ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS ON GROWING POPULATIONS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE STATE OF WYOMING

A Record of Study

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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May 2014

Major Subject: Educational Administration

ABSTRACT

For centuries, America has been the place for people from all countries to come and seek their dreams. Our nation continues to welcome all, offering cultural and linguistic diversity to the areas where they settle, which is in new areas of the country and into many public schools.

This study looks at the increase in culturally and linguistically diverse students in Wyoming, and how schools in Wyoming are impacted by the linguistically diverse population. The qualitative study investigated the perspectives of district leadership regarding the growing population of ELs in the state. The purpose of the study was to understand what district leaders in the State of Wyoming are doing in terms of this growing population. The study focused on four areas regarding the growing EL population as to: 1) the challenges districts face 2) the positive opportunities districts have, 3) what districts are actually doing, and 4) what districts think they should be doing. The research participation was planned through purposeful sampling, as voices from all district leaders would provide more clarity to the research questions.

Literature review focused on the challenges that school districts face with a growing English language learner population, the challenges superintendents face in their roles, and the ways that effective superintendents transform schools and student outcomes. Especially important in the literature are the discussions of how culturally responsive leadership is imperative for students to succeed.

Themes emerged in response to each of the focus areas. Specifically, district leaders have been working to provide for stronger EL student outcomes, yet there are still areas in need of improving. Data revealed much what is found in the literature, though local idiosyncrasies provided insight as to how Wyoming has been affected differently. The general themes addressed staffing, professional training, and funding issues. Communications, political support, and cultural relations were themes that were also revealed.

DEDICATION

Without the support, hard work, and devotion of my family, I would have never accomplished this milestone. It was by each of their own sacrifices that I was able to finish this degree and study. To each of them, I will be forever grateful.

Therefore, I must dedicate this study to Jim, who was constantly pushing me to complete all the work at his own expense; to Sydney, who was the chauffeur and second mother when time constraints did not allow me to be; to Dominick, who became the best Hamburger Helper chef and kept the family fed; and to Greta, who cheerfully went along for the ride without complaint. It fills my heart with love and pride knowing you have all been there for me, as I have tried to be for you.

I must also dedicate this to my parents, Jim (+) and Julie Shannon, who taught me that regardless of what happens in life, no one can ever take education away from you. I thank you for the foresight to force me to learn another language, which has been the cornerstone of my career. Thank you for teaching me the value of education – may my work in the field make you proud.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This road towards completion has been a difficult one to travel, yet it is a rewarding finish to finally reach the end of the road. It would have been an impossible journey without the support and guidance from several people, whom I feel must be acknowledged for their role in my education.

There have been three particular educators from my past that have influenced who I have become as an educator and an administrator. Though they may never know, their wisdom and tutelage have made me the educator I am today: Mrs. Emily Dawson, Spanish teacher at New Caney High School; Dr. Douglas Foley, professor of anthropology and multicultural education at the University of Texas at Austin; and Dr. Fred Ivy, professor of educational administration at Texas A&M International University who compelled me to seek this degree.

Though these previous educators built my foundation in education, it was through the dedication of my committee members that I was able to see this study to fruition. Dr. Linda Skrla, Dr. Jim Scheurich, Dr. Randall Brown, and Dr. Humberto Gonzalez – thank you for always pushing me harder and expecting more from my work. The comments, suggestions, and insight provided to me made for a true learning experience and drove me to produce a study of which I was proud. My chair, Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan, provided supportive guidance throughout my work. The time and energy put forth in the revisions and edits of the study were much appreciated. Dr. Webb-Hasan has been the eternal optimist, and the positive energy which she provided

helped me to never give up. She has been a blessing to me over the course of this degree. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Finally, I would not have made it through the time consuming paper trail or the study without the encouragement and friendship of my cohort friend, Susana Garza. We always had each other's backs and were rooting the other one on through the challenges life gave us. I am grateful to have had you there to be my friend and confidant, Dr. Garza!

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today's educational institutions have been facing more challenges than in the years before as changing demographics have been creating roadblocks for many educators and educational leaders who are unskilled and unlearned in meeting the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2008). Population growth of immigrants to the nation has created a challenge where they lack understanding of the educational systems and majority language, which has caused them to struggle academically (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). Ethnicities that have historically struggled in education have continued to exhibit the same low levels of achievement. Often, immigrant populations have faced lower socioeconomic living statuses that have further exacerbated academic challenges (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). As a result, educational leaders have struggled to find ways to enhance educational opportunities and meet annual yearly progress (AYP) for the many subgroup student populations that statistically have underperformed (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005). Therefore, the need for culturally responsive leadership has been heightened for schools to reform and become successful.

Culturally responsive leadership has been one of the most important aspects of educational leadership training in recent years, and it has been recommended that this specific leadership practice in the nation's educational system could improve the outcomes of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (Cooper, 2009). However, cultural and linguistic diversity has existed since colonization in the Americas.

Historically, American students have faced challenges in the United States due to divided cultures and languages. In the colonial period, several immigrant groups challenged the early American ideal of assimilation by creating schools in their native languages (Ovando, 2003). Linguistic education was shunned from that time until the first case reached courts, as an effort to create a society of assimilated Americans (Zimmerman, 2010). It was not until 1923, though, that the first case regarding bilingual education, Meyer v. State of Nebraska, was heard by the Supreme Court (262 US 390, 1923). However, it was the landmark case of Lau v. Nichols (1974) that is considered the seminal case mandating bilingual and ESL education for limited English proficient students in districts with populations of 20 or more students of the same language (414 US 563, 1974).

Almost half a century after the Supreme Court required that schools work to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students, many states, districts, and schools have continued to find significant challenges in meeting their language and instructional needs (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2005). Requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) have created additional challenges for school districts in meeting the needs of linguistically diverse students, as educational leaders have been faced with creating a better understanding of the culturally and linguistically diverse students in order to close the achievement gaps, resulting in further struggles to implement practices in schools, districts, and school communities that address the needs and challenges they have faced (Hakuta, 2011).

Growth of English Language Learner Populations

According to Hoefer (2007) in his statement to the House Committee on Immigration, there were approximately 22 million immigrants in the United States. Half have come here without proper documentation or authorization, with approximately 60% of those illegally emigrating from Mexico. Historically, the southwestern states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, along with the western mountain state of Colorado, have had large populations of immigrant students from Mexican origin, and as such, these states have felt the impacts of large populations of English language learners for years (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). However, the population of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has spread to several other states that, until recently, had not been significantly impacted with meeting the educational needs of such populations. In the decade between 1998 and 2008, the United States public schools (Pre-K to the 12th grade) showed growth of 53% in EL populations, with some states showing over 200% growth (National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008). Several states showed triple digit growth, with South Carolina having the largest percentage of change with an overwhelming 827% growth in English language learners that enrolled in grades Pre-K to 12 within the decade (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). This spreading population is often referred to as the "new diaspora", and state and local education agencies have been racing to meet the academic, linguistic, and social needs of student populations with which few leaders or educators have had experience (Faltis & Valdés; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010).

In the western state of Wyoming, the influx of English language learners has shown a population increase of 91% over the past 5 years (Wyoming Department of Education, 2010). The highest growth in the population of EL students was 110% between 2004 and 2005 (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language, 2008). The performance and graduation rate of English language learners was significantly lower than other subgroup populations of students.

The general performance of Wyoming students has been in the upper half of students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). According to 2011 NAEP data, the state scored lower than only 8 states in 4th grade reading and 7 states in 4th grade math. However, 80% of students tested were White, 1% of students tested were Black, 14% of students tested were Hispanic, and 3% were American Indian/Alaska Native. In fourth grade, Whites outperformed all other subgroups by 11% to 40% in all areas, with the closest gap existing between Whites and Hispanics in mathematics (11%) and the greatest gap existing between Whites and American Indian/Alaska Natives in reading (40%). For 8th grade, the state scored lower than only 6 states in reading and lower than 10 states in mathematics. Demographic statistics mirrored that of the fourth grade student population, with similar achievement gaps between Whites and Hispanics. Information from these statistics shows that on the national level, the state's academic performance has been in the top half or better in the nation (IES, 2011). It should be cautioned that Hispanic or American Indian/Alaska Native does not necessarily indicate students were English language learners.

On national data from the 2010 NAEP, it was found that in both 4th and 8th grade reading and math, there were 19 to 39 point differences in the performance of Hispanic ELs and Hispanic Non-ELs (Buckley, 2011; Wang & Bachler, 2011). For state reports provided on the NAEP, demographic group breakdowns did not specify if the Hispanic students were EL or Non-EL students. However, both state and national data showed that achievement gaps existed between Whites and diverse populations.

In the state of Wyoming, according to the US Census Bureau, 6.2% of the population over five years of age speaks a language other than English (2010). The largest portion of speakers of languages other than English, or 4.6% of the population, speaks Spanish as their heritage language, and 36.2% classify themselves as speaking English less than "very well". When broken down further into age category, the statistics were very similar, ranging around 10% point difference from age 5 to over 65. Compared to National data, 19.6% of people over the age of five speak a language other than English at home (Quickfacts, 2010). Therefore, the state in question has not faced the same breadth of challenges of non-English speakers as have other states with higher populations of non-native English speakers. The state of Wyoming is bordered by Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Utah. Most of the states have shown an increase in populations of people who spoke a language other than English between 2000 and 2010 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The school systems of most of these border states have also shown an increase in the population of EL students. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2008), Colorado showed growth of over 200% in the decade between 1998 and 2008, and

Nebraska experienced growth of 171% in their EL population. Although Wyoming experienced growth of the EL population, it has not compared to that of those two border states. Idaho and Utah experienced growth similar to that of Wyoming, while South Dakota and Montana actually experienced a decline in the EL population (National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008). Within a decade, the migration of an EL population to this region changed educational demographics and thus presented academic agencies with struggles concerning language instruction.

Nationwide, large populations of English learners have challenged educational institutions for several decades (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). For instance, in the early part of the millennium, there were over 400 languages other than English spoken by the over 5 million U.S. public school students; approximately 80% of the students spoke Spanish as their first language (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). More recent statistics has shown that large student populations of English language learners have continued to enroll in American public schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), 20.4% of all students enrolled in elementary or secondary schools spoke a language other than English, yet only 5.3% spoke English with difficulty. However, 69.8% of Hispanic students enrolled in elementary or secondary schools spoke a language other than English at home, and 19.1% of the population of students spoke English with difficulty. Subgroups of Hispanics, including Mexicans, Central, and South Americans spoke another language or had more difficulty with English than Puerto Ricans or Hispanics from other areas, such

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as Cuba or Spain. Asians followed closely behind Hispanics in the languages spoken at home and their proficiency of the English language.

Noting that 20.4% of students spoke languages than other English, it would seem probable that similar percentages of students would receive some type of language acquisition service. However, of the 47 reporting states, only 7.9% of the student population nationwide received some sort of EL services, though the types of services or programs were not provided in the statistics. States reporting the highest percentage of EL services were located on the southwestern border of the United States, such as California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. There were much smaller EL populations served in the Southeastern, the Midwestern, and the Mountain West states, with percentages approximating 6% of the population. It is important to note that most of the states surrounding Wyoming had significantly larger EL populations than the general Mountain West states. Idaho, Utah, and Nebraska all had between 11% and 15% of their school populations receiving EL services, while Colorado ranked in the top 12 states in the nation with the highest EL populations (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics). The state of Wyoming only had 3.2% of its students receiving EL services in 2003, yet by 2010, the population of EL students had almost doubled to 6% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003; Wyoming Department of Education, n.d.) This rapid growth in the population of EL students could be cause to see difficulties in addressing needs and academic successes of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Background on Linguistic Education

Statistics cited in Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian (2005) revealed that less than 20% of English language learners nationally met standards for reading in 2002, and were more likely to be tracked in subpar academic groups or drop out of school. Additionally, Genesee et.al. (2005) suggested that EL students would be much more successful if the language of assessment matched the native language of the students, and especially if the language of instruction, assessment, and students was congruent.

Twenty states are currently members of WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium), which provides English proficiency standards and Spanish language arts standards and competencies to its member states (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). The state in which the research was done is a member of WIDA. The WIDA consortium originally started with the states of Wisconsin, Indiana, Delaware, and Arkansas in 2002 through a federal grant (WIDA, 2011). Although Arkansas quickly left the consortium, all the states that originated the consortium, and the subsequent states that joined, were facing an influx in student populations that were culturally and linguistically diverse. It was noted that the new diaspora that was affecting these states had been providing challenges for decades to the southwestern border states of California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.

Although a member of WIDA, the state of Wyoming only utilizes WIDA to access language proficiency standards. Due to constant changing political landscapes and the propensity throughout the state of having the locust of control at the local levels,

there has been a lack of consistent policy or programs to enforce consistent use of all standards offered by WIDA. Thus, programs and standards for English language learners throughout local education agencies vary greatly, which could be indicative of statewide policy and program challenges rather than inefficiencies with WIDA, which actually has provided the standards and competencies that could increase student achievement if they were being enacted. Lack of student achievement was prevalent as the graduation rate among EL students in Wyoming was at 54% in 2010 and 62% in 2011, and 56% in 2012 (WDE ART, 2013).

In passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal government recognized a need to create equity in education for English language learners. Additional federal work proceeded in creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and subsequently in the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. By recognizing that diverse student populations were not afforded the same levels of education as mainstream America, the federal government stepped into the states' arena of education by mandating that all students receive an equitable education. In 1974, Lau v. Nichols (1974) was the Supreme Court case which ruled that students with a native language other than English were not receiving an equitable education if they were not able to receive instruction in their native language (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; NCES, n.d). This was the law that mandated bilingual education.

Even with legislation that required that students from linguistically diverse backgrounds be given equitable educational opportunities, many of them still underperformed when compared to English language speaking students, which was

apparent in Wyoming with the low graduation rates and achievement gaps that existed in standardized assessments. This issue was addressed by federal legislation again with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001). NCLB required that all diverse subgroups, including English language learners, pass state exams within designated time periods, which range from one year to three year exemption periods depending on the state. The state of Wyoming chose to use the one year exemption period. Other requirements from NCLB impacted the Bilingual Education Act, which was funded under Title VII, to be transformed to the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act, with funding transferred to Title III, which included funding several programs in addition to the English language acquisition programs. This change from Bilingual Education to English Language Acquisition shifted the philosophy and pedagogy in many local and state agencies to that of subtractive language, whereas the emphasis was transferred to the acquisition of English instead of the predominance of bilingualism (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, n.d.). Many linguists have disagreed with the concept of English language acquisition as they feel that it subtracts or discredits native language maintenance. Valenzuela (1999) found that subtractive linguistic education led to discontent with education, which followed into generational contempt towards the school systems amongst some culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

The concept of bilingual education was grounded in theory on language acquisition (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). The most basic precepts of

this were that all humans learn language through listening and speaking, and eventually transfer the language abilities to the written word through reading and writing. More in-depth understanding of this theory included the facilitation of comprehensible input, dialogue, and opportunities for comprehensible output (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). This theory regarding how people learn languages strongly supported additive language instruction whereas students acquire language through the natural process that develops with native and second language growth.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of bilingual education was very much in style and considered appropriate pedagogy for students from language minority backgrounds (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). However, current political and educational contexts often align bilingual education as anti-American, so there has much been more dissension among educational policymakers and practitioners as to the need for bilingual education programs (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). Due to changes in these political and philosophical ideologies, there has been a decline in bilingual programs over the past twenty years (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010).

In recent decades, context of how to address educational programming for English language learners has faced many challenges, including system emphasis on English acquisition through English only instruction, as well as several voter based propositions that have led to the resending of bilingual education programs in the states of Arizona, California, and Massachusetts. The same anti-bilingual initiative was on the Colorado ballot, but was not approved by voters (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). Ironically, California was the state that originated bilingual education

with Lau v. Nichols (1974), and the first state to stop bilingual education in 1998 with the passing of Proposition 227, which mandated one year of intensive sheltered instruction for English language learners before being mainstreamed into content area classes instead of learning content while acquiring English (Chávez-Reyes, 2010). Even with anti-bilingual initiatives passing in these states, by the year 2006, all states had developed, adopted, or were in process to do so regarding English language proficiency standards (ELPS), which laid out the framework for English language learners to be proficient in both language and content material (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2013). This was why the state of Wyoming became part of the WIDA consortium (WDE, 2010).

Culturally Responsive Schools and Language Learning Programs

The developing of language acquisition programs has been paramount in ensuring that English language learners become proficient in language and content. A majority of English language learners have received instruction in English-only programs (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). In states that were not accustomed to large English language learner populations, many educational practices have existed that restrict native language use or instruction and have tracked students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds into more vocational and less academically rigorous course work (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). This restrictive trend also has affected the larger school community regarding English language learners and their families. However, it has been unequivocally important when working with English language learning populations to recognize the need for families to be empowered in the

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educational process, where understanding that language and literacy could be enhanced with acceptance and acknowledgement of community and parental cultural assets (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Wang & Bachler, 2011). This has best been achieved through culturally responsive education.

In culturally responsive districts, educators were not only proponents of the implementation of additive language programs, but they also were proponents and advocates for the students with whom they worked (Bartolomé, 2010). Bartolomé found that in less culturally responsive districts, beliefs existed that students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds should learn mainstream culture and dominant American vernacular. However, when culturally responsive leaders developed schools that addressed the cultural and linguistic needs of all students, then school programs created opportunities of success (Cooper, 2009).

In successful, culturally responsive schools, educators understood language acquisition and bilingual pedagogy, content knowledge, and specialized knowledge in language acquisition and literacy development in the secondary language (Mora, 2007). Efficacious teachers in these programs were able to increase students' English language acquisition and knowledge of content material. Many bilingual programs have done that while helping students maintain their native language. However, bilingual education programs often lacked appropriate materials needed to instruct in languages other than English, which created challenges for districts who tried to follow additive language philosophies (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010).

There are currently several basic bilingual programs, with varying levels of language maintenance, which are found throughout the United States. Programs for students who are English language learners include English as a Second Language/English Immersion programs, transitional bilingual programs (often referred to as early-exit programs), developmental bilingual programs (often referred to as late-exit programs), heritage or indigenous language programs, and dual language programs (often referred to as two-way immersion programs). It is important to note that in several of the bilingual programs that exist, the language goal is for learners to become competent English speakers, not necessarily to maintain or develop bilingual/bi-literate abilities. The two programs which have bilingual development goals are the heritage or dual language programs, which promote cultural and linguistic pluralism (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; Wang & Bachler, 2011).

Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández (2010) supported that all students in the 21st century should be multilingual in order to function in a global world. This foresight into education of students for college and career goals has supported native language maintenance or enrichment bilingual programs, such as dual language, instead of the more traditional, early exit education programs for English language learners.

When culturally responsive educational leaders had decided on English acquisition programs, it was evident they understood the bases of bilingual education and the research on language acquisition (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). For instance, the time frame of learning a language has shown to take anywhere from 3 to 7 years. The early oral conversational proficiency is that which

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occurs most quickly, but higher levels of cognitive and academic language occur more slowly. Research on language acquisition showed that oral conversational proficiency in the second language (L2) increased the ability to learn to read, write, and comprehend L2 with more academic fluency (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). By understanding the English language learner and language acquisition, culturally responsive schools have been able to focus on the social and cognitive needs of the English language learners.

Oral proficiency in a second language (L2) increased the likelihood to read, write, and comprehend L2, which has been an important research understanding for culturally responsive leaders. It has been powerful for the leaders to understand this research on how native language (L1) knowledge can contribute to student achievement. Students' ability to transfer reading skills from L1 to L2 increased levels of achievement in decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary development (Mora, 2007)

Mora (2007) suggested that Moll's seminal research and philosophy on students' funds of knowledge could help EL students to learn a second language if teachers used the oral language traditions from cultures to help increase literacy in L2. A majority of EL students were U.S. born, but often have lived in linguistically diverse communities where there has been a lack of sufficient English spoken by the community members (Lee, 2010). When educators could see the students' language and culture as assets instead of liabilities in their education, English language learners were better able to build on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to successfully master the English needed for academic success (Chávez-Reyes, 2010).

Though all EL students have been expected to become English proficient in U.S. schools, those from stronger language ability in their first language were more likely to achieve higher levels in the second language. Typical deterrents to language acquisition and levels of language proficiency in the first language, such as sociolinguistic status or schooling, paralleled as deterrents in the second language (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010). Additional research has found that students use of cognitive strategies from L1 transferred to similar cognitive strategies in L2 (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). That is why it has been beneficial to increase students' academic commands of L1 to facilitate academic acquisition of L2. This language additive philosophy was observed in more successful, culturally responsive schools.

Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

Lee (2010) also found that English language learners often felt they were not culturally represented in curriculum or instructional practices. This perceived disregard for EL students in academic life caused more disconnect to the school system and lowered motivation where EL were less likely to partake in their learning, further exacerbating the ability to acquire English and be successful in English based content instruction.

Bartolomé (2010) suggested that anyone working with students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds needed to focus on deconstructing socially created norms in order to appropriately focus on the students' needs for culturally relevant pedagogy. In order to become culturally relevant, it was helpful if the students'

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languages and cultures were validated (Lee, 2010). However, a majority of teachers were not of the same linguistic, socioeconomic, or cultural background as students. The linguistic, economic, and cultural chasm that existed needed to be considered with anyone that worked with English language learners so that appropriate educator development could occur (Bartolomé, 2010). Cooper (2009) stated that it was actually imperative to disrupt the socially produced ideals of some educators in order that education for culturally and linguistically diverse populations to be effective.

Many educators exhibited the deficit theory regarding the EL students' ability based on knowing a language other than English, often have perceived the student as inferior. It was common for many teachers to believe that if linguistic minority students used their native language (L1), then it would detract from their ability to learn English and be academically successful (Lee, 2010). However, Lee found that ELs were better able to achieve higher levels of academic achievement when the teachers recognized the assets of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and incorporated them into the teaching experiences.

It was important to provide culturally relevant instruction in order to bridge gaps for students from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds to the American school system. It was futile to expect culturally and linguistically diverse student populations to fit into the American system. Educational leaders needed to find the cultural biases and blind spots among the school systems and the staffs and directly address those inadequacies (Cooper, 2009). Therefore, instead of expecting students to fit into the culture of the American school system, schools needed to provide endless opportunities

to integrate all EL students so that, with proper instructional and staff supports, students could succeed (Lee, 2010).

There was an urgency that districts with EL students focus on improving the educational opportunities for their language learning students. In order to ensure that EL students received the best educational opportunities, successful educational leaders set high expectations for the English language learner population and for the teachers (Bartolomé, 2010; Reichardt, 2002). Additionally, districts had to strive to implement educational theory of culturally relevant pedagogy that was responsive to students' home cultures by appreciating and acknowledging students' cultural differences without forming preconceived notions of the students' deficit abilities to achieve academically based on their differences (Cooper, 2009; Lee, 2010).

Advocacy for EL students invoked by educators who understood the need for cultural responsiveness was paramount in improving schools. Throughout the history of bilingual education in the United States, those students who were presented advancement opportunities through culturally responsive systems succeeded, whereas those without, struggled. Different leadership styles, program decisions, and pedagogical strategies either hurt or hindered the EL student.

Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian (2005) found a correlation between the academic achievement of EL students with the time period enrolled in effective language programs. The measures of academic achievement included attendance, completion rates, GPA, and achievement test scores. EL students who had never been enrolled in an English language acquisition program, such as bilingual or

ESL class, exhibited the lowest levels of academic achievement and the highest dropout rates. In closing, EL students were more successful when education leaders fully adopted and implemented the ideals behind culturally relevant pedagogy and programs for instructing students with limited proficiency in the English language (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Reichardt, 2002).

English Language Learners in Wyoming

The University of Wyoming is the only four-year university in the state where the research took place. It is considered a tier one research university. However, it only started offering endorsement classes in English as a Second Language in 2009, which is a 15 hour program. No endorsement for bilingual education is offered (University of Wyoming, n.d.). Likewise, the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board, which is the licensing entity for educators in the state of Wyoming, has only offered an endorsement in English as a Second Language since 2007 (PTSB, personal communication, 2012). With the importance of instructional pedagogy as mentioned in previous research, it could be understandable that ELs were and are struggling with academic achievement in Wyoming.

According to 2010 assessment data (WDE, 2010) only 54% of English language learners graduated from state schools. This number only closely surpassed the lowest group of graduates, which was the homeless population at 52% graduation rate. Subsequent years data showed a slight increase in 2011 to 62%, but a decrease to 56% in 2012 (WDE, 2012). There has been much research on the importance of bilingual and

ESL programs for EL students. It would be beneficial to understand how district instructional leaders have been and are addressing the growing number of EL students, and how they create educational systems to meet student needs in order to increase the EL students' academic achievement. However, considering the rapid growth of the EL population in the state, there was research to suggest that there was possibly a lack of educator preparation in the area of EL instruction, as well as a possible lack of policy and programs that focus on English language acquisition that would create difficulties for educational leaders (Wang & Bachler, 2011).

Therefore, understanding the perceptions of educational leaders regarding the current challenges they were feeling as it pertains to the influx of English language learners in their respective districts, the opportunities they were seizing within their districts due to a growing EL population, the ways the district was meeting the needs of the growing population of ELs in their district, and what they believe they should have been doing to meet the needs of the growing EL population could lead to more thorough knowledge of leadership practices that could improve outcomes for the culturally and linguistically diverse students, at both state and local levels.

Statement of the Problem

Wyoming and several surrounding states are often referred to as the Central Region. The Mid-Continent Research on Education and Learning (McREL) researches the educational systems in the states of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, and Wyoming. The majority of these states have small EL populations compared to other states in the country, and the EL population count would

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be insignificant if compared to states like Texas, Illinois, California, or Arizona (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). However, such a large shift from the predominately homogeneous White population has created challenges for the educational systems in those states (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Reichardt, 2002). One of the largest challenges faced by educational systems throughout the United States was based on the fiscal resources of the school districts that served the largest percentage of English language learners, which were more likely located in rural areas with large populations of students living in poverty. For instance, in South Dakota, the poorest districts had the highest EL population of 54%. Ramsey and O'Day (2010) found nationally that between 60% – 68% of students who were EL were also categorized as lower-socioeconomic, and it has been suggested by the researchers that academic issues for students have been exacerbated by both language and poverty challenges, creating two-fold challenges for educational leaders as well.

Flynn & Hill (2005) also found that another challenge for districts was hiring staff who were trained or educated in English language acquisition or bilingual teaching strategies, as well as attrition of those deemed highly qualified. Instructional practices suggested that teachers should follow pedagogy in all content areas that addressed the needs of EL students (Mora, 2007). Teachers' lack of education or professional training in such pedagogy has created challenges for the academic success of English language learners (Flynn & Hill, 2005). This was especially prevalent in areas that have experienced rapid growth in the EL population.

When looking at states surrounding Wyoming, most of which have experienced exponential growth, assessment scores of English language learners showed deficiencies in the academic success of ELs. In Nebraska, proficiency rates for the Nebraska State Accountability test for the 2011-2012 school year was 50% in reading and 44% in math (Nebraska Department of Education, 2012).

Colorado ranks their English language learners into three categories – No English Proficiency, Limited English Proficiency, and Fluent English Proficiency – the latter of which is deducted from the assessment data. In 2012, Colorado changed their state assessment from the Colorado Student Assessment Program to the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program in order to better match the Colorado Model Content Standards, which were based on the Common Core State Standards. The total population of English language learners in grades 3-10 that rated as proficient on the Transitional Colorado Assessment Program in English reading was 44% and in English math was 46% (Colorado Department of Education, 2012). Colorado also offered a Spanish reading assessment to EL students in grades 3-4, and those scores showed proficiencies of only 9% on the TCAP Spanish assessment.

South Dakota proficiency rates for English language learners in 2012 on the South Dakota STEP test for reading and math was 30%. Additionally, assessment data based on the state Assessment Measure of Annual Progress (AMAO) showed the achievement of all ELs dropped to 6% of students that maintained English proficiency (South Dakota Department of Education, 2012). Though the assessment data was very low, the South Dakota graduation rate for English language learners was 82%, which

appeared much higher than that of English language learners in Wyoming and near the top of the ranking nationally. Additionally, it should be noted that South Dakota in one of only two states that has shown declining enrollment of ELs.

Idaho and Utah, though not studied as part of the McREL research area, border Wyoming and have experienced significant growing populations of EL learners. The 2012 data for EL students on the ISAT for Idaho ranged from 56% proficient or above in reading at the 7th grade to a low of 43% proficient or above in reading at the 10th grade. The range was somewhat lower for mathematics, with a high of 46% proficient or above at the 4th grade to a low of 28% proficient or above at the 10th grade (Idaho State Department of Education, 2012). Passing rates for ELs in Utah on the CRT assessment was 37% for language arts and 29% for mathematics (Utah State Office of Education, 2012).

Wyoming statistics on the state PAWS assessment for 2012 regarding English language learner proficiency range showed subpar achievement as well. The data in the state of Wyoming is broken down by grade level only. Percentages of EL students proficient in reading ranged from 42% proficient at the 4th and 8th grades to 20% proficient at eleventh grade. The percentage averaged between all the grades in reading was 36%. Proficiency passing percentages for mathematics ranged from 12% at the 11th grade to an outlier of 73 % at the 3rd grade; the percentage averaged between the grades in mathematics was a 43% proficiency rate (Wyoming Department of Education, 2013).

Statistics of these central region areas, including two Wyoming border states, illustrated that there were academic struggles for English language learners. It is

assumed that, if district achievement mirrored that of the state, there would be AYP consequences for the outcomes of this subgroup. Ramsey and O'Day (2010) believed that addressing EL student achievement as set out in NCLB started moving the nation in the right direction for closing the achievement gap between ELs and native English speakers and for having educational leaders focus special attention to the growing student population.

One point that Ramsey and O'Day (2010) addressed regarding AYP and ELs is that inconsistencies have existed, as the EL subgroup has been the only subgroup that must meet multiple measures in order to meet AYP by passing state assessments in language arts and math, and additionally meeting two of the three Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs). The three areas that must be met in order to meet AMAOs include an increase in the number or percentage of EL students progressing in English acquisition, an increase in the number or percentage of EL students that attain proficiency in English, and the percentage of EL students ranked proficient on the state assessment for AYP. An additional argument brought by Ramsey and O'Day was that a student qualifies for EL designation due to a lack of language proficiency, yet they are given state assessments to prove language proficiency. This situation is more challenging in Wyoming where English language learners only have a one year exemption when new to the state school systems.

Additional issues states faced with NCLB and EL accountability was based on the ever changing population of ELs (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Students that qualify for EL status is constantly changing, as new arrivals with less English proficiency qualify

for EL designation. Once an EL student becomes academically proficient in the English language, proven by passing the NCLB approved assessments, then the EL student exits the designation. Thus, the true accountability measures for ELs are a cyclical underestimation of the education systems' success with the subpopulation.

Each state has developed individual state criteria and assessment numbers for NCLB and AYP measures in that state. Each state's determination and growth rate for ELs differs from other states (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Therefore, school districts in each state have varying views, challenges, and opportunities for meeting AYP with the specialized EL subgroup. In the state of Wyoming, there has been a lack of research focusing on understanding, from the superintendents' viewpoints, the challenges they have faced as district leaders with the increasing population of English language learners into their school districts. Additionally, there has been no insight into how superintendents are working to meet the needs of the population of English language learners. It could prove beneficial to understand how the growing EL populations have been affecting school districts in the state with small but growing EL population, so that further research could address policy and practice to increase student achievement for a small, but definitely not insignificant, population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand how district level leaders in the State of Wyoming perceive the impacts to their districts with the growing population of EL students. The focus of the study and how the districts were impacted focused on four areas: 1) the challenges districts faced with the growing numbers of EL students, 2) the

positive opportunities, respective to the positive outcomes that emerged, that districts have had because of the growing numbers of EL students, 3) what districts have actually been doing, if anything, to address the needs of EL students, and 4) what districts think they should have been doing that they were not doing to address the needs of EL students. The hope was that the information and insight gained could be applied to practice as it relates to state and local policy initiatives, instructional efficacy, and leadership development.

