A STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES FOR EMERGENT BILINGUAL STUDENTS

IN PLACE ISD

A Record of Study by

DIMITRI DANIEL GARCIA

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Chair of Committee,	Radhika Viruru
Co-Chair,	Mónica Vásquez Neshyba
Committee Members,	Fuhui Tong
	Sharon Matthews
Head of Department,	Claire E. Katz

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) study is to investigate the

issue of Place Independent School District's academic disparity between English learners (EL) and

non-EL students in order to improve the quality of instruction and lessen this academic gap. There

are three driving questions for this record of study, all of which lead to mixed methods, action

research approach to understanding the academic disparity between El and non-EL students in

PISD.

This research included analysis of state data, surveys sent out to every reading language

arts teachers, and teacher interviews. In the end, 10 participants from 5 of the 6 campuses

participated in these semi-constructed interviews. The results of the interviews were transcribed

yielded 500 individual units of analysis. These units of analysis had the four common themes of

EL Student Need, EL Program, Future Program Needs, and Teacher Need. The final product is

direct insight into a consistent narrative, where the biggest factors for ESL student outcomes go

back to teacher accountability in the use of ESL-specific teaching methods, developing

relationships between students and teachers, and changing the mindset of teachers to more

receptive and positive in serving EL students.

The results of this study indicate a need to reevaluate PISD's bilingual program model at

the primary grades and the content-based program model at the secondary grades. Program

models and teacher responsibility need to be clearly defined for everyone. Survey results showed

that teachers who serve in either program alone were unsure of what their campuses' EB services

and programs were. Furthermore, the ISD needs to review, then establish, common teaching

expectations for EB students.

DEDICATION

"Relationships before rigor, grace before grades, patience before programs, love before lessons" -

Dr. Brad Johnson

For Callie

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Contributors

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1.1 The Context

Bilingual education and the academic disparity between our nation's English learners (EL)

and non-EL students have been a key component of educational reformation for those who are EL

and for those who teach EL students. The 1968 passing of the Bilingual Education Act (BEA)

created a pool of financial assistance for districts to create innovative programs to support LEP

students. Educators, politicians, minority interest groups, majority interest groups opposed to

providing language acquisition services, and communities have argued over what constitutes

equitable support for bilingual and EL students (Anderson & Boyer, 1970). Although the BEA was

arguably a step in the right direction by virtue of it creating financial funds to support the creation

of English, dual language acquisition programs, the BEA did not provide a framework for how to

instruct bilingual and EL students, nor did it define what programs would be best at identifying and

serving this population (Escamilla, 2018). Today we are still faced with the one critical failure that

the BEA did not accomplish, which was to build a clear framework for an English language

acquisition program. What is lacking is a successful program that defines best instructional

practices for educators who teach English reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to non-

English and limited English proficient students.

The BEA no longer exists in its original form, and has been replaced entirely with the

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), previously called the "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB),

and though it continues to set aside federal funding tied to Title III, which is to "improve

instruction, provide tutoring and intensified instruction, and conduct community participant

programs," ESSA also fails to define a common framework for a language acquisition program

(U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2014, para. 7). Since ESSA officially came to pass in December of 2015, the biggest change states have seen is the pressure placed on them to decrease the academic gap between EL and non-EL student groups. Despite ESSA coming into fruition, the law continues to lack focus on how to decrease that academic disparity and only provides an increase in federal funding for districts with a disproportionate growth in their migrant and EL population (Breiseth, 2016). Salamone argues that despite the ever-changing policies, the way in which educators are instructed to teach and support ELs has not changed in four decades (as cited by Diaz- Zamora, 2014, p.19). Even though there have been numerous studies, books, webinars, and professional development for bilingual and EL instruction, there still is no federal law requiring mainstreamed teachers to be trained in how to directly support the instructional needs of their bilingual and EL students. In fact, there are only five states that have any comprehensive framework on EL instruction that makes training of their teachers mandatory (De Jong, Naranjo, Li, & Ouzia, 2018). What we find is that modern legislation on our bilingual and ESL programs continues to utilize state testing as the singular data point on EL student success. Ravitch's (2011) work on testing and accountability points out that using a single data source to measure a student's ability will inevitably lead to failure in accurately assessing a student's academic success. Today's legislation continues to fail in identifying an appropriate means of measuring a bilingual and EL student's language acquisition skills, and as we shift into the national context of this problem, we find that despite the obvious growth in increasing EL populations, we still fail to address the needs of EL students in our U.S. educational system. In the absence of legislation not providing a common expectation of quality EL instructional strategies, effective EL professional development for educators, or clearly articulating what is or is not an appropriate method of measurement for quantifying bilingual and EL student language ability, we will find that growing rates of EL and

LEP students is disproportionate to our action taken to address these students' learning needs.

