn. In considering the power of belief among teachers themselves, administrators are encouraged, as part of their on-site professional development to work with teachers to explore their beliefs about ELL learning. Once they understand the belief systems of their teachers they can continue initiating adaptations to support teacher learning as well as students.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

**Recommendation one.** Differentiation of services for ELLs must be at the forefront of our educational structures and mandates. Creating school and systemic structures, and adapting teacher programs to respond to this need are an area for further research. In a behemoth system like the NYC DOE, implementing systemic change is difficult. Change cannot be solely a top down initiative but must be integrated processes that allow multiple entry points and collaboration. It is recommended that further research would analyze and assess these changes in order to provide system leaders with timely information to begin creation of informed and thoughtful implementation models. This research would be qualitative and focus on system leaders in school and college settings, and other key stakeholders as change agents in assessing an implementation model for ELL instruction.

Further research into the needs of older entry ELLs and strategic practices that directly impact their learning would provide much needed data to align needs of these students with educational practices. This would entail a more detailed examination of the background of the students who are entering schools, not just from a language, gender, and cultural perspective, but from a skill perspective. What percentages of students are entering at or above certain ages and how does that align to their entry levels in terms of language and literacy? This would provide base line data for aligning school design and selection to needs, and ultimately provide insights into course structures that best support students.

**Recommendation two.** Supporting the above recommendations for further research would be the exploration, in more depth, of the alignment of supplemental services to the needs of high school level ELLs. What practices most effectively encompass and respond to the acculturation, academic, and language needs of ELL students? Would these services need to be singular in nature or could a core group of supports be developed that embed all needs simultaneously? Exploring which supplemental services have the most impact on supporting ELL outcomes would provide valuable information to leaders in more precise structuring of ELL supplemental supports. This research could be conducted through a quantitative or mixed method research study that, through administrator responses, targeted the alignment between student achievement and services provided.

**Recommendation three.** A final area recommended for further research is specific to language acquisition. The current literature indicates that the development of language fluency requires more time than the majority of students who enter high school with no English language have. Language acquisition should be explored with a focus on creating language development sequences that align with the time frames of entering ELL students. Can identified priorities in

language acquisition theories be adapted to meet the needs of late entry high school ELL students in order to accelerate their progress through the adaptation of specific teacher practices? Embedded in this research recommendation is a focus on exploration and alignment of language acquisition practices and the development of a methodology for re-sequencing curricula in schools to support language acquisition. This qualitative research would include teachers with experience in ELL instruction and curricula and linguists.

### **Closing Remarks**

There have been many contributions to field of ELL instruction and it was the hope of this researcher that through this research focused on administrator identified practices and models, that additional information of value was added to the database. It is difficult to put ourselves in the “shoes” of others, however one can only imagine the frustration of students who come to us to learn and who are placed in environments that prevent that from occurring. Students drop out of school every day, often for reasons we as educators cannot prevent. However, it is unconscionable that any of those drop-outs occur because we as educators have not utilized or structured our resources to meet the needs of our students. Hearing the stories of a core of NYC educators as to how they are working to increase and improve the educational structures and services for ELLs is an important step in the direction of addressing the inequity that currently characterizes the system. After reviewing the literature and engaging in the interview process, it is clear that we need to address the inequities that exist in education related to ELL instruction. It is also equally clear that given the tools, knowledge and commitment evidenced by the interviewees that the means to address these inequities for high school ELLs exists.