Overview of Methodology

When wanting to develop meaning as to how educational leaders perceive the issues of large populations of diversity moving into a society with minimal diversity, the researcher immediately chose to frame the research from the lens of Interpretivism. According to Schwandt (2000), Interpretivism looks at the actions or intent of the research participants and uses the researcher to interpret the circumstances surrounding the research participant. Also, interpretivism looks at the understanding of social reality and how that reality affects the larger social meaning. Additionally, interpretivism is useful for when the researcher seeks to gain knowledge through understanding the actions of the participant. This theoretical framework was chosen in which to base the research, since it would help the researcher to gain an understanding as to the perceptions of district leaders in regards to the culturally and linguistically diverse populations and to the social and academic structures in place for the students in their respective districts (Evans, 2007).

The research paradigm that was chosen to fit into this theoretical framework was the constructivist paradigm. With an influx of linguistically diverse students into majority homogeneous districts, this research paradigm would best provide the ability to construct meaning through the interpretations of research. One important aspect of constructivism is the understandings are socially and locally constructed (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The importance of these understandings is that they are transmitted throughout the social environments, making the impact of the research on the perceptions of educational leaders extremely valuable in studying the EL population in Wyoming.

Additionally, the researcher plays an integral role in constructivism. In this research study, the multiple lenses in which the researcher would act as a participant was led to an ease of interpretative induction. The researcher has become familiar with the social and political values of the state, yet has in-depth knowledge of English language learning. By using the lived experiences of working with EL populations in Wyoming, the researcher would be better able to construct meaningful research questions that could be subjectively interpreted and led to further research and praxis in a state that was newly experiencing the diaspora on linguistically diverse students.

Research Questions

Constructivism was the base of the interpretive research plan, and was used to gain meaning and understanding of district superintendents in Wyoming as related to the surge in EL populations. There were four main research questions that addressed how district leaders perceived the impacts of a growing EL population in the districts they

served. The qualitative measures sought to provide understandings that discovered the superintendent perceptions regarding the growing EL population. The questions that lead the researcher were:

1. What challenges do Wyoming districts face in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

2. What positive opportunities have Wyoming districts had by addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

3. What have Wyoming districts actually been doing to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

4. What should Wyoming districts be doing to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

Significance of the Study

Through this study, which was conducted throughout the state of Wyoming with solicited participation from all 48 local education agencies and the one Bureau of Indian Education School, the researcher hoped to develop an insight into the leadership role by understanding systematic challenges faced by districts and systemic implementations for meeting the needs of EL students throughout the state. Understanding and interpretation of the research can possibly be used to influence the political arena, at the state and local levels, to promote and support culturally responsive leadership and a focus on more effective education for diverse student populations. Finally, the research was intended to

be shared with the state education agency to advocate for policy and supports that could help local education agencies address the same challenges and needs as attained through the research.

Limitations of the Study

One of the primary limitations of the study was the ability to get educational leaders to participate. Since the researcher hypothesized that the influx of the EL subgroup population was a new phenomenon, it could be a study in which participants have not had enough time working with the population to recognize their own lived experience, leading to less efficacious reflection on the challenges and needs they have addressed as district leaders. As such, with an N size of 49, a significant lack of participation could greatly affect the transferability of the data obtained from the study.

The last limitation was that, with a contentious political landscape between the legislature and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the ability of the study to be used to influence policy at the state department of education could be compromised due to political alliances and uncertainties.

Assumptions

The researcher based the need of the study on certain assumptions regarding the education of EL students in the state. The first assumption was that local education agencies were experiencing an influx in the population of English language learners. An additional assumption was that the local education agencies were facing challenges with increasing EL populations, and that the educational leaders were inexperienced in creating systems that addressed the needs of these learners. The final assumption was

that information attained from the study could help the state provide policy and supports

regarding English language learners, and that policy would help guide district leaders to

become change agents in their communities regarding linguistic education.

Definitions of Key Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) - the measure of academic achievement by schools and

        districts based on statewide measures of accountability pursuant to guidelines

        agreed upon and   established under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB,

        2001)

Annual Measure of Academic Objectives (AMAOs) – performance objectives or

        benchmarks that must be met by English Language Learners according to Title

        III Accountability measures of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001)

Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) – educational entities that

        cooperate with local educational agencies to provide a variety of specialized

        services for students. BOCES are often found in rural areas where cooperation

        among a variety of service providers enables students to receive services that

        may not be available otherwise.

Culturally and linguistically diverse – a term used by the U.S. Department of Education,

        and found throughout educational research, that refers to students who are non-

        English proficient or English language learners, as well as students who belong

        to a marginalized subgroup.

English learners (ELs) – used in current educational settings and research, EL refers to

students who primarily speak a language other than English or have not achieved English language proficiency.

English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) – defined standards are based on four domains of language usage, which include reading, writing, listening, and speaking. English language learners progress through the continuum of these standards through language acquisition, providing proof of progression in annual examination (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – Public Law 89-10; the national act passed by Congress in 1965 that focused on equalization of education and accountability among schools. It is reauthorized periodically. The No Child Left Behind Act is the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – Public Law 107-110; the No Child Left Behind Act is the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, which included the first federal act to require assessment in skills that address measureable goals that are meant to address equality in education for all subgroup populations (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Subgroup – a group of students within a larger group; in education terminology, subgroup usually refers to demographic populations that are used to determine accountability measures as per NCLB, such as race, ethnicity, or disability.

Title III – part of the No Child Left Behind Act, Title III became the English Language

Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act that

requires EL learners to progress in English acquisition as well as meet academic

standards in content areas as per NCLB accountability. This act replaced the Title

VII Bilingual Education Act. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) – consortium of 33 states and

U.S. territories that provides standards, assessment, research, and professional

development for English language learning populations of students among its

members (WIDA, 2013).

Summary

This record of study has been created in order to further understanding as to how

districts in the state of Wyoming perceive the impact of a growing population of EL

students into the state and individual districts. This study has been divided into five

chapters, each with its purpose as laid out herein.

Chapter I has been an introduction to the background of growing populations of

English learners in the nation, addressing achievement challenges and programs that

have addressed the population. Information on linguistic education and culturally and

linguistically responsive schools provides the additional background as to how schools

nationally have addressed growing EL populations. More specific information on

achievement of ELs in Wyoming led to the statement of the problem and purpose of the

study. A brief overview of the research methods, as well as additional information on the

research questions, limitations, and assumptions of the study were presented. Chapter I

ended with a list of key words to facilitate understanding of EL concept terminology.

Chapter II presents the review of literature that guided the research questions. Since locally constructed views are important to the research plan laid out, Chapter II starts with research on the state of Wyoming, which will provide better understanding of the local context of the research. Additional literature was reviewed in respects to transformational leadership and how leaders become change agents for their districts. This aspect was deemed important since a recent growth in diverse populations would be significant for the state of Wyoming. More literature review is presented as to the challenges districts with growing EL populations face, as well as the challenges district leaders face in their leadership position. This information provided basic information as to how school districts and school leaders perceive the impact of growing EL populations on their districts.

Chapter III presents the research methodology used in this qualitative study, as well as the data collection and data analysis that was done to present an understanding of the research outcomes. Those findings are presented in Chapter IV. The research findings in Chapter IV provide the numerous themes that were discovered as to the challenges, opportunities, actions, and needed actions that district leaders in Wyoming perceive have impacted their districts.

In the final chapter, discussions as to how this research contributes to the body of research, as well as a call for further research, is shared. Additional implications as to how this research could contribute to policy or practice is also addressed. Final thoughts by the researcher are shared at the end of Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The State of Wyoming

To further understand issues of increasing numbers of EL students in the state of Wyoming, it is important to understand the regional influences on educators. Lincoln and Guba (2000) state that reality is constructed due to local and specific influences on the research subjects. Therefore, it is imperative to provide an insight into the locality that is Wyoming.

The state of Wyoming falls under the state designation of a frontier state. According to the Rural Assistance Center (raconline.org, n.d.), the most simplistic definition is a state or county that has less than 6 people per square mile. With 5.8 people per square mile in the state of Wyoming, it is one of the two states in the nation that qualifies for frontier designation, with Alaska as the other frontier state (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Challenges faced by people who live in the frontier are basic access to services, such as health care, public transportation, general shopping, basic infrastructure, and proximity to educational systems. The designation of frontier state is proudly accepted and displayed, and part of the western way that is considered life in Wyoming.

Wyoming is a state that proudly displays its independence and uniqueness. The state motto is "Forever West" or "Code of the West", which implies that there is a certain freedom to explore and be independent. The pride in this freedom leads to a general distrust of big government. Wyoming historically and politically has rejected

national norms. For instance, in 2011, the state legislature passed a bill allowing all

people to carry firearms in the state with no need for licensure or training certification.

The state nickname, "The Equality State", is drawn from the state's rejection of laws that

existed throughout the rest of the United States. This particular nickname was given

because Wyoming was the first state in the nation to allow women the right to vote.

Larson (1953, p. 74) stated that

> "It is well known, too, that the legislature of Wyoming Territory played a key
>
> role in the extension of rights to women by adopting woman suffrage in 1869."

Wyoming did not become a state until it was admitted as the 44th state in 1890. The

Nineteenth Amendment that gave all women in the United States the right to vote was

not passed until 1920, while women in Wyoming had voted for over 50 consecutive

years. In 1924, Wyoming elected the first woman governor in the United States, when

Nellie Tayloe Ross succeeded her husband who had been governor of Wyoming

(Scharff, 1995). This ability to stand up and be different is a common pride when talking

to any native Wyomingite.

Even though women's suffrage is one of the highlights which instills pride in

people from the state, there are many other areas in which Wyoming leads the nation,

both in economics and education. Bittner (2012) provides information on the state.

Wyoming is the ninth largest state, in total area, of all fifty states, yet is has the smallest

population of all the states, with a total population of approximately 568,000.

Wyoming Economics

However, the state has one of the strongest economies of all the states. For instance, it ranks first for per capita gross domestic product, mining, and construction, and is the second to last state with corporate or personal bankruptcy filings. It has the lowest unemployment of all states. Wyoming boasts the first National Park, Yellowstone, and the first National Monument, Devil's Tower, as well as other national parks and forests (Wyoming State Library, 2013). Tourism is one of the major industries in the state, with visitors bringing over two billion dollars to the Wyoming economy every year. Wyoming is first in the nation in coal production and trona mining, 2nd in the nation in helium production, 4th in the nation for natural gas production, 5th in the nation for wind energy production, and 8th in the nation for petroleum production (Bittner, 2012). Additionally, two of the six active producing uranium mines in the United States are located in Wyoming (Cockar, 2013). Its energy industry accounts for 29.4% of the state's gross domestic product, which is larger than any other states (Sauter, Hess, Weigley, & Allen, 2012).

In agriculture, Wyoming ranks first in average ranch/farm size, and ranks in in the top 5 in the nation for wool, sheep and lamb, and barley production, and is a leading producer of sugar beets. According to a recent article by the Huffington Post (Sauter, Hess, Weigley, & Allen, 2012), Wyoming's tax structure is the most favorable in the nation for business development. These economic forces provide the state with a very stable and large economy, and the legislature uses much of the profits on education.

With excess capital to spend on education, it is understandable that Wyoming leads the nation in the percentage of population (92.3%) over the age of 25 with a high school diploma or higher. It offers the second highest average teacher salary for PK-12 public education. However, Wyoming also spends a large portion of its capital on post-secondary education, as it ranks first in the nation in spending on higher education (Bittner, 2012). In the May 4, 2012 edition of the Laramie Boomerang, it stated that the University of Wyoming, the only four year university in the state with an approximate student population of 13,000, had the lowest tuition costs in the nation. According to the University of Wyoming Department of Planning, Budget, and Institutional Analysis (2013), anticipated tuition and fees for a Wyoming resident are currently $4,404 per year, and tuition and fees for a non-resident are $14,124 per year. The state support of the University, as well as the seven community college systems, does not just affect the tuition rate. Wyoming offers scholarships, completely funded by the state, to high school students from throughout the state. The Hathaway scholarship is a four year scholarship program that ranges in award amounts, from small $1000 scholarships to completely paid college or university tracts for four years. In 2012, the state awarded close to $10,000,000 to college students on Hathaway Scholarships at the University of Wyoming. Additionally, the state funds several post-graduate programs. For instance, the WWAMI Medical School program awards completely paid medical school at the University of Washington to 20 medical students every year (University of Wyoming, 2012). Because the state has a stable, wealthy economy, surplus budgets help provide well-funded educational opportunities.

Van Olphen et.al. (2006) state that increases in economic development, especially labor forces, create an influx in immigrant populations that are more likely to take hard labor jobs. As seen in the data obtained by both the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (2008) and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2008), states with agrarian economies and booming labor industries have seen exponential changes in their populations of EL students. Understanding some historical information on the state and the economic factors that support education in the state should provide insight about Wyoming. It is important to recognize that most of the economy is driven by labor forces, which specifically affects the changing demographics of a region.

Wyoming Demographics

Demographics throughout the state of Wyoming appear relatively homogeneous compared to much of the nation, but school data has shown influxes in ethnic and racial populations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), 90.7% of the population is White, 2.4% is American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.8% is Black or Asian, and 0.1% is Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The other 5.2% classified as Other Race or Mixed Race. Hispanics, which can be categorized in any race, make up 8.9% of the population, with Mexican descent being the most prevalent. It is important to realize that the small population of the state equates to a Hispanic population of approximately 50,000 and a combined total of all races, except White, at approximately 50,000 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Change in Demographics in Wyoming
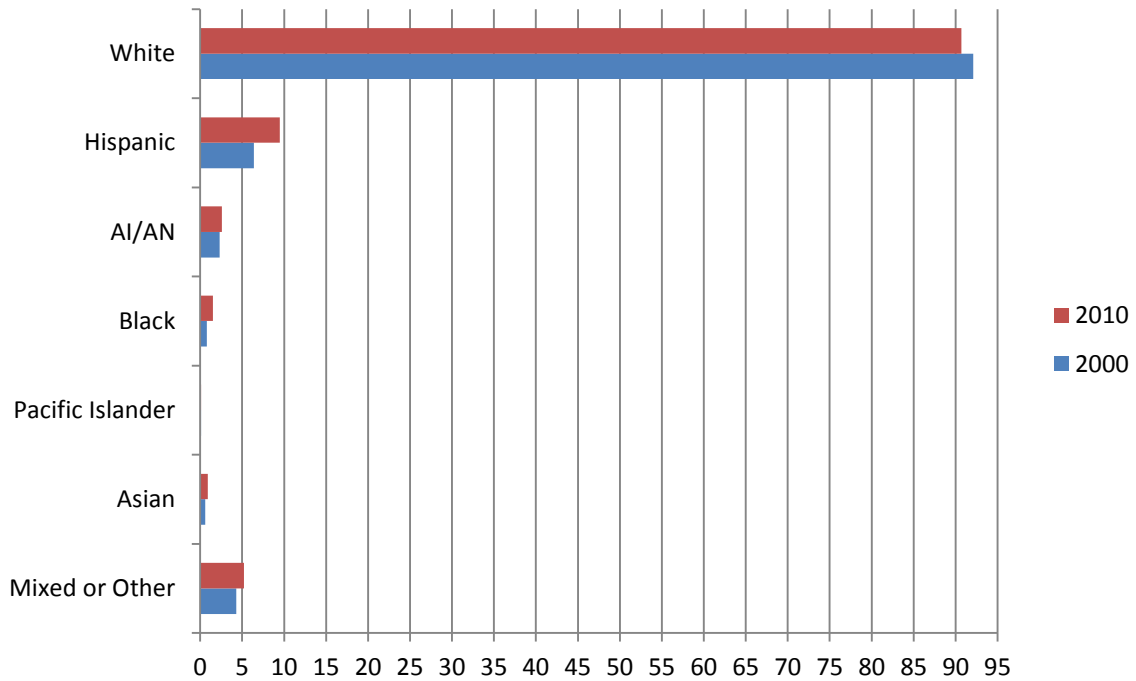
Figure 1. Change in breakdown of demographic population by percent in the state of Wyoming between 2000 and 2010. The total population in 2000 was 493,782, compared to a total population of 563,626 in 2010. Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010.

It is important to note that American Indian/Alaska Native population can be found throughout the state, but the largest concentrations are found on the Bureau of Indian Affairs reservation located in Wyoming. Historically, there were five main tribes in Wyoming which included the Crow, Cheyenne, Ute, Shoshone, and Arapahoe (Native American Tribes of Wyoming, 2013). Today, the only existing tribes are the Shoshone and the Arapahoe which are both concentrated on the Wind River Reservation, which encompasses approximately 2,200,000 acres in central Wyoming, with the location of the large masses of land in both Fremont and Hot Springs Counties (Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.). Of the population on the reservation, 22% speak a language other than

English at home. The largest towns encompassed in the reservation are Lander, Fort Washakie, and Riverton. Other smaller municipalities are also in the Wind River Reservation, as its sheer size makes it the seventh largest reservation in land mass in the nation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs oversees the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The only BIE funded school in Wyoming is St. Stephens Indian School in St. Stephens, Wyoming (Bureau of Indian Education, n.d). However, Fremont County School District #14 in Ethete, Wyoming is a public school sponsored by the local and state education agencies that promote the American Indian culture. The vision for the public school, as found on the website for Fremont #14 is:

> "…empowering students to become successful individuals and citizens who can adapt to living within two worlds; a constantly and rapidly changing world, and one of cultural awareness and tradition."

These schools' demographics may be skewed from district norms due their localization in the Wind River Reservation. Though the populations are quite homogeneous at these schools (99.9% American Indian/Alaska Native), the need for culturally responsive education and training in cultural and heritage language precepts would be beneficial for the numerous non-American Indians that work at these schools that serve predominantly American Indian populations, especially as the districts located here have the largest populations of EL students.

Other schools in the state of Wyoming have very different demographics. According to the Wyoming Department of Education (2012), state demographic breakdowns show that all schools in the state have a population of 81% White, 13%

Hispanic, 1% Black, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% two or more races. By using the School District Demographics System from the National Center for Education Statistics, it shows that certain counties have more diversity than others. For example, the highest percentages of Black and Hispanic students are located in the areas with significant job opportunities in industrial plants, such as in Sweetwater County (Rock Springs), Natrona County (Casper), and Laramie County (Cheyenne).

High populations of Hispanic students are also found in Teton and Park Counties, the two counties with the economies most heavily based on tourism, which is due to the location at either entrance to Yellowstone National Park. There are also higher Hispanic populations in Washakie and Campbell counties, which have economies based on agriculture and mining respectively. The Asian population is mainly centered in Albany County, (Laramie and the University of Wyoming), Laramie County (Cheyenne) and Natrona County (Casper).

It is plausible, as stated by van Olphen et.al. (2006) that industry drives migration of culturally and linguistically diverse populations that are willing to take labor intensive jobs in specific areas, especially that offer the best economic opportunities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), some of the states with the largest percentage of demographically diverse students also had large percentages of English language learners. Fremont County School District #14, which is the district located in the Wind River Reservation, had an EL population of 33%. Teton County School District #1, which is home to Jackson, Wyoming and the Grand Teton National and

Yellowstone National Parks, had an EL population of 12%. Carbon County School

District #1 (Rawlins, WY) and Sweetwater County School District #1 (Rock Springs and

Green River, WY), which are large industrial towns, had EL populations of 6%. The

data on the other districts with high diversity showed smaller EL populations in 2009.

Over the years, however, data on EL population growth has been steadily increasing in

Wyoming (Figure 2). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the

population of EL students grew by 101% in the decade between 1994 and 2004, while

the overall student population decreased in the same decade (Reichardt, 2002).

Figure 2. Map of Wyoming by Counties
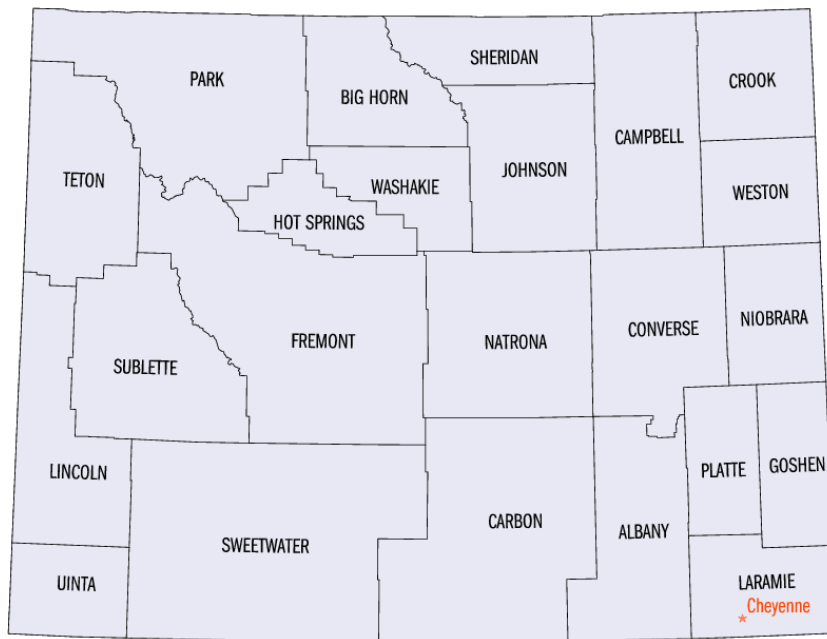
Figure 2. Map of Wyoming by the 23 counties. Information listed as counties with quicker growing EL populations in 2009 that were included in the paragraph above included Fremont County (Wind River Reservation majority in Fremont County), Teton County, Park County, and Sweetwater County. Source: www.netstate.com

Title III

The Wyoming Department of Education released the Active EL Identification and Reporting Guidebook in 2010-2011, which delineates the process for identifying EL students in local school districts to ensure meeting the Title III requirements, as well as specifying the types of EL programs that could be used to meet the legal requirements of educating English language learners. Title III lays out purposes specifically as listed in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). There are several objectives described under both Part A: The English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, Academic Achievement Act and Part B: Improving Language Instructional Programs Act. As listed in the U.S. Department of Education (2013) in Part A, Sec. 3102, the purposes of Title III include:

> (1) to help ensure that children who are limited English proficient, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency, develop high levels of academic attainment in English, and meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet;

> (2) to assist all limited English proficient children, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects so that those children can meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet, consistent with section 1111(b)(1);

> (3) to develop high-quality language instruction educational programs designed to assist State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in teaching limited English proficient children and serving immigrant children and youth;

> (4) to assist State educational agencies and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide high-quality instructional

programs designed to prepare limited English proficient children, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all-English instruction settings;

(5) to assist State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools to build their capacity to establish, implement, and sustain language instruction educational programs and programs of English language development for limited English proficient children;

(6) to promote parental and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents and communities of limited English proficient children;

(7) to streamline language instruction educational programs into a program carried out through formula grants to State educational agencies and local educational agencies to help limited English proficient children, including immigrant children and youth, develop proficiency in English, while meeting challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards;

(8) to hold State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools accountable for increases in English proficiency and core academic content knowledge of limited English proficient children by requiring —

> (A) demonstrated improvements in the English proficiency of limited English proficient children each fiscal year; and

> (B) adequate yearly progress for limited English proficient children, including immigrant children and youth, as described in section 1111(b)(2)(B); and

(9) to provide State educational agencies and local educational agencies with the flexibility to implement language instruction educational programs, based on scientifically based research on teaching limited English proficient children, that the agencies believe to be the most effective for teaching English.

More in depth information as to the purpose of Part B of the Title III programs are listed in Sec. 3202 describe the purpose in instructional programs:

The purpose of this part is to help ensure that limited English proficient children master English and meet the same rigorous standards for academic achievement as all children are expected to meet, including meeting challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards by —

(1) promoting systemic improvement and reform of, and developing accountability systems for, educational programs serving limited English proficient children;

(2) developing language skills and multicultural understanding;

(3) developing the English proficiency of limited English proficient children and, to the extent possible, the native language skills of such children;

(4) providing similar assistance to Native Americans with certain modifications relative to the unique status of Native American languages under Federal law;

(5) developing data collection and dissemination, research, materials, and technical assistance that are focused on school improvement for limited English proficient children; and

(6) developing programs that strengthen and improve the professional training of educational personnel who work with limited English proficient children.

Besides working on developing the purpose of Title III for educational institutions, there exist a myriad of regulations that follow Title III use in the districts. For instance, there are numerous funding and accountability issues that each district must adhere to. Some of the several regulations for districts involve formulary grant management, eligibility enrollment, achievement and accountability reporting, system-wide improvement development, professional development planning, fiscal planning, and Title reporting on

all aspects of the programs. Additional information is required for planning, reporting, and financing of schools for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

In the state of Wyoming, several districts have low EL numbers, yet they must fulfill the requirements of Title III as any school with large EL populations. Additionally, smaller districts with smaller EL populations are less likely to have staff specifically hired to work on Title III or staff that has extensive experience in meeting the Title III regulations. That has created a need for many districts to seek assistance from the Wyoming Department of Education for guidance and support.

Wyoming Politics and the Department of Education

The Wyoming Department of Education has been headed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, usually referred to at the state superintendent, which is an elected position as prescribed in the Wyoming Education Code of 1969. According to the Wyoming Legislative Statute, Title 21, the Wyoming Education Code was adopted in 1969 and is revised annually. It delineates the process, procedures, and responsibilities that are to be included in public instruction. In the Legislative Statute, the only specific language focused on English language learners are under the duties of the State School Board, whereas it states:

> Effective 7/1/2012 whereas the state board must: F) Provide a fair and unbiased
> assessment of student performance without regard to race, ethnicity, limited
> English proficiency and socioeconomic status; and G) Provide appropriate
> accommodations or alternative assessments to enable the assessment of students

with disabilities as specified under W.S. 21-9-101(c)(i) and students with limited

English proficiency.

The rest of the Education statute that would address English language learners falls

under the job responsibilities of the state superintendent. They include appropriations of

federal funds and the call for providing a uniform education system in conjunction with

the state board of education, local education agencies, and public support. However,

duties under the direction of the state superintendent do include specific language that

addresses students with disabilities, including any disability that prevents students from

reading normally, including deafness, blindness, or other physical disabilities (21-9-

101c). Statute does specify that these duties should be carried out with consultation of

the state board and coordination with local education agencies.

According to Kowalski and Brunner (2005), there are varying types of

governance with the positions of state superintendent. The delineation of the job in

Wyoming is addressed in education statute. The state superintendent, an elected position,

is a voting member of the state board of education and presides over the state department

of education. The state superintendent, in conjunction with the state board, presents

concerns regarding educational activities and appropriations to the governor and

legislature. This is an example of how the state board and state superintendent form a

partnership to improve education. However, Statute 21-2-301c of the Wyoming

Education Code (1969) states that

The superintendent of public instruction shall not participate in board

deliberations on or vote on any matter relating to a contested case involving

actions of the department of education.

Since the state superintendent acts as the head of the department of education, it would

seem that a fair and impartial decision making group would convene in contentious

cases. However, issues can arise if the state board and the state superintendent have a

contentious relationship, whereas all matters and cases that arise in the name of

education can become contested.

The current political climate of the department of education in Wyoming is one

that seriously affects the way the education systems run. The state superintendent is an

elected position which is intended to work in conjunction with the state board of

education and the state legislature. As an elected position, it is also one that is chosen by

the voters. The current state superintendent was elected as the republican candidate, and

the state typically votes republican except for Teton (Jackson, WY) and Albany

(Laramie, WY) counties.

The state superintendent's experience in public education has been very limited,

with serving only one year as an assistant principal at a public junior high school. The

majority of her 15 years in education was in private education (Wyoming Department of

Education, 2011). A serious lack of respect has existed between the state superintendent

and members of the state board of education, the legislature, and the leaders of local

education agencies. Through political pressure, the legislature, the state board, and the

state education department had grown quite contentious in the previous years, whereas

suggestions coming from the state department of education were tabled or vetoed more than accepted by the state legislature, and board actions overturned a majority of decisions regarding education.

By the beginning of the 2012 school year, the state senate proposed Senate Bill 104, in essence to remove the power of the administration of the Wyoming Department of Education from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Instead, the administration would be left to a new Director of the Wyoming Department of Education, a governor appointed position. The Superintendent of Public Instruction has now filed suits against the government regarding the constitutionality of the senate bill.

In addition to the political upheaval with the state superintendent and the legislature, current educational leaders have been involved in the politics with the state department of education and the legislature regarding the adoption or non-adoption of the Common Core Standards. Current Wyoming state standards are broad based, with vague student learning expectations that span from K-4, 5-8, or high school and lack delineation of skills to be mastered. An example of the current language arts standards for grade levels K-4 states that

> "Students use the writing process and use appropriate strategies to write a variety of expressive and expository pieces." (Wyoming Department of Education, 2011).

Though the Common Core State Standards were officially adopted by the Wyoming Department of Education in the summer of 2012, there was no directive to districts as to implementation of them in their curricula (Wyoming Department of

Education, 2011.). The contentious environment and lack of direction in matters of policy and standards has led to districts becoming disconnected to the state department of education. Because of the philosophical stance toward isolationism and the lack of coherence at the state level, leaders at district levels take the locust of control and create district focused policies based on personal preference and local community ideals. While the precepts of basing the focus of local education agencies on local community need is vital, there is a lack of leadership from the state department of education down to local education agencies that ensure that all areas, populations of students, and diverse needs are being met. This is particularly true for English language learners, who have one of the lowest graduation rates statewide (Figure 3). Even then, the graduation rate for EL students can be skewed due to drop-out rates of students in junior high school, in which the graduation and drop-out rates are not calculated.

Figure 3. Graduation Rates in Wyoming in 2012
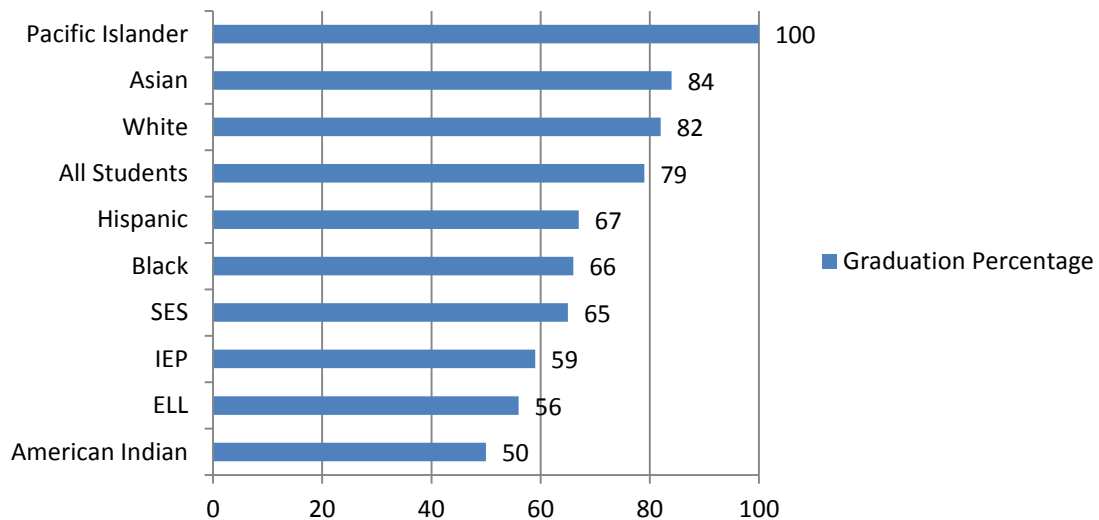
Source: Wyoming Department of Education, 2013

Therefore, local education agencies in Wyoming face significant challenges from a contentious political arena, a tenuous relationship between state and local education agencies, a lack of cohesiveness at the state level, and a changing dynamic of student demographics.

Transformational Leadership

There are differing perspectives as to the definition and use of the terms transformational, transactional, and transformative leadership. Shields (2010) suggested that they are different theoretically, but acknowledged they are often used interchangeably. Shields (2010) suggested that transformational leaders will establish goals that aim for change among diverse populations, whereas transformative leaders strive for a societal transformation. This is found in differing key values of each, with the prior focusing on justice, equity, and liberty and the latter focusing on liberation, emancipation, and democracy. She suggests that the two have common roots, but transformational, as well as transactional leadership, is based more on practice whereas transformative leadership is more focused on moral principal.