1.1.1 National Context

The USDOE launched their new EL data story early in 2018, providing a narrative of our EL history in the U.S. with insight from every district's 2014-15 data on their ESL programs. Mitchell (2018) reported that from 2006 to 2016 the U.S. saw an increase of 1.2 million bilingual students, and though there was a 22% increase of EL students, public education did not see a change in the quality of education being provided to bilingual and EL students. Similarly, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2018) and the USDOE reported that the number of identified EL students rose from 3.8 million in 2000 to 4.8 million in the fall of 2015, and today one out of every ten students are identified as being served by the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Of those identified ESL students, 77.1% reported speaking Spanish as the primary language at home (NCES, 2018; Sanchez, 2017). It is important to understand that students are identified as EL based on the primary language spoken at home, and the identification process is completed with a home language survey. If the parents or guardians identify that they speak a language other than English as their primary language at home, then their child will be eligible to participate in a language assistance program at school (NCES, n. d.). Based on the aforementioned national data, it is evident that the EL population continues to grow at the national level, but this growth trend has disproportionate rates of growth that are dependent on a number of factors.

The increase in the EL student population is not consistent across all grade levels. There is a greater national EL population at the primary level versus the secondary level as of the fall of 2015, and when looking at national data, EL populations are far greater in urban areas over rural (NCES, n. d.). This statistic is evident when you look at the states with the most EL students, which starts with California at 29%, Texas at 18%, Florida with 5%, and New York with 4%

(Sanchez, 2017). Despite the ever-rising EL population at the national level, there remains an absence of any real solution on how to best serve these students. Although portions of both Title III and Title VII funding are set aside for professional development that focuses on best practices, there is no common standard of expectation of what is considered best practice nationally.

1.1.2 Situational Context

Texas has the second highest EL population in the nation (NCES, n. d.). The last four years of data from the Texas Education Agency's (TEA), *Texas Public School Statistics*, (2015; 2016; 2017; 2018b) shows the following regarding enrollment trends of EL students:

Table 1.0 **EL Population Trend in Texas 2014-2017**

School Year	Bilingual/ESL Total	% Of Total Students	Total Students (in millions)
2013-14	878569	17.1	5.15
2014-15	930737	17.8	5.23
2015-16	968569	18.3	5.28
2015-17	1005219	18.8	5.34

This data from 2015 to 2018 was the initial TEA data that helped to identify state growth trends, that helped initiate the original ROS' inquiries. Looking at these TEA numbers, we find that in 2013 to 2017, the total number of identified bilingual and ESL students has increased by 126,650 students, a 14.4% growth. Simultaneously, Texas's total student enrollment has increased by 190,000 students, which is a 3.7% growth. The growth of identified EL students is disproportionate to that of Texas's growth of total student enrollment. Arguably, the needs of EL

students and how to best serve them academically should be the single-largest issue, aside from funding, that lawmakers and educators should be striving to solve. Why are we not asking ourselves how we can best serve our bilingual and EL student populations?

Despite the lack of direction at the national level, Texas has at least defined four program models to serve bilingual and EL students, which are defined later in chapter I, under "important terms." The problem with these four program models, is that most districts, including Place Independent School District (PISD), struggle to find the resources to implement the best program model, as defined by STAAR and EOC scores of ESL students versus non-EL students. The two reporting categories to take note of are Domain I and III, which measure student achievement across all subject areas in grades 3 through 12 (Domain I), and closing the gaps. Closing the gaps, domain III, measures the disaggregated performance of all student groups, including EL, against that of all other student groups.

1.2 The Problem

1.2.1 Statement of Problem

The district being studied in this Record of Study (ROS) is PISD, which is located in Region 16, in the panhandle of Texas. PISD is one of 64 districts in the region, and PISD has had a historical academic disparity between EL and non-EL students, as identified by state testing in reading and math, since the large influx of EL students in the mid to late '90s. The following table highlights data taken from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and shows region 16's ten districts with the highest EL population by percentage:

Table 2.0 **Percentage of Students Who Are EL's in Region 16 ISDs (2014-15)**

ISD	Number of ELs	Total Number of Students	% Of Students who are EL
Hartley ISD	77	223	34.50%
Place ISD	705	2425	29.10%
Texoma ISD	57	212	26.90%
Dumas ISD	1118	4572	24.50%
Bovina ISD	114	485	23.50%
Wheeler ISD	105	487	21.60%
Friona ISD	245	1150	21.30%
Booker ISD	87	420	20.70%
Spearman ISD	169	878	19.20%
Dimmitt ISD	231	1234	18.70%

Today, the EL population for the ISD sits as the second highest in total EL student population and percentage wise of total EL population compared to all enrolled students in all of Region 16. In the 2016-17 school year, the Amarillo ISD is the largest district in the region and has a total EL population of 33,576 students at the time this data was collected; however, in terms of percentage of EL students to non-EL students, Amarillo ISD only comes up as having the 18th highest percentage of EL students at 13.1%. This fact is centrally important to understand, because the need to rectify this academic gap in PISD is disproportionately more than in any other ISD in all of Region 16, but in order to bridge that deficit, one must first determine the root cause

for this academic disparity.