## REFERENCES

- Adelman, H.S., & Taylor, L. (2006). *The school leaders' guide to student learning supports*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Adelson, J., & Niehaus, K. (2014). *School Support, Parental Involvement, and Academic and Social-Emotional Outcomes for English Language Learners*. Columbia, SC: American Educational Research Association.
- Alemu, D. (2016). Dissertation completion guide: *A chapter-by-chapter nontechnical guide for graduate research projects*. [Kindle version]. Retrieved from [www.ebooklaunch.com](http://www.ebooklaunch.com)
- Allen, A. M. (2011). *Parental involvement and educational performance: The perceptions of parents in an urban elementary school*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Ancess, J., & Wichterle, O. S. (2002). Reinventing high school: Outcomes of the coalition campus schools project. *American Education Research Journal*, 39(3), 639-673.
- Archibald, S., & Gallagher, H. (2002). Case study of professional development expenditures at a restructured high school. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 10(29). Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v10n29.2002>
- Atwell, P. N. (2013). *Effective behaviors and practices of administrators in urban charter schools relating to student achievement*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Ballantyne, K., Sanderman, A., & Levy, J. (2008). *Educating English language learners: Building teacher capacity*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English language Acquisition. Retrieved from;  
[http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/mainstream\\_teachers.htm](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/mainstream_teachers.htm).
- Barnyak, N. C., & McNelly, T. A. (2009). An urban school district's parent involvement: A study of teachers' and administrators' beliefs and practices. *School Community Journal*, 19(1), 33-58.
- Baxter, J.M. (2004). *Superintendents' perceptions of English-only instruction in Massachusetts and Rhode Island public school districts*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Baydoun, N. (2013). *The effect of parental participation on the academic achievement of female English as second language middle school students in the Persian Gulf*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Bennis, W., Goleman, D., & O'Toole, J. (2008). *Transparency: how leaders create a culture of candor*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Education, A Wiley Imprint.
- Birmingham, J., Pechman, E., Russell, C., & Mielke, M. (2005). *Shared features of high-performing after-school programs: A follow-up to the task evaluation*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. Retrieved from [www.policystudies.com](http://www.policystudies.com).
- Breiseth, L., Robertson, K., & Lafond, S. (2013). Connecting with ell families. Retrieved at: [www.colincolorado.org](http://www.colincolorado.org)
- Brogadir, R., & Stufft, D. (2011). *Urban principals' facilitation of English language learning in public schools*. Education and Urban Society. University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Retrieved from [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org).

- Brown, C. D. (2007). *Impact of professional development on teaching limited English proficient students in a suburban school district*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Calderon, M., Slavin, R. & Sanchez, M. (2011). *Effective instruction for English learners*. Retrieved from [www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)
- Cassidy, S., Eachus, R. (2000). Learning style, academic belief systems, self-report student proficiency and academic achievement in higher education. *Education Psychology*, 20(3), 307-322.
- Center for Post -Secondary Research. (2007). *Experiences that matter; enhancing student learning and success*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Center for Public Education. (2017). *What research says about English Language Learners: At a glance*. Retrieved at: [www.centerforpubliceducation.org](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org)
- Center for Public Education. (2017). *Teaching the teachers*. Retrieved at: [www.centerforpubliceducation.org](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org)
- Cheeseman-Day, J. & Newburger, E.C. ( 2002). *Educational attainment and synthetic estimates of work-life earnings*. Retrieved at: [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)
- Collier, V. (1989). How long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly* 23(3).
- Collier, V., & Thomas, W. P. (1989). How quickly can immigrants become proficient in school English? *Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, 5, 26-38. Retrieved from [http://thomasandcollier.com/Downloads/JEILMS-F1989-P26-38\\_c.pdf](http://thomasandcollier.com/Downloads/JEILMS-F1989-P26-38_c.pdf)

- Cosden, M., Morrison, G., Gutierrez, L., & Brown, M. (2004). The effects of homework programs and after-school activities on school success. *Theory in Practice*, 43(3), 220-226.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc/[Kindle version}. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and other matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, 19, 121-129
- Dalton, E. A. (2010). *Relationship between professional development expenditures and student achievement*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Bransford, J., LePage, P., Hammerness, K., & Duffy, H. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: what teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Education, A Wiley Imprint.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R.C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: a status report on teacher development in the united states and abroad*. Palo Alto, CA: School Redesign Network at Stanford University.
- DiMartino, J., & Clarke, J.H. (2008). *Personalizing the high school experience for each student*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum development.
- Dimmitt, C. (2003). Transforming school counseling practice through collaboration and the use of data: a study of academic failure in high school. *Professional School Counseling*, 6, (5), 340-349.