Kowalski and Brunner (2005) described the objective of transformational leadership as raising the moral goal of all stakeholders and leading others to the same objective. Thus, there has been an urgent call and prominent push for equitable educational practices through transformational leadership, which can help manage uncertainties between the ever-changing influences on the educational system while creating opportunities for shared power and decision making in that same educational system (Kowalksi & Brunner, 2005). The use of transformational leadership in education

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has allowed stakeholders to transform current educational practices so that, as a moral obligation, the system ensures that all students succeed by creating an organization that personifies democratic principles and culture (Goodman, Baron, & Myers, 2005). One area in which a transformational leader should focus the moral obligation is in striving to achieve cultural responsiveness and adapting to the changing demographics of our nation and our public schools, thus ensuring that all students are provided equitable educational services (Brown, 2005). The current blueprint for education reform in the country calls for districts and school leaders to lead through transformational change (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). According to Hoy and Miskel (2005), a transformational leader is described as someone who will create that change.

> Transformational leaders are proactive, raise the awareness levels of followers about inspirational collective interests, and help followers achieve unusually high performance outcomes (p. 397).

Historically, inequities have existed in education in the United States since the Colonial period. The Slave Code disallowed slaves the ability to learn to read or write. Brown v. Board of Education (1954) challenged the plight of the oppressed through inequitable education practices. Politicians, researchers, educators, and the general population still see that inequities exist in education, especially in regard to students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. Evans (2007) found that educational leaders that proactively addressed the cultural and linguistic inequities by using their power to make cultural responsiveness a priority with resource and time allocation created systems where students from culturally and linguistically diverse

backgrounds were more successful. However, Hoy and Miskel (1982) stated in their seminal work on schools as social systems that most leaders focus on overall improvement of the general population, and then convince stakeholders that the improvement will help all students, including the ones from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, even though data has proven differently. This general disregard for diverse student populations amongst many educational leaders has created the dissonance between culturally aware and responsive leaders and those that are culturally deficient. However, the call for improving achievement of all students has become the imperative for educational leaders.

Cooper (2009) suggested that the inequities existing in U.S. schools should be addressed by leaders who seek to address and change the marginalization of culturally and linguistically diverse populations by confronting the inequities in the school systems through self-reflection and social transformation. This has been even more urgent in school systems that, due to geographical or sociopolitical constraints, have continued to perpetuate inequity and injustice. It has been through purposeful, focused transformational leadership that school leaders have created equitable and just school systems.

Fairbanks-Schutz (2010) stated that it was imperative that superintendents create goals for equity in education in order for transformational leadership to be successful. In order for transformational leadership to impact student achievement, it focused on social justice, inequities, and the greater public good (Shields, 2010). Shields also stated that the seven elements found among successful transformational leaders included critiquing

current practices, attempting change, creating frameworks to find inequities, acknowledging hegemony, focusing attention on achievement and the public good, seeking equity and justice, and possessing moral courage and activism.

Depending on the diversity of the membership in the organization, the transformational leader needed to follow a moral imperative to impact the belief and value system within it. Skrla and Scheurich (2001) discussed the impact of the educational leader's thoughts on deficit thinking in their research.

Not surprisingly, then, school superintendents who lead school districts populated by children of color and children from low-income homes typically are also strongly affected by deficit thinking. Whether it is conscious or not, these superintendents' explanations of and expectations for what is possible educationally for the children in their district are shaped by the larger deficit educational discourse that assumes these children will not succeed in school (p. 237).

Often, the leadership and personnel at schools with culturally diverse populations have exhibited bias and deficit thinking based on student differences. This has created a concentrated need for culturally responsive leadership (Artiles, Klinger, & Tate, 2006).

In order to create culturally responsive schools, the education leader, through transformational leadership, made a moral commitment to the larger community and impacted social change. The task has involved creating trusting environments in the school and within the community (Johnson, 2007). Chavez-Reyes (2010) suggested that hegemony was extremely evident in schools with high populations of students from

culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that lacked culturally responsive

leadership, whereas when families sought to repair inequities, school leadership often

suppressed the wishes by shifting to a power role and excluding parents from the school

partnership. This was evident in shifts of leadership authority that created distrust and

suspicions between the school and the community. Transformational leaders have

recognized the commitment to democratic principles and moral obligations to provide

culturally responsive school systems that build relationships by creating a positive

climate between the schools and community.   Transformational leaders have created

culturally responsive systems and a better learning environment by demanding high

expectations, ethics of care, and a compassion that has developed emotional

understanding of all students and their diverse backgrounds (Johnson, 2007; Zorn &

Boler, 2007). Transformational leaders have become culturally responsive leaders.

To develop emotional understanding of students, culturally responsive leaders

enlighten staff on the funds of knowledge that all students, including those from

culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds bring to school (Moll, 1992). Research

has suggested that educational leaders need to understand the diversity of the school and

community population and work with the background knowledge that students bring to

school (Johnson, 2007). Often, personnel in schools with highly diverse populations

have not worked to develop an emotional or cultural understanding of the students

(Evans, 2007). However, the unintended response to this deficit mentality has created

habits of inflexibility and inattention by teachers and administrators to the needs of the

students, based on the lack of understanding of the students' funds of knowledge and

culturally learned rules of behavior (Evans, 2007; Zorn & Boler, 2007). This has caused adverse effects to students' academic outcomes, which have been additionally difficult for culturally and linguistically diverse populations because their funds of knowledge have not adequately prepared them for the academic rigor of unfamiliar school systems. For instance, students from minority backgrounds have less oral language, as well as lower pre-reading and pre-math skills at the onset of schooling (Farkas, 2003). It has also been found that many students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and especially those from minority backgrounds, have less academic readiness observed by smaller vocabularies, lower IQs, and more aggressive behaviors that are not considered the socially accepted norm in school systems (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). Therefore, it is extremely important that culturally responsive leadership focus on understanding and affirming these populations in order to transform schools and increase chances of positive educational outcomes for students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Scheurich (1998) suggested that affirmation of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds is vital to creating a culturally responsive school, and the educational leader create a school vision that all children can succeed as long as they are afforded a loving school climate that values diversity and individual funds of knowledge. However, many schools and districts have not produced that loving climate. Often, educators' negative biases about families, minority backgrounds, and native languages have created discord among the students and faculty while damaging academic outcomes for students (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005).

Skrla and Scheurich (2001) recognized that the deficit bias about students from culturally and linguistically diverse student populations was often possessed by the top leadership positions in districts, which created district-wide cultures that were detrimental to the success for the students from those populations. The negative district culture created emotional misunderstandings that lowered school quality and standards of teaching (Farkas, 2003; Zorn & Boler, 2007). Linguistically diverse populations have especially struggled in school, where not only cultural differences have created divides, but a lack of common language has also created difficulties and challenges. Therefore, transformational leadership should create culturally responsive systems that have a moral focus on changing systems by developing strong communications and relationships with families and communities in order to utilize diversity as an educational resource and empower families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to enhance educational opportunities for the students (Chávez-Reyes).

Lee (2010) offered that educational leaders should consider the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students when working with schools and staff. A culturally responsive leader should provide cultural sensitivity training to staff, while embracing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the community in building school-community partnerships. Additionally, a culturally responsive leader should seek to hire multilingual staff with the same linguistic backgrounds of students in order to close some of the cultural and linguistic divide between staff, students, and community members (Lee). By hiring multilingual staff, the culturally responsive leader provides better opportunities to increase communication with the linguistically diverse student and community

population. Transformational leadership that focuses culturally responsive efforts on personnel and improving the overall cultural responsiveness of schools has improved student outcomes.

Fairbanks-Shutz (2010) found that districts improved when the leader made decisions based on personal and ethical considerations that addressed diversity. Additionally, districts that significantly improved had superintendents who shifted their leadership style from managerial and political to that of instructional leader focused on improving student learning (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). However, it was more than focusing on student learning. The successful leader enacted three main leadership characteristics: a belief that all children can be successful, communication of that belief to all stakeholders, and shared decision-making with stakeholders to promulgate student success (Fairbanks-Schtuz, 2010).

Many schools with culturally diverse populations struggled to achieve the same levels of success as those with more homogeneous, majority populations. However, NCLB has called for all students to produce acceptable achievement outcomes. Bredeson and Kose (2007) recognized that the role of transformational leadership focused on student outcomes. In order for a transformational leader to help produce this positive change in student performance, there was a personal belief and value system that transcended to the creation of building commitment for the goals for the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

De Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi, and Park (2006) found that quality educational leadership had a direct correlation to instructional outcomes. Therefore, for students

from diverse cultures to achieve positive academic outcomes, educational leaders needed to address diverse cultural issues at the school (Cooper, 2009). The shift in leadership style was necessary to transform schools with high populations of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. The need for superintendents to transform their own leadership from a manager of chaos to a culturally responsive reformer needed to be addressed (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). It has proved challenging when shifts in student diversity have rapidly changed district demographics.

The goal of school reform has focused solely on student outcomes (Fairbanks-Schutz, 2010). The responsibility of engaging culturally responsive education in order to maximize the potential of all students has mainly been the responsibility of the school administrator (Obiakor, 2007). Instructional leaders with a personal commitment to culturally responsive leadership have student populations that have performed better than schools with similar demographics that do not have culturally responsive leadership (Cooper, 2009; Murthada-Watts & Stoughton, 2004). Likewise, power and hegemony have become difficult to overcome between schools and students without focused emotional leadership (Zorn & Boler, 2007). Lee (2010) suggested that culturally responsive leadership could improve the academic outcomes of students from linguistic minority populations when the school policies and practice focused on students' language and culture. This emotional, conscious effort by transformational leaders has increased the likelihood that equitable practices for students from linguistic minorities were academically successful (Cooper, 2009).

Schools with a demographic population of high minority and low socioeconomic (SES) students historically have performed worse than schools with different demographics. These schools often have less qualified teachers and under certified teachers, further complicating student learning and positive academic outcomes (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006, Vang, 2005). Further exacerbating student performance in such schools, serious inequities in the curricular programs and ineffective pedagogical strategies have contributed to the educational plight of students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Blanchett, 2006, O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006). Therefore, it was found that transformational leaders should embrace the need to create culturally responsive schools.

Instead, many educational leaders were more likely to believe that culturally and linguistically diverse students were less likely to achieve due to their home culture or previous schooling experiences. This deficit thinking has hindered student success, yet educators often claim that it is unconscious and does not truly reflect the existence of a meritocratic attitude (Bartolomé, 2010; Evans, 2007). Superintendents and educational leaders that have significantly improved student outcomes work in helping all stakeholders reform schools and challenge the deficit thinking within those schools (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Those leaders recognize the need for inclusive and equitable practices in education regarding diverse student needs (Fairbanks-Shutze, 2010). It is through focusing on reform that they are best able to change the organizational philosophies, and consequently improve student outcomes.

Change Agents for Meeting Needs of Students with Diverse Backgrounds

"I am not so naïve that I don't understand that superintendents are under a lot of

pressure and that times are tough. But I believe that superintendents are also

tough. I believe that superintendents are the best agents for change and have a

great opportunity at hand. They need to step up and take action." (Scherer, 2004,

p. 23).

Although Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, and Slate (2008) state that a superintendent is a

symbolic leadership figure in promoting change, there is much other research that

supports the work of superintendents as being true change agents for the school district.

For instance, Fairbanks-Shutz (2010) found that the moral and ethical actions of

superintendents impact students that historically underperform. Through

transformational leadership that challenges existing inequities and unjust educational

practices, superintendents become change agents for students from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds in helping them to become successful academically

(Shields, 2010). A superintendent becomes a change agent and leader, moving students

toward success, when he battle inequities, is ideologically aware and passionate, and

courageously takes risks to challenge the deficit thinking that promulgates the inequity,

marginalization and disengagement of the culturally and linguistically diverse in their

organization (Cooper, 2009). Cooper also states that, ideologically, superintendents that

are change agents need to reject bias and the color blind philosophies that exist in

communities and schools.

Addressing Diversity

These color blind philosophies inadvertently promote White privilege and unspoken discriminatory practices (Cooper, 2009). Whitt (2009) calls for superintendents to recognize positional authority and hegemony of White power that exists in educational organizations in order to promote change. It is important for superintendents to have values and beliefs grounded in social and group norms (Fairbanks-Shutz, 2010). However, they cannot follow color-blind theory where a lack of recognition of the changing demographics in schools ignores growing cultural and linguistic diversity (Cooper, 2009). Instead, superintendents must enact change. The best change agents recognize growing diversity and address it in curriculum and program changes. They also challenge community bias by creating new policies for diversity (Evans, 2007).

Superintendents of school districts that impacted learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students worked to lead change efforts in the district. Superintendents who changed their deficit thinking about diverse student populations and promoted positive change helped to increase student achievement from the diverse student groups (Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). In order to become successful change agents, leaders perceived cultural and linguistic diversity as assets and resources instead of detriments (Cooper, 2009). They also focused on changing the organizational culture and building a district-wide consensus to address student needs (Johnson, 2007).

By enacting and expecting organizational change, superintendents became change agents that led districts to make significant academic improvement for students

from high poverty and diverse population achievement (Whitt, 2009). Cooper (2009) found that superintendents who were successful change agents worked to improve culturally responsive family partnerships and addressed curriculum programs and instructional strategies that addressed the changing demographics.

Curriculum and Instruction

Student achievement and the efficacy of curriculum and instruction have been frequently based solely on the assessment scores used to qualify schools and districts under NCLB. The use of standardized test results is often too complex for EL populations, so understanding and using those scores as the guide for success is inadequate, since the understanding of language is assessed instead of actually testing on skill mastery. For example, on the 07 NAEP, there was a 36 point discrepancy on reading scores between EL and non EL students, though it provided no variable for language acquisition levels of the EL students (Wang & Bachler, 2011). Cooper (2009) suggested that superintendents must find cultural blind spots where bias exists, which requires looking much beyond standardized test scores. If superintendents want to impact student learning and have positive influence on overall achievement, then the superintendent must change the focus to increasing efficacious instructional practices within the district instead of looking solely at meeting AYP in the EL subgroup (Orr, 2006; Portis & Garcia, 2007, Revis, 2010).

Change is achieved by focusing on instruction and setting long term goals that coordinate efforts for professional development in curriculum and instruction (Revis, 2010). Professional development should be based on instructional strategies for ELs,

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which should include direct, explicit and systematic literacy; interactive learning through scaffolding; and process based learning that offers authentic writing for communication (Wang & Bachler, 2011). Students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds attain higher achievement when schools change their pedagogy, climate, and power structures to focus on their diverse needs (Shields, 2010). Successful leaders that are change agents in their organizations address curriculum, instruction and engagement that address the growing and changing demographics (Cooper, 2009).

The best change comes from leaders recognizing diversity and addressing it in curriculum and program changes (Evans, 2007). The most effective programs that address student diversity include solid investigations of program contexts, multiple types and sources of data, and appropriate and extensive qualitative data (Wang & Bachler, 2011). Additionally, change in curriculum and programs must include challenging community and political bias in order to create new policies and programs that address diversity (Evans).

In order to ensure that policies and programs are addressing changing diversity, the superintendent needs to maintain strong relationships with the local school board and community so all stakeholders allow his leadership to initiate change. Throughout the changes of policy that ensue throughout the district, the superintendent's focus should stay on instructional practices (Orr, 2006; Portis & Garcia, 2007). Districts that were highly successful in EL achievement were led by superintendents that were willing to change instructional programs and practices in their districts. The districts with high EL proficiency in literacy followed a Response to Intervention model for EL learners that

included frequent intervention monitoring and implementation. Other districts that were highly successful in achieving EL proficiency implemented dual language instruction models (Revis, 2010). It is important to note that the monitoring and implementation of both programs was tracked by the educational leader. Flynn & Hill (2005) found that EL programs needed to be integrated, monitored, and evaluated.

Superintendents that were successful change agents led organizations that had higher student outcomes and kept a focus on curriculum and instruction (Whitt, 2009). Highly successful instructional leaders participated in instruction and knew what instructional practices looked like in the classes for students (Wallace Foundation, 2008). It was suggested that a superintendent that successfully implements change spent a majority of their time on curriculum and instruction, with the largest parts of that time spent in data analysis, curriculum and instructional management, and monitoring the efficacy of programs in place. As part of the change, successful superintendents also had expectations for school board, principals, and teachers to be involved in curriculum and instruction improvement, and they were actively included in helping improve student outcomes (Bredeson & Kose, 2007).

Professional Training

Flynn & Hill (2005) stated that including stakeholders in the improvement process for EL learners was vital if superintendents were to be successful change agents. Leaders ensured that staff was aware of the legal requirements in serving EL students, which according to the USDE includes using EL programs that are research-based.

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Additionally, the superintendent provided adequate time to staff in providing services and included them in EL program revisions.

Most importantly, superintendents supported teachers in appropriate instruction of EL students by providing professional development and training on instructional strategies and cultural understanding (Evans, 2007).

Fairbanks-Shutz (2010) stated that, in dealing with growing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students, educational leaders should keep a strong focus on curriculum and instruction with teacher development. The need for coordinated efforts to provide professional development was seen in organizations that were successful in increasing student outcomes (Revis, 2010). However, it was also discovered that organizations that faced growing diversity among the student population needed to address the diversity in professional development, whereas there should be a focus to reverse deficit thinking among staff and not assume that cultural meaning and understanding between teachers and students will happen without a concerted effort to address differences (Evans, 2007; Shields, 2010). It was found that successful superintendents addressed cultural awareness by working with students and parents with cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as providing staff professional development on language acquisition theory (van Olphen, 2006). Successful superintendents also set high expectations for all students and teachers regardless of demographic backgrounds of the students or teachers (Revis). This was achieved by establishing clear goals and expectations with student achievement as the focus, which was supported by increasing teacher capacity and instructional efficacy (Fairbanks-Schutz, 2010).

However, challenging long-held beliefs among community and staff has proven difficult and challenging for many superintendents that are trying to create positive change within their organizations. Cooper (2009) suggested that superintendents should eradicate color blind and hegemonic hiring practices. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) mandates that districts must provide communication in a language that is understandable for families to the fullest extent possible, as well as provide students with highly qualified teachers (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Evans (2007) stated that meeting mandates was easier if district leaders hired multilingual or multicultural staff. Superintendents that were successful change agents took hiring practices into account, and sought staff members that were more culturally aware and better able to increase family involvement within the organization.

Community Relationships

It was found that districts which were unsuccessful with growing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students did little to attract the diverse families to the schools. Often, cultural clashes and issues with ELs were based on communication gaps between parents, teachers, and students. In these districts, there was lack of support for families in the new cultural environments and a lack of multicultural understanding by the staff. Leaders blamed the low academic achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students on the lack of teacher preparation in ESL theory and ESL instructional strategies, as well as a lack of a systematic, articulated ELL plan (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010).

Successful school systems took a different approach that promulgated change. Leaders in successful systems cultivated the cultural capital within the diverse populations of the school community and sought community partnerships that enhanced the community's diversity (Cooper, 2009). Superintendents in successful districts promoted change by fighting political battles that were not in the best interest of children, while positively influencing the sociopolitical groups that would help implement policies and practices that helped increase student outcomes (Evans, 2007; Portis & Garcia, 2007).

Superintendents who were able to enact positive change in student outcomes promoted collective action and empowered parents and families from diverse backgrounds. They were change agents that were able to bridge family and school chasms by forming meaningful opportunities to infuse diverse families into the leadership and decision making bodies of the school system, as well as create partnerships with community stakeholders to help promote general growth throughout the community (Cooper, 2009). It was the successful superintendents' ability to share in meanings and understanding of race with all stakeholders that influenced change and increased the ability to improve the educational system (Evans, 2007).

Successful superintendents realized that change in student achievement cannot be achieved by one leader, but needed to be promoted throughout the organization among all stakeholders. In districts with high achievement among the culturally and linguistically diverse populations, superintendents built strong relationships with local school board to allow the need to initiate change and share leadership, while the

superintendent maintained an organizational focus on instructional practices (Orr, 2006; Portis & Garcia, 2007). With a clear, communicated vision, superintendents were able to build strong relationships that focused on students (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011). Additionally, those superintendents kept a positive attitude and open communication with all stakeholders when addressing diversity, including providing translated documents whenever possible and including diversity in community partnerships.

Strong, open communication with all stakeholders helped superintendents to share vision, goals, and expectations that helped develop school communities that worked towards changing the organization to focus on student outcomes (Orr, 2006; Portis & Garcia, 2007). It was through communication with all stakeholders that superintendents were able to develop meaning and share decision making in dealing with culturally and linguistically diverse students. This provided multiple perspectives based on diverse experiences in decision making that created better learning opportunities for diverse populations (Evans, 2007).

Leadership

Flynn and Hill (2005) suggested that districts that experience large influxes of EL students must exhibit strong leadership. Addressing cultural awareness by working with students and parents of cultural and linguistic diversity helped change the outcomes for EL students (van Olphen, 2006). However, the superintendents of successful districts created district change through action leadership.

The U.S. Department of Education (2010) calls for district workers to meet the educational needs of diverse populations.

"Improving programs for English learners and encouraging innovative programs and practices to support English learners' success and build knowledge base about what works" (p. 19).

District staff looks for leadership to implement the change in meeting goals for EL learners. Leadership must define and share the vision and goals for achieving successful outcomes for EL learners (Orr, 2006). In order to make sustained academic growth among EL populations, Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) stated that superintendents must keep focus on achieving the goals set forth.

A superintendent who was effective in addressing outcomes of EL students needed an aptitude for change, as the change process was critical to overcoming the numerous roadblocks that were encountered (Portis & Garcia, 2007). Wertz (2003) found that the most important characteristic of leaders who effectively implemented change was resiliency. Superintendents continued focus on change with all stakeholders transformed beliefs in the ability of EL students to succeed (Johnson, 2007). One way for a superintendent to transform beliefs within the district was by establishing clear expectations with student achievement as the focus, and that was supported by increasing teacher capacity and instructional efficacy (Fairbanks-Schutz, 2010). Superintendents who helped increase EL student achievement increased teacher capacity by providing professional development in language acquisition theory (van Olpen et. al., 2006). The superintendents were also actively involved in observing instruction, visiting schools and staff, and leading instructionally (Revis, 2010). Revis also stated that superintendents that provided central office supports to instructional staff helped schools

achieve higher student outcomes. Additionally, superintendents were successful change agents when they comingled instruction, management, and politics (Orr, 2006).

Superintendents need to be effective, innovative facilitators of change, especially when considering political directives (Orr, 2006). They should recognize their own power and ability to influence change and use it to address student needs, as well as change the school philosophy to focus on learning for all students (Evans, 2007). It is a superintendent's ability to resolve conflict and contradictions on different ideologies that reconcile perspectives to allow change (Evans).

In conclusion, superintendents can be successful change agents by articulating their vision, setting high expectations for all learner groups, engaging the local board in sharing political power and decision making, developing system-wide plans that focus on specific student groups, and focusing on instruction and student outcomes (Portis & Garcia 2007). Superintendents that take into account growing diversity are more successful in changing outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and especially for EL learners.

Challenges for Districts with Growing EL Populations

Political requirements through the USDE blueprint for reform calls for states to address English language learners by providing some type of English acquisition program, establishing statewide identification and eligibility criteria, and implementing systems to evaluate efficacy of English language learning programs. The penalty for not addressing the achievement or improving the academic outcomes of English learners would result in loss of fiscal support.

Many states, such as the Carolinas, Nebraska, and Nevada have experienced significant growth in the population of EL learners over the past decade, with several other states showing over 200% growth as well (National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008). The majorities of the areas with the largest growth are located in the Southeast, the Midwest, and the Mountain states, and are presented with new educational dynamics and educational needs that are unfamiliar to many educators (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) found that the achievement gap continues to grow between EL populations, particularly Hispanic ELs, and the general student population (Table 1). In addition to the challenges of educating the EL population, these states must meet the federal guidelines, such as the development of English language proficiency standards throughout grades and content (USDE, 2013). Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education recommends that districts work with states to implement effective EL programs, such as by focusing on school improvement, promoting systematic reform for EL programs, and developing strong student English proficiency (USDE, Title III, Part B, 2013).

Table 1: Achievement Gap in States with Growing EL Populations

State	Percentage Growth In ELL	Gap Between White & EL
Georgia	140%	53%
Nebraska	118%	49%
Nevada	137%	49%
Iowa	79%	43%
Virginia	173%	20%

Note: The information shown includes data from the percentage of EL population growth between the years of 2004-2005, as well as the achievement gap between EL students and White students on the NAEP reading test in the same year. *Source*: Fry (2007) and National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy (2008).

As mentioned, districts that do not adequately improve the outcomes of EL learners will risk losing federal financial support. The majority of fiscal resources allocated by the federal government for the education of ELs are tied into Title III. Ramsey and O'Day (2010) found that Title III funding, in most states, was considerably inadequate to be able to provide the services, programs, and resources needed to reform education and improve educational outcomes for EL students. They did suggest that there was need for coordination between Title I and Title III to seek enough funding to possibly provide reforms and programs that could increase student achievement. Reichardt (2002) suggested that districts seek additional funding through other possible sources tied to the Immigrant Education Act, the Indian Education Act, or other federal initiatives designed to equalize and reform educational outcomes for students from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Communication

Another of the challenges states face with growing EL populations is meeting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) mandate that requires districts working with ELs to provide communication to families in a language understandable to them. Additionally, it is expected that districts employ, to the best extent possible, highly qualified teachers that have the ability to communicate with EL students and parents in their native language. Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) found that a lack of communication and qualified staff led to lower student achievement and cultural clashes based on the communication gap, often leading to the families feeling a lack of support in the environment.

The inability to communicate was often perceived as districts lacking systematic plans for diverse populations and hiring ill prepared teachers who lacked strategies and cultural literacy. However, it is important to realize that districts, especially in certain geographic regions, struggle to meet the communication mandates due to lack of a qualified hiring pool. Therefore, many districts that are experiencing rapid growth of EL students, especially those in rural or suburban areas, are extremely challenged in meeting the federal mandates, especially considering the small funding allocations of Title III monies (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Reichardt, 2002).

School Reform

In order to address many of the challenges, Wang and Bachler (2011) found that most states and districts with large or growing numbers of EL students focused on ensuring the Title III requirements were being met, which typically included fiscal management, the EL identification processes, parent involvement opportunities, teacher quality and professional development in the areas of English language acquisition, and the implementation of curriculum programs. Reichardt (2002) found that school reform which actually helped improve the outcomes for EL students addressed multiple areas, especially in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment based on best practices research. Additionally, there was an increase in professional development in the areas of research based practices for improving the school's academic programs. In order to help reform schools, Reichardt found that district leadership should find working models within specific subgroup populations, disseminate data on the subgroups, and promote research based practices.

Promoting effective school reform for the changing demographics of students requires that all systems and sub-systems work together to create an efficacious change process (Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1994). The state department and legislature is one of the top influences on school reform, and must work with all systems to ensure that policy promotes processes that impact student outcomes (Dlugosh & Sybouts). Cooper (2009) emphasizes the imperative need to transform current policy and practice relating to the changing demographic. In his research, he found that many educational systems would dismantle the policy and start over, which proved extremely ineffective. Instead, addressing the newest challenges and needs by changing and improving policy proved much more effective in reform efforts to address the needs of changing demographics.

The reform efforts that proved most beneficial in improving the outcomes of changing student populations, especially the EL student populations, focused on changing curriculum and instruction, increasing staff development on both instructional practices and cultural awareness, and improving parent and community involvement from the population of EL parents and students (Cooper, 2009; Dlugosh & Sybout, 1994; Reichardt, 2002). Cooper suggests that cultural differences, particularly in areas that experience significant growth in diverse cultures, must be addressed in the educational setting.

Hegemony among EL Populations

Critical race theory suggests that schools traditionally use curriculum and standards to maintain the status quo, and that many schools expect the culturally and linguistically diverse to conform or be cast out (Evans, 2007). With the challenge of a

growing population of EL students, many schools and systems in the U.S. promote this hegemony through color blindness (Evans). Inequities that exist in U.S. schools need to be addressed by leadership that actively challenges the marginalization by countering the inequities head on with school system analysis, self-reflection, and social transformation. This battle for social justice is especially noticeable in systems that perpetuate the injustice (Cooper, 2009). Evans found that the growing diversity, especially connected to geographical location, created tensions in the school systems. In order for educational reform to address these tensions, successful educational leaders drew on their own experiences, beliefs, and backgrounds to make decisions regarding the educational needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There is a priority for superintendents to build trust and communications with the school board and different stakeholder groups (Whitt, 2009). Cooper (2009) found that when educational leaders do not address the cultural tensions in the community, linguistic bias, and the politics of the school system, then culturally and linguistically diverse groups continue to be marginalized in education. Taking into account the geographical and historical trends of a community is vital to meeting the challenges of a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Most superintendents are White (86%) and Male (95%). That puts them at different backgrounds than the student demographics in their districts (Orr, 2006). Evans (2007) found that leaders with the same cultural affiliation as the culturally diverse students have more commitment to the resistance of sociocultural perspectives than white leaders have towards the culturally diverse students. It is imperative that

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educational leaders and superintendents, especially those in communities with growing

populations of the culturally and linguistically diverse, address bias and color blind

theories that exist in the school system and the broader community (Cooper, 2009).

There is a need for educational leaders to recognize the diversity of the student

population and the challenges a growing diversity brings to the districts throughout the

state.

There is wide cultural and linguistic diversity in U.S. schools, with Spanish being

the most prevalent native language 90% of the time. The other 10% of native languages

includes over 400 languages other than English spoken in U.S. schools. Therefore, there

is a need for educational leaders to recognize that there are not only Spanish speaking

immigrants, but changing linguistic diversity that includes languages and cultures that

come to the U.S. school systems from throughout the globe (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010).

Linguistic differences are not the only challenges that educational leaders from school

systems face with the growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse

students. With the new diaspora of culturally and linguistically diverse populations,

contentious social tensions often arise in a school community due to differences of

cultural, family, and religious beliefs (van Olphen et.al. 2006).

Many districts with growing cultural and linguistic diversity have exhibited

surges of bias and tension. Therefore, communities experience White flight, xenophobic

conflict within the communities, and cultural clashes between school and home (Cooper,

2009). Much of the community based bias regarding immigrants and "others" who come

to communities and states is focused on the concept that jobs are taken from the

"Americans" already in the community and state (Cooper). One of the most difficult challenges that superintendents and educational leaders face in these communities experiencing significant growth of culturally and linguistically diverse students is directly tied to cultural clashes where educational leaders must negotiate with a variety of stakeholders with multiple or overlapping interests, while ensuring that all students receive an equitable education (Evans, 2007).

School districts face challenges due to the social and cultural disequilibrium with rapidly changing demographics. However, federal guidelines expect districts to ensure academic success for EL students, though the challenges they face are exceeded by what can be tested on a standardized test (Cooper, 2009). Evans (2007) states that low performing schools with high EL populations are most often located in rural and suburban communities with a White majority population. Additionally, these schools offer few remedial programs, little parent outreach, little ethnic diversity among the school staff, and few staff trained in English language learning strategies (Wang & Bachler, 2011). Ramsey and O'Day (2010) state that the majority of growth is in the Southeast, Midwest, and Mountain states, where the community and district dynamics are similar to those stated above.

States with small populations are experiencing very high growth in EL populations (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). In particular, most states surrounding Wyoming, a Mountain West state and the location of the research, have generally small populations but have seen large increases in the EL populations. Wyoming, Utah, and Idaho have all experienced double digit growth of the EL population, while Colorado and Nebraska,

other neighboring states of Wyoming, have experienced growth of EL populations by 200% and 171%, respectively (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2008). Colorado and Nebraska have made great strides in addressing reform in the education systems for EL students, though Colorado has a long history of large EL populations and education for English language acquisition (Faltis & Valdés, 2010). The Bueno Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder has a long-standing reputation of promoting quality education and equal educational opportunities for language minority students (University of Colorado, Boulder, n.d.). The diaspora of EL students is much different in Nebraska, who has seen the growth exacerbate in the last decade.

The Nebraska Department of Education addressed the growth of ELs by requiring every school district to submit a LEP plan for all English language learners, which specifies how students are identified, individual EL instructional plans, assessment for growth in the English language learner, and program evaluation methods (Wang & Bachler, 2011). Though the state department of education created a cohesive plan for districts with EL students, further research by Apthorp, Wang, Ryan, and Cicchinelli (2012) focused on skills that are expected of teachers in addressing the academic achievement of EL students in the central region states. Colorado and Nebraska expect teachers of EL students to differentiate instruction and increase communication with families of EL students. Wyoming had additional required skills that included supporting diverse language backgrounds and understanding language acquisition theories and strategies that supported the theories. However, those

professional expectations are only a portion of what states, districts, and schools are starting to do to address the challenges of growing populations of EL students.