1.2.2 Relevant History of the Problem

The United States Census Bureau's (CSCB) (2010) population estimates report for Place, Texas, where PISD is located, registered the city to have a population 7,774 people in 2000. Of that 7,774 people, 34.13% where identified as Hispanic. In that same report, the 2010 population increased to 8,802 people, of which 57.9% where Hispanic, and 52.2% spoke a language other than English at home. When compared to the Texas Education Agencies' (TEA) 2003-2004 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, PISD's total student population equated to 1,953 students, of which 50.2% were identified as Hispanic and 20.3 % where being served as LEP students. Fast forward to TEA's Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for PISD in the 2017-18 school year, and the total student enrollment increased to 2,221 students, with 72.3% identified as Hispanic and 28.9% of students are now served in the bilingual/ESL program. As both a city and a district, Place's EL population has grown at disproportionate rates when compared to their non-EL, student counterparts. As a district, the 2019-20 school year marks the first year in over a decade in which district leadership is not only questioning the quality and fidelity in which PISD's bilingual/ESL program is being implemented, but it also marks a first in recent district history where a committee has been formed to create a three-to-five-year plan to help grow our bilingual/ESL program. One of the goals of this study was to help create a plan that directly provides quality of instruction to PISD's teachers through implementation of effective, relevant PD.

1.2.3 Significance of the Problem

Currently, PISD's EL enrollment has remained at and around 31%, and since the start of the 2016-17 school year, our district has seen a small stream of new bilingual enrollments from

Guatemala, who speak an indigenous languages that is mixed Mayan and Spanish, such as K'iche' (Milian & Walker, 2019). TEA requires any district, who has 20 or more identified ELs with the same language background and in the same grade level, to offer a bilingual education program (TEA, 2020). PISD's ultimate goal is to create a dual language immersion program that educates EL students so that they have full language proficiency in both their primary language and in English. The aim is both for them to be both biliterate and on grade level for both languages. In order to offer a bilingual program, however, you must have teachers that are certified both in their content and/or grade level, as well as in bilingual education. The problem is that there are currently only 3 teachers in PISD, across kindergarten through fifth grade for the 2019-20 school year, that meet this criterion. For PISD to begin offering a bilingual program, the district must have certified bilingual teachers in the subsequent grade levels in which the program is being offered, and though the district can pool these three teachers to help begin the bilingual program, the ISD must create a long- term solution in which certified bilingual teachers are either grown internally by the ISD or specifically recruited for the program.

The issue of finding certified, much less experienced, teachers to teach in a bilingual program is not isolated to PISD. Swaby (2017) reports that the increasing number of EL students in Texas is not the main problem. The real problem is that the certification process is so rigorous that many teachers struggle to become bilingually certified. Currently, TEA requires teachers to pass the bilingual target language proficiency test (TExES test 190), the bilingual supplemental exam (TExES test 164), and either the core subjects grades EC-6 (TExES test 291) or core subjects grades 4-8 (TExES test 211). In the absence of being able to provide a bilingual education program due to a lack of bilingually certified teachers, PISD has pushed in recent years for all teachers at the primary grade levels to be ESL certified.

Still, research has proven that a bilingual program, particularly a two-way model in which all students are taught in both English and Spanish, results in biliterate, bicultural students that excel academically (Inclan, 1972; Logan, 1967; Pellerano, 1998). What PISD needs now is a plan of action on how, despite lacking resources, the district begins moving toward recruiting and growing bilingually certified teachers and begins implementing a bilingual program.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions guide this study.

1. What does PISD's state and local data reveal as the primary area(s) that has resulted in STAAR and EOC academic gaps, between EL and non-EL students?

2. What are teachers' perspectives regarding PISD's English as a second language (ESL) program and the quality of professional development offered for ESL instructional strategies?

3. What do teachers see as the most effective means of supporting the academic needs of their EL and LEP students?

The purpose of this Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR) study is to investigate the issue of Place Independent School District's academic disparity between EL and non-EL students in order to improve the quality of instruction and lessen this academic gap. The results of this study will be presented to PISD's board and administration, in order to direct the PISD's ESL three to five-year bilingual/ESL program's plan.