- Drake, G. S. (2000). *A study of the relationship between principals' educational beliefs, personal characteristics, school demographics, and student achievement in Alabama public high schools*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Doubet, K., & Hockett, J. (2015). *Differentiation for middle and high schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (Eds.). (2005). *On common ground: the power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Dwech, C.S. (2010). Mind-sets and equitable education. *Principal Leadership*, 10(5), 26-29.
- Early, P. B. (2012). *Professional learning communities: Teaching, learning, understanding*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2010). *Making content comprehensible for secondary English learners: The SIOP model*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Echevarria, J. Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2013). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Elmore, R. (2000, Winter). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Washington, DC: The Albert Shanker Institute.
- Evans, M. T. (2012). *Principal leadership: How knowledge, agency, and beliefs influence grade-level k-8 student retention*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Eye, B. J. (2015). *A policy analysis of professional development for quality teaching in alternative schools*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research* 38(1), 47-65.

- Ferlazzo, L., & Hammond, L. (2009). *Building parent engagement in schools*. San Francisco, CA: Linworth Publishing.
- Fuga, M. T. (2016). *An investigation of the impact of parent and community involvement in middle schools in North Carolina that successfully serve Latino English language learners (ELLs)*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: system thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Gammill, D. M. (2013). *Adult learning in a K-12 setting; job-embedded professional development: Teacher identity and self-efficacy*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Gandara, P., & Rumberger, R.W. (2007). *Defining an adequate education for English learners*. Retrieved from <https://www.stanford.edu/.../Gandara%20%20Rumberger%20EL%20Resources.doc>
- Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Greene, J.P. (1997). A meta-analysis of the Russell and Baker review of bilingual education research. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21(2/3). Retrieved from <http://www.languagepolicy.net/archives/greene.htm>
- George, P.S., McEwin, C.K., & Jenkins, J.M. (2000). *The Exemplary High School*. New York, NY: Harcourt College Publishers.

- Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: What the research does—and does not—say. *American Educator*, 32(2), 8–44.
- Goldhaber, A., & Anthony, E. (2003). *Teacher quality and student achievement. urban diversity series*. Retrieved at: <https://eric.ed.gov>
- Greene, J.P. (1998). *A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of bilingual education*. Austin, TX: University of Texas, The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.
- Guerra, A.P. (2008). *The impact of professional development on instruction for English language learners*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Guo, Q., & Koretz, D. (2015). Estimating the impact of the Massachusetts English immersion law on limited English proficient students. *Educational Policy*, 27, 121-149.
- Haas, E., Tran, L., Huang, M., & Yu, A. (2015). *The achievement progress of English learner students in Arizona*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Hakuta, K. (2011). Educating language minority students and affirming their equal rights: Research and practical perspectives. *Educational Researcher*, 40(4), 163-174.
- Harutunjan, J. (2007). *The impact of professional development programs on teachers work with English language skills*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Hearn, L. D. (1994). *The impact of professional development activities on staff development as perceived by teachers and administrators serviced by the Detroit center for professional growth and development, 1988-1991*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.

- Haubrich, M.K. (2010). *An examination of the relationship between language based instructional strategies and academic achievement*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Henderson, A.T., Mapp, K.L, Johnson V.R, , & Davies, D. (2007). *Bake Sale*. NY, NY: The New Press.
- Jung, E. & Zhang, Y. (2016). Parental involvement, children's aspirations, and achievement in new immigrant families. *Journal of Educational Research*, 109(4), 333-350.
- Karabenick, S.A., & Clemens-Noda, P.A. (2004). Professional development implications of teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English language learners. *The Journal of the National Association for Bilingual Education* 28(1), 55-75.
- Kim, H. Y. and Suárez-Orozco, C. (2015), The language of learning: The academic engagement of newcomer immigrant youth. *The Journal of Research on Adolescents* 25: 229–245. doi:10.1111/jora.12130
- Kotter, J. (2012). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.
- Lee, J.S. (2014). The relationship between student engagement and academic performance: Is it a myth or reality? *The Journal of Educational Research*, 107(3), 177-185.
- Lezotte, L.W. (1991). *Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation*. Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products, Ltd. Retrieved from <http://www.effectiveschools.com/freestsuff.asp>
- Lowden, C. S. (2003). *Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Mann, B. (2014). *Education & equity are not equal*. The Educational Trust. Retrieved from [edtrust.org](http://edtrust.org)