School systems that have been successful in implementing reforms for the academic outcomes for ELs have focused on several variables. Rothstein (2004) suggests that basic focus on school reform will not help close achievement gaps for ELs, but that community relations must be considered. Successful school systems maintain positive school environments where cultural bias and racial tension is addressed and deterred (Cooper, 2009; Wang & Bachler, 2011). Additionally, curriculum practices including enrichment opportunities, cooperative learning, and high expectations for EL students are promoted, instead of tracking EL students into areas of remediation. Finally, professional development is provided for staff in the areas of bilingual education and language acquisition theory, as well the implementation of theory into practice (Wang & Bachler, 2011). These successful school systems, both at the state and local levels, exhibit strong leadership that challenge the status quo and strive to promote educational excellence for the culturally and linguistically diverse (Reichardt, 2002). In the daily tasks of leadership, there are many challenges faced directly by the educational leaders and superintendents of districts facing the diaspora of EL students.

Leadership Challenges Faced by Superintendents

Superintendents face many challenges in leading districts to improve student outcomes, especially within the EL subgroup. However, many of the challenges have nothing to do with student achievement or instructional planning. Orr (2006) found that most challenges faced by superintendents centered on board relationships and the power

of the political machine, followed by budgetary issues and sustaining a strong

community culture. Other research on the challenges faced by superintendents has

supported Orr's findings. Bredeson and Kose (2007) concurred with the importance of

budgetary challenges of superintendents, and found that the majority of a

superintendent's time was spent on budget and finance, followed by political issues.

Budget and Finance

It has been found that finances are the most challenging part of a

superintendent's job (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005).

Cohn (2005) stated that budgets presented overwhelming challenges to superintendents

due to frequent budget shortfalls, compounded by deteriorating school facilities, union

contractual agreements and lawsuits. Especially in more desperate economic times,

superintendents are challenged to find the necessary funding while having to cut

budgets, making resource allocation management quite time consuming (Portis &

Garcia, 2007; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010).

Even resilient leaders found challenges based on financial restraints. Financial

issues create problems in hiring and attrition of personnel. Likewise, they detain

program changes and initiatives that cost substantial amounts. Although Orr (2006)

found that funding allocations are inadequate to provide for an array of adequate

instructional programs, contrary research through the Wallace Foundation (Johnson,

2007) found that additional fiscal resources should be for used for staff salaries and

professional trainings instead of being spent on instructional programs. Many times,

influences from local boards, state government, and federal government require that

funds be used for specific instructional programs for specific student groups (Wertz, 2003). Therefore, superintendents face significant challenges with financial constraints and meeting state and federal demands of accountability through NCLB (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2008; Cohn, 2005).

Instructional Leadership

Although finances were found to be challenges in much of the research, Bredeson and Kose (2007) and Orr (2006) found that superintendents actually spend a majority of their time on communication, personnel, and curriculum and instruction, yet their main areas of focus were listed to be instruction, managerial duties, and politics. Bennett and Jaradat (2011) found that superintendents found internal challenges that conflicted with the efficacy of fulfilling their leadership duties. Specifically, they found they had to overcome the perpetual status quo from employees, as well as the challenge from within the organization that constrains change. Successful superintendents appreciated the challenges, and listed their calling to educational leadership with great passion based on moral code (Orr, 2006).

Superintendents listed their ultimate goal of instructional leadership as increasing academic outcomes for all students, bureaucracy and managerial tasks often interfered with instructional leadership (Johnson, 2007). Lamkin (2006) state that local politics and sharing decision making with boards, which is most frequently elected community members with no experience in education, create additional challenges. State and federal mandates, regulations and policies all call for increases in standards and assessments, which have created a need for superintendents to have strong backgrounds in instruction

and decision-making skills based on that instructional background (Lamkin, 2006). Orr (2006) found that challenges on instructional outcomes and accountability were exacerbated by inadequate financing for staff training and state reform mandates.

Personnel

Other research showed consistent findings regarding the ability to hire highly qualified staff, especially in addressing needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and providing adequate training in instructional practices with the district resources (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Lamkin (2006) found that increased demands from state and federal mandates were exacerbated by a lack of adequate training for staff regarding specific instructional skills for the linguistically diverse, as well as challenges within staffs for relating to the community due to a lack of acculturation and cultural diversity training.

Ramsey and O'Day (2010) stated that part of the challenges that school staffs had was in communication with populations that have diverse languages. Cooper (2009) found that superintendents and school leaders experienced key challenges in building strong family relationships due to cultural tensions and the lack of cultural inclusion in the school setting. School districts showed significant challenges with parent involvement and communication with parents from both low socio-economic households and linguistically diverse populations (Johnson, 2007). However, Cooper (2009) found that educational administrators lacked knowledge in addressing tensions stemming from cultural and linguistic diversity. One of the suggested ways to address these challenges was for the educational leaders to participate in training to deal with high needs

populations, as well as provide training for staff in working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Johnson, 2007; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010).

Orr (2006) found challenges in addressing teacher and staff trainings. Additionally, Johnson (2007) stated that districts faced challenges in the recruitment of highly qualified and invested teachers that work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The challenges stemmed from not only hiring highly qualified staff, but in hiring those with the ability to communicate in diverse languages (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Cohn (2005) stated that hiring challenges were often exacerbated by union demands, state and federal guidelines for accountability, and personnel lawsuits.

These additional challenges created hardships for school districts in meeting the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Portis and Garcia (2007) found that additional personnel challenges were due to staff resistance to change of programs or practices. Regular education teachers often lacked ownership of students that were categorized other than the general education student (Revis, 2010). Revis also found that a majority of regular education teachers set low expectations for students from diverse populations, especially EL learners. Therefore, staff perceptions created challenges for superintendents, who often lacked funding for diverse needs and sustained professional development of teachers in addressing the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Revis, 2010).

Accountability

Addressing the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the instructional and accountability outcomes of that student

population, ranked as one of the biggest challenges superintendents faced (Orr, 2006).

Data has often been used as the sole measure of academic success for students. NCLB

and data driven decision making can interfere in revealing the true needs of students,

especially those from diverse backgrounds. Johnson (2007) suggested that data should

be viewed as only a piece to guide knowledge and instruction that could help students

from culturally and linguistically diverse populations have more successful instructional

outcomes.

Cohn (2005) found that superintendents felt pressure and challenged to meet the

state and federal accountability demands while trying to help students improve their

instructional outcomes. Additional research on superintendents meeting the academic

needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations noted that the

biggest challenges were found in meeting the mandates of NCLB (Canales, Tejeda-

Delgado, & Slate, 2008). Bredeson and Kose (2007) stated that state curriculum and

NCLB assessment mandates provided significant challenges and took up a significant

portion of a superintendent's involvement in curriculum and instruction.

The importance of meeting the challenges of NCLB is that any measure of

inadequate student performance comes with consequences and fiscal shortfalls, which

are also noted as significant challenges for superintendents (Cohn, 2005). Cohn found

that the ability to close achievement gaps was due to the inadequate state and federal

resources. The pressures of meeting state and federal accountability has created struggles

for district leaders, especially when local media incites the community by pointing out

the failures or inequity of achievement gaps that persist in districts (Portis & Garcia, 2007).

When local media point out that students have not achieved a recommended level of AYP accountability, the same media source has often failed to inform the community of the intricacies of NCLB. The intricacies of NCLB leave district leaders struggling with the imbalance between the internal and external systems of accountability that are not congruent. The internal mechanisms guide and increase student achievement and the external mechanisms fulfill political measures of student achievement (Portis & Garcia, 2007).

Cohn (2005) suggested that there are flaws in some of the NCLB accountability measures. For instance, schools are often unfairly judged under NCLB criteria, not because of performance, but because of higher populations of diverse student groups create instances where some schools have more subgroups needing to meet AYP. Additional policy requirements and specific mandates complicate districts' NCLB measures by calling for research based program development, diverse language communication methods, and monitoring activities that audit the use of limited federal budgets, such as Title 1 and Title III (Cohn). Whitt (2009) found some of the challenges facing superintendents in regards to NCLB often lead to the superintendent blaming instructional and accountability issues on others, such as campus administration or teachers. Revis (2010) did find that school administrators, teachers and staff, especially in areas with non-accountable, populations of ELs, have apathy in helping linguistically

diverse populations. This led to failing AYP outcomes at the district level, especially those districts with growing EL populations.

Bredeson and Kose (2007) found that superintendents and districts were challenged by federal mandates that did not take into consideration district size, geographical challenges, or community attitude. For instance, community apathy toward the culturally and linguistically diverse subgroups and political disagreement over the role of superintendents and school boards impacted student achievement (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). Unfortunately, federal mandates do not take local issues into consideration (Bredeson & Kose, Orr, 2006).

Community

Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011) found that major challenges were propagated by the organizational culture and the propensity to change that existed in the organization. An organizational culture is affected by its geographical setting, insomuch that community relations and acculturation by community groups affects the culturally and linguistically diverse population. Depending on the geography and location, certain areas face rapidly changing demographics, especially with increases in low socioeconomic and English language learning populations. Local ideologies and political realities, which can include national, state, and district politics, have an impact on the community. Bredeson, Klar & Johansson found that smaller communities had much less political impact due to the familiarity between community members.

Portis and Garcia (2007) found that many communities struggle with rapidly changing demographics. Many communities faced increased friction due to having to

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meet the needs of the large influx of culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This community friction translates to challenges for the superintendent in meeting the needs of ELs while maintaining organizational culture and strong community relations (van Olphen et.al. 2006). Evans (2007) found that in many communities, geographical lines divided the communities and schools. Superintendents faced challenges when racism existed or grew with changing diverse student population, and that racism was often based on geographical history of the community (Whitt, 2009).

Concepts of race are socially constructed within an area. The identity of a school within the area will change with demographic changes in the community. However, the growing culturally diverse group will have the community based culture socially imposed upon it, which will transcend into the organizational culture of the smaller school community (Evans, 2007). This changing demographic diversity, which includes linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse groups, creates tension in community schools (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). The diversity can divide communities and schools, creating challenges for the organization and district leadership (Evans, 2007).

Therefore, the superintendent should take sociopolitical and ideological cues from district stakeholders. It is imperative that there is a clear understanding of community conflict when dealing with demographic increases of culturally and linguistically diverse students so that leadership can better make decisions in addressing organizational challenges (Evans, 2007). Many of the challenges that could arise out of changing demographics could be addressed by changes in local policies implemented by the school board. Orr (2006) found that an exception to the national challenges of NCLB

and the lack of financial resources available for growing diversity in school districts were crises that became specific to individual districts.

District superintendents specifically found political challenges with district governance, mandates, and local politics. They stated that a large portion of their work was focused on meeting the political challenges, although they felt their priority should be curriculum and instruction (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Kowalski and Brunner (2005) found that superintendents were challenged by balancing the authority and power in district administration, where school boards' policy making duties and superintendents' administration responsibilities often collided (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). Those challenges were compounded when districts faced issues with creating policies and effective EL instruction when there was a rapidly growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bennett & Jaradat, 2011).

Additional research on growing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students found that the size of the district brought additional challenges for growing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse students and effective EL instruction. There were fewer propensities to change educational and instructional practices in smaller districts (Dlugosh & Sybout, 1994). Even though smaller districts faced more challenges in budget and resource development, they still received the same impact and sanctions from federal and state mandates (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Bredeson and Kose discovered that in smaller districts, there were more challenges and need regarding funding K-12, calling for ways to find additional fiscal resources outside local tax revenues. Likewise, there was a call to increase student outcomes in order to

meet NCLB mandates for growing EL populations. Insomuch, Cohn (2005) found that meeting NCLB mandates was less challenging and more accepted by urban superintendents than by rural and suburban superintendents.

In particular, superintendents in rural areas faced additional challenges that were not found in suburban and urban areas, especially in meeting the needs of growing populations of culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The most significant challenges were based on having limited resources, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, providing effective professional development, and creating effective parent partnerships (van Olphen et.al., 2006). Bredeson and Kose (2007) found that superintendents in rural districts ranked the biggest challenge as limited budgets and financial issues. Additionally, when rural districts experienced rapid growth of culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially those students who were English learners, the superintendents felt immense challenges to meet the financial needs of the district, usually with minimal state and federal funding, while making diverse students academically successful (Lamkin, 2006; Revis, 2010). Revis also found that the challenges of making EL students successful were exacerbated by a lack of professional development opportunities in EL strategies, the transiency of the EL populations, and the lack of staff expectations for the EL students.

However, Bredeson and Kose (2007) found that superintendents in rural districts ranked other challenges in meeting the needs of growing EL student populations. The rural superintendents struggled with district wide planning and goal setting for effective evaluation of EL student learning. Lamkin (2006) found that rural superintendents

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ranked additional district challenges concerning personnel issues regarding recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff, which was compounded by union and litigation issues as well as the ability to offer competitive salaries.

Superintendency

Budget issues resound in research on the challenges of superintendents in rural districts. Kowalski and Brunner (2005) found that superintendents in many rural areas experienced challenges with equity issues in balancing fiscal needs and meeting the needs of the diverse socioeconomic areas in the district. Likewise, Kowaski and Brunner recognized that district location, especially in rural areas, presented significant challenges for superintendents. For the state of Wyoming, the largest city is Cheyenne with a population of 59,466. There is only one other city in the entire state of Wyoming with a population over 50,000 (U.S. Census, 2010). Reichardt (2002) found only three districts in Wyoming were classified as large town or cities. All other districts in Wyoming were in towns or rural settings. Therefore, educational research regarding rural or suburban areas provided appropriate background when researching the challenges of superintendents in Wyoming.

According to Reichardt's study for McREL (2002), Wyoming student populations have decreased since 1993, in which there were 100,000. The trend of decreasing enrollment is expected to continue. The majority of Wyoming student populations live in small towns and rural areas. The rural populations are expected to decline the most (Reichardt). However, Wyoming districts have been experiencing increasing enrollment of EL students. The growing linguistic diversity of the students

does not match the demographics of district leadership. Superintendents in Wyoming are predominantly white males. Only 27% of superintendents in Wyoming were female in 2002, and all were located in districts on the western side of the state in rural districts. Since then, the number of female superintendents has decreased to fewer than 10%. Other challenges that districts in Wyoming faced was the fact that 19% of Wyoming principals were not certified, and 6% of superintendents were not certified in 2000 (Reichardt). Additionally, not all Wyoming schools have a principal, as the job is often shared as a principal and superintendent, or as a principal of several rural schools throughout the county based school district.

Orr (2006) found that superintendents lacked appropriate professional development for dealing with the challenges in their districts. He also found that the challenges of district leadership deterred people from seeking jobs or certification for the superintendency. In addition to the numerous challenges noted that superintendents faced, Reichardt (2002) found that time demands that affected personal lives, high levels of stress, as well as lower compensations in rural districts were extraneous challenges that superintendents had to address. With the numerous challenges that superintendents faced, Portis and Garcia (2007) found that successful superintendents based their work on personal ethics. It was found that superintendents which were the most successful implemented change based on a moral imperative for equity and social justice, and possessed a serious passion for changing lives. Wertz (2003) also found that superintendents that were successful in overcoming challenges focused their outcomes on change that could impact student lives. Further research on superintendents found that

the role of the district leader either perpetuated existing practices and philosophies on cultural and linguistic diversity or created change that eliminated inequities and racism (Evan, 2007). In order for superintendents to overcome the challenges that they faced in their roles, they worked to transform the district in order to move student achievement forward.

Summary

In realizing that Wyoming has a growing EL population, it is important to understand what superintendents in the state are doing with the growth of the linguistically diverse population. Since the research is based on the constructivist paradigm of research, participants' lived perspectives were very important. Therefore, the review of literature provided background on the state of Wyoming to look into the idiosyncrasies, history, economy and politics of the state, which could prove to have research outcomes affected by the location of the participants.

Further literature review on transformational leadership was provided since transformational leadership has been in place among districts that have been successful with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. Transformational leaders that have been successful based their actions on their own moral obligations to confront injustice and inequities, as well as seek to improve the cultural climate of their communities and district. This was deemed important as the research at hand was focused on the actions and need for further action among the respondents. Through the data analysis of the research, clues would be sought into the use of transformational leadership throughout the districts in Wyoming.

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Literature as to how district leaders became agents for change in meeting the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students was also reviewed. It was found that district leaders that had been successful in improving outcomes for the culturally and linguistically diverse students focused heavily on curriculum and instruction, professional training of staff, and addressing diversity in their schools and communities. The connection to the research study in Wyoming would seek to understand if the district leaders in Wyoming were focused on similar actions.

By reviewing literature on challenges districts faced with a growing EL population, and what leadership practices are successful in addressing the growing EL populations, then it will be easier to understand responses to research from Wyoming superintendents. The literature discussed the challenges with meeting Title III requirements, addressing hegemony in the schools and communities, improving communications among the linguistically diverse populations and schools, and focusing on school reform through improving curriculum and instruction and addressing policy inequities. The research study in Wyoming would illicit responses as to the challenges felt among different districts in Wyoming with growing populations of EL students.

Challenges faced by superintendents in the role as district leaders, especially regarding a growing diverse student population, was also reviewed in the literature. Nationally, those challenges were based mainly on managerial tasks, such as budget, politics, and personnel management. Accountability issues, especially among diverse subgroups, have also been found to be a significant challenge to superintendents. It was also found that in the current literature, that these challenges were exacerbated in rural

communities. Since Wyoming is made up predominantly of rural school districts, this information as to these additional leadership challenges found in the research would be beneficial to make connections to national trends and those in Wyoming.

Wyoming superintendents addressed what challenges and opportunities districts found in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students, as well as what districts were actually doing or should be doing to address the needs of the growing number of EL students. The methodology, which will be discussed in Chapter III, will explain the research plan in depth. Additionally, the findings in Chapter IV will provide answers as to the perceptions that district leaders in Wyoming have regarding a growing population of EL students, whereas Chapter V will share the similarities and differences between the Wyoming research and the literature that currently exists.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As the researcher hoped to reconstruct understanding of the social world, the research paradigm that was employed was the paradigm of constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The researcher felt constructivism would be the best approach to use in order to achieve the goal of understanding participants' knowledge of the topic. Creswell (2007) suggested that the constructivist paradigm be used when the researcher seeks understanding of the topic by addressing the participants' worldview of the topic. Indeed, the nature of knowledge could be affected by the participants' experiences with the topic and their ability to connect action to praxis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

This constructivism research approach followed interpretive research methods, as this enabled the researcher to interpret meaning that was constructed from that the researcher's and participants' own locally and socially created experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Therefore, to answer the research questions regarding school districts in Wyoming and how the impact of a growing EL population presented district challenges, district opportunities, as well as how leadership was addressing the needs and how they could be addressing the needs of the growing EL population, interpretive research was best suited to construct meanings to the questions.

Additionally, this qualitative research, as stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provided that the researcher acted as a biographer who connected their own lived experiences to the research at hand. The researcher was part of the subject in much of

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qualitative research, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln. Therefore, the researcher provided a direct influence on the research at hand. The researcher connected with the research through the lens of both researcher and participant. The lived experiences of the researcher were directly connected to the research, due to the researcher's years of practitioner based experiences. Therefore, it was imperative to understand the lens through which the researcher perceived the research problem (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Researcher as Participant

The use of first person narrative is used here since my lived experiences are so closely connected to the research at hand. I have served public education since 1989. My first job was in the largest urban school district in the state of Texas. I worked at a Title I elementary school in the north side of the city with a largely diverse student population. I was hired to work with the English language learning student population, first as an English as a second language (ESL) teacher to pull students out of regular education classes to focus on 30 minutes of intensive conversational English. The ESL position was done away with that year, as the trend in education was moving towards transitional bilingual programs. My job the subsequent year was as a bilingual kindergarten teacher. After one and a half years in the urban district, I moved to a city on the Texas-Mexico border, where I worked in various positions with bilingual students for 20 years. The population of the school district was largely Hispanic at 98%, Limited English Proficient at 42%, and low socioeconomic status at 76% (Texas Education Agency, 2011). However, LEP statuses should usually be considered skewed numbers,

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since students continuously exit throughout their school years. For example, an elementary school would have a considerably higher LEP population than the secondary schools, since students enroll at higher rates in elementary schools and exit the programs by the secondary grades. Education with culturally and linguistically diverse populations throughout more than two decades of work was the only lens in which I had experienced teaching and administration.

In 2010, I moved to the state of Wyoming and accepted an administrative position, which proved an educational culture shock for me. My lived experiences had been almost completely with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The juxtaposition of demographics served by the school districts in which I worked and networked created a new set of lenses in which to see reality. Part of the reality I learned was that working with diverse populations is a learning experience. As the experience for me working with largely White populations was a new struggle, I saw my administrative counterparts struggling with ways to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Charmaz (2000) suggests that a qualitative researcher will seek meaning for the participants and self, looking for values, acts, and facts that clarify both the participants' and the researcher's realities. Therefore, I chose qualitative research methods in order to increase understanding of the research problem at hand, by being a participant observer in the research, whereas my own lived experiences lent to better empathy and understanding.

Theoretical Paradigms and Perspectives

Creswell (2007) discussed the theoretical framework of Interpretivism as that which is used as the researcher interprets meaning from the research. Goals of the researcher following Interpretivism may seek to develop an understanding of how people think or how people act. With a passion for the understanding the meanings in the voice of others, as well as years of experience in working with English language learners, the research embraced this framework in which to research the growing population of English language learners in a state void of much diversity.

The constructivist paradigm was followed as a way to construct meaning that participants have regarding English language learners. According to the constructivist paradigm, ethics are intrinsically included in the research process while the process is on-going, until the final revelation is discovered at the completion of the research. Constructivism follows the ontology of relativism, whereas the reality is locally and specifically constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Because of the regional specificity of the research question at hand, this relative ontology coincided with the discovery of understanding that was affected because of the lived experience of the participants, which differed because of the specific local and regional constructs.

According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), constructivism is transactional, whereas the findings are created as the research progresses. The research methodology is the epistemological stance of objectivist hermeneutics, which Schwandt (2000) states is also the epistemology of interpretivism, in which the researcher interprets the understanding

of the participants' meanings. The three features the researcher should recognize and follow in performing the research is

> "(a) They view human action as meaningful; (b) they evince an ethical commitment in the form of respect for and fidelity to the life world; and (c) from an epistemological point of view, they share the neo-Kantian desire to emphasize the contribution of human subjectivity (i.e. intention) to knowledge without thereby sacrificing the objectivity of knowledge. In other words, interpretivists argue that it is possible to understand the subjective meaning of action (grasping the actor's beliefs, desires, and so on) yet do so in an objective manner" (Schwandt, p. 193).

To ensure subjectivity, the researcher acted as the only interpreter of the research outcomes through thorough, trustworthy data analysis. It was suggested that the researcher become a facilitator of the study by providing the many voices of the participants, and that the researcher be a passionate participant of the research in the reconstruction of meaning by providing those voices. These methods of constructivist research matched the methodology laid out for this research plan, as the researcher was passionate about understanding the participants' view of the topic and expressing their voices, as well as by having a passion through her own lived experiences with both the participants and the research topic.

The axiology of constructivism, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2000), is that transactional knowledge is valuable for social emancipation, creating the intrinsic value of the research, which could lead to action by the participants. A value added to this

research was the ability to have the outcomes influence educational leaders in a call to action where they want to themselves develop more understanding of the challenges and ways to meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population, which could possibly be illuminated by the research.

Schwandt (2000) states that constructivism follows the hermeneutic philosophy of research, where the understanding is interpreted by the researcher through participatory conversations that is built into the logic of questions and answers. This understanding was produced in two steps, which included acquiring understanding and applying understanding. Reaching the understanding involved semantic and syntactic analysis, where language and reason were the instruments of control. The research design was directly based on hermeneutics, where questions, answers, and conversation were interpreted by reconstruction of meaning through data analysis.

This research design followed the constructivist approach to qualitative research. The researcher developed an analytical interpretation of the research, which led to further research questions to inform the analysis (Charmaz, 2000). According to Creswell, the researcher should construct meaning through open ended questions, and through analytic interpretation and further questioning, making sense of the world and topic at hand. Creswell suggested that this emphasizes local worlds and multiple realities, and is imbedded with experiences, relationships, and communication of beliefs and values.

The research gathered extensive, rich data and completed the analysis with thick descriptions. This was done by amassing pertinent details of what became transparent

through the participants relating significant information through open ended surveys and interviews. As general explanations and data emerged, a few further research questions arose, so that more data evolved. One caveat of this constructivist research is that the researcher must stay subjective and allow understanding to emerge from the data interpretation (Creswell, 2007). The use of data analysis was employed for interpreting the need for further data collection.

Participants

The research question called for the participant population to follow purposeful sampling. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) called for discriminant sampling of the population that could provide the richest information pertinent to the research question. The purposeful sample included inviting all active superintendents from each public school district and the Bureau of Indian Education school in the state of Wyoming (N=49). According to Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), the superintendent's leadership is the major factor that will determine the academic achievement of all students, thus the superintendent would have the most influence on affecting achievement of ELs and was chosen for the purposeful sample. The superintendent had the option to designate participation to the person in the district most responsible for the education of the ELs, such as an ELL Director or Assistant Superintendent of Instruction. School district sizes range from approximately 150 students in small districts, which can range from one room rural schools and single district schools, to the largest district with approximately 13,500 students (see the Table on p. 117). Contact information was obtained from public websites. Access to entry for the samples was obtained through personal communication.

Initially, introductory letters and consent forms were sent to all superintendents, and follow-up emails were sent two weeks after the initial letters. Since the state of Wyoming has a small population and a small administrative pool, peer requests were made by several of the current superintendents through emails and personal phone calls to help elicit participation in the research project.

Data Collection

The research consisted of surveys through an open ended questionnaire, followed by structured interviews of specific research participants that added further meaning and understanding to the initial survey responses. Demographic data was addressed at the beginning of the questionnaire, as both personal and professional backgrounds influence the multiple identities and lenses from which reality can be created (Evans, 2007). According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), the questionnaire should address the research questions, which in this research regarded challenges, positive opportunities, ways instructional leadership addresses the EL student needs, and ways instructional leadership should be addressing the needs with a growing EL population. The designed questionnaires were provided as open ended questions (Appendix A). This allowed for answers to provide more length, style, and language, which allowed for richer data analysis that matches this qualitative research (Creswell 2007; Gall, Gall, & Borg).

Construct Validity

The questionnaires were checked for construct validity amongst the population similar to that of the survey population. The audience for the validity check of the questionnaire included researchers from the local university and ELL practitioners in the

state of Wyoming. The validity check offered opportunities for feedback, criticism, and

recommendations as well as space for comments on unclear vocabulary or jargon,

following suggestions by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007). The originally designed

questionnaire was sent to the audience for validity check through the *surveymonkey*

website, just as it was to be done for the research participants. Through that, the

audience responded with concerns and questions about the research instrument. There

were originally concerns about the clarity of a few of the questions. There were also

concerns as to the answer format for the demographical statistics. The suggested changes

and questions of clarity were addressed, and updated questionnaires were redistributed

for further construct validity checks through the *surveymonkey* website to the same

audience. The responses from there showed that the instrument was understandable and

easy to interpret. The final questionnaire was subsequently the one distributed to the

participants.

Participant Acquisition

To begin the research process, the sample population was contacted with an

introduction letter and consent form mailed to their district office. The packet included a

self-addressed, pre-stamped return envelope. Follow up emails were sent to request

consent and participation two weeks after the initial mailing. The first follow up email

elicited little more participants. Due to low response rates, responding superintendents

who the researcher personally knew were asked to seek additional respondents from

their colleagues throughout the state. This generated only a small additional participant

rate. A second follow up email was sent to all districts that had not agreed to participate,

followed by an additional letter with attached consent form and return envelope. A few more participants were garnered from this second effort. A third email was sent to non-responding districts offering monetary incentives for participation in the research. All previously agreed participants were informed of the incentive plan. The final respondents were added to the participant list, and email questionnaires were sent to the participants through the *surveymonkey* online survey site.

The data for this study was garnered through a survey of the instructional leadership of all Wyoming districts that responded to the survey (N=15). This was a 31% response rate. The researcher had wanted to attain a higher response rate. However, this provided the researcher the opportunity to seek further information on non-respondents in survey research, which is shared in Chapter V. In addition to the online survey, interviews were held with instructional leaders from the four responding districts with the largest EL populations. Information on the respondents will be shared in more detail in the section on research participants in Chapter IV.

Follow Up

Once the data from the survey was collected and analyzed, expected underlying themes and structures were interpreted from the responses. Interpretation of the data calls for analysis to saturation, which often calls for additional research. After data analysis, these follow up interviews helped gain deeper meaning and clarification that was used to garner deeper understanding (Creswell, 2007; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Fontana and Frey (2000) stated that the researcher plays a neutral roll in the interview

process. The interview process and questions that guided the process stemmed from the data obtained from the previous questionnaires.

The interviews took place with those four respondent districts with the largest EL population. The districts with the largest EL populations were chosen because the researcher felt the educational leaders would be able to provide more information due to their current work with larger populations of EL students. Interviews were semi-structured, which indicates that structured questions were asked, with an opportunity for probing further with open ended questions that arose from the answers (Gall, Gall, & Borg).

The structured questions were pilot tested following the same method and the same participants as the open ended questionnaire through *surveymonkey* website. The responses stated that there were no concerns with the design of the follow-up questions. The semi-structured interviews provided a means to further study and discover the sample populations' lived experiences with the EL population. Audio recordings were used with prior consent. Transcripts were taped and transcribed in order to facilitate data analysis. The participant was provided a copy of the transcript and offered the opportunity to clarify any misinformation or misinterpretation. No identifying information was kept on the transcripts after this member checking.

Data Analysis

As common in qualitative research, the researcher was a participant observer. There was only one researcher who collected and analyzed all the data, ensuring that all

data was measured against the same interpretation. This data interpretation and analysis followed the recommendations for interpretive research as laid out by Charmaz (2000).

Data was collected through the open ended questionnaire. Responses were read several times in order to ensure richness and recognize key phrases (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). After reading to recognize key phrasing, the data was coded with line-by-line coding, which Ryan and Bernard (2000) suggest using as the best means to identify themes. In line-by-line coding, each line of text is studied, and the interpretation of the meaning of text is coded for each line. The use of line-by-line coding in research keeps the researcher constantly studying the data through in-depth analyses. Additionally, this in-depth look at every line keeps the researcher from imposing his or her own beliefs in the interpretation of data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This descriptive interpretation of data also allowed the researcher to look at the subjects' world views in their answers. This analysis was subjective, based on the researcher's own lived experiences and intuition, and sought to construct and interpret meaning from the data instead of discovering a truth. The use of active coding through line-by-line interpretations led to findings of subsequent, connected codes throughout the data. In order to ensure that the data was thoroughly interpreted, the researcher revisited the data, asked new questions of the data, and recoded the data several times to the point of saturation. By coding data several times from many interpretive points, and then clustering the data into coded segments, the researcher reached the saturation point of data analysis, ensuring that trustworthiness and reliability were established (Creswell, 2007; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The step in data analysis that followed data coding to saturation was the step of memo writing. This step helped the researcher further her thinking and clarify the interrelated process that possibly existed. Memo writing, the type of journaling employed by the researcher, assisted in examining her own experiences and the connections that may have gone unseen and find patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2000). According to Ryan and Bernard (2000), memo writing can be done in one of three types of codebooks. This research used code notes, wherein the researcher described how codes led to the interpretation of meaning. Interview answers through the follow-up research clarified the research outcomes. The same process of coding and memo writing was employed. One of the examples of the code notes from the open ended survey responses about culture follows:

There are several comments on the cultural acceptance in schools. These comments keep saying that students are involved in school activities. It says they are not ostracized and are treated the same as the other students. Many people use the word assimilate and no prejudice. They are talking in the affirmative, but it brings to mind our studies on color-blind philosophies, and how their perception that there are few cultural concerns. However, use of some terminology connotes negativity. Perception = positive aspects to diversity but is there an underlying current that is not positive?

It is recommended that interpretive research should be done by the researcher without help of computer analysis, as computer analysis distracts from the human interpretation needed for this research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Instead, the

data should be analyzed and interpreted by the researcher only in order to insure interpretive fidelity (Creswell, 2007). Understandings were exposed through the data interpretation regarding the research questions on school districts in Wyoming and how the impact of a growing EL population presented district challenges, district opportunities, as well as how leadership was addressing the needs and how they could be addressing the needs of the growing EL population.