1.4 Personal Context

1.4.1 Researcher's Role and Background

At the start of the ROS, I had spent the last eleven years working in two districts, both of which have high bilingual and EL student populations; however, my initial experience in a former

district was with working in a well-defined bilingual and ESL program. This program had already set a standard in which teachers were not only ESL certified, but the entire district would go through yearly PD on best practices regarding ESL instructional strategies. My experience as an English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) teacher at the secondary level there meant that I was not only directly responsible for our district's academic results for both English I and English II, but I was also the primary teacher for our high school's Newcomer Program. This experience in the classroom has given me insight into better practices and methods for EL instruction.

I previously served as Place ISD's principal for Place Junior High (PJH), and since my arrival in July of 2017, I had identified that our bilingual and ESL program was lacking both administrative support and resources. This assessment of the ESL program not being evaluated yearly and assessed for its effectiveness was highlighted in a meeting in early 2018, at which time the local service center came to conduct a program audit. It was in that meeting that the PISD's new superintendent came on board, with the entire administrative team, and reviewed state data that showed our ESL program was not showing EL student academic growth, that our district's pull-out program was lacking ESL certified teachers, and there was no district-level plan for ESL PD. Furthermore, the number of identified ESL students at the primary level requires that our ISD have a fully-implemented bilingual education program, and yet, until recent leadership changes, this identified need had never been adequately addressed.

It is with direct support of the superintendent and PJH's leadership team that I was both encouraged and empowered to gather the data and ask the questions to help our ISD take corrective action in addressing our bilingual and EL needs. This ROS was conducted as an action research study. The goal was not to simply identify the root cause, but to propose a solution to correct our previous course of action, and my former role as both a campus administrator and an active

member of the community, which had placed me in an opportunity to be able to work with district stakeholders in finding a solution to fix the problem of our EL students' academic disparity.

With regard to our district's current ESL program, I serve on the district-level committee that is tasked with creating short-term and long-term goals. I have also been tasked with working with our district-level ESL coordinator to provide the administrative team and board an annual update on our program's progress, and as a result of our collaborative efforts, the board and the superintendent gave us approval for a third party, El Saber, to come in during the fall of 2018 and perform a program audit. As a result of discussing the intent of this ROS with district and campus leadership, I had a tremendous level of support to conduct this study and provided suggestions for corrective action. I hoped to redirect Place ISD's ESL program, and pushed to refine what quality, on-going PD in ESL instructional strategies looks like for the teachers and initiate a plan to implement PISD's first bilingual program.

1.4.2 Journey to the Problem

My interest in bilingual and EL instruction goes back to my experience as a newly- hired, straight-out-of-college English I teacher in Presidio, Texas, a small town which shares a border with Mexico. Despite growing up in El Paso, Texas, and being fully immersed in a bilingual, bicultural society, I was completely inept at addressing the needs of my newcomer students, who were in their first or second year of their bilingual program, or addressing the instructional needs of my EL students, which constituted more than half of the student population. I falsely assumed that my incoming 9th grade students would all be literate in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English and on grade level. The humor of how naïve I was is not lost on me today, but my complete lack of reality was a direct reflection of what is lacking in post-secondary education programs. It was at the end of my first year, when I felt most disheartened for not knowing how to

best serve this student population, that I committed myself to learning all I could about bilingual and ESL instruction. Thankfully, my fervor was pointed in the right direction by my principal at the time, who began to sign me up for workshops and allowed me to attend a language conference the following year in San Antonio. It is at that conference that I learned about language acquisition strategies, the difference between conversational and academic language, and how imperative it is to use high interest, culturally-relevant material with your students.

After my experience as a teacher and early college campus administrator in Presidio, I was beside myself to leave one border and come to the opposite border (Oklahoma) in the panhandle of Texas, only to find there was no real bilingual or EL program. Aside from meeting the minimal standards of compliance, PD was lacking in quality or non-existent entirely, and there was zero discussion about creating a bilingual education program. It was beyond me to comprehend that in a 70% Hispanic community, where over 50% of Hispanics reported they spoke Spanish as their primary language at home, why then did we not have a dual-language program? Nearly everyone I had the chance to query as to why this was reported back that either it was not possible to start a program here on account of not being able to get bilingually-certified teachers, or, the community was not interested in the program. By community, I mean stakeholders both inside and outside the ISD. I realized that being bilingual here can carry a negative connotation in the eyes of a few. Despite the cautioned advice given from many, I could not help but keep coming back to the question, "What can we do to make this work, for all our kids?"