- Marzano, R.J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- McLaughlin, M.W., & Talbert, J.E. (2006). *Building school-based teacher learning communities: Professional strategies to improve student achievement*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Education, A Wiley Imprint. [Kindle Version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com
- McGrath, V. (2009). Reviewing the evidence on how adult students learn: an examination of Knowles' model of andragogy. *The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education*, EJ860562, 100-110
- Migration Policy Institute. (2017). *U.S. immigration trends*. Retrieved from [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)
- Moughamian, A., Rivera, M., & Francis, D. J. (2009). *Instructional models and strategies for teaching English language learners*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.
- Mora, J.K. (2009). From the ballot box to the classroom. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, 66(7), 14-19.
- Muneja, M. (2015). Theoretical basis for adult learning facilitation: review of selected articles. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(31), 54-61.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2016). *English language learners in public schools*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cgf.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp)

- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2017). *The condition of education*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs>
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2017). *English language learners*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [www2.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2016). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the united states: 2013*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)
- Nelson, A. (2005). Increased learning time and targeted instruction improve academic skills for at-risk ESL learners. *International Journal On School Disaffection*, 3(2), 48-52.
- New York City Department of Education. (2014). School year 2013-2014 Demographic Data. Retrieved from [www.schools.nyc.gov](http://www.schools.nyc.gov)
- New York State Department of Education (2015). *English language learners (ELLs) screening, identification, placement, review and exit criteria*. Retrieved at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged>
- New York State Department of Education (2017). *New York State education at a glance*. Retrieved from <http://www.data.nysed.gov>
- Niehaus, K., & Adelson, J.L. (2014). School support, parental involvement, and academic and social-emotional outcomes for English language learners. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(4), 810-844.
- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (2005). *Research You Can Use to Improve Results*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/re-engineering/rycu/index.shtml>
- Odden, A., Fermanich, M., Archibald, S., & Gallagher, A (2002). A cost framework for professional development. *Journal of Education Finance*. 28(1), 51-74.

- Parrish, T. B., Pérez, M., Merickel, A., & Linqunti, R. (2006). *Effects of the implementation of proposition 227 on the education of English learners, k–12: Findings from a five-year evaluation*. California Department of Education. Sacramento, CA: American Institutes for Research/WestEd.
- Pew Research Center. (2017). *Changing Patterns in U.S. Immigration and Population*. Retrieved from [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org)
- Robinson, B. M. (2013). *The impact of professional development on teacher effectiveness*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Rossell, C., & Baker, K. (1996). The educational effectiveness of bilingual education. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 30(1), 7-69
- Rothstein, (2016). *Educational Equity- What does it mean? How do we know when we reach it?* Center for Public Education. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/educationalequity>
- Snyder-Hogan, L.E. (2010). *The role of parental involvement in the academic achievement of Latino youth*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Seales, S. (2011). *Epistemological beliefs of administrators: A comparison of beliefs and actions of elementary and secondary school leaders*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Shannon, S. (2017). *Nine characteristics of successful schools*. Retrieved from [www.file:20characteristics%20of%20effective%20schools.pdf](http://www.file:20characteristics%20of%20effective%20schools.pdf)
- Short, D., & Boyson, B. (2012). *Helping newcomers succeed in secondary schools and beyond*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research.