Summary

Qualitative research design was specifically chosen in order to give voice to the research regarding the socially constructed view of the participants based on their worldview and lived experiences. Qualitative research provides deep insight into the research questions that could not effectively be provided through quantitative methods. In seeking the perceptions of district leaders in the state of Wyoming, the qualitative research design was the most productive in telling the story of how districts are addressing growth in EL populations.

A constructivist research plan was followed to present findings regarding the perspective of district leaders in the state of Wyoming on the growing population of EL students in their districts. Additionally, constructivist research allows the research to grow while understanding is constructed through elicited responses. This emergent design helps to provide rich data as it progresses. Additionally, constructivist research allows for interpretation while building understanding, which is intrinsically connected to the cultural, social, geographical, and political backgrounds of the participants.

Insomuch that qualitative research describes current practices and leads to further research or action. Little currently exists on research in Wyoming. There is even less research on the EL populations in Wyoming. By using constructivism research, the study provided voices that have been shared in the findings in Chapter IV. Additionally, much of the research elicited the need for future research, which is shared in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how districts in the state of Wyoming are adjusting to a growing population of English language learners. In particular, the investigation looked at answering questions from the perspective of the district leader as to 1) What challenges Wyoming districts face in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students 2) What positive opportunities Wyoming districts have through addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students 3) What Wyoming districts are actually doing to address the needs of the growing number of EL students 4) What Wyoming districts should be doing to address the needs of the growing number of EL students.

In order to answer the research questions, the study included an open-ended survey in which educational leaders provided information in short answers or prose. Follow up communication included member checks as to the answers given when they were unclear, although there were only two times that clarification was needed. Personal interviews were conducted with those respondents from the four districts with the largest EL population. The personal interviews sought more in depth understanding from questions that remained after the initial survey.

The research from the initial survey was coded under each general category of the challenges, successes, actions, and what actions should be done. Each question that fell under each general category was analyzed. The responses to each question were

coded through line by line coding. The descriptors found in each line were interpreted and coded into a response theme. After each area of the challenges, successes, actions, and planned actions was analyzed, the researcher went back through the responses, recoding the answers into additional interpretive codes. This was done three times, until the codes were repetitive to the point of saturation. At that point, clustered groups were revealed.

The major themes that were found to be challenges that districts face with the growing population of EL students were: 1) staffing and training educators to work with EL populations, 2) continuous achievement gaps, 3) communication barriers, and 4) funding. District responses to the positive opportunities they have had with the growing population of EL students fell into three major themes: 1) improving achievement, 2) seeking and offering improved staff and professional trainings, and 3) reduction of cultural tension.

Themes that were revealed in response to what districts have been doing were: 1) staff and professional training, 2) hiring more highly qualified staff, and 3) curricular expansion. District responses to what they believed should be happening to continue to address the growing population of EL students were interpreted into three general themes: 1) continue to seek additional support, 2) find more funding, and 3) seek more training for staff in EL strategies. Another theme that was found through the data analysis under the questions in this area was that a high number of respondents felt there was no need for additional support from district offices or the Wyoming Department of Education to address the growing population of EL students.

Following constructivists research, it was important that the findings were constructed because they were embedded in the narrative of the participants. The findings presented should be outlined through concept maps as well as narrative text. By giving linear logic to the findings and voice to the participants, understanding is constructed and embodies the various realities of the research (Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Description of Wyoming Districts

There are forty-eight public school districts and one Bureau of Indian Education school located in the state of Wyoming. School districts are established in county districts (See Figure 2 on p. 42). Some counties are divided into more than one school district, with each significant town being the base of that school district. This is usually found in counties with very rural, expansive land masses or counties where mountainous terrain make transportation challenging. Twenty-six of the forty-eight public school districts have total enrollment under 1000 students, with the average enrollment from these small school districts being 524. The Bureau of Indian Education School has a total enrollment under 300 students. Eleven school districts have student populations that surpass 2000 students, and the remaining eleven school districts average a student population of 1322. The three largest school districts are located in Laramie County (Cheyenne – 13,370 students), Natrona County (Casper – 12,075 students), and Campbell County (Gillette – 8,337 students). The rural nature of Wyoming and its designation as a frontier state helps explain the small district populations. Thirty-two of the forty-eight districts fit the federal guidelines for frontier status, having a population

density of less than 5 people per square mile. Of the remaining sixteen county school districts, only seven have a population density of more than ten people per square mile. Therefore, small population growth and population changes of students can have big impacts on the school systems.

Of the school districts in Wyoming, there are variances in the EL population distribution in districts. Most districts with minimal populations of EL students are in smaller, more rural districts. They have shown little growth in the EL population over the past four years. Other districts throughout the state vary in their percentage of EL students. The districts with the largest EL populations are mainly located in the Wind River Reservation, but other districts with the highest percentages of EL students are located in communities based on agriculture and tourism. It is especially interesting to note that some school districts located on the Wind River Reservation, as well as the Bureau of Indian Education School, have no students classified as EL. Additionally, larger populations of EL students are in larger towns, where the economies are based on natural resource exploration and extraction.

Ethnic population distribution shows that the districts with larger ethnic diversity typically have higher percentages of EL students than those districts that have predominantly White populations (Table 2). However, it is to be understood that EL learners in the state are represented in all races and ethnicities. It is also to be noted that not all students identify a race or ethnicity in all districts; likewise, some students may identify more than one.

Table 2. Demographic Statistics of Wyoming Districts

District	City Base	Total Students	White	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	ELL
Albany 1	Laramie	3,657	2746	49	611	23	105	2	166
Big Horn 1	Burlington	894	749	2	104	7	3	0	19
Big Horn 2	Lovell	708	600	0	87	3	9	0	5
Big Horn 3	Greybull	490	394	1	91	0	1	0	54
Big Horn 4	Basin	302	243	3	54	0	0	0	10
Campbell 1	Gillette	8,705	7667	69	756	123	64	7	295
Carbon 1	Rawlins	1,866	1222	68	557	111	21	4	143
Carbon 2	Encampment	639	579	3	40	0	1	1	0
Converse 1	Douglas	1,745	1549	15	136	28	9	0	40
Converse 2	Glenrock	675	607	0	49	9	0	0	6
Crook 1	Sundance	1,075	1008	1	32	12	1	0	4
Fremont 1	Lander	1,672	1231	4	122	195	16	0	14
Fremont 2	Dubois	155	148	0	2	5	0	0	0
Fremont 6	Pavillion	388	169	1	11	81	0	2	5
Fremont 14	Ethete	622	4	0	3	613	0	0	137
Fremont 21	Ft. Washakie	499	2	0	7	474	0	0	25
Fremont 24	Shoshoni	346	288	3	38	10	0	0	5
Fremont 25	Riverton	2,582	1862	16	252	388	14	0	83
Fremont 38	Arapahoe	392	10	0	9	373	0	0	146
Goshen 1	Torrington	1,719	1375	5	282	14	6	4	33
Hot Springs 1	Thermopolis	649	604	7	15	13	5	1	0
Johnson 1	Buffalo	1,287	1163	3	75	15	4	1	5
Laramie 1	Cheyenne	13,387	9715	403	2563	144	166	95	308
Laramie 2	Pine Bluffs	940	732	4	160	10	8	0	55
Lincoln 1	Kemmerer	603	538	8	47	6	1	2	10
Lincoln 2	Star Valley	2,559	1370	17	115	8	10	5	34
Natrona 1	Casper	12,750	10774	228	1287	125	113	11	382
Niobrara 1	Lusk	979	876	1	64	17	8	2	8
Park 1	Powell	1,722	1455	7	204	7	4	0	48
Park 6	Cody	2,136	1983	9	98	15	31	0	24
Park 16	Meeteetse	117	113	0	0	3	0	1	0
Platte 1	Wheatland	1,039	917	1	95	9	7	0	27
Platte 2	Guernsey	199	158	0	40	0	1	0	0
Sheridan 1	Big Horn	905	849	1	11	33	1	1	3
Sheridan 2	Sheridan	3,277	2946	17	192	41	16	5	23
Sheridan 3	Clearmont	90	81	0	2	1	0	2	0
Sublette 1	Pinedale	1,018	893	3	95	12	11	3	50
Sublette 9	Big Piney	627	514	3	85	8	0	0	48
Sweetwater 1	Rock Springs	5,514	4047	173	1210	32	48	8	393
Sweetwater 2	Green River	2,653	2046	11	504	19	8	11	119
Teton 1	Jackson	2,487	1677	2	725	4	9	0	480
Uinta 1	Evanston	2,869	1392	23	400	19	22	0	228
Uinta 4	Mountain View	771	750	1	11	2	1	2	0
Uinta 6	Lyman	731	683	8	29	3	3	2	5
Washakie 1	Worland	1,400	999	0	371	6	4	0	79
Washakie 2	Ten Sleep	109	100	0	2	6	0	0	2
Weston 1	Newcastle	796	712	3	35	28	3	0	5
Weston 7	Upton	248	236	1	3	7	1	0	0
St. Stephens Indian	St. Stephens	274	0	0	0	274	0	0	0

The researcher took the dynamics of Wyoming and the population of school districts into consideration, understanding that data from some school districts may not be applicable or helpful to the research questions posed. However, some of the research respondents were those that have no EL student populations, or have experienced minimal growth of the student demographic. Through networking, the researcher hoped to obtain large participation numbers in order to develop a deeper understanding of how the varied growth of EL populations was impacting the different districts and the state as a whole.

Participants

Each superintendent from the county school districts was contacted through written communication via the U.S. Postal Service, with follow-up communication by email. During the first month, the response rate was extremely low, with only two school districts agreeing to participate. The researcher continued with follow-up communications through email. Likewise, some participants contacted their peers in non-respondent districts to encourage their participation. The response rate grew to 31% of the school districts by the fourth month of seeking participation. Patton (2001) stated that the credibility of the research is most dependent on the rich data acquired rather than on the size of the population. Cooper (2009) also addressed participation in research by stating that finding participants proved to be the biggest challenge in conducting the research. By understanding the isolation philosophy of Wyoming inhabitants and understanding the topic at hand shed light on the smaller participation rate of the superintendents. Cooper (p. 705) stated:

"Participating in research requires one to have interest in a study's topic as well

as availability, comfort with the researcher, and trust in the research process."

Many of the school districts returned their consent forms simply stating they will not

participate in the research at hand. One decline came from the district with the largest

concentration of ELs, with a note attached stating,

"Thanks for the invitation but we decline to share Title III information."

According to Bredesen & Kose (2007), non-responses can be a consideration in survey

research. Data from some of the non-respondent school districts was considered and will

be shared in the final chapter to see what findings may be interpreted from such non-

response.

A breakdown of the participant districts can be used to create a general

understanding of all districts in the state of Wyoming, as they represent the broad view

of districts experiencing growth in the EL population, from district with almost no EL

students to the districts with the largest EL populations. The districts that participated

account for 48% of all Wyoming students, as well as 42% of the total EL population in

the state. The participant districts provided a solid snapshot of Wyoming. The

geographical distribution of the participants was representative of population

disbursement throughout the state. One third of the respondents were located in the

southeastern part of the state, where larger populations are generally found due to the

larger cities of Cheyenne, Casper, and Laramie. An additional forty percent of the

respondents were from the northeastern and the southwestern areas of Wyoming. The

final 27% of the respondents were from the central and northwestern areas of Wyoming.

Central Wyoming's population is almost exclusively populated around the Wind River

Indian Reservation. Northwestern Wyoming has the smallest permanent population of

Wyoming's geographical areas, and is home to Yellowstone National Park and the Teton

National Park (Table 3).

Table 3. Participant District Snapshot

District Number	Location	Percentage EL Students
1	Southeast	2%
2	Southeast	5%
3	Southeast	8%
4	Southeast	0%
5	Southeast	0%
6	Southwest	7%
7	Southwest	5%
8	Southwest	8%
9	Northeast	3%
10	Northeast	1%
11	Northeast	0%
12	Northwest	1%
13	Northwest	3%
14	Central	1 %
15	Central	0%

Source: *Wyoming Department of Education (2013)*

The majority of respondent districts were located in towns and cities that are

based on similar economic industries. As mentioned in previous literature review,

population growth of EL populations often follows specific industry growth. However,

understanding the rural nature and limited economic diversity of Wyoming, it would be

expected that many of the responding districts would be located in areas with similar

industries. The majority of the districts that responded are in locations that rely on natural resource extraction or manufacturing as a main source of economic support (Figure 4). It should be noted that most areas have more than one main economic industry.

Figure 4. Economic Industry Indicators of Respondent Districts by Percentage
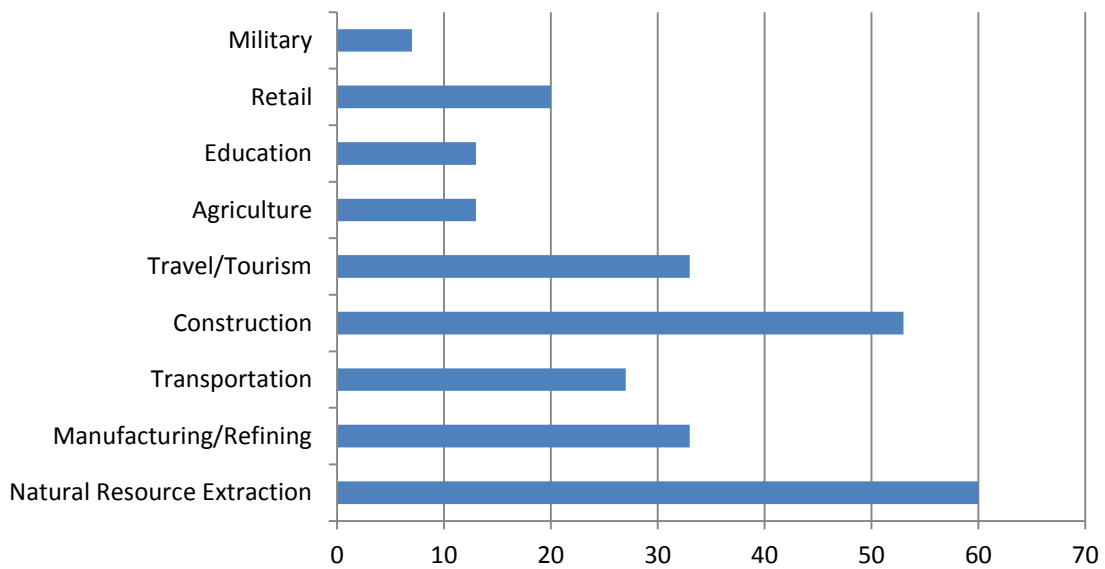
Source: City Data, 2013

The respondent districts were equally distributed in regards to total student population. One third of the districts were small districts, with fewer than 1000 total students enrolled in the district. The smallest district that participated in the research had a 189 total student population. One third of the districts were considered medium sized, with populations between 1001-2000 students. The final third of the districts were large

districts with populations over 5000 students. Two of the three largest districts in Wyoming participated in the research, and have two of the three largest EL populations.

District distribution of EL populations varied, but approximately 80% of the responding districts had less than 6% EL students, with the majority having between a 0-2% EL population (Figure 5). However, participant responses included rich descriptive explanations regarding the growing population of EL students, explaining that the new diversity, however slight, brings with it challenges, opportunities, actions, and needed actions on the part of district leadership. Twenty percent of the participant respondents had larger populations of EL students, and also provided rich descriptions in both the open ended survey and the follow-up interviews.

Figure 5. District Percentage of EL Students
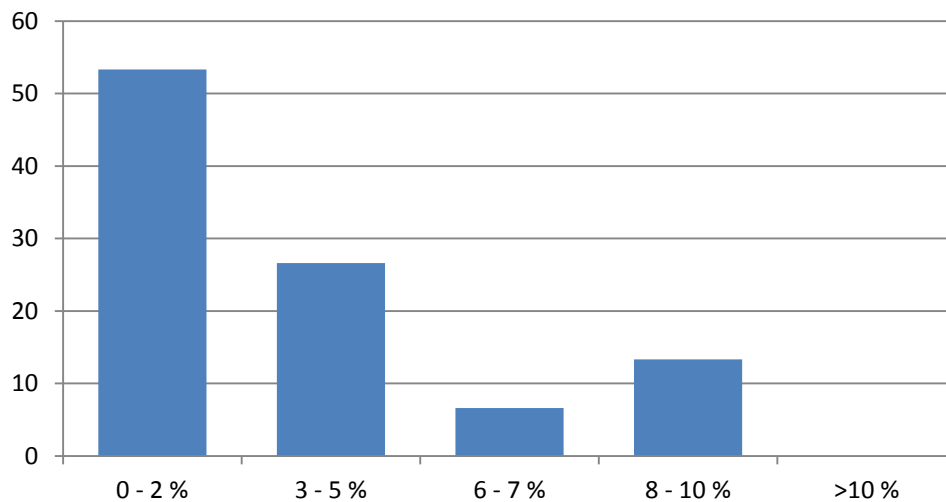
Insomuch that the research followed the constructivist paradigm that was connected to the relativist ontology, it was important to the researcher to garner

understanding of the participants' reality in their own locally constructed lived experiences. Gaining insight into those experiences was considered helpful in analyzing data and having background in interpreting meanings in the findings. The largest percentage of respondents had been in their current position between six to ten years. Close to one third of all participants had been in the position less than six years, and approximately 17% had been in their positions for over 10 years (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Years of Experience in Position of Respondents
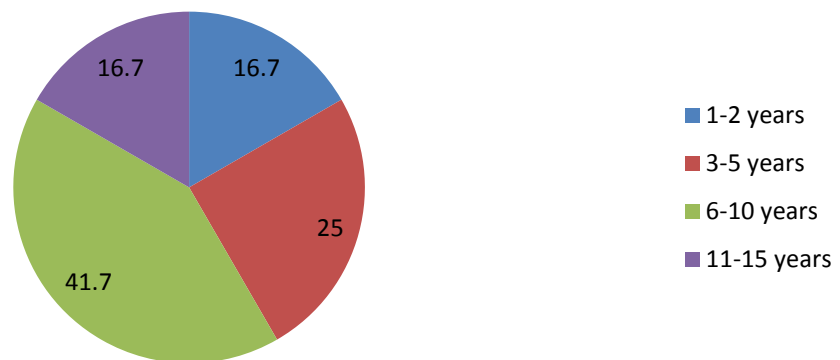
Experience in education was also considered important in understanding if the respondents had worked in the field long enough to see the effects and the changes in education with a growing population of EL students. A 40% majority of the respondents had been in education over 20 years, and another 20% had been in education over 15 years. An additional 26% had been in education between 6 – 15 years, and only 6% had been in education less than 5 years (Figure 7).

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Figure 7. Years of Educational Experience of Respondents
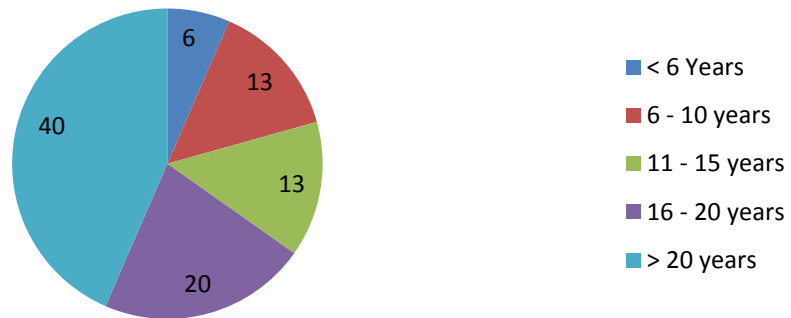
Education level was also considered important by the researcher, as it was an assumption that higher levels of education would offer different insight into leadership for diverse populations that would be achieved through advanced schooling. Thirteen percent of the respondents had earned bachelor degrees as their highest degree. Forty-seven percent of the respondents held masters degrees, and 33% held doctorate degrees (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Highest Degree Earned of Respondents
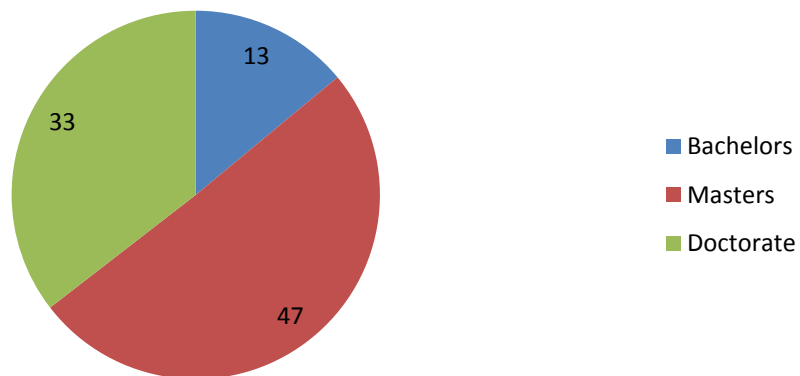
It was important to note that many school districts in Wyoming are extremely small and rural, so often the principal and superintendent share the same duties. As noted in the literature review, certifications and degrees of educational leaders often vary in small, rural districts. Since the participant districts varied in size, additional information was gained as to the specific role that was assigned for working with the EL population. Forty percent of the respondents did not have a specific person assigned to direct or manage the programs for EL students. Typically, the responsibility for direct work with and record management of the EL populations was shared between the regular education teacher and the assistant superintendent. The other 60% of the districts did have job roles that had been specifically assigned to work with the EL population, which ranged from Director of ELL, Title Directors, Assistant Superintendents, and teachers. In several districts, the ELL teacher also served as the Director of ELL. Many districts stated that different aspects of EL management were performed by several different roles. This distribution showed that incoherence regarding specific job roles throughout the state that are charged with ensuring Title III paperwork and mandates are followed while increasing instructional practices overall in the districts abounds.

The final descriptive statistical information regarding the participants was recorded in order to increase the understanding of the lived experiences of the respondents, and to subjectively theorize if the respondents had constructed meaning through lived experiences of language learning or cultural diversity. Twenty percent of the respondents speak another language beside English, with thirteen percent of them

speaking Spanish and seven percent speaking French. All of the respondents claim White as their race and ethnicity.

By the researcher's work in the state of Wyoming and through networking among several districts, the descriptive statistical data from the research was representative of the population of educational leaders. The research provided by the districts provided a general snapshot of Wyoming school districts based on their geographical locations, their basic economic foundation, and their overall student and EL populations. It was important for the research to relate the backgrounds of the participants in order to make sense of the responses. By subjectively analyzing the data through coding and relating it to the multiple realities of the respondents, the researcher was able to interpret the constructed responses that were indicated and revealed through a general clustering of themes that addressed the research questions:

1) What challenges Wyoming districts face, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

2) What positive opportunities Wyoming districts have, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, through addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

3) What Wyoming districts are actually doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

4) What Wyoming districts should be doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

The themes and description of the research can create a general understanding of how school leaders are experiencing the growing population of EL students in Wyoming.

Challenges Districts Face with Growing EL Populations

The state of Wyoming has a growing population of EL students. Many of the respondent districts have experienced the growth, yet some have not. Questions were created based on much of the literature review that addressed challenges schools faced with growing populations of EL students as well as the researcher's lived experience in working with EL populations. According to the research that was presented in that review, rural districts and districts with high poverty rates face additional challenges. Responses throughout the state of Wyoming were often conclusive with the findings in the literature review. However, idiosyncrasies of the local educational systems and the respondents gave additional voice to the understanding of how the challenges impact educational systems in Wyoming.

Staffing and Training

The only university in the state is the University of Wyoming. The University of Wyoming has only recently added the English as a Second Language endorsement program, and it has been less than six years that the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board has allowed the endorsement. Minimal population growth into

Wyoming hinders additional growth of teaching professionals with language instruction experience into the professional staffing pool.

The most general theme noted among all the respondents regarding the challenges school districts with a growing EL population face concentrated on the difficulty in hiring staff that was highly skilled in working with the EL population, and finding appropriate professional trainings for all staff that worked with the EL population. In one school district, for instance, EL services are provided by a teacher that serves as ELL Director, regular education teacher, and Title One Math interventionist. At a different district, the Director of Special Services works with the few EL students that enroll in the district. One district responded that, even though their current situation has remained static and the services for EL students are adequately provided for, the comment was noted that:

> If our number [of EL students] does grow, I anticipate lack of ELL training among staff members and lack of an ELL certified teacher would present new challenges.

Providing staff trained in meeting the needs of EL students was consistently mentioned as one of the biggest challenges districts face with the growing EL students. In an open ended response, one district replied:

> We have had a large turn over in certified staff due to retirement and so we have a lot of new teachers with little or no training on working with ELL students in the general ed. classroom.

That sentiment was reiterated during a follow-up interview.

> They [teachers] move here and work for a couple of years, and then move on to
>
> Colorado or somewhere else. You know, not everybody can make it in
>
> Wyoming. We're stuck always hiring new when they can't take it.

Another interviewee shared a similar belief with his response:

> We were looking to hire this teacher who speaks Chinese. We interviewed her,
>
> [we] were impressed. We offered her a contract, along with a sign-on bonus. She
>
> took that contract back to her district and Denver, and they matched it. It's hard
>
> to get them to come, but this time we were just a pawn.

Along with the need for hiring and retaining qualified staff in addressing the needs of EL students, the need for staff development was consistently mentioned. Many of the comments focused on a lack of experience in teaching the growing population and a general lack of understanding EL standards and instruction. Some of the comments focused on the lack of efficacious teachers in the mainstream, content classrooms. Others shared concerns of the students missing content while attending English in an ESL pull-out program, stating that there were not enough teachers for them to receive the content and English instruction they needed. The comment by one district focused on the lack of content instruction and English acquisition hindering student success. It was especially prevalent in the secondary schools, where older students face more challenges in language learning than younger students do:

> The secondary buildings have had the greatest challenge Teachers have a
>
> difficult time understanding the need to provided [sic] required accommodations.

It is to be noted that there was a convergence of the challenge of providing staff and training with the challenge of funding. For example, one respondent noted that the two were interchangeable issues:

> We need more staff to help our ELL students, but we do not have enough funding to do so.

A different respondent noted that positives and negatives of funding and staff training existed.

> Our teachers still have a lot to learn. Our EL teacher cannot do it all. We are thankful for the opportunity to have funds that can be utilized to build a strong staff development component.

Many respondents listed additional needs for staff trainings in working with EL students as a major challenge, noting that staff training should include instructional trainings and cultural trainings, as well as training teachers to understand the varied assessments and data pertinent to the EL population. Though the need for training was understood, a majority of respondents added that it was extremely difficult to find or provide meaningful training opportunities for their staff.

> One respondent noted that, because of the high mobility of EL students, the district EL position mirrored the mobility.

> Our kids are in and out, so our para is usually short term. This is too bad since it's tough to find Spanish speaking paras. Then we get new kids and we have no one to work with them.

It is important to note that a majority of the respondents that discussed staff hires in their districts referred to paraprofessionals as the ones that worked with EL students. In a follow up interview discussing staffing issues, one of the respondents shared the district's work in providing staff at a number of schools.

> We have hired several ESL paraprofessionals for all our schools that have a high ELL population. We have ESL staff at close to ten schools now. This is a problem we've been facing for like 7 or 8 years, so we have been putting boots on the ground to work with the kids. It's working. Our ELLs are doing great.

> Oddly, in the same conversation, it was mentioned that too many [classroom] teachers do not understand EL students and how to teach them. However, several respondents addressed school administration as creating challenges in working with EL student populations. The challenges with administrative staff included buy-in for program changes that addressed EL populations and the need for additional trainings, especially considering that the numbers of EL students were not always significant. The comments regarding administrators not supporting EL programs was interpreted as having staffing challenges beyond the scope of the classroom.

Continuous Achievement Gaps

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all students and subgroups of students achieve a certain level of academic success. It was enacted so that students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic groups, as well as those with special educational needs, be afforded equitable educational opportunities. Data states that achievement gaps still exist. It has been suggested that schools are unfairly penalized in

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meeting NCLB with EL populations, who have a limited time for exemption from state assessments, and still have to make growth and meet the criteria for Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives, or AMAOs. In Wyoming, the exemption period is only one year.

No respondent commented on the disadvantages mentioned in prior research. However, they overwhelmingly commented that the districts are facing challenges in closing the achievement gap. Eighty percent of the respondents commented that their districts have faced significant challenges in closing the achievement gap, by both meeting Annual Yearly Progress and increasing scores on the state accountability test (PAWS). In a follow-up interview, one respondent's answer summarized all of the responses very well:

> Most of our ELL students are growing academically per our data on MAP, ACCESS for ELLS, and PAWS. They just aren't on grade level. They don't speak English well. Reading impacts all areas of the curriculum, but they don't know what they're reading because of language. Language arts, science, social studies – it's all more difficult due to the amount of reading and writing it takes to be successful. Our ELL population is making strides in closing the gap, but they are doing best in math. It will take us more time for everything else.

By 2014, 100% of all student subgroups are required to pass the state assessment. The state of Wyoming applied for and was granted its first federal waiver in 2013. It is left to be seen if the waivers will continue to be sought for the subsequent years. When speaking with a different respondent regarding the achievement gap and AYP, it was

shared that many times, individual schools are not affected due to limited numbers of EL students, but that there is a bigger concern at the district level.

> Most of our schools do not meet the 30 or more students [EL enrollment], so there's no AYP issues there even with the achievement gap. The problem is at the district level.

One interviewee connected the issue of the achievement gap to cultural differences. The district has recently experienced a large influx of Somali refugees, and though many were exempted their first year, many more have passed the exemption period.

> We're testing this big group of Somalis, but they don't speak the language well, and frankly don't understand our schools.

From the follow-up interviews, more than from the open ended responses, their appeared to be a general mood of pity for the EL students regarding testing. It was the area, more than any other, where the researcher developed an understanding that district leaders appreciated the hardships the students faced with language acquisition.

Communication Barriers

Throughout the literature review, communication challenges were reported for districts and schools with growing and high populations of students and families from linguistically diverse backgrounds. In the research in the state of Wyoming, one of the themes consistently generated as being a challenge to districts was also a lack of communication with the linguistically diverse.

Many of the answers to the open ended responses used the word "Spanish", leading to the interpretation that Spanish has been the language of most of the

linguistically diverse students. Since 79% of all EL students nationwide speak Spanish as their native language, it would be expected that it would be prevalent in the state of Wyoming as well. However, some of the answers included communication with Somali and Arapahoe, and during a follow-up interview, communication with Russian families was also discussed. The understanding is that EL does not signify that challenges of communication with linguistically diversity populations is only in Spanish, but that multiple languages are spoken by the EL students in Wyoming.

Respondents relayed that most of the challenges in communication came in the way of language barriers between the districts and the families of EL students. It was reported that the lack of staff that can speak a language other than English makes it difficult to include linguistically diverse parents in the educational process. As part of the challenge, some respondents shared the challenges, but included ways they have tried to make improvements in the area.

It's hard to communicate when we do not know the language. We have recently

hired a bilingual para, but only because we have non-english [sic] speakers.

The growth of EL population has included languages other than English or Spanish. Districts that were previously addressing the communication challenges of growing populations of EL students that were native Spanish speakers addressed new challenges with growing diversity.

Many of our ELL students have parents who do not speak English. We send

school communications home in Spanish and English, but not all community

groups are included in that.

Another response addressed the same issue with growing populations of speakers of languages other than Spanish:

> For nearly a decade, our district has had translator services for families.
> Fortunately, the primary language has been Spanish, so we have been to
> concentrate [sic] these services for one language for the most part. Now we are
> seeing different languages and do not have the services for those.

During a follow-up interview, one of the respondents shared the challenge the district has had with an influx of EL students of different linguistic diversity:

> We do really well when communicating with the Spanish families. We have
> hired several translators that are at all of our ESL schools. What we need to find
> are Russian translators – do you know of any? We have some Russian families
> that have moved in, and some Chinese families. We have no way to
> communicate with them.

Although communication proved a challenge, several respondents included information as to how the districts are trying to address the communication challenge and involvement of the parents of the EL populations.

> Parents who do not speak English are typically timid about coming into a school.
> However, oru [sic] biggest population of ELLs is Hispanic and we have quite a
> few staff members who are bilingual. We are able to communicate with parents
> which ease the anxiety of being a part of our system.