When I finally had an opportunity to candidly ask our ESL campus coordinators and district administrators why our district's bilingual program was non-existent and why the ESL program was nothing more than a check the box approach, I was told that these programs were simply not being given their appropriate investment of time and resources. Simply stated, no one

cared if we were doing our best to serve bilingual or EL students. The only focus was that we were compliant in the eyes of the state. Thankfully, new district leadership has allowed the question of equitable instructional support for all students to rise to a level that requires district innovation and action. Now there is an expectation that PISD will begin planning a bilingual program, and efforts are currently underway to improve PD for ESL instructional resources, and it is with this renewed encouragement that I am able to conduct this ROS.

1.4.3 Significant Stakeholders

Since the addition of an assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction and the creation of a district-level ESL coordinator, there has been a new vigor in supporting the needed reformation and invigoration of PISD's bilingual/ESL program. PISD now has a committee, comprised of a student, a parent, two central office representatives, one secondary administrator, and six teachers, who meet monthly to evaluate PISD's current program and construct a three to five-year plan. Part of the committee's vision is to identify areas of need, including professional development, ESL instructional resources, and novel ways to garner community support, with the aim of improving our program. The committee has desires to understand what has led to this academic gap between our EL and non-EL students, but more so, seek to find a way to mend this academic deficit for our EL students. The work and insight that comes out of my ROS will come directly back to this district committee, to help give information with respect our current resources, teacher perspective on our ESL program, and provide teacher feedback on the relevancy and applicability of the district's ESL PD. The results of this survey will also be given to campus administration, to help leadership develop a campus specific plan of action to support and direct their ESL program models.

The targeted participants that were surveyed and interviewed are all core, content area

teachers. The survey was distributed to all teachers who are directly involved in the serving ESL and LEP students. PISD's ESL model at the primary level is a content-based program, which means all teachers from kindergarten to fifth grade will be given the survey to participate in the study, but as for the secondary-level, PISD's program model is pull-out based, which means only the English language arts and reading (ELAR) teachers and the ESL teachers are ESL certified and provide the necessary academic supports for our EL students, It is important to note that PISD's intent is to transition to a content-based model within the next two years at the secondary-level, and for the purposes of this study, the survey will be provided to all core-area teachers, with the understanding the response district's program goal is for a content-based model.

The survey used in the ROS is adapted from the 2014 English Language Learner Program Survey for Principals. This survey was developed by REL Northeast and & the Islands Education Development Center, the English Language Learners Alliance, and the Department of Education. The intent of the original survey was to gather information on school-level policies, ESL instructional practices, ESL PD being offered, and the level of understanding a campus principal has regarding state standards for an ESL program. The survey has been modified for a new target audience, teachers, and the focus has been directed to ascertain feedback in the following areas: (1) content expertise, (2) ESL instructional expertise, (c) teacher planning process with regard to EL student need, and (d) the quality and frequency of EL PD.

The stakeholders that are most directly impacted by the quality of ESL instruction and bilingual/ESL program offerings are the EL students and their families; though they are equal partners in the collective goal of improving the ESL program, it is this researcher's ardent belief that in the absence of implementing the required bilingual program, the most immediate changes to be made are at the district and campus level. After all, PISD, as with any district, is not able to

change the academic background and literacy level of its students, prior to attending school within the district. The focus must then be to determine what problems and deficits are occurring in our current ESL program model and take corrective action. By evaluating and addressing the needs of our program, PISD will directly support the academic needs of our EL students, and will begin to remove the deficit that has occurred between our El and non-El students.

1.5 Important Terms

TEA's Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) publishes a yearly framework manual in which all the program models are defined. The bilingual education program has four models: transitional bilingual/early exit, transitional bilingual/late exit, dual language immersion/one-way, and dual language immersion/two-way, and two ESL programs: ESL/content-based program and ESL/pull-out program model (TEA, 2018a). The programs to be focused on here are the dual language and ESL programs. These programs are defined by TEA (2018a) as follows:

- Dual language immersion/one-way is a bilingual/biliteracy program that serves identified English learners with a bilingual or ESL certified teacher, who teaches literacy and academic content in the students' primary language and English, for at least half of the instruction delivered.
- Dual language immersion/two-way is a bilingual/biliteracy program that serves identified English learners in an integrated setting, with students who are proficient in English, and with a bilingual or ESL certified teacher, who teaches literacy and academic content in the students' primary language and English, for at least half of the instruction delivered.
- An ESL/content-based program model is an English acquisition program that

serves identified English learners by a certified ESL teacher in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. The goal of the content- based program is for EL students to become proficient in English through their core classes.

- An ESL/pull-out program model is an English acquisition program that serves identified English learners by a certified ESL teacher in English language arts. EL students will become proficient in English with the assistance of an ESL certified teacher in a pull-out or inclusion delivery model in English language arts.