- Shi, Q. (2014). *English language learners' educational attainment in high school: An examination of educational expectation, academic self-efficacy, parental expectation and parental involvement using path analysis and structural equation modeling*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Slavin, R.E., & Cheung, A. (2004). How do English language learners learn to read? *Educational Leadership*, 61(6), 52-56
- Thayer, J. L. (2004). *Professional development: Costs and effectiveness in one rural school district*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Truebridge, S. (2016). Resilience: It Begins with Beliefs. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 52(1), 22-27.
- Truebridge, S. (2010). *Influencing educators' beliefs about student resilience in an effort to enhance student success*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- U.S Department of Education. (2017). *Data and statistics*. Retrieved at: [www2.ed.gov](http://www2.ed.gov)
- U.S. Department of Education Releases. (2016). *A new record high for graduation rates*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press>
- United States Census Bureau. (2008). *QuickFacts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37025.html>
- Valentino, R., & Pearson, S.R. (2014). *Effectiveness of four instructional programs designed to serve English language learners: variation by ethnicity and initial language proficiency*. San Francisco, CA: Center for Educational Policy Analysis.
- Vaughn, S., & Roberts, G. (2007). Secondary interventions in reading; providing additional instruction for students at risk. *Teaching Exceptional Children*. 39(95), 40-46.
- Vogt, W., & Johnson, R. (2011). *Dictionary of statistics & methodology: A nontechnical guide for the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Vogt, P., Gardner, D., & Haefele, L. (2012). *When to use what research design*. New York, NY: The Guildford Press.
- Wainer, A., & Tomas Rivera Policy Inst., C.C. (2004). *The new Latino south and the challenge to public education: strategies for educators and policymakers in emerging immigrant communities*. Austin, TX: University of Texas, The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.
- Waters, T. & Marzano, R. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent on student achievement*. Denver, Co.: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning. Retrieved from <https://www.mcrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SuperintendentLeadership.pdf>
- Willig, A. (1985). A meta-analysis of selected studies on the effectiveness of bilingual education. *Review of Educational Research*, 55(3), 269-317.
- Wixom, M. (2015). *State-level English language learner policies*. Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/17/92/11792.pdf>.
- Wong-Fillmore, I., & Valadez, C. (1986). Teaching bilingual learners. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Wright, W. E. (2017). *Landmark court rulings regarding ELLs*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/>
- Wood, D.L. (2014). *A study of the effects of bilingual and structured English immersion programs on the oral English language literacy development of students learning English as a second language*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UMI, ProQuest, LLC.
- Zacarian, D. (2012). *Serving English Learner Laws, Policies and Regulations*. Washington, DC: Retrieved from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/>

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### **Letter of Introduction to Potential Participants**

To: \_\_\_\_\_

You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research project titled: Meeting the needs of older second language learners: What works, and how might school and district leaders align needs to practices and resources? The study is being conducted to provide relevant information to practitioners and leaders, and to fulfill the requirements for the student investigators' doctoral dissertation. Dr. Robert Reidy, the primary investigator and Melody Kellogg, the doctoral student investigator are conducting this research. You are being asked to participate in this research study because of your leadership in the education of English language learners and your unique ability to provide insight in the dynamics of decision making around ELL instruction on a high school level. This letter is intended to provide you with information that allows you to make an informed decision regarding your willingness to participate in the study. This letter overviews the purpose of the study, what your commitment to participate would entail and all issues related to confidentiality and participant rights specific to the study

#### **The Purpose of the Study, Research Design, and confidentiality**

The purpose of this research will be to identify characteristics that are present within high schools evidencing successful outcomes with ELL populations, and to consequently inform the decision making of school and system leaders specific to successful ELL practices. The research will also provide a platform for system leaders to evaluate the level of engagement and role they should have in aligning and implementing systemic practices to effect ELL achievement in their district. Information regarding instructional models, professional development, budget usage, parent engagement and internal and external support services specific to ELL instruction will be examined for their alignment to pre-identified success indicators to determine what patterns emerge. This is a mixed method research (including both qualitative and quantitative methodology). Data from the surveys and the interviews will be examined to see how various practices and models align with student outcomes and success elements.

Participants will be asked to take a preliminary on-line survey (approximately 20 minutes) and then participate in an one to one interview of approximately sixty minutes. Consenting participants will be asked to take the attached survey prior to the scheduling of the interviews. Once the survey is complete, the student investigator will schedule a time (at the convenience and location choice of the interviewee) to engage in a more in-depth interview. The researcher, with the permission of the participant will digitally record the interview as well as engage in note taking. During the interview the interviewer will ask only the scripted questions and necessary

clarifying questions. All interviews will be professional, and respectful of the interviewee's time.