Our biggest challenge with parents and the community is parent involvement; the

parent coordinator for the district is working with me to better integrate non-

English speaking parents into the overall PTO for the district.

In interpreting the responses and seeking understanding, the overwhelming voice came

through in the responses that the majority of districts were aware of the challenges they

faced with communicating with families of EL students. However, they were seeking

ways to improve communication by seeking outside translators, hiring bilingual staff,

and involve diverse parent groups.

Funding

As part of the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and

Academic Achievement Act, funding was transferred to Title III. In the literature review,

funding was considered one of the biggest challenges that superintendents faced in

district administration. Title III funding is provided based on EL population. Districts

receiving federal funds must fulfill all requirements due to the funding. Therefore, even

districts that receive minimal Title III funds are required to do the same amount of

paperwork as districts that receive significant funds from Title III.

One of the respondents addressed the requirements with Title III funding:

Title III funding has been around $40,000 per year. It continues to provide a

great deal of on-going training for staff. The biggest challenge has been to fulfill

all of the regulations and documentation requirements for Title III.

During a follow-up interview, one of the respondents discussed the challenges of

fulfilling the requirements of Title III funding, mentioning that it would be easier to pay

for everything with local funds and have no issue with ensuring that all of the federal regulations and documents are submitted. An additional response regarding federal funding summed up the issue of meeting federal requirements associated with Title III funding:

> Federal funds are not sufficient to enable the district to meet federal requirements.

> Many of the responses were defamatory regarding federal funding, stating that a lack of funding created several problems with the growing EL population. The funding challenges reported mainly impacted the ability to hire enough staff to work with growing populations of EL students. Additionally, the federal funding challenges in districts with very small EL populations were not sufficient to pay for one employee to work with the EL students.

> One respondent in a follow-up interview explained the challenges of Title III funding, but also the solution the district has used to address the funding issues:

> Our Title III funding does not even support our ELL employees. But our ESL schools are also Title I schools. We blend our Title I and Title III support – that helps more kids. It's been working great.

One of the most personal responses regarding funding addressed the lack of federal support, but discussed the local funds that offset the lack of substantial Title III funds:

> My dinky Honda is worth more than the funding the district gets from Title III. Seriously though, our Title III do not allow for much more than purchase of

supplemental materials. Fortunately, the school district helps make up the needed funding for a good ESL program.

Wyoming has had one of the strongest economies in the nation, and respondents provided information that general funds at the local level were frequently used to offset the lack of Title III funds. Several excerpts from the open ended responses included:

The district has been very supportive of providing funds necessary for the support of ELL students.

We are thankful for the opportunity to have funds that can be utilized.

State funding gives us the opportunity for ESL programs.

We fund all ELL employees with general funds.

Another follow-up interview included an at length discussion about funding possibilities and the creative ways in which the district was able to fund ESL programs:

We do not receive much Title III funding, but it does support our ELL director. What we have are many Title I schools. We have big Title I budgets. We hire our ESL teachers as Title I teachers and call them literacy specialists. But their focus is on ESL. We offer ESL summer schools and ESL afterschool programs through the state Bridges funds. All of the programs are helping the students, but they are coming from different pots. There are always ways to move money to help kids – that's our job. Who cares where the money comes from, as long as kids are being successful?

Funding, especially the federal Title III funds, are limited and can create challenges for the districts with growing EL populations. In the interpretive stage of data

analysis, the understanding that the researcher came to regarding the challenges that districts faced with funding was that Title III funds are insignificant in their ability to adequately fund programs and staffing to help the growing EL populations. However, district respondents seemed resolute in providing funding to partially support the EL students. It was apparent that hiring some EL staff, providing professional training, and acquiring ESL programs and materials were essential district procurements for meeting the needs of their growing EL population.

The challenges districts face with growing EL populations were found to be staffing and training, continuous achievement gaps, communication barriers, and funding (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Challenges Districts Face with Growing EL Populations
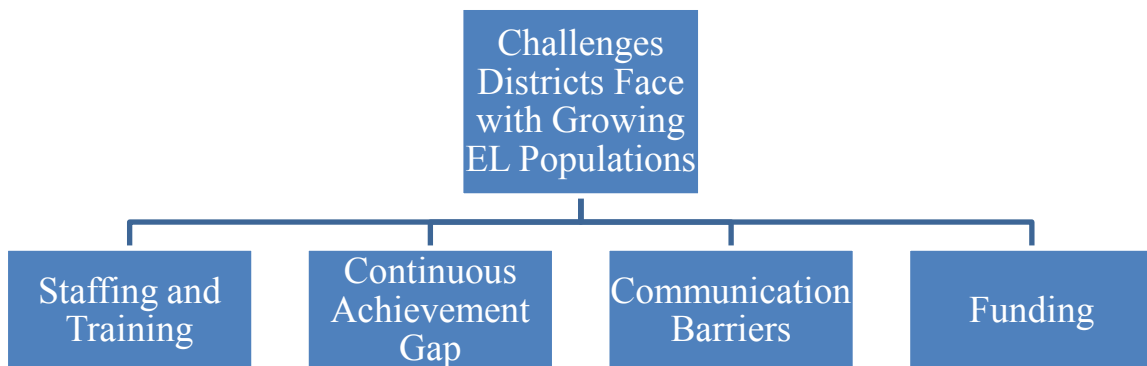
Positive Opportunities Districts Have Had with Growing EL Populations

The researcher's first job in Wyoming was as a principal in a Title I school with a high EL population. Upon her hire, it was affirmed that her candidacy was the most

attractive due to her experience with EL students and her fluency of the Spanish language. She was told by the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction that the district wanted to utilize her knowledge in the field to develop more opportunities for schools in the district in addressing the needs of the EL students.

During the data interpretation of the districts in the research, it was apparent that many districts did see that the growing number of EL students in their district brought opportunities for overall district improvement. Most districts overwhelmingly responded that an increase in EL learners provided great opportunities to increase teacher effectiveness. Additionally, there were answers into the minutiae of school administration that illustrated that schools were intently focusing on attending to the growing population of ELs.

Staff and Professional Trainings

It is often debated that teachers are the most important contributor to student achievement. Tucker et.al. (2005) concede that teacher efficacy affects student outcomes even more when the students are culturally or linguistically diverse. If that is the case, then increasing teacher efficacy and effectiveness would be paramount in increasing student achievement among EL populations. According to the responses in this research, educational leaders are taking the opportunity of an increase in the EL student population to also increase the efficacy of the teachers.

Respondent districts have been seizing a changing demographic to enhance instructional practices throughout the school districts, which have included increasing professional learning opportunities, increasing the use of research based practices, and

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continuing education. One respondent best represented instructional leadership for the growing EL population by returning to school to attain an ELL endorsement. However, most of the respondents increased staff instructional efficacy by providing trainings and professional learning opportunities. One respondent summarized how they had captured positive learning opportunities throughout the district:

> We have put into place an ongoing training in instructional strategies for ELL students. We have changed the role of our ELL teachers in their buildings to be seen as a resource for the staff by providing them training that they in turn share with their building.

One respondent addressed how in-house staff training focused on more than just instructional practices, but also addressed cultural literacy:

> The PD delivered by the ESL department focuses on meeting the needs of ELLS in the mainstream classroom. We have taken the opportunity to demystify the language acquisition process and to build an understanding of the importance of heritage language and culture.

Several other respondents spoke to in-house type of teacher development that the districts are offering, stating that they have active ELL directors, teachers, or coordinators that seek to expand staff offerings in ELL instructional strategies. For instance, one responding district stated that:

> We have instructional coaches who are certified trainers in research-based instructional practices for ELL students. They provide ongoing training for teachers across the district.

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Other districts responded to the professional learning opportunities by providing trainings and assistance to staff working with EL students:

> Teachers have received our initial district staff development offerings. Then the teachers have been provided with one-on-one support from the ELL Coordinator to expand their strategies related to teaching ELLs.

Other districts have utilized outside learning opportunities to increase teacher's instructional knowledge of working with EL students. Several respondents spoke to the significant number of trainings and national conference that have been attended by teachers of EL students. In a follow up phone interview with one of the larger respondent districts, information was shared as to the district response for teaching EL students:

> It's pretty new to most of them [teachers]. They haven't been where you've taught [Texas/high EL population, sic] but they want to learn! We've got the money and are sending our teachers all over for PD this summer. Some of them found it, and we'll let them go. Every one of our ELL teachers goes somewhere for PD. We're really working hard here and it shows.

Two of the districts responded that not only was it important for teachers to increase instructional efficacy for EL students by providing learning opportunities, but that it was equally important for the school administrator and the ELL coordinator to monitor the instructional practices of the teachers.

As districts were seizing the opportunity to increase instructional efficacy for improving student outcomes, a few noted that they were focusing hiring practices

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that included seeking staff certified in ELL instruction or that had ELL experience. The overwhelming focus on opportunities by districts was on improving teacher learning in order to provide better instruction and better student achievement:

> We have provided training to teachers on how to work with the ELL population, but the training is transferrable to all students. Our teachers have learned this sheltered instruction is good for all of their students.

Improved Achievement

The research was coded to consistently find that improvements in student achievement were categorized as opportunities that districts were experiencing with a growing population of EL students. However, the voice of the respondents could not be as clearly interpreted through the responses as in all other responses to the open ended survey nor the follow up interviews.

In the open ended responses, brevity prevailed in simple sentence answers regarding student success such as:

> We have met AMAOs.

> Students have improved in reading and writing.

> Our children continue to improve.

Even in follow up interviews in person and on the telephone, districts spoke of improved achievement in succinct form:

> We keep making gains. Our students have met AMAOs two years in a row, and are doing much better on PAWS.

Our scores keep going up, every year. We keep meeting the AMAOs, so their

hitting the mark.

When questioned further, districts continued to evade direct responses as to exact

numbers of students and the amount of gains. Only one respondent shared any detail in

the open ended response.

ACCESS for ELLs scores for 2011-2012 were better than they ever have been:

24% of our students tested proficient.

The repeated response of student success was considered a successful opportunity

districts were seizing with the growing populations of EL students. Although most did

not list scores, and the brevity of the answers did not elaborate much, districts did feel

that positive gains by students that are English language learners was an area of seized

opportunities among the growing population.

Reduction of Cultural Tension

Understanding that growing cultural and linguistic diversity can cause significant

demographic shifts among already small populations, district leaders responded that

opportunities have presented a decrease in community and school-wide cultural tensions.

Many of the respondents noted that the growing population of EL students was due to

the increase in culturally and linguistically diverse families who had presented positive

economic opportunities to the community:

The economic environment has been affected in terms of available workers

within the town; particularly for female ELLs. The town itself has many

industries outside of the town limits that particularly draws male works (i.e. the

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oil and gas industries). While male family members may be working jobs outside

of town, many of the female family members work in town.

Another respondent echoed this sentiment:

Our service industry was vacated when the oil and gas industry moved into our

county. The parents of our ELLs have filled that vacancy. The Hispanic

population provides employers with a quality work force throughout the

community.

Respondents discussed the opportunities the community has taken with a

growing EL population, mentioning different community entities, such as churches and

county programs, which have made strides in providing multi-cultural events in the local

communities. During a follow-up interview, one of the respondents best explained how

the entire community helps reduce cultural tensions due to the growing culturally and

linguistically diverse population:

As a community, there are ethnic stores, religious and cultural events – it all

helps students and families feel welcome here. We have community and school

cultural events. You can tell there is real support of different cultures. Our

community is really starting to integrate.

Most respondents commented on growing diversity as an opportunity for not only the

community, but for the school district's employees and students to embrace the change.

However, it was noted that this is a shift in philosophy from prior years, and that districts

are still working on addressing the ever-changing demographic:

Several years ago, it may have been necessary to remind staff of the rights of ELs

from 504 and OCR regulations. Today, it is more of belief with embracing

diversity.

While there was acknowledgement in a few of the responses that challenges still exists

regarding racism and integration of students from culturally and linguistically diverse

backgrounds, they list that the opportunities and success the school district has had in

decreasing the negative beliefs and behaviors has been positive.

Due to our teachers having an open perspective of new cultures and viewing this

as a benefit to our school, our students have embraced the cultural diversity and

have learned to respect various cultures.

Although there were a couple of comments that admitted that long held racial tensions

exist among a few staff members, most respondents noted that positive attitudes from

employees have been reducing cultural tensions. It was interpreted through the data

analysis that there is a concerted effort on the part of the districts to increase cultural

awareness among staff.

The district routinely works collaboratively with our local BOCES to promote

language and cultural classes. We also have a [sic] ELL parent liaison who

provides training for teachers and parents across the district.

Likewise, there have been efforts in the districts to reduce cultural tensions that have

included the beginning of several clubs and opportunities that help student integrate into

the mainstream school environment. There have also been efforts to increase parental

involvement in the schools. It was noted by one respondent in a follow up interview that cultural tension has been dramatically reduced:

> Our ELLs are really assimilated into every part of our schools. They are in our school plays, in the band, and play sports. Our leading back [football] is leading in stats statewide. He's a hometown hero. Getting them [ELs] involved in the school is how you get all kids to get along. We don't have many racial problems because we treat them all the same – same opportunities. They form friendships. Our schools don't have racial problems.

It is to be noted that a majority of respondents used the word Hispanic when discussing cultural diversity. Although culturally and linguistically diverse populations from several ethnic backgrounds can be found in Wyoming, it is apparent from the responses that Wyoming follows the national trend of the largest growing population of ELs being of Spanish speaking origin. During one follow up interview, the respondent shared how addressing ELs provides both challenges and opportunities for districts:

> We have experience with our Spanish ELs. They've been in our South Triad schools for years. There is not much of an achievement gap. They are involved. We've hired staff that speaks Spanish so kids get help and parents get involved. But lately, it's all been challenged. We've got a huge increase in the Somali population. We don't have anyone that speaks Somali. We can't communicate. And they've got huge cultural differences. It just emphasizes how hard it is to support those cultural differences when the demographic changes happen quickly. We've had to look at what we're doing and create new changes to our

EL program to face these challenges. That's an opportunity for us to make it

better – to see how we continue to change and improve on what we're doing.

The interview respondent, though experienced with Spanish populations, provided the

insight on how to create opportunities for district improvement through new challenges

brought on with a growing population of EL students (Figure 10).

It was interpreted through the many interviews and open ended responses that

district leaders embraced the growing diversity in their districts. The researcher, during

data analysis, kept in mind that 100% of the respondents reported to be White racially

and ethnically. Yet their answers focused on the positive community and school growth

with cultural and linguistic diversity.

Figure 10. Positive Opportunities Districts Have Had with Growing EL Populations
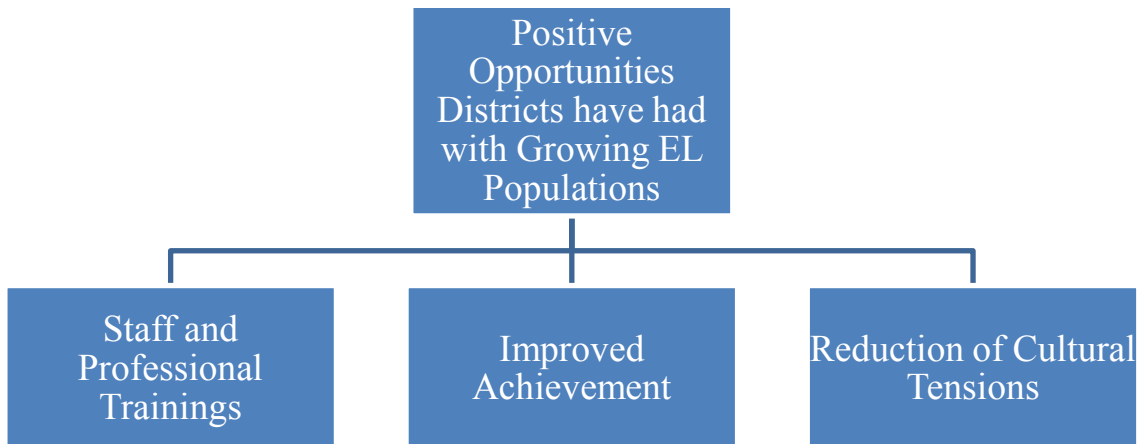
What Districts are Doing to Address Growing EL Populations

There is a consensus in the literature review that describes that district leaders in

districts with growing EL populations should focus on promoting reform and change

through culturally responsive leadership. There are several actions that were suggested

in the literature. In the research in Wyoming districts, data revealed that school districts

are doing much of what is supported in research. After coding to saturation, the data

showed that the districts are working hard to provide staff and professional training,

recruit qualified staff, and invest in more research based curricula that focuses on EL

instruction.

Staff and Professional Training

Many of the districts listed that staff and professional trainings were one of the

opportunities that districts have taken for improving the district with a growing

population of EL students. The theme overwhelming was noted as what the district is

doing to address the needs with the growing population. Though respondents listed that

there is a continued need to provide improved instruction for ELs, it was also noted

throughout several responses that there is a continuous effort to inform staff regarding

the legal demands of providing for the needs of EL students:

> There are so many facets to ELL, from identification processes, to legal
>
> requirements, several program options, the exit criteria, the different evaluation
>
> requirements. … teachers need to know what it's all about. All of our training
>
> starts with letting the staff know what we must do as a district to meet all of the
>
> needs of the EL students.

This response was one of many that insisted that teachers still need to understand the

legal compliance issues that must be met by the district for EL students.   Several

districts reported that legal compliance is addressed by their ELL Directors or lead ELL

teacher. During one follow up interview, it was shared that the position of director is one that is multi-faceted.

>Our Title III director is in charge of all of our trainings. She participates in the WDE annual director's meeting every winter and goes to the summer camp every August. It's her responsibility to come back and share all the new compliance requirements with our schools. She works on all the data analysis and ELP scores and creating the language plans with the teachers. She also provides the staff development on our ELL curriculum and instruction to meet those plans. It's a big job, but she is the one who helps train our teachers to work with the ELLs.

It was interpreted throughout the data that most of the staff trainings were done at the district level.

>The District Coordinator presents to staff at building meetings and also works one-on-one with teachers to implement current research-based strategies. She ties McRel strategies into research for teaching ELLs.

Some other respondents mentioned district or in-house work as to providing local training in ELL curriculum, ELL strategies, and sheltered instruction. However, there were districts that were providing learning opportunities outside of the district to increase teacher efficacy in ELL instruction:

>Many professional development opportunities are provided for our ESL teachers, including CAL Institutes, What Works for English Language Learners trainings, WIDA Standards trainings. Five of our teachers have completed the CAL Trainer

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of Trainers for their What's Different about Teaching Reading to ELLs program.

They help train our other teachers in teaching ELLs.

One of the follow-up interviews shared similar information about trainings that were

provided specifically for the ELL teachers:

We send our teachers [ELL] to conferences out of state. They all go to Colorado

for their annual conference. This summer, we are sending them to different

conference out of state. They really get lots of opportunities for PD.

A couple of the districts responded that, in addition to trainings, consultants were

hired to work with teachers in order to improve instruction for ELLs. Professors Joan

Wink and Jenna Shim from the University of Wyoming were utilized in the past.

Additionally, one district hired an educational consultant to work with the district:

Jill Jackson has done our consulting on leadership and learning. She provided our

teachers with solid instruction. She knows the reading program and how to

structure it for our ELLs. Jill is great and our teachers love it.

Some responses mentioned that there were budgetary constraints that affected the

amount of staff trainings that could be offered to improve outcomes for ELs. Many

respondents echoed budgetary issues in what they were doing to address the growing EL

population. However, though funding was not sufficient, districts noted that funds were

found in order to work on improving their EL programs.

Hiring

Funding from Title III was consistently noted as a challenge for districts with

growing EL populations. However, districts have been working with state and local

funds to insure that students that are EL receive an adequate education. Throughout the data analysis, hiring additional staff was consistently mentioned by the respondents as opportunities they are using to their advantage to improve and increase qualified staff in order to address the needs of the growing population ELs.

> We have provided staffing at a greater percentage than is recommended in the funding model. Our district funding provides three teaching positions and 8 assistant and/or translator positions, plus supplies and materials budget. This is above our federal funds for the program.

Other respondents shared how they are hiring specific positions that will increase the efficacy of their instruction in order to help EL students be more successful.

> We have hired an ELL District Coordinator last year to help teachers with strategies specific to ELL students. She provides an ELP plan for each ELL student so that [teachers] understand the English proficiency of each student and what he/she can do at their level.

Hiring additional staff that works with all teachers to improve instruction while maintaining smaller budget limits was offered as responses as well:

> We have added two staff members who work with sheltered instruction for all teachers in the district and provide support to ELL students in their classes.

> Some district respondents, however, significantly increased their staff to address

the growing EL population. The change in how the programs run required that districts hire several new teachers. Many of the districts commented that they considered the

need to hire additional staff as an opportunity to seek highly qualified staff, and stressed the desire to hire staff that spoke Spanish.

> The whole K-12 program used to be housed at a single site. Now it is at several locations within the same grade structure as the hosting schools. That has brought about a need to hire several new employees to work with our ELLs at all the sites.

A different respondent shared similar information as to the growth in staff that worked specifically with the EL population:

> The ESL program has added ESL staff, including teacher positions, an ESL Director, and paraprofessionals. We have more than doubled our ESL staff at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Some respondents shared that funds were not available to add all the staff that was needed to work with EL students. It was a general theme that, although districts were hiring in order to address a growing EL population, there was a lack of funding provided from the federal level to hire for all the positions that would benefit the EL students:

> We had one ESL teacher. We have added an ELL support class in the high school. We could use more.

The interpretation of the responses, though infused with comments about funding issues, deemed information that districts were working to address a growing population. Local and state funding was overcome in order to hire and train professional staff. Additionally, responses clearly defined that districts were addressing the growing EL population in curricular decisions.

Curricula

The state adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has created a need for districts throughout the state to address curriculum programs and materials that have been used in the recent past. One follow up interview addressed how the change in standards at the state level provided for a perfect opportunity to address the growing EL population while also addressing general curricular needs:

> They're [CCSS] a big change – a huge change from what we've had. As a district
>
> we are going to have to look at everything we're using – what we've got doesn't
>
> meet a fraction of what's expected. We have our team working on mapping
>
> where we are and where we've got to be. We won't purchase anything until the
>
> programs match the Common Core. But we will take that opportunity to get
>
> really strong programs that offer solid ESL supports and leveled support for our
>
> IEPs and ELLs.

Curriculum mapping and support programs were consistently mentioned as what districts are doing to address the growing EL population. Districts overwhelming discussed the move to curriculum mapping to align to the Common Core State Standards, as well as aligning curriculum at the K-12 level. In doing so, respondents stated that they were using this opportunity to add programs that would help ELs be more successful:

> We have added replacement core reading programs, including Read 190 in the
>
> middle and high schools and Wilson Reading in the elementary have been added.

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Other district responses suggested that curriculum program decisions have focused on specifically finding curricular materials for ELs:

> We have looked for ELL specific materials. When ordering a new reading series, we looked at the ELL supplemental materials.

An additional response focused on materials to be used solely by the EL students:

> We have reviewed and updated research-based ELL curriculum specifically for interventions and provided training in the use of the materials.

Another example of how districts have considered the EL population in curricular decisions suggested that considerations about ELs will be an on-going process:

> New Curriculum that has been adopted throughout the district has leveled readers for ELLs. Our District Coordinator worked on the adoption and has been asked for input about the ELL component of future curricula in all subject areas.

The purchase of curriculum programs and supplements can be expensive. Limited funds were mentioned in the responses on hiring and training, but only in one open ended response regarding curriculum. As a follow up question in the interviews, the researcher inquired as to what districts are doing for the EL populations in curricular decisions, and how funding was addressed in those decisions. Interview respondents concurred that, while the materials were not cheap, the districts had funds that were used to purchase programs and supplements. One respondent's concise answer mirrored the sentiments of all respondents:

> You know we're lucky in Wyoming – we have money. We can get what we need and pull from lots of pots [of money]. We'd like more funding from the feds, but

without it, we still get the job done. Our teachers and students get what they

need.

Respondents generally relayed that districts were actively working to improve

student outcomes by hiring more staff for the ELs, providing staff and professional

training, and purchasing research-based curricular programs. Although responses to

questions regarding what the district leadership was doing to improve outcomes for EL

students did not reveal that leaders were addressing cultural diversity, responses about

the successes districts were having did uncover that district leaders were making a

concentrated effort to address cultural diversity within the schools. Actions by the

districts followed several suggestions throughout the research that would impact

outcomes for EL students (Figure 11).

Figure 11. What Districts are Doing to Address Growing EL Populations
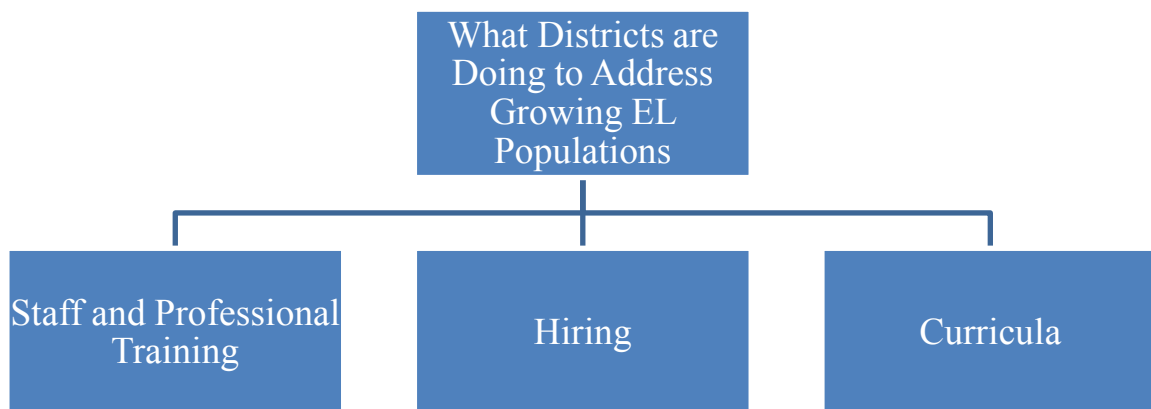
What Districts Should be Doing with Growing EL Populations

Seek Support

In analyzing data regarding what district leaders felt they should be doing to address the growing EL population of students, a majority of respondents felt they could actively seek more supports for working with EL populations. Questions in the open ended survey included supports that could be attained at local and state levels. Responses to local board questions went mainly unanswered. Those respondents that did reply provided brief answers affirming the local boards and their supports of EL programs, such as:

Our board is quite supportive of ELs and their families.

Our board adequately works to meet the ELL needs now.

Our board has approved a district ESL Plan.

Even in follow up interviews, respondents replied to board support questions in similar terse form:

Our board really supports all we do. They support our EL program.

In contrast, respondents were more vocal in their need for support from the Wyoming Department of Education that ranged from policy to instruction support. One particular policy issue was addressed in one open ended response. It was again addressed in follow up interviews, and all respondents agreed that a policy change at the state would be a strong support from the state. Currently, the state of Wyoming only allows for a one year exemption for EL students from the state assessment and only in the language arts portion of the state accountability exam, known as PAWS. There are no exemptions in

math or science. The exemption date for enrollment begins on the first date of the testing window. For example, if the PAWS testing window is open on March 7, then the student would have to take the test if enrolled in any U.S. school as of March 7 the prior year. The open ended response addressing the support suggested that a one year window should be extended.

> If our state could give a waiver to new ELLS taking the state assessment that would help tremendously. One year is not enough of a waiver. They need to revisit this!

Follow up interviews all concurred that further exemption would be advantageous. One respondent in the interview became passionate about the need for state support in addressing a one year exemption period:

> It's ridiculous. We have one year. One year. And they may not have been in our schools the whole year. But they are in our count. Do they know how long it takes to learn a language? One year isn't enough.

The other interviewees were not as passionate about the need for support in changing exemption rules, but the general feeling was that the state of Wyoming should increase the exemption period to the maximum allowed.

Additionally, respondents wanted more support from the Wyoming Department of Education. Although districts had felt that staff and professional trainings were opportunities that districts were already addressing, there was a general need for more support from the state in the area of offering additional trainings:

The WDE [Wyoming Department of Education] has EL trainings, but they need

to increase the number of trainings around the state, so that all districts in the

state have the opportunities to learn. The ones offered so far have been of good

quality, but are usually difficult to attend due to distance from our district. To

send all the teachers we would like to send would be costly in travel and subs.

Sometimes they have to travel far and it is often impossible to get to Cheyenne or

Casper in the winter. That is where they mainly offer everything now.

Additional responses suggested that the state could support the districts better by having

an expert in EL strategies on staff that could visit and collaborate with district staff as to

improvement needs, provide sample lessons, and make suggestions as to the best

research-based materials to use for EL instruction. One follow up interview explained

the desire for support from the state regarding the EL department, but shared distrust in

their ability to provide the needed support:

We are not really experts in ESL here, but there are not many experts in the state

on ESL. That is why we often just send our teachers to conference.

Another area of support that was frequently mentioned was that of additional state

funding in order to improve EL programs throughout the state.

Additional funding would be a way they [the state] could support us in hiring

another ESL teacher. I wish they would advocate for more funding of ESL

teaching positions and supporting ESL endorsements of general education

teachers.

One respondent stated similar sentiments, and stated that the idea of this type of support

has existed in the past:

> Several years ago, the legislature funded ESL endorsement classes for certified
> teachers. This needs to be reinstated to capture new teachers and replace retired
> teachers.

Additional comments explained how districts work to address current funding shortfalls,

but need to continue to seek support for additional funds:

> We have a local foundation. We have received funds from the foundation to
> purchase technology items for ELL students. We could do a better job in finding
> grants from other foundations and the states.

> Responses revealed that support should be sought from the state department of

education regarding policy for EL students, additional instructional support, and

increased funding for supporting EL programs. Throughout much of the research in the

literature review, funding was consistently seen as a needed support that districts

nationwide felt to be a shortfall in addressing needs of culturally and diverse

populations. Responses in the research in Wyoming provided similar assessments of

funding shortfalls.

Funding

Although respondents addressed increasing funding as an area districts should be

focusing on in supporting and increasing achievement of the growing population of EL

students, much of the responses have affirmed that districts in Wyoming have been able

to fund their programs due to significant coffers in district and state budgets. Responses

as to what districts should be doing consistently addressed that there is a need for more

funding from additional sources.

> Our district meets the needs of our ESL program, so no additional outside
>
> funding sources have been acquired. They would be nice to even fund a stronger
>
> program.

Several responses listed the current funding that supports EL students comes from local

sources:

> We work to try and fund the ELL program. Currently, our ELL Services are
>
> funded under the block grant.
>
> We use district funds for the costs for ELL students
>
> We find ways to fund ESL: General funds, Title 2 and 3, State extended day
>
> funding. General funds are our main supports, but we have some federal funds.
>
> We use Title III, some Title 1, and some general funds for our ELLs.

The additional information suggested that it would be nice to provide greater services

with greater funding from Title III funds. In an interview, the best description of how

districts should be seeking new funds was expressed by the respondent:

> Our district has hired several teachers and paraprofessionals. We have hired
>
> interpreters. It takes a big chunk out of our general budget to provide the supports
>
> we need. The federal formula for Title III is lacking in considering all it takes to
>
> form a solid ESL program. We have to serve the students, and we must meet the
>
> AMAOs and AYP. There is just no funding from the federal level. And then we

have the Sequester, so our district has lost even more federal funds. We should

be working to get more financial support from the federal level.

An additional response to the open ended survey also suggested that federal funding is

an area of need for districts with a growing EL population:

We do not receive any [Title III funding] because of our low population but yet

we have to be audited and required to do the same paper work as a district who

that is able to hire ESL specialists through funding.

An area of need for districts in working with the growing population of EL students is in

funding. Even with strong local and state support, district leaders feel there should be

additional funds to help offset the expenses that are incurred with a growing EL

population. Previous responses have offered that districts are purchasing materials as

well as hiring and training additional staff, mostly from local funds. Seeking further

funding was considered a way district could make further gains in the education of EL

students.

Staff and Professional Training

District leaders understand the impact of effective teaching. Although district

respondents felt that there were district opportunities that were being seized by actively

working to train staff in working with EL students, they also felt that it is an area that

needs to be continued to see improvement in the outcomes for EL students.

The more we provide training that reaches the learning needs of all students, the

better we will serve ELs. At the same time, teachers need to be supported when

they have unique issues with ELs in their classroom.