Texas does have clear program frameworks to help define how bilingual and EL students should be served, but the program is limited to requiring that students are served by a bilingual or ESL certified teacher, and in regard to dual language programs TEA (2018a) outlines whether or not students are mainstreamed, and with respect to the ESL program, TEA (2018a) determines whether students are served by ESL certified teachers in all core content areas or in English Language Arts alone. There is not a definitive instructional model or direction on what is or is not better practice; nor will you find anything that clearly articulates how to best serve students. The program model which an individual campus must implement is defined purely by the number of identified EL students, which is contingent upon those students' families accurately filling out the home language survey and turning it back in to the campus. The process is far from perfect, but to truly grasp the need for a solution to serve EL students, one must understand the history of English language learners, how they went from receiving no services to being served, and what are the "expectations" on how to best serve EL students. Other important terms pertaining to this study include:

- Bilingual – a person who speaks two languages fluently.
- English as a second language (ESL) – a term for students who are not native

English speakers. May refer to a student whose primary language is not English; or alternatively can be used in reference to the program used to educate a student who is not a native English speaker.

- English as a second language program – a special language program in agreement with Texas education code (TEC) chapter 29.

- English Learner – a student who is in the process of acquiring English and has another language as their primary language. The term English Learner and English Language Learner are used interchangeably and are synonymous with limited English proficient (LEP) (TEC, chapter 29, subchapter B).

- Limited English proficient – describes a student who has limitations on their English skills for various reason, including being a non-native English speaker or a student with a learning disability.

1.6 Closing Thoughts on Chapter 1

Having a successful bilingual/ESL program will not only mean PISD is addressing the needs of our EL students and EL community, but it also means the ISD is simultaneously creating a generation of bilingual and bicultural students who are fully literate in both English and Spanish. Over the last two decades, the demographics of the panhandle of Texas, PISD specifically, has drastically shifted toward a much larger population of families whose primary language spoken at home is not English. There is a clear shift in population growth and the primary home language, and yet there is a severe lack of bilingual/ESL program offerings within the ISD's region. Dumas ISD and Amarillo ISD are the only districts in region 16 that have a bilingual/ESL program in their districts. Any other district that is required to have a program, including PISD, submits a waiver

for lack of certified teachers to implement the necessary program models. The main problem of certified teachers as a resource is evident, but in the absence of those bilingual teachers, PISD can still work on improving instructional input and design.

As a teacher, when you observe a student struggling with the lesson or the assignment, the first thing you should do is reflect on your personal instructional practice to identify what potential barriers your student may be facing. You may ask, "Am I differentiating according to my student's academic needs? Am I providing the instructional supports that are necessary for them to succeed? What is the learning style of my student? Am I providing opportunities for them to be successful according to their own learning style?" As a campus administrator, a district administrator, or a district-level committee, the same mindset must likewise be taken, but instead of focusing on the student, the new target audience is the teacher. Afterall, a teacher also has learning needs, and the question must revolve around what we are doing to teach our teachers. How are we best serving them and their own professional needs in order for our teachers to best serve our students?

It is with this mindset that I as a researcher and educator approach the topic of ESL instruction. I am personally invested in the teachers and staff in PISD, and if our aim is to help educate and support our kids, we must begin with educating and supporting our teachers to be effective, quality educators. By using the survey, I will ascertain teacher perspective on what our teachers are or are not learning and how we as a district are supporting, or not supporting, their educational needs as instructors of EL students, and in my follow-up, semi- constructed interviews, I will be able to listen and further explore teacher perspective on what they believe is the catalyst that has led to our EL academic gap, and listen to teachers' views on what PISD should do to address our EL students' needs. This study and its findings are specific to PISD, are not intended for publication, and are not applicable to be generalized into other research and content areas. I

seek to improve PISD's ESL programs, and with the findings, provide suggestions for the district

bilingual/ESL committee to consider when developing their three to five-year program plan.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP

2.1 Introduction

When one stops to consider people who have greatly shaped education, a few names such as Socrates, Plato, John Locke, John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget, to a name a few, may come to mind, but when looking for seminal moments, authors, or essays that pertain to a particular field, the research and cross-referencing of published works' reference page proved to be quite an undertaking. Some fields of education clearly have those who definitively influenced their fields. When it comes to the topic of bilingual education and English learners, there were two pivotal moments in the twentieth century that shaped our modern programs. The first was the bilingual education program that was implemented in Coral Way Elementary, while the second was the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968. The BEA was directly influenced by the incredible work that was happening at Coral Way, and in turn, helped to shape modern law and educational services that are provided to our bilingual and English learners (ELs). Similarly, the works of both Jim Cummins and James Crawford laid a foundation for language proficiencies and cognitive language constructs that also shaped how we instruct and construct our bilingual and EL education programs. What follows is a direct insight into both these seminal moments and seminal authors' works and how they shaped bilingual and EL education.