Once the interview is completed it will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and a copy of the transcript will be shared with the interviewee for confirmation of interview information. All interview and survey data will be non-identified and all IRB protocols for ensuring confidentiality will be adhered to. Survey and interview materials will be anonymous being given pseudo non-identifying labels. All storage sites (both digital and paper) will be secured and accessible only by the researcher. Electronic storage will be password protected and the password will only be known by the researcher. Hard copies of information will be stored in a secure cabinet at the researcher's private residence. All ethical and moral codes of conduct will be adhered to in accordance with the IRB protocols. All materials will be destroyed upon the mandatory hold time specific to the research

### **Benefits and risks**

Current outcomes for ELL students lag significantly behind non-ELL students, both nationally, and in the state specific to this research. While extensive research exists regarding instruction for ELL students, study outcomes vary in their recommendations for instructional models and practices, and there is no definitive identification of best models and practices. Additionally, there is also a dearth of research that is specific to high school level ELL students and what models and practices align to improved outcomes for this population. Since all participants in this research study will be administrators (assistant principals or principals) of Aschools with significant ELL populations, they will all be contributing to expanding the knowledge base on the student population they are committed to serving. In addition, the research will provide information and data that will inform their decision making regarding formative approaches to designing for, and responding to the needs of high school level ELL students. The research will also inform the decision making of system leaders, and provide a platform for them to evaluate the level of engagement and role they should have in aligning and implementing systemic practices to effect ELL achievement in their district .

The risks in this study are minimal and only related to personal information and confidentiality, which is insured as identified above. As a participant, you may opt out at any moment during the interview process

### **Remuneration**

In accordance with the New York City Department of Education, no remuneration or compensation will be offered for participation, other than thanks and gratitude.

### **How the Information will be used?**

The data and results of this study will be embedded in researcher's dissertation and hopefully will inform practitioners, and school and system leaders regarding what models and practices align with improved outcomes for high school level ELL students. It will also provide a

foundation for further examination of instructional methodologies specific to high school level ELL students.

Again, as mentioned initially, participation is voluntary and if you choose to participate, you may at any time withdraw from the study without any penalty or repercussion.

If you are willing to voluntarily participate in this study, please contact Melody Kellogg principal/student investigator via email at [kellom@sage.edu](mailto:kellom@sage.edu) or by phone at 917-453-7005. If you do choose to participate you will be asked to sign an additional letter of informed consent.

Sincerely,

---

Melody Kellogg

---

Dr. Robert Reidy



## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

#### Interview Questions 1/6/2017

- General information
  - Why did you choose to work with an ELL population?
  - What are the admissions policies of your school?
  - What professional development have you received specific to ELLs?
- Model of student instruction
  - What instructional model do you use in your school and why did you choose the model?
  - Why do you believe this model supports learning specific to high school ELLs, and what might be the weaknesses of the model?
  - What are the specific instructional practices and structures that teachers consistently use in classrooms to support ELLs?
- Types of support services provided for ELLs at your school.
  - How do you acculturate and create community with entering students in your school?
  - Would you describe the additional ELL supports/services you have in your school and how they align and support student development?
  - What would you identify as the most critical support services that need to be present in high schools to ensure success of ELL students?
- Beliefs / understandings about ELL instruction
  - What are your beliefs about how older ELLs should receive instruction?
  - Why do you believe that achievement and success rates for ELLs are systemically lower than non-ELLs?
  - What do you believe are the three most important elements that contribute to ELL success?
- Challenges to ELL instruction
  - What recommendations do you have for system leaders and policy makers to improve outcomes for high school ELL populations?
  - What would you identify as the obstacles to ensuring ELL success in your school?
  - What level of support do you feel you receive from external sources specific to ELL success and how aligned is it to the needs of your school?
- Role of parent engagement
  - What does parent engagement look like in your school and what percentage of ELL families are active participants?
  - How much of an impact do you feel parent engagement plays in academic outcomes for your ELL students and why?
- Role of professional development ( principal and teacher training)
  - How often do your teachers have professional development specific to ELLs and is there a primary focus?

- What is your belief about the role professional development plays in improving outcomes for ELLs?
  - How do you ensure transference of professional development to classroom practices?
  - What would you identify as the area teachers require the most support in when teaching ELLs?
- Budgetary commitment to ELLs ( number of teachers and support staff)
- What portion/percentage of your budget is dedicated to ELLs?
  - What do you identify as budgetary priorities for supporting ELLs?
  - How many staff members are dedicated to ELL students (numbers and/or percentages)?
- Accountability measures for student achievement
- Please describe how you track and measure ELL movement and achievement internally.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: Meeting the needs of older second language learners: What works, and how might school and district leaders align needs to practices and resources? This research is being conducted by Robert Reidy (principal investigator) and Melody Kellogg (the doctoral student investigator). This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for the student investigator's doctoral dissertation.