District leaders did see the need for continued support in staff and professional training by recognizing that, though gains have been made, there is a continued need for more staff to learn effective instruction for EL students.

> Teaching ELL students in the regular education classroom is our biggest challenge. Our secondary teachers could use coaching in adaptations in content classes for ELL students. We need to provide more ongoing in-district PD to mainstream teachers.

Respondents addressed concerns that hinder the ability to offer the additional training they believe is needed:

> The biggest issue for PD is time. We provide so much training for teachers that adding EL training to the list often creates more stress in an already stressful system. We have all the other required PD for different areas and scheduling challenges for more PD is the issue.

Other respondents addressed the need for further professional development, but raised concerns on cost-effectiveness for professional development needs that may not be well spent. Some of the comments mentioned a lack of a significant population of students makes professional trainings or consultants too expensive for a nominal budget. Other responses suggested that trainings were costly, and a lack of knowledge as to what trainings would be most beneficial often curtailed additional trainings. In a follow up interview regarding how districts think they should be addressing the needs, one respondent was forthright:

Our district has given trainings. Our director goes to trainings and presents all the

information to our teachers. They have all received sheltered instruction. We

know more teachers need more PD, but it's unknown at this time what PD would

be most effective. We are at that point where we want to help, but are not sure as

to what next.

In the interpretation of the research, it was clear that district leaders were aware of the

growing population of EL students in their district, and considered that more still needed

to be done in order to increase student achievement of this population of students (Figure

12). In the open ended survey, the general responses were much shorter and terse than in

the rest of the research. Likewise, follow up interviews were more ambiguous. Many of

the responses included "I don't know" answers.

Figure 12. What Districts Should be Doing to Address Growing EL Populations
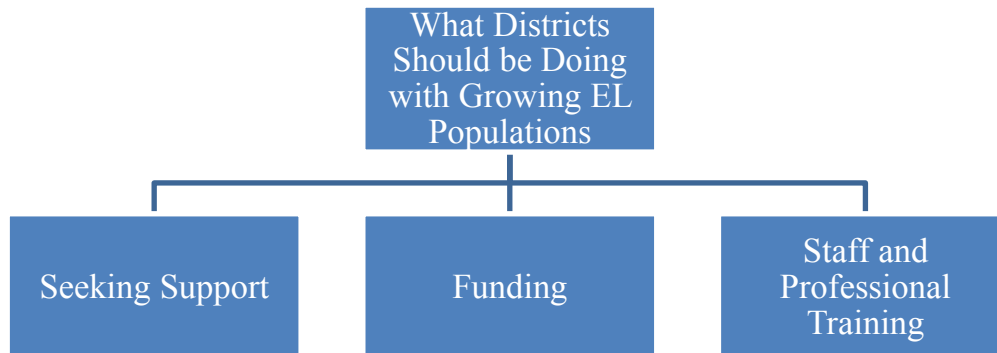
Summary

District leaders of 31 percent of the school districts in the State of Wyoming

participated in the research focused on the growing EL population in the school districts

in the state of Wyoming. The research questions focused on: 1) What challenges Wyoming districts face, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students 2) What positive opportunities Wyoming districts have, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, through addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students 3) What Wyoming districts are actually doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students 4) What Wyoming districts should be doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students.

Following constructivism research, meaning was constructed from the responses and interpreted by the researcher. The voices of the respondents provided insight into research questions and created an understanding of how districts are experiencing a growing population of EL students. The research outcomes revealed major themes in the challenges and opportunities that districts face with the growing population of EL students, as well as themes as to what districts are doing and should be doing to address the growing population of EL students.

It was assessed that most of the district leaders had not worked with significant EL populations in their educational experience. District sizes and populations of EL students varied among the respondents as did their general educational experience. The common factor that all respondents had was that they were all White. It was interpreted that, besides race and EL experience, the lived experiences in education with a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse population was shared. In general,

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answers were very similar, and many of the themes that were constructed from this research have also been found in literature.

District leaders' responses to the challenges their districts are facing with the growing number of EL students generated four major themes. The themes were staffing and training educators to work with EL populations, a continuous achievement gap for EL learners, communication barriers, and funding.

District responses to the positive opportunities they have had with the growing population of EL students fell into three major themes: improving achievement, increasing staff and professional trainings, and reducing of cultural tension.

Themes that were revealed in response to what districts have been doing included staff and professional training, hiring more highly qualified staff, and curricular expansion. District responses to what they believed they should be doing to address the growing population of EL students were interpreted into three general themes that included seeking more support, attaining additional funding, and seeking more training for staff in EL strategies (Figure 13).

Voices from the respondents were interpreted in both the open ended surveys and in follow-up interviews. The researcher interpreted a pride amongst the participants regarding the work the district was doing with a growing EL population. A frequent comment from respondents addressed the successes and strides the districts have made, as well as the challenges that exist and strides that still need to be made. More in-depth interpretation of the responses will be discussed in the summary and conclusion in Chapter V.

Figure 13. Overview of Research Outcomes

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In the final chapter, conclusions are shared as to how district leaders in the state of Wyoming have perceived the impact of a growing population of EL students into the school systems. Recommendations for practice, policy, and future research are included. Additionally, information on the research complications is expressed. The conclusions are connected to research literature on English language learning populations.

The research was initiated due to the problem found throughout educational research regarding growing populations of English language learners in areas that had previously not experienced large populations of ELs. The researcher is a former bilingual educator whose career experience had been in districts with large EL populations that moved into an administrative position in the state of Wyoming. It was through personal and professional experience that the problem districts in Wyoming faced with a rapidly growing EL population was first noticed by the researcher.

Therefore, the research purpose sought to understand what district level leaders in the State of Wyoming have been doing regarding the growing population of EL students. The study focused four areas: 1) the challenges districts faced with the growing numbers of EL students, 2) the positive opportunities that districts have had because of the growing numbers of EL students, 3) what districts have actually been doing to address the needs of EL students, and 4) what districts think they should have been doing that they were not doing to address the needs of EL students. It was the hope of

the researcher that an understanding would be garnered to provide significant information that could be used to promote practice and policy that would help improve education for the English language learners in the state of Wyoming.

Since the state of Wyoming is the least populated in the nation, access to state and local leaders is considered much easier than in larger states. Therefore, many consider the political arena more apt to be influence by citizens. Additionally, the University of Wyoming is the only four-year university in the state. As the linguistically diverse populations continue to grow, it would be prudent for the state and university to access research that currently exists on EL populations throughout the school districts in Wyoming. The research could possibly influence educational leaders and systems to promote and support culturally responsive leadership and advocate for policy and supports that could improve outcomes for linguistically diverse populations.

Possibilities for the research outcomes could lead to the Wyoming Department of Education providing more support and resources to the districts regarding EL instruction. Since professional training and hiring was a consistent theme throughout the research data, the state department and the university could provide more educational opportunities to increase instructional practices for English language learners. Opportunities for growth abound, and with adequate funds at the state, creative partnerships could be created amongst several entities.

The constructivism research approach followed qualitative research which included an open ended survey and follow up interview questions for districts that had larger populations of EL students. Interpretation of data from open ended surveys allows

for rich narrative from the respondents that lead to deeper understanding. However, it also creates a need for further research that helps inform a more thorough analysis of the data (Charmaz, 2000). Voices from the respondents were informative and led to conclusions that many district leaders feel passionate in improving outcomes for the English language learners, not only for improved scores and AYP outcomes, but for some moral obligation to provide culturally responsive schools. This was interpreted especially through follow up interviews where ideas were expressed with fervor.

The researcher perceived there were research complications based on lack of participation by districts. Every district in the state with the largest percentage of ELs – those with populations above 10% -- declined to participate in the research. This led the researcher to seek further understanding of the non-respondents. It was concluded that additional research among this population would have a greater impact in affecting both policy and practice regarding EL populations in the state of Wyoming.

However, the districts that participated provided a solid cross-section of the state of Wyoming. The research data provided conclusive themes regarding the challenges, opportunities, actions, and needs for actions among districts in Wyoming that experience growth among the EL populations. Several themes support what currently exists in the research literature. Much of the research literature has concluded with general themes on the challenges, opportunities, and actions regarding school systems and the EL population.

One of the themes most often found in literature is the lack of educators with proper knowledge or training in EL instruction (Arens et.al., 2012; Good, Masewicz, &

Vogel, 2010; Wang & Bachler, 2011). The lack of training and preparation creates more challenges with hiring highly qualified staff, especially in areas where the growth of EL populations is a newer phenomenon (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). The theme of hiring and training staff knowledgeable in EL instruction was the most prevalent in the research findings in the Wyoming research.

The other overwhelming theme found in the literature regarding challenges districts and district leaders face with a growing EL population revolves around budget shortfalls and funding issues (Batts, 2008; Cohn, 2005; Portis & Garcia, 2007; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Many of the funding issues affect the districts' ability to seek and hire qualified staff, provide appropriate profession development, and acquire research based curriculum programs that can benefit the EL students. Funding was also found to have an impact felt in the research in the Wyoming school districts.

An additional theme in literature focuses on how schools with large EL populations are more successful when communications with linguistically diverse populations are improved through multilingual communication and stakeholder involvement (Rothstein, 2004). By focusing on linguistic needs, as well as cultural needs of diverse populations, school districts are better able to improve EL student outcomes (Bartolomé, 2010; Cooper, 2009). District respondents addressed the need to improve communication and the ability to improve acceptance of cultural diversity in the districts.

Much of the research findings on the school districts in Wyoming were congruent with that in the literature. However, literature does frequently mention

challenges in districts due to political and policy issues (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). This was one area that was not found in the research of Wyoming school districts. However, all of the findings in the Wyoming research themes are found in research regarding districts and the growing EL population.

There were four themes that emerged as the biggest challenges districts face with growing EL populations: providing qualified staffing and appropriate training for EL practice; an achievement gap that continue between the EL students and the general population; communication barriers that exist between school districts and the families and students with linguistic diversity; and funding shortfalls that exist from federal allotments from Title III.

District respondent data clearly established three themes as the opportunities that districts experienced with growth in the EL population. These themes addressed issues that are frequently found to be challenges in the literature. With the growing EL populations, districts have found opportunities to improve staff and professional trainings, improve achievement of the EL population, and reduce culture tensions in their schools. Much of the opportunities they had were due to the district actions in addressing the growing EL population. Hakuta (2011) stated that higher outcomes for EL learners were due to district leaderships' focus on district EL student needs. The opportunities that were achieved in Wyoming were due, in part, to a concentrated effort to address needs of the EL learners.

There were three themes as to what actions districts are taking to address improved outcomes for the growing population of EL students. Those themes support

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that need for strong instructional leadership from district leaders (De Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi, & Park, 2006). The actions that were prevalent in the findings included increasing staff and professional training, seeking to hire qualified and multilingual staff, and implementing curriculum programs specifically designed for EL learners.

Final findings regarding the actions districts still needed to address EL populations exhibited a cognizance from district leaders that continuous improvement efforts must be implemented. In order to improve EL student outcomes, system-wide plans need to be created (Portis & Garcia, 2007). The themes and findings showed that district leaders were aware of future planning needed in working with EL populations. Those findings included seeking support, acquiring additional funding, and providing more staff and professional training.

Relationship of Study Outcomes to the Research Literature

Literature review regarding the challenges and opportunities superintendents face when working growing EL populations was compared to the research findings and discussed herein. Hakuta (2011) suggested that states with a new diaspora of rapidly growing populations of EL students actually had significantly improved student outcomes when the educational leaders focused on addressing the growing population. Research abounds on the importance for culturally responsive leadership and addressing change from superintendent to all stakeholders (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Cooper, 2009; Fairbanks-Shutz, 2010; Murthada-Watts & Stoughton, 2004; O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006; Vang, 2005). Additionally, superintendents that were successful based their focus leadership regarding EL student populations on personal ethics and moral imperative

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that they could impact student outcomes (Portis & Garcia, 2007; Wertz, 2003). Wertz stated that resiliency was necessary for leaders to impact EL education. Among the Wyoming respondents, several themes continuously recurred. Voice was also found throughout most of the respondents interpreted as having the moral imperative and resiliency needed to provide for true impacts on EL student outcomes. Respondents addressed the challenges, opportunities, actions, and need for actions in several ways, with several of the themes recurring throughout the research.

Theme of Challenges of Staffing and Training

Arens et.al (2010) discussed the shortage of EL trained and certified teachers in the mid-continent states. Wyoming is part of Mid-Continent research. Research findings in Wyoming provided the general consensus that districts were very challenged in staffing schools with highly qualified teachers. Research has found that it was a significant challenge to hire highly qualified staff with proper certifications, especially in rural areas (Evans, 2007; Lamkin, 2006; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Wang & Bachelor, 2011) Additional federal mandates that require districts to provide staff that can communicate with linguistically diverse populations further has further exacerbated the challenges of hiring EL staff (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Lee, 2010).

Wyoming respondents mentioned the need for hiring staff and training them in knowledge that supports EL learners. Literature supports that the majority of teachers, especially in areas that are experiencing a newly growing EL population, are inexperienced and unskilled in EL instruction, accommodation and modification needs of EL students, and general regulations regarding EL program mandates. This creates

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significant challenges of hiring and training staff in meeting needs of ELs (Batt 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2010). Wyoming has experienced those challenges as noted in responses.

Flynn and Hill (2005) suggested that districts really struggle to hire staff already trained in EL instruction. Additional research found that finding and hiring support staff to help work with EL students was an additional challenge (Lee, 2010). Orr (2006) found that hiring and training new staff in EL instruction was difficult, yet exacerbated by inadequate funding sources. This research was supported by the findings and responses among Wyoming districts.

Theme of Challenges with Continuous Achievement Gaps

The No Child Left Behind Act was set in place to ensure that districts worked to close achievement gaps between the majority population of all students and categorized subgroups of students. The focused attention in providing equitable educational outcomes to all students has been a noble and necessary policy. However, in practice, the achievement gap continues. Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) found that the achievement gap between Hispanic ELs and others continues to widen. Reform efforts amongst schools and districts had not been able to close the achievement gap of EL students (Rothstein, 2004).

Wyoming Districts responded that an achievement gap continues between EL students and the student majority. Districts responded as to the many instructional actions that have ensued, yet they found a significant challenge still existed with the achievement gaps in their districts. Respondents were positive in their remarks as to the

strides that have been made in improving academic outcomes in most areas, yet noting that those strides are not sufficient to equalize achievement between the majority and the EL students.

Theme of Challenges with Communication Barriers

One part of the mandates of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has required that districts provide communication to parents in a language understandable by the parents. This requirement has been understood with the disclaimer as to the best extent possible. Districts in Wyoming responded that the communication barriers were one of the largest challenges they faced with a growing population of EL students.

It has been documented in the literature that the lack of communication between parents, teachers, and students leads to lower incidences of parental involvement and lower student outcomes (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010). Wyoming districts, in addressing that the achievement gap still exist, noted that communication with families and students has been an area in which the districts struggle. The challenge should be understood to be not only a challenge in communicating, but was mentioned as a challenge for hiring as well.

Finding bilingual professionals in the state of Wyoming has been a recent challenge. It was not until January of 2013 that the Supreme Court of Wyoming, along with district and circuit courts, engaged in seeking to register court interpreters for court hearings (Racines, personal communication, 2013). It was shared that it has been slightly easier to find Spanish speakers, though they often lacked knowledge of the court systems. However, it was also expressed that speakers of languages other than Spanish

or English were close to impossible. District respondents often shared the same frustration that hiring bilingual individuals was extremely difficult, and thus created communication barriers that hindered improvement in working with EL populations and their families.

Theme of Challenges with Funding

It has been stated in the literature that one of the most challenging aspects of district leadership was in attaining sufficient funding for all of the district needs (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005). Additional literature on the challenges that face districts with large EL populations consistently stated that funding issues plagued those districts (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Reichardt, 2002). Still, more literature concludes that adequate funding has been even more challenging for rural districts (Bredeson & Kose; 2007; Lamkin, 2006; Ramsey & O'Day, 2010; Reichardt, 2002; Revis, 2010).

Research outcomes from the Wyoming school districts all fit into the literature that already exists. Respondents discussed the challenges the district has with inadequate federal funds that can be daunting when trying to address the growing population of EL students. Funding issues can hinder hiring of staff, purchasing of materials, and providing professional development (Revis, 2010). Therefore, many of the other challenges, as well as the actions the school systems in Wyoming have been taking to address the EL growth, require additional funds.

The research outcomes addressed the advantage the school districts in Wyoming have in their ability to use excess funds to help supplant the budgetary shortfalls in the

funding challenges. Even so, a resounding theme emerged as to the challenges and the need for additional funding in addressing the needs of growing EL populations.

Theme of Opportunities with Staff and Professional Training

According to research done by Batt (2008), teachers and staff want to learn how to better work with EL students. Throughout the research, a general theme emerged that districts were working to provide teachers with trainings on working with the EL students. It was suggested in other literature that teachers require an understanding of language acquisition theory and instructional strategies, especially in areas that are experiencing rapid growth of the EL population (Apthorp, Wang, Ryan, & Cicchinelli, 2012).

Respondents frequently mentioned the use of trainings that were provided through WIDA, through outside trainings, and with in-house professional growth opportunities. The theme and voice in the responses appeared to illustrate the leaders' understanding of the research on the need for professional development focused specifically on working with the EL population. Research by Hakuta (2011) found that districts were more successful in improving EL student achievement when they provided EL instructional resources and professional development for teachers (Hakuta, 2011). The use of professional development and trainings focused on the growing EL population led district leaders to state that one of the best opportunities they are taking with the growing population is increasing teacher practice by increasing professional development in best practices instruction, which is consequently improving student achievement.

Theme of Opportunities with Improved Achievement

According to Portis and Garcia (2007), much of the research regarding student achievement by the EL population focuses on the negative outcomes and the achievement gap. In their research on EL students, Gennesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2005) found that less than 20% of EL students met standards in reading assessments a decade ago. Additionally, state graduation rates amongst the EL population have continued to lag behind almost every other subgroup (Scott, 2012). Once district populations reach the mandated enrollment of the EL student subgroup, then districts faced additional challenges with meeting federal accountability mandates (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2008; Cohn, 2005; Orr, 2006).

Though the respondents from Wyoming acknowledged that achievement gaps still existed between the EL students and the majority groups, they also felt that one of the opportunities they have seized was the ability to improve student achievement. Several of the respondents noted the improved achievement through the use of data provided by meeting the AMAOs. Additionally, respondents noted that scores have improved overall on additional state based assessments, such as MAP and PAWS scores for the specific subgroup of EL students. There was a general interpretation that there was pride in the ability of the districts to improve student achievement on these data points. National research on graduation rates showed inequities still exist in this area, but no respondents addressed graduation rates in their responses.

Theme of Opportunities with the Reduction of Cultural Tensions

Research on districts with growing EL populations has included that there are cultural tensions and prejudice in the schools and communities. The general feeling or tensions within the community has feed similar tensions in schools. Much of the discord has been due jobs tensions, where community members blame economic struggles on the diaspora of workers they have deemed "un-American" (Cooper, 2009; van Olphen et.al., 2006). In the research in Wyoming, there were statements contradictory to what that research found, stating instead that the communities were pleased to have an increase of services due to an increase of workers. The researcher noted that many of the comments focused on the EL population as providing entry level employees that worked low income jobs. It was interpreted that the community was lacking in such services, and the families were a welcome addition to the communities.

Additional research on how district leadership addressed the cultural and linguistic diaspora included research on the need for culturally responsive leadership, wherein districts that focused on culturally and linguistically diverse students experienced better student improvement (Bartolomé, 2010). Much of the work of the district leaders was focused on changing the hegemonic beliefs of teachers, countering academic inequities, and working to reduce cultural tensions (Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007). Research responses provided information as to how district leaders were addressing cultural understanding through training staff and by providing several opportunities for students to be involved in the school system. By discussing after-school and extracurricular programs, district respondents saw that there were less cultural

tensions than in years before. Additionally, comments regarding teacher attitudes towards working with linguistically diverse students illustrated that districts are slowly making headway in creating more culturally responsive schools.

However, much of the research on culturally responsive schools, as well as additional research on funds of knowledge, has found the importance of changing attitudes of staff to understand the benefits of working with the students' by embracing their home cultures and languages and removing any deficit thinking that could hinder the teachers' abilities to work with the students' strengths (Cooper, 2009; Lee, 2010; Moll 1992). Research respondents in Wyoming did not address or mention the importance of this in the trainings that have been done with students. It was concluded by the researcher through the data analysis that much of the training and actions on reducing cultural tensions were mainly focused on including students within the general student population and training students on the basic principles of EL instruction.

Lee (2010) discussed the need to have the ELs feel their cultures represented and validated throughout the school. Many respondents discussed the use of cultural days where they celebrated EL cultures, specifically mentioning celebrating the diversity with ethnic food and project activities. One respondent discussed the implementation of school clubs to help celebrate cultural diversity. This superficial sense of addressing cultural and linguistic diversity was analyzed as the districts efforts to increase cultural awareness.

Additional research suggested that a positive school climate that has worked to reduce cultural tension and change social norms can provide the culturally and

linguistically diverse students with better school attendance and academic outcomes (Bartolomé, 2010; Cooper, 2009; Wang & Bachler, 2011). Several respondents felt that their districts had worked on decreasing cultural and linguistic tension by providing students with various opportunities, both inside and outside of school. There was mention by a few respondents of the community partnerships that were built with local churches and community centers to help create opportunities for students to build strong relationships within their peer groups, and thus reduce cultural tensions within the schools.

Theme of District Actions with Staff and Professional Trainings

District respondents overwhelmingly addressed staff development as important in working with the growing EL population. It was the only theme that emerged as a challenge, an opportunity, an action, and a needed action. The overwhelming response regarding professional trainings was interpreted as the district leaders' emphasis on instruction leadership, as well as the knowledge that has been found in literature. It has been well documented that the best student outcomes, especially when working with the EL population, has been in part due to an increase of staff development on EL instruction and cultural understanding (Cooper, 2009; Dlugosh & Sybout, 1994; Reichardt, 2002).

Though some research has concluded that an increase in professional development regarding EL students showed an increase in student achievement, much of the research has focused on types of research that proved most beneficial in working with a growing population of EL students (Reichardt, 2002; Wang & Bachler, 2011). For

example, it has been found that one of the most important forms of professional training for teachers working with EL students should focus on EL pedagogy for all teachers in all content areas (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Mora, 2007). According to the research responses, all districts have focused on the legal aspects of EL mandates. It was interpreted by the research that respondents felt this introductory knowledge was paramount for staff to understand the basic district responsibility in working with EL students. However, several district respondents had addressed professional trainings in pedagogy as actions they have taken to increase student success. There has been an increase in the amount of pedagogy and best practices throughout most districts. Additionally, there were comments as to the involvement of content area teachers in pedagogy and practices, especially in sheltered instruction. However, comments suggested that although there have been increases in EL trainings, there have not been enough to ensure that teachers have mastered several of these instructional practices that have shown to increase student outcomes.

Lucas and Villegas (2010) found that districts needed several types of training to help teachers increase ability to provide quality instruction to ELs. They noted that there were time constraints to provide the quantity of trainings that teachers needed to become proficient in these instructional methods. District respondents stated that there were time constraints as to the much additional training, not EL related, that must also take place within the districts. These comments were often the segway into comments regarding the need for additional training and scheduling to ensure that teachers were increasing aptitude in working with EL students.

Theme of District Actions with Hiring

Research responses were analyzed as the how districts were challenged with hiring for a growing population of EL students. However, data also revealed that it was an area in which districts were taking action. Wang and Bachler (2011) indicated that districts needed to hire quality staff in order for students to be successful. Additional information from Lee (2010) concluded that providing quality supports through staffing helped to increase success rates of EL students. Research on Wyoming districts provided data that leaders understood the need to ensure schools had high quality staff in place to work with EL students. However, it was interpreted that, though districts were actively increasing and seeking EL trained staff, it was an insurmountable task for several districts.

Lucas and Villegas (2010) found that teacher education programs often lacked the necessary elements for pre-teachers to attain proficiency in working with EL students. Moreover, the ability to find teachers and staff that had EL training was addressed by Flynn and Hill (2005). In a frontier state like Wyoming, great distances, small populations, and limited educational opportunities could be seen as an exacerbation to the problems faced by district leaders. District hiring opportunities and recruitment could be hindered since there is only one university in the state, which only started offering and ESL endorsement in 2009 (University of Wyoming, n.d.). The endorsement program is an additional 15 hours above degree hours, and there has been no student teaching as part of the program in the past. Even with the challenges that were

noted, there have also been strides taken by districts to seek staff that has experience, education, or training in working with EL students.

An additional hiring barrier has been the ability to communicate in the target language of EL students. Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) addressed the need for staff to be able to communicate with families and students in their native language. Though respondents mentioned the difficulty in finding bilingual staff in many areas, those respondents from the districts with the largest EL population had hired staff throughout the district that was bilingual. It was mentioned in both open-ended responses and interviews as a point of pride amongst those respondents that there had been a significant increase in staff that could communicate with the parents and helped students transition into English. It should be noted that the majority of the positions that were hired based on bilingualism were paraprofessionals. Respondents commented that it was easier to find a bilingual paraprofessional than a teacher that was proficient in two languages. It was interpreted through responses that district leaders felt hiring staff which could communicate with families and students would eventually reduce the communication barriers that existed.

Theme of District Actions with Curricula

Different literature discussed the importance of addressing outcomes for EL student populations with appropriately developed curriculum (Cooper, 2009; Dlugosh & Sybout, 1994; Reichardt, 2002). District leaders that responded to the research acted as instructional leaders by adding new curriculum programs that were specifically designed for EL students. Fairbanks-Shutz (2010), as well as Wang and Bachler (2011) stated that

a focus on new curriculum could help increase student outcomes. The data revealed that several districts had purchased new curriculum or had purchased EL complimentary supplements for their existing curricula.

It was suggested that part of the funding efforts should look at acquiring instructional programs specifically designed for EL students (Wertz, 2003). Comments by respondents addressed how local funds had been used to ensure that additional EL programs and materials were provided to the schools for use with the growing EL population. However, research by Arens et. al. (2012) discussed the importance of professional training in the appropriate use of new curricular programs adopted for use with EL populations. This was not discussed amongst the respondents.

The areas that respondents did not address when discussing curricular program implementation was any connection to the Common Core State Standards, which was adopted in 2012 by the state of Wyoming. Respondents did not discuss the training aspect of new curriculum implementation, neither in any professional development discussion nor in any curriculum responses.

Theme of District Needs to Seek Support

Literature frequently regarded one of the most time consuming jobs of the district leader was the political aspect of the job. Political responsibilities are divided between local and state boards. In order to maintain a strong culture of support and success, political maneuvering should be done at the local board level (Orr, 2006). Additional research suggested that district leaders had twofold political challenges in seeking multiple areas of support and policy creation (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Kowalski &

Brunner, 2005). In addition to working these political efforts at the local level, state policy and practice support has been shown to be an equally time consuming political endeavor (Cooper, 2009; Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1994).

Data from the research respondents concurred that district leaders felt a need to seek additional support from the state level. In both open-ended survey responses and interviews, district leaders shared several areas of needed support from the state of Wyoming as well as the Wyoming Department of Education. Respondents discussed funding in other areas of the research, stating that was lacking, but that there were sufficient local and state funds so districts were able to fund programs, staff development, and curriculum purchases. However, the respondents stated that there was a need for them to seek additional financial support in working with EL populations. Responses included a need for increased state support in funding the hiring of additional EL personnel and the purchasing of additional EL materials. Additional funding supports were discussed in the need for districts to send teachers for ESL endorsement classes. Currently, the state of Wyoming funds National Board Certification for teachers, and ESL endorsement classes were funded in the past. This area of support was included in the need for additional state funds as well as in needed supports.

Data also was used to conclude that district leaders would appreciate additional support in changing policy that could help students be more successful, as well as support districts in meeting Annual Yearly Progress. The one policy that was mentioned more than once was the exemption period for EL students. It was believed the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) could work to change the exemption status. Additional

responses addressed a need for more support from the WDE included the need for additional teacher training in the area of EL instruction. It appeared by some responses that districts lacked the ability to provide additional, next level trainings and needed that support from the state department of education.

Although district leaders felt very free to discuss what they needed from the state and where the state had not been helpful, they all became very terse to non-respondent regarding local supports. Previous literature discussed the necessity of the district leader to seek community support and maintain positive political relationships (Evans, 2007; van Olphen et.al., 2006; Whitt, 2009). It was also mentioned in literature that responses and response rates could be skewed if the participants felt distrust or discomfort with the researcher or the research process (Cooper, 2009). Eighty percent of the questions regarding local governing boards were left blank. The other responses with comments in the open-ended survey regarding needs from the local board all stated: "none".

The researcher was unsure if the interpretation of this response was due to no need for local supports or a lack of trust in sharing information with the researcher. In follow up interviews, the research addressed local board again. It was reiterated by respondents that local boards provided supports and stood behind the superintendents' leadership.

Theme of District Needs of Funding

One of the challenges that came out of the research data was that funding was inadequate to provide for the staffing, staff trainings, and curriculum resources needed due to the growing population of EL students. Literature often discussed the inadequacy

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of funds needed to provide the needed services and resources for EL populations in schools (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Additional literature reviews revealed that budget constraints for EL services lead district leaders to need to seek additional funding from outside sources (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Orr, 2006; Reichardt, 2002). District respondents provided data that shared similar challenges regarding Title III funding shortfalls. However, districts also included descriptive data regarding the advantage the districts had due to strong budgets and additional funding sources.

Even though the districts shared that information, there was a significant desire amongst districts for additional funding. The general interpretation of the data revealed that districts had funds that could be used to provide for the needs of the EL students, but that districts would prefer to have outside sources to fund the EL programs. Larger districts responded that the large amounts of funds were being used to provide for the programs. Smaller districts, especially the most rural of the respondents, shared that creative accounting and staffing was being used to ensure an EL program was meeting student needs. Literature provided that small districts experienced greater funding challenges in supporting EL students (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). This funding theme, supported by research, left districts needing ways to increase funding for the EL program without decreasing funding in other areas.

Theme of District Needs of Staff and Professional Training

The theme of staff and professional training was consistently reveled throughout the research on growing EL populations. Research consistently mentions the need for effective professional development to improve El outcomes (Fairbanks & Shutz, 2010).

This was the area that districts felt were some of the bigger challenges, yet was also the opportunity and the action that were in place within the districts.

As district instructional leaders, it was derived from the research responses that district leaders have been actively seeking ways to improve instruction for all students. English language learning trainings have been implemented for most staff. Positions have been created that work directly on training and supporting professional staff. There was data to reveal that district leaders feel a need for further trainings. However, the data reveals that district leaders have come to an uncertainty as to what further trainings are needed. It was at this interpretation of the data that the researcher inferred that lack of experience in working with EL populations had caused this conundrum of having a need for future professional trainings, but not understanding which trainings are needed. It was stated in research that a lack of experience in working with EL populations affects administrators, teachers and students (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). Districts seemed to recognize this truth as revealed in their responses.

General Implications

Constructivism research provides information that is constructed due to the lived experiences of the subjects, and the research will be complete insomuch as the participants lived experiences are complete. The research found that research participants generally had little to no prior practice in working with EL populations. Additionally, all respondents were White, so there was no evidence of cultural connections between themselves and the culturally and linguistically diverse population. Only twenty percent of the respondents claimed to speak a language other than English,

but that illustrates that some of the respondents had direct experience in language learning, yet it cannot be interpreted as to the degree of language learning.

Of course, the interpretation that was used to derive at these understandings was based on the researcher's lived experiences in working with administrators in the state of Wyoming. In the three years of working within the state, the researcher has come to understand the local culture of Wyoming. By making connections to the local culture, the researcher was better able to draw inferences from the responses in a local context. One of the connections drawn was the political nature of the small state. Superintendents are known to meet with legislatures, both state and national, to lobby for their districts' needs. It was the lobbying efforts from superintendents that were the catalyst for the legislative change in removing power from the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction. Additionally, this easy ability to meet with officials could provide great leverage if the superintendents were to collectively lobby for change in policies regarding the EL population.