2.2 Relevant Historical Background

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 sent an influx of refugees and immigrants into Florida, and because of the program Operation Pedro Pan, Florida's schools in Miami alone would contain more than 14,000 Spanish-speaking students (Everett-Hayes, 2008). The first school to rise to the occasion in an effort to meet the needs of these students through a bilingual and bicultural method

was Coral Way Elementary school, located in Dade County, Florida (Pellerano, Fradd, & Rovira, 1998). Coral Way, in conjunction with the Ford Foundation Project, was tasked in the spring of 1963 to begin work on creating a curriculum that would address the needs of their new ELs (Logan, 1967). What follows is insight into the curriculum and methods implemented by our country's "oldest 20th century public bilingual school" (Pellerano et al., 1998).

Prior to Coral Way, there existed both a narrow definition of what constituted literacy as well as a homogenous approach to teaching reading development, both of which completely ignored an EL student's second language and culture (de Jong, 2011). What U.S. public schools had at the time was still primarily known as the sink-or-swim model, in which EL students were thrust into mainstream classes with the expectation to learn through immersion (de Jong, 2011). There was a false notion that because schools were integrated, the needs of all the diverse learners were being met, but it was not until Dade County schools had their non-English-speaking students double from 4,327 to 8,708 students in a single school year, and double again the following school year to 18,260 students, that the U.S. had a school whose first priority was developing an "English-as-a-Second Language" program (Inclan, 1972, p. 192). The process of developing this program first began with a novel approach of creating a planning and steering committee that was comprised of educators who had direct experience in EL and bilingual education programs in Spanish-speaking countries such as Puerto Rico and Guatemala (Logan, 1967). This committee, which already had tremendous success with its bilingual programs in Latin America, understood that four things must be developed if Coral Way was to have any success, and they are as follows: (1) instruction from a native teacher in the student's primary language; (2) instruction from a non-native, English-speaking teacher in the student's secondary language; (3) development of second-language-acquisition teaching materials; and (4) professional development (PD)

for their teachers. So, what did Coral Way's program look like in practice?

To begin with, teachers were required to attend a six-week workshop, prior to the start of the school year, that guided them through this new teaching modality. This PD pointedly addressed linguistics and language structure in the morning, while the afternoon focused on curriculum and alignment (Logan, 1967). Next, Coral Way hired two Cuban refugee teachers at each grade level to provide primary instruction in Spanish alongside their other colleagues, who would provide instruction in English (Logan, 1967). Then, the master schedule allowed for teachers to have a common period during the day to plan and collaborate (Logan, 1967). At this time teachers would identify pertinent vocabulary from textbooks, plan lessons, and adjust teaching to address student need. It is important to point out that although this program was novel, Coral Way teachers and administrators recognized that what they were developing had to fall in line with Florida state law regarding education standards (Logan, 1967). Coral Way's program was developed in accordance with Florida state expectations, but much of their program's design was incredibly ambitious for its time.

When the program began, it was initially offered in first, second, and third grades; however, each subsequent year of the program after the initial year, Coral Way added another grade level up through sixth grade (Logan, 1967). All subjects were taught in a self- contained class, across four bilingual classes per grade level; however, there was a single class at each grade that was a traditional, non-bilingual class, allowing parents to opt out of the program (Logan, 1967), but parents of both students who were learning English and those who were now learning Spanish, reported that they were all happy to see their children were becoming biliterate and bicultural (Pellerano et al., 1998). Coral Way's program of developing both English and Spanish in tandem with each other allowed bilingual students' primary language not to deteriorate, and

equally important, it allowed the children to maintain their culture with grace and not force them to adapt, thereby abandoning their identities (Inclan, 1972).

Maintaining a bilingual and EL student's culture was and still is a national issue today. Bess de Farber, who was a first-grader when Coral Way's program began, explained that her mother was from Argentina, and since her mother died when she was a young girl, de Farber reflects that, "I could have lost my heritage easily… it was through reading, writing and speaking [in both languages] – that I was able to rediscover those relatives" (Everett- Haynes, 2008, para. 15). Maintaining and embracing a child's identity is truly a good thing, but as Gutierrez pointed out, students were still expected "to master the same skills at the same time," which is "reinforced by the administration of specific assessments" (as cited in de Jong, 2011, para. 14). The 1970-71 evaluation of Dade County school's bilingual program showed that students, in the areas of math and reading, scored on par with their non- bilingual counterparts (Inclan, 1972). The only problem with this initial assessment is that the state was looking only for deficiencies; therefore, the report does not provide insight into whether or not Coral Way or other bilingual schools in Dade County performed better than other, non-bilingual schools (Inclan, 1972).