#### **Purpose, research design and confidentiality**

The purpose of this research will be to identify characteristics that are present within high schools evidencing successful outcomes with ELL populations, and to consequently inform the decision making of school and system leaders specific to successful ELL practices. The research will also provide a platform for system leaders to evaluate the level of engagement and role they should have in aligning and implementing systemic practices to effect ELL achievement in their district. Information regarding instructional models, professional development, budget usage, and internal and external support services specific to ELL instruction will be examined for their alignment to pre-identified success indicators to determine what patterns emerge. This is a mixed method research (including both qualitative and quantitative methodology). Data from the surveys and the interviews will be examined to see how various practices and models align with student outcomes and success elements.

Participants will be asked to take a preliminary on-line survey (approximately 20 minutes) and then participate in an one to one interview of approximately sixty minutes. Consenting participants will be asked to take the attached survey prior to the scheduling of the interviews. Once the survey is complete, the student investigator will schedule a time (at the convenience and location choice of the interviewee) to engage in a more in-depth interview. The researcher, with the permission of the participant will digitally record the interview as well as engage in note taking. During the interview the interviewer will ask only the scripted questions and necessary clarifying questions. All interviews will be professional, and respectful of the interviewee's time.

Once the interview is completed it will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and a copy of the transcript will be shared with the interviewee for confirmation of interview information. All interview and survey data and questions will be non-identified and all IRB protocols for ensuring confidentiality will be adhered to. Survey and interview materials will be anonymous being given pseudo non-identifying labels. All storage sites (both digital and paper) will be secured and accessible only by the researcher. Electronic storage will be password protected and the password will only be known by the researcher. Hard copies of information will be stored in a secure cabinet at the researcher's private residence. All ethical and moral codes of conduct will be adhered to in accordance with the IRB protocols. All materials will be destroyed upon the mandatory hold time specific to the research.

#### **Potential risks and benefits of participation**

Current outcomes for ELL students lag significantly behind non-ELL students, both nationally, and in the state specific to this research. There is also limited research and definitive recommendations for models and practices to improve outcomes for high school level ELL students. Since all participants in this research study will be administrators (assistant principals or principals) of schools with significant ELL populations, they will all be contributing to expanding the knowledge base of the student population they are committed to serving. In addition, the research will provide information and data that will inform their decision making regarding formative approaches to designing for, and responding to, the needs of high school level ELL students. The research will also inform the decision making of system leaders, and provide a platform for them to evaluate the level of engagement and role they should have in aligning and implementing systemic practices to effect ELL achievement in their district .

The risks in this study are minimal and only related to personal information and confidentiality, which is insured as identified above. As a participant, you may opt out at any moment during the interview process

### **Consents**

I give permission to the researcher to play the audio or video recording of me in the places described above. Put your initials here to indicate your permission. \_\_\_\_\_.

Participation is voluntary, I understand that I may at any time during the course of this study revoke my consent and from the study without any penalty. Put your initials here to indicate your understanding\_\_\_\_\_.

The researcher will use an audio digital recording and the transcriptions for data analysis only. I give permission to the researcher to digitally record and transcribe my interview for data analysis only. I also understand that a copy of the transcription will be provided to me afterward in order that I may review the interview for accuracy. Initial here to indicate your permission.

\_\_\_\_\_

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Research participant

Sincerely,

---

Melody Kellogg  
Ed.D. Candidate  
[Kellom@sage.edu](mailto:Kellom@sage.edu)  
917-453-7005

---

Dr. Robert Reidy  
Faculty Advisory  
[reidyr@sage.edu](mailto:reidyr@sage.edu)

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human participants. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Donna Heald, PhD  
Associate Provost  
The Sage Colleges  
65 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Troy, New York 12180  
518-244-2326  
[healdd@sage.edu](mailto:healdd@sage.edu)

## APPENDIX D

### NYC DOE IRB

February 22, 2017

Ms. Melody Kellogg  
1235 Father Capodanno Blvd.  
Staten Island, NY 10306

Dear Ms. Kellogg:

I am happy to inform you that the New York City Department of Education Institutional Review Board (NYCDOE IRB) has approved your research proposal, “Meeting the needs of high school ELLs: What works, and how might school and district leaders align resources and best practices to meet student needs?.” The NYCDOE IRB has assigned your study the file number of 1569. Please make certain that all correspondence regarding this project references this number. The IRB has determined that the study poses minimal risk to participants. The approval is for a period of one year:

**Approval Date: February 22, 2017**

**Expiration Date: February 21, 2018**

**Responsibilities of Principal Investigators:** Please find below a list of responsibilities of Principal Investigators who have DOE IRB approval to conduct research in New York City public schools.