The researcher had previously worked in the state of Texas, where funding issues have been famously addressed in numerous lawsuits initiated by MALDEF regarding inequity in funding. As a new administrator in Wyoming, learning the funding model for Wyoming was one of the most difficult aspects of the job. The state of Wyoming generously funds schools, being among the top states in the country for education funding, at elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. School facilities are also funded through the state, so that bond elections are only held if school communities want additional facilities that are not in the scope of school facility funding, such as additional

stadium seating or expanded arts centers. School facilities are evaluated every year, and then ranked as to the needs of each district. The School Facility Commission builds, remodels, and repairs schools yearly according to that ranking. Excess money in the state educational budget creates funding surpluses. Every year as a school administrator, the researcher had to find additional ways to expend the school budget. It is drawing from that knowledge of school finance in the state that the researcher was able to infer an understanding as to the funding challenges the respondents addressed. While there has been a lack of Title III funds in the districts around the state of Wyoming, the challenge that was derived was that general state funds had to supplant the EL programs and staffing. The implication for Wyoming does not have the same impact as the implications throughout other states that have general budgetary challenges.

Research literature often focuses on the dichotomy of culturally and linguistically diverse populations of students that are frequently taught by White staff that has little experience with diversity. The researcher's personal experience in education had always been with culturally and linguistically diverse staff and students. Her first experience in the classroom was in Austin, Texas with a culturally and linguistically diverse teacher mentor and a class of culturally and linguistically diverse refugee students. Her subsequent experience in Houston and Laredo involved having culturally and linguistically diverse staff and students. It was when the researcher took her first job in Wyoming that the understanding of the literature became reality.

This experience was paramount in developing an understanding of the research data. Staff demographics are largely White, as are communities and students. Therefore,
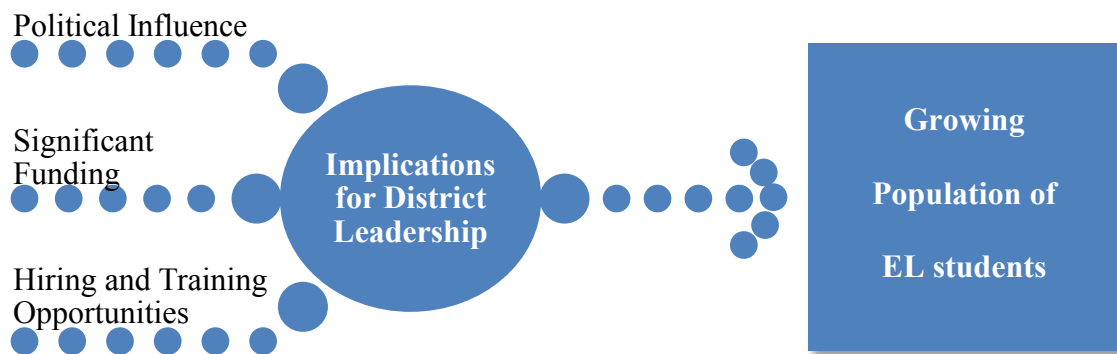
the districts face significant challenges in meeting the needs of a growing population throughout the state of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The implications provide for a broad spectrum of needs with training teachers in culturally responsive education, hiring teachers that are knowledgeable in cultural and linguistic education, and finding staff that can close communication barriers. This creates significant demands on district leaders who do not have the ability to find the quality staff needed who are willing to move to remote locations for work. Most areas of Wyoming lack ease of access, especially in the winter months, so that attracting highly qualified staff that will face the hardships of weather and distance can prove futile.

The understanding can be drawn that district leaders have been trying to provide staff that is experienced or able to work with the culturally and linguistically diverse families and students, but there challenges are often more than additional salary is able to provide.

The fact that the most overwhelming theme emerged as to the need for further professional development in working with EL students lead to the understanding that district leaders know that improved instruction will improve student outcomes. However, it is the lack of experience amongst the staff and the leaders in what instruction for ELs should be that has created a challenge. It was mentioned that even the staff from the state department of education has little experience in EL instruction. Finding and providing quality training in EL instruction will continue to plague districts if they continue to seek from within their own staff and state for professional trainers.

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Of the implications drawn here is that districts must continue to seek professional

development, but that it would be most beneficial to seek trainings in areas where EL

instruction and programs have been proven successful through time. It would be prudent

for local education agencies, the state department of education, and the University of

Wyoming to develop partnerships where teacher education programs and state trainings

would automatically include working with EL students.

Figure 14. General Implications of the Research

Political Influence

Significant
Funding

Implications
for District
Leadership

Growing

Population of

EL students

Hiring and Training
Opportunities

The general implications from the research are drawn on the understanding of the

Wyoming educational systems and the data obtained from the research on the district

leaders perceptions of the growing population of EL students (Figure 14). District

leaders could use their political influence and significant funding sources to improve the

outcomes for EL students. Use of the political influence could be focused on policy, as

suggested in research, for changes to current assessments. Political lobbying could also

be beneficial to increase state funding models that focus on additional hiring and training funds to be specifically earmarked for EL instruction. The majority of themes that emerged from the data could be addressed with the comingling of these leadership actions.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

Policy

The general implications of the research have a direct correlation to the ability of the research in Wyoming to impact policy in the state of Wyoming (See Figure 15 on p. 195). Themes illustrated challenges districts have faced and supports that districts could use with a growing population of EL students. Lawton (2012) found that political pressures and legislators' beliefs had a direct impact in policy initiatives at the state level. Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2010) discussed the need for educators to influence policy to ensure equity for diverse student populations. With the research outcomes, district superintendents could use the information address policy at the state level. The districts' needs could be shared to focus on policy change.

Educational policy should involve several layers of state government, such as the legislators and the superintendent of public instruction, as well as leaders of local education agencies (Lawton. 2012). With the political influence of superintendents, there could be policy implications that stem from this research. It is especially important that educational leaders use their political power to ensure that education for the culturally and linguistically diverse populations is transformed to meet their needs. The expectation for the next several years will bring growth in this particular population to

schools in Wyoming (NCES, 2013). Therefore, educational leaders could use their power to influence policy changes regarding EL students.

Johnston (2002) suggested that policy focus on funding state teacher salary increases was vital in improving the ability of a state to hire more highly qualified teachers. Funding and hiring issues were themes that emerged from the research. By increasing funding, especially in hiring teachers that are highly qualified in working with the EL populations, districts would be able to attain additional staff that is better prepared to work with a growing EL population.

Additionally, the theme emerged that districts, although having some improvement, were still struggling with achievement gaps within the EL population. Research by Forte (2010) on EL student achievement in NCLB discussed the in congruencies of policy and practice. The No Child Left Behind Act's goal was focused on student achievement. However, the goal of most educational systems has been effective education. For many student groups, the education has proven to increase their outcomes, but not their achievement on standardized test scores. Forte suggests that NCLB and AYP outcomes have been fixed on a basic algorithm that does not take into effect the effectiveness of the educational systems. Several states have received waivers to change the AYP model to that of growth instead of a single number. There were concerns in the research that the Wyoming exemption status for EL students should be changed. The implications provided by the research in Wyoming and research in other states as to changes in NCLB should be used by district leaders to address policy changes at the state level.

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Final implications from the research were presented in the lack of qualified teachers that are available in the state. Any teacher applying for licensure in Wyoming must study Wyoming history and government. The state licensing board must have proof of proficiency through assessment before licensing any teacher. District leaders could suggest that licensure also be dependent on training or self-directed literature and assessment to ensure basic knowledge of English language learners. Research data was overwhelming as to the need of professional trainings. By implementing policy at the state level, districts could offer professional development beyond the basic knowledge of EL, and focus on instructional methodology that would have a greater impact on the EL students (Figure 15).

**Figure 15. Implications of Policy**
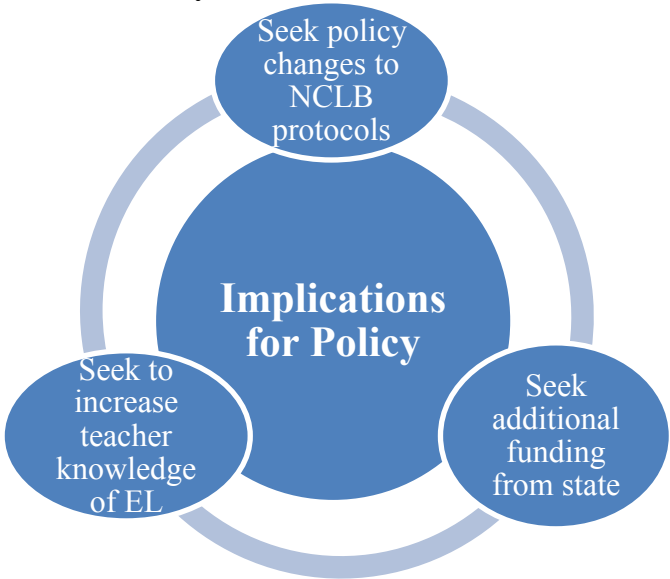
Practice

Johnston (2002) addressed practices at the district level that focused on system reform. He found in his research that many district actions towards professional development and curricular changes were superficial attempts to improve district outcomes for EL students. The research outcomes in Wyoming discussed the same actions were enacted by district leaders. However, data revealed that district leaders were at an impasse as to how to continue to provide more meaningful professional development. Johnston found that district leaders were often unaware of the best ways in working with the growing EL populations, and that district leaders should also work to grow in their own knowledge of EL programs.

There is an implication that leaders could increase their own efficacy by networking throughout the state and nation in order to gain a broader base on which to find professional development opportunities that would better inform teachers and staff on best practices in EL programs and pedagogy. Additionally, quality professional training should include district leadership, so that there is a heightened awareness on the best practices and the changing research on improving outcomes for EL student.

Finally, Johnston (2002) suggested that policy and practice should focus on creating more authentic partnerships that were mutually beneficial. Local education agencies, the state department of education, and colleges and university should together to ensure pre-service teachers and active teachers are provided with essential and effective professional development. Working together, state educational leaders would have more access to the hiring and training of highly qualified staff (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Implications for Practice
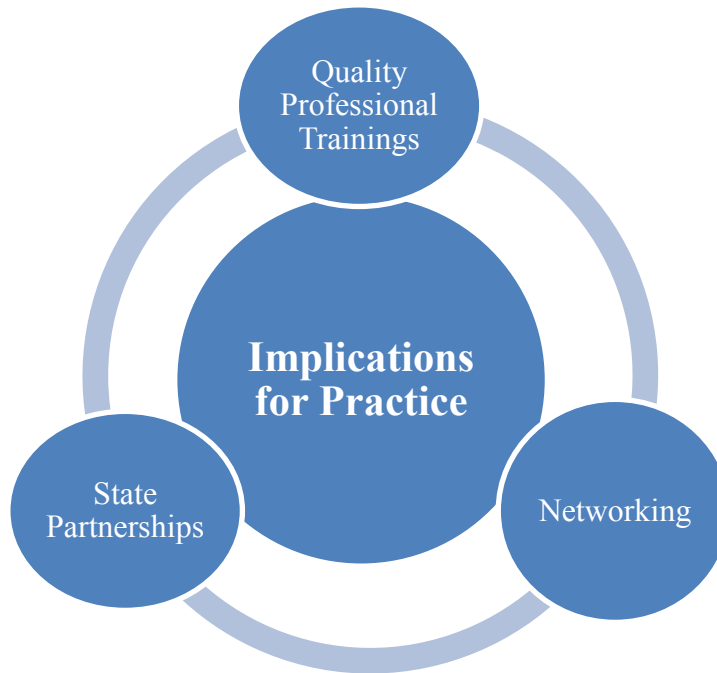
Future Research

The research in this record of study followed constructivist research. It has been stated that data obtained through constructivist research provides knowledge that is interpreted by the researcher but always inconclusive, thus providing for further research (Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2007). The research outcomes on the perceptions of district leaders in Wyoming on the growing population of EL students provide only a snapshot into this subject. Research on educational systems in Wyoming has been limited, as any search in on-line libraries provides very little literature. Most of what is provided comes through the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). This record of study only adds a minimal amount of information as to the growing population of EL

students in a state that has a majority of districts located in isolated, rural settings (See Figure 17 on p. 200).

Corbett (2010) discussed the importance of understanding the anthropology and sociology of place in education. In the rural context, there is a specific order of being that embodies the community. Connections and societal norms vary greatly among different rural communities. The economic and social factors of each rural community impact the contextual understandings and beliefs of its inhabitants. Therefore, educational systems also vary greatly in these small locales. Since Wyoming has the designation of a frontier state, with the majority of districts being rural districts, this record of study provides a minimal look into how districts are addressing growing populations of EL students. However, there are implications found within the study that call for additional research specifically within rural districts. One area that would be beneficial in further research would be to discover how rural districts provide quality staff development for teachers, especially in working with underserved populations of students.

Another area of great importance that is missing from this research addresses the school districts located on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Those districts have the largest percentage of EL students, but the lowest graduation rate of all subgroups. Especially concerning is the fact that specific language is found in the Title III concerning the need to focus on Native Americans in Title III language acquisition and instructional programming. The researcher met with closed doors in trying to elicit

responses from the public school districts and the Bureau of Indian Education School. This area should definitely be accessed in further research.

Cooper (2009) discussed how the qualitative nature of some research leads to changing research questions. The respondents' voices in the research in Wyoming expressed a pride that district leaders felt in their actions with a growing population of EL learners. This research was solely based on the qualitative research looking at the perceptions of district leaders. To increase a more encompassing picture of if the actions by districts in addressing a growing population of EL students, additional research as to the perceptions of teachers, students, and families would provide a more thorough understanding of how well districts are actually impacting student outcomes.

Literature has found that a majority of ELs are also classified in the low-socioeconomic subgroup or a different racial subgroup (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). This research did not take into account any variable beside the EL population. Future research as to how district leaders in Wyoming are working to increase student achievement among different subgroups would lead to further understanding. This could provide especially interesting information since Wyoming continues to be a state with a high population of Whites (Figure 17).

Johnson and Wislar (2012) nonresponse can lead to bias and survey error. The response rate in this study was close to 30%. Implications on the low response rate will in the next section. However, according to suggestions by Johnson and Wislar, follow up research with the non-respondents with the same research could add to the findings and increase the generalizability research outcomes.

Figure 17. Implications for Future Research
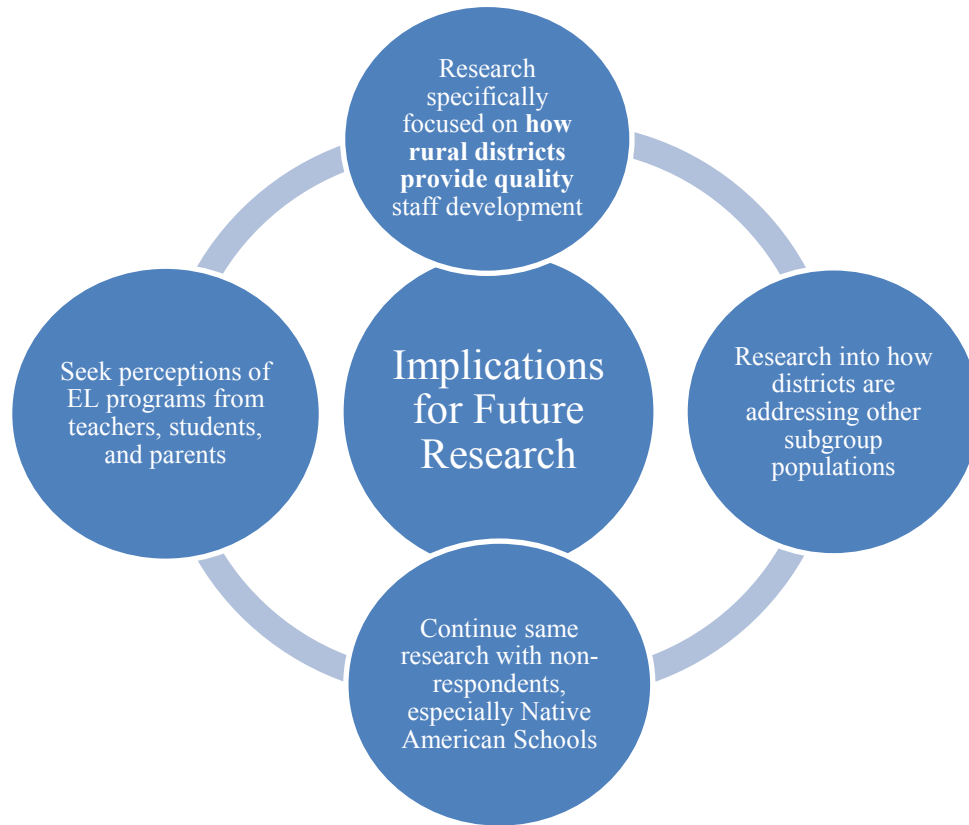
Implications of Research Challenges

As an educator with twenty-five years of experience in working with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, the researcher felt a passion about the need to understand how districts in Wyoming were addressing the needs of a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially those that were classified as English language learners. However, the researcher had not expected to face challenges as to the entry into the systems. It became apparent during the research that the research was considered an outsider. Working in Laramie while doing the study may

have hindered the researcher's entry into many districts. The general overall perception is that Laramie is a liberal educational town that has different student populations than other districts. Besides being from Laramie, the researcher is a recent transplant into Wyoming. The "good 'ole boy" system is still prevalent in the state of Wyoming, where people from across the state are often friends of friends. Networking among the systems is commonplace. The researcher, arriving from a different state and providing the research under the Texas A&M system, may have further impaired the ability to access several respondents.

At the onset of the research, the response rate generated was not up to the researcher's expectations. The research participants were pre-notified. Additional incentives were offered to participate in the research. These two tactics have been found to increase survey participation (Groves & Peytcheva, 2008). The biggest concern for the research was that low response rates can affect accurate generalization through the research (Livingston & Wislar, 2012). After several attempts to attain higher response rates, the researcher proceeded with the research responses that she had, which were approximately 31% of all districts in the state of Wyoming.

The researcher deduced that there could be implications from the low response rate, and felt that it was important to understand how response rates affect research. Groves and Peytcheva (2008) found that overall, survey responses rates have been declining in recent years. In their meta-analysis of response rates, they also found that non-response rates in and of themselves do not accurately indicate that the research has

non-response bias. However, there is a suggestion in the meta-analysis that seeking to understand why there is non-response is important in seeking to find bias and error.

Non-Respondents

Johnson & Wislar (2012) stated that non-response in survey research can lead to bias and survey error. In order to reduce the likelihood of error, it was suggested that researchers should follow up with non-respondents in order to reduce error and propensity for bias in the results. However, Livingston and Wislar (2012) found that non-response bias would generally only exist if the non-respondents' data would be significantly different from the respondents' data. In the study of Wyoming school districts, there was an equitable distribution of districts throughout the state. It would be assumed that typical geographical and demographical districts would have similar understandings. That is only an assumption, and cannot be verified that all non-respondents would perceive the growth in the EL population as the respondents from similar districts. Livingston and Wislar (2012) also discussed how non-response can originate from perceived risk of participation in the study.

Since the non-respondents did not personally know the researcher, there could have been a perception of risk in participating in the study. Groves and Peytcheva (2008) found that the factors that increased participation in research were due to an influence in leverage for participating in research or due to high interest that would benefit and affect the participant. It was reasoned that non-respondents could have felt that the research would not benefit them, or that the research could hinder them. By understanding the isolated nature of Wyoming, it was assumed that the many non-respondents did not trust

that information they shared could possibly have negative impacts on their districts, especially if not all of the ESEA mandates and Title III funding protocols were being legally adhered to. An additional presumption was that the district leadership did not feel a high interest level in EL education, either due to lack of enrollment or lack of moral imperative.

Those presumptions are only some explanations as the low response rate. Literature into non-response rates in survey research by Jepsen, Asch, Hershey, & Ubel (2005) found that the length of survey had a direct correlation to the response rates. Research surveys that were longer, especially over 1000 words, were less likely to receive responses. This could have been another factor contributing to the non-response rate of the research in Wyoming. The research received emails from some respondents regarding the length of the survey and the time it took to participate in the research. In a follow up interview, one of the respondents wished the researcher luck in analyzing the data, stating that it was one of the longest surveys in which he had ever participated.

As the researcher proceeded with the research and the data analysis, there were further questions that arose that the researcher deemed were significant implications to the research. One was that the districts with the largest EL population – those over 10% -- did not participate in the research. The other question was that the two districts that had enacted the most progressive EL programs did not participate. The researcher considered these non-responses as the ones that could actually create the most probability of error or bias in the research. Therefore, the researcher felt it important to share some information

on the non-respondent districts that could skew the ability to form generalizations from this study.

Two of the non-respondent districts are located in the Wind River Indian Reservation. They have the largest EL population state wide, with 22% and 37% of their students categorized as English language learners. The demographics of the school districts are majority minority districts, with American Indian/Alaska Native designation of 95% of their student populations. Both districts are Title I districts. When looking at data from the state assessment, general district achievement was 46% and 47% proficient or above in mathematics at the two districts. In reading, the achievement data showed 41% and 55% proficient or above in reading. With high EL numbers and low achievement data, it was inferred by the researcher that responses from these school districts would have contributed greatly to the study.

Three other districts that could have contributed to the understanding of EL programs in the state of Wyoming are located in Big Horn, Natrona, and Teton counties. In contrast to the other two non-respondent districts with large populations of EL students, these districts have sizeable EL populations but have higher overall achievement. Natrona County Schools have almost 400 students (3%) that qualify as English language learners. Natrona County has one of the highest achievement rates on the ACCESS for ELL test provided by WIDA. There was a 38% proficiency rating for EL students testing in 2011 (WDE, 2013). Natrona County schools also had student success on the state assessment that was close to the state average, with 78% of students

attaining proficiency or higher on math and 76% of students attaining proficiency or higher on reading.

Both Big Horn #3 and Teton #1 have large EL populations of 11% and 19% respectively. Their achievement on state assessment is above state averages. Big Horn #3 has 80% proficiency rates in mathematics and reading. Teton #1 has a proficiency rate of 85% or higher in mathematics and reading. The research from districts with high overall proficiency rates and higher EL populations could have provided valuable information for the study.

The non-response from Teton and Natrona was especially disappointing for the researcher. In addition to having strong achievement rates and larger EL populations, both school districts have recently implemented progressive bilingual programs. Recent literature has concluded that the most effective programs for EL students are the heritage or dual language programs, in which additive language philosophies have students maintaining the native language and adding the new language, which is usually English (Billings, Martin-Beltrán, and Hernández, 2010; Wang & Bachler, 2011). Teton and Natrona counties are the only two districts in the state that have recently begun offering dual language programs. Their participation, though unlike any other district respondents, would provide a keen insight into the perceptions of those district leaders into EL programing and the growing EL populations in their districts.

What I Learned

The researcher's professional experience has been with all culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Her childhood was well infused with cultural

experiences and cultural awareness. Her parents made her and her sibling learn and gain

proficiency in the Spanish language, as it was seen as a necessity to be able to

communicate with the diaspora of Spanish speakers in Texas in the 1980s. She has lived

as a minority in a predominantly Hispanic culture for twenty years. She has considered

herself bicultural and bilingual. During graduate education, colorblindness and

hegemony were often discussed. This was one topic that often confused the researcher,

as she had not lived among the majority and seen the White power in her adult life.

Though she accepted culturally responsive leadership, she had not realized that it is only

achieved by leaders who purposefully focus on it. By working in and researching in the

state of Wyoming, the researcher finally learned what so often eluded her in academia.

District leaders must seek to equalize educational opportunities by countering the social

norms that exists in school systems – social norms that seek to maintain the status quo in

the schools and communities, which are led by White power, or in the case of Wyoming,

the White male.

The researcher also learned that many leaders in education are proponents of

children: children of all abilities and backgrounds. The respondents implied that the EL

students were as important as any other student, and that it was the providing social

justice in ensuring that the students were as successful in school as all students. Often,

district leadership has focused on the managerial aspects of the position of

superintendent. It was realized that district leaders do have a focus on the humanistic

side of education, which contributes to more culturally responsive schools. However, as

Skrla and Scheurich (2001) suggested in their research that often, educational leaders

may not even recognize their own deficit thinking regarding children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Often, voice in the research response mirrored the unrecognized deficit thinking by stratifying community and school dynamics in regards to the EL students.

The last thing that the researcher discovered is that all educators have different experiences that guide their practice. An understanding was revealed that the respondents had little personal experience in working with EL learners. However, as educational leaders, they sought information that helped inform district-wide decisions for reforming district programs and actions in order to address the needs of a growing EL population. They believed their actions, which were all found in literature, would benefit the achievement of EL students. Although no respondent ever referred to cultural responsiveness, it was understood that the district leaders made concerted efforts to ensure that schools were engaged in improving cultural awareness, pedagogical knowledge, and improved student outcomes.

The research gained a deeper understanding of the obstacles that not only students from culturally and linguistically diverse populations face, but also the obstacles that educational leaders face in learning about cultural and linguistic diversity. The districts in Wyoming are in beginning stages of working with a growing population of EL learners. District leaders will face continued challenges to meet the needs of the growing EL population.

Conclusion

The state of Wyoming has experienced significant growth in the population of EL students over the past decade, with a 91% growth over the past five years (WDE). Six percent of the Wyoming school population is classified as English language learners (WDE). Research on the growth of ELs into the nation's schools predicts the trend to continue (National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008). The economic climate of the nation has created challenges for workers to find employment. Wyoming's economy, based on natural resources and agriculture, has provided a stable job market. Often, immigrants take the jobs of unskilled labor. The economic trends result in an influx in the labor force, lending to the increase in cultural and linguistic populations (Van Alphen et.al, 2006).

Smaller communities are impacted with a growing population of diversity of culturally and linguistically diverse workers due to these economic opportunities (National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, 2008). School districts in Wyoming are expected to continue to experience growth of culturally and linguistically diverse student population. The culturally and linguistically diverse student population continues to achieve lower than the White majority, and it is expected that the achievement gap for English language learners will continue to plague the nations' schools (Buckley, 2011; Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Wang & Bachler, 2011). This will create a need for district leaders to persist in providing culturally responsive leadership that will address current issues with the growing population of EL students, as well as seek to increase district efficacy of EL program management.

Currently, research among the district leaders related the challenges districts face as hiring and training of staff that are proficient in working with EL students, communication barriers, funding shortfalls, and a continuous achievement gap. Although an influx in the unskilled labor market of culturally and linguistically diverse workers is expected in Wyoming, there are not growth trends that expect an increase in the professional labor market. It is, therefore, expected that the challenges school districts are experiencing will continue. Similar research results emerged as the district leaders in Wyoming felt that there were necessary actions for school districts to seek additional outside support, seek additional funding, and seek more effective staff training that will impact instructional outcomes for EL students.

Research into district leader perspectives regarding the growth of EL students in Wyoming provided data where district leaders feel their districts are experiencing success. The themes emerged that the districts were seizing positive opportunities to increase staff trainings, to improve achievement, especially in AMAOs, and to reduce cultural tensions in the schools. The actions that districts were actively performing included a focus on hiring more highly qualified, bilingual staff, increasing staff training in working with EL populations, and providing curriculum that was specifically created for working with EL students.

It was ascertained by the researcher that Wyoming is in the beginning stages of working with a changing cultural and linguistic diversity. It was understood by the researcher that many of the respondents had a lack of cultural understanding and the true challenges faced by the EL students, yet they believed that their actions were both

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culturally and linguistically responsive. The voices of the participants had an excitement and pride in the responses as to their actions with EL students. There was much rhetoric that matched what research said on the most basic level.

The researcher had a personal conversation with an EL director in September, 2013. That researcher was visiting the dual language school in Teton County. The discussion ensued about how the EL director wanted to take all she had learned from Teton County to enact a dual language program in the school district that she led. The Teton County #1 dual immersion program has been in place less than five school years. This was interpreted as how Wyoming school districts continue to seek further expertise from within the state instead of going to areas of more significant expertise.

In order for the districts to continue to make strides in student achievement with the EL student population, there will need to be further effort in increasing district achievement. The isolationism and pride that exist in the state of Wyoming, as well as the status quo will need to be challenged. It will take an intense focus on culturally responsive leadership in order for districts to experience great gains in student achievement. This research is a snapshot that can serve as a springboard into further actions and opportunities districts can take to address the growing population of EL students in Wyoming.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

What is the district population of EL students?
____ 0-2%   ____ 3-5%   ____ 6-7%   ____ 8-10%   ____ >10%

Does the district have a person assigned to specifically work with the EL population?
____ yes   _____ no
      If yes, what position works specifically with the EL population (check all that apply)?
           ____ Assistant Superintendent   ____ Director of EL   ____ EL Teacher

What are your total years of experience as a superintendent, including this year?
____ 1-2   ____ 3-5   ____ 6-10   ____11-15   ____ 16+

What are your total years of experience in education?
____ <5   ____ 6-10   ____ 11-15   ____ 16-20   ____ >20

What is your highest degree earned?
____ Bachelors   ____ Masters   ____ Doctorate

Do you speak a language other than English?
____ yes   ____ no
      If so, which language(s)?
_____

What is your ethnicity?
____ White   ____ Black   ____ American Indian/Alaska Native   ____ Asian/Pacific Islander
      ____ Hispanic (any race)

What challenges do Wyoming districts face, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, in addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

- In thinking only of the EL population , in which areas are your district facing significant challenges?
- Describe the EL population's performance towards meeting the academic standards of the district.
- Describe the achievement gap, if any, in the content areas as it pertains to the EL population.
- Describe how the EL student population has assimilated academically and socially.
- Describe to what degree has a growing linguistically diverse population created challenges within the student body
- Describe to what degree has a growing linguistically diverse population created challenges with parents and community
- Describe how financial constraints and federal funding for EL students have challenged the district

What positive opportunities do Wyoming districts have, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, through addressing the needs of the growing number of EL students?

- In thinking only of the EL population, in which areas are the district experiencing the most success?
- How has a growing EL population provided opportunities for teachers to grow professionally
- How has the growing EL population increased research-based instructional practices
- How has the growing EL population improved student cultural and diversity awareness
- How has the district used linguistic diversity towards cultural awareness for teachers and community
- How has a growing population of the EL students affected the community in terms of an enriched economic environment

What are Wyoming districts actually doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

- What policy changes have the board implemented that address the needs of EL students?
- What program changes have been made throughout the district to address the needs of the EL students?

- What curriculum updates have been implemented to address the needs of the EL students?
- What supports have the Wyoming Department of Education provided to facilitate meeting the needs of EL students?
- What professional development opportunities have been implemented to address the needs of EL students?
- Have outside consulting sources have been acquired to guide the district in meeting the needs of EL students, and if so, in what areas?
- What funding sources are being allotted to meet the needs of the EL students?

What should Wyoming districts be doing, in the perspective of the instructional leadership of the districts, to address the needs of the growing number of EL students?

- What board policy could provide support to facilitate meeting the needs of EL students?
- What program changes could address the needs of the EL students?
- What curriculum needs could address the needs of EL students?
- How could the Wyoming Department of Education provide support to facilitate meeting the needs of EL students?
- What new funding sources have been allocated to service the needs of the EL students?
- What professional development opportunities could be provided to address the needs of EL students
- What outside consulting sources could help guide the district in meeting the district needs in working with EL students?
- Thinking of the EL students, what supports or policies would help you in addressing
  the needs of the population?

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

Q1. Can you tell me how staffing highly qualified staff has created challenges for your school

district?

Q1.1.What have you done to address those challenges?

Q2. Can you describe how your district is affected by the EL achievement gap?

Q.2.1. How have you worked on closing it?

Q3. What is your district doing to help meet the communication needs of the EL population?

Q4. How does your district address funding challenges, especially from Title III?

Q5. The most prevalent answer to the survey questions addressed staff development. Can you

share how staff development is being impacted by a growing EL population?

Q5.1.Where do you get most of your EL training?

Q6. Can you share how the district is experiencing improved academic achievement among the

EL Population?

Q7. People shared that cultural tensions have been reduced in both community and school. What

can you add to that in your community?

Q7.1. And in your district?

Q8. I also learned that hiring was a challenge and something districts are working on doing to

address the EL population. Can you share how your district has been handling hiring for

EL populations?

Q9. How have you taken the opportunity of a growing EL population to make curricular

    decisions?

Q10. Seeking supports was another theme that emerged from the data as to what districts
needed

    to do. Can you tell me what support from the local level you feel would help your

    district?

    Q10.1. At the state level?

* Following semi-structured interview style, these were the initial questions that led to
conversations and other impromptu questions and conversations.