☐ Approval by this office does not guarantee access to any particular school, individual or data. You are responsible for making appropriate contacts and getting the required permissions and consents before initiating the study.

☐ When requesting permission to conduct research, submit a letter to the school principal summarizing your research design and methodology along with this IRB Approval letter. Each principal agreeing to participate must sign the enclosed Approval to Conduct Research in Schools/Districts form. *A completed and signed form for every school included in your research must be emailed to [IRB@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IRB@schools.nyc.gov).* Principals may also ask you to show them the receipt issued by the NYC Department of Education at the time of your fingerprinting.

☐ You are responsible for ensuring that all researchers on your team conducting research in NYC public schools are fingerprinted by the NYC Department of Education. Please note: This rule applies to all research in schools conducted with students and/or staff. See the attached fingerprinting materials. For additional information [click here](#). Fingerprinting staff will ask you for your identification and social security number and for your DOE IRB approval letter. You must be fingerprinted during the school year in which the letter is issued. Researchers who join the study team after the inception of the research must also be fingerprinted. Please provide a list of their names and social security numbers to the NYC Department of Education Research and Policy Support Group for tracking their eligibility and security clearance. The cost of fingerprinting is \$135. *A copy of the fingerprinting receipt must be emailed to [IRB@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:IRB@schools.nyc.gov).*

Ms. Melody Kellogg P a g e 2 February 22, 2017

☐ You are responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in accordance with your research proposal as approved by the DOE IRB and for the actions of all coinvestigators and research staff involved with the research.

☐ You are responsible for informing all participants (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents, and students) that their participation is strictly voluntary and that there are no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study.

☐ Researchers must: use the consent forms approved by the DOE IRB; provide all

research subjects with copies of their signed forms; maintain signed forms in a secure place for a period of at least three years after study completion; and destroy the forms in accordance with the data disposal plan approved by the IRB.

**Mandatory Reporting to the IRB:** The principal investigator must report to the Research and Policy Support Group, within five business days, any serious problem, adverse effect, or outcome that occurs with frequency or degree of severity greater than that anticipated. In addition, the principal investigator must report any event or series of events that prompt the temporary or permanent suspension of a research project involving human subjects or any deviations from the approved protocol.

**Amendments/Modifications:** All amendments/modification of protocols involving human subjects must have prior IRB approval, except those involving the prevention of immediate harm to a subject, which must be reported within 24 hours to the NYC Department of Education IRB.

**Continuation of your research:** It is your responsibility to insure that an application for continuing review approval is submitted six weeks before the expiration date noted above. If you do not receive approval before the expiration date, all study activities must stop until you receive a new approval letter.

**Research findings:** We require a copy of the report of findings from the research. Interim reports may also be requested for multi-year studies. Your report should not include identification of the superintendency, district, any school, student, or staff member. Please send an electronic copy of the final report to: [irb@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:irb@schools.nyc.gov). If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Mary Mattis at 212.374.3913.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Mattis, PhD

Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Barbara Dworkowitz

## APPENDIX E

### Sage IRB

January 12, 2016

Melody Kellogg

Doctoral Student, The Sage Colleges

**IRB PROPOSAL #527-2016-2017**

**Reviewer: Francesca Durand, Chair**

Dear Researchers:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your expedited application and has approved your project entitled “**Meeting the needs of high school ELL’s: What works, and how might school and district leaders align resources and best practices to meet student needs?**” Good luck with your research.

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

When you have completed collecting your data you will need to submit to the IRB Committee a final report indicating any problems you may have encountered regarding the treatment of human subjects, if the project goes longer than one year.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,