Coral Way laid the foundation for the country, showing that bilingual programs can be successful in teaching language acquisition while maintaining state standards in regard to standardized assessments (Logan, 1967), and by developing students' proficiency in both English and Spanish, the program was creating highly-desirable biliterate employees for a future workforce (Pellerano et al., 1998). There are two significant points to note regarding the success of Coral Way's program: 1) Coral Way teachers reported that having a daily period for common planning, reviewing relative data, and receiving relevant PD was hugely instrumental in helping them instruct and support their students (Logan, 1967), 2) the program was not purely focused on

biliteracy. The inclusion of support for a student's culture from the perspective of parents (Pellerano et al., 1998), students (Everett-Haynes, 2008), and staff (Inclan, 1972), made all the difference. When considering an ISD's inclusion of a bilingual and/or ESL program, it is evident that Coral Way's success hinged on providing teachers with both quality professional developments, relevant to ESL instructional strategies, and providing time to those teachers to collaborate, plan, and implement said strategies. Equally important to the success of the English language program was emphasizing the importance of the ESL student's home culture. The goal was not to replace but rather, to supplement, thereby positively augmenting the student's academic and cultural scope.

Coral Way's success did many things, including garner national attention (Incaln, 1972; Pellerano et al., 1998), but it also laid the foundation for ratification of new federal changes in education, such as the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed this law on January 2, 1968 and explained the purpose of the bill, which was to provide districts with the financial resources to establish bilingual education programs for all students whose first language is not English (Anderson & Boyer, 1970; Navarrete, 2018; Kim, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2015). President Johnson's goal was to see each child reach his individual potential, "regardless of his race or his religion or his father's income" (Anderson & Boyer, 1970, p. 1). To those who were fighting for civil rights, the BEA was a program that was long overdue, but it fell short in reaching its full potential (Sinclair, 2018). Still, when it comes to educational reform, the BEA was a giant step in the right direction. We will review why the BEA was a seminal moment for bilingual education, as well as in what ways it was both successful and unsuccessful in meeting its goals.

Prior to the BEA, the programs that were expected to teach students English were focused

primarily on "Americanization," teaching children language through the sink-or- swim method and instilling students with American values (Navarrete, 2018). The original intent of the BEA was to promote bilingual immersion, whereby students of both native and non-native English and Spanish learned both languages together in tandem like Coral Way Elementary (Kim et al., 2015), but what was actually passed deemphasized the use of the students' primary language and removed bicultural relevance entirely from the curriculum expectations (Escamilla, 2018). This was a direct result of the politics at the time, which were no longer concerned with passing the BEA as a "reparation for Spanish-dominant communities," but rather, to provide a bill that was broad, addressing multiple languages, with the simple aim of appealing to both sides of the political aisle (Sinclair, 2018). A major drawback from generalizing the BEA as a catch-all for all language instruction is that Senator Ralph Yarborough, who effortlessly worked for two years to see the BEA come to fruition, understood that at the time of the bill's passing, over 70% of bilingual students spoke Spanish, and there is a "significant difference between Spanish-speaking and other non- English-speaking" students and how English instruction for them should be approached (Sinclair, 2018, p.714). As a result, the BEA's language changed, identifying students as "limited English proficient" (LEP), to include any child who needed help in reading and writing. Even if the student's primary language was English, this new LEP label would allow them to receive services under the BEA (Escamilla, 2018, p.375). Perhaps the biggest criticism of the BEA is that the bill had no program goal, nor did it specify whether the aim was to promote both bilingual and biculturalism or if it was merely a language transition program (Escamilla, 2018), but despite the BEA's multiple shortcomings, it did accomplish a great deal for bilingual students and funded the start of numerous bilingual programs.

The BEA, when it was passed in 1968, included $15 million for bilingual programs

nationwide, and included language that encouraged "innovative thinking," "experimental" and "imaginative" primary and secondary programs (Sinclair, 2018, p.715). When the funding did become available in BEA's second year, it was "appropriated for 76 projects serving 27,000 children (Escamilla, 2018). After *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), in which it was determined that schools must provide bilingual and LEP students with a "meaningful education," the BEA was revised and reauthorized in 1974 (Sinclair, 2018, p.718). This allowed the BEA to allocate an additional $45 million for school language programs, directly funding 211 schools that served students with 26 different primary languages, and although this was only 6% of the country's identified LEP students, bilingual education programs were finally being developed to include teacher preparation and certification for bilingual instruction (Escamilla, 2018).

The BEA was in no way perfect in clearly identifying a goal for bilingual, bicultural education, and with the inclusion of language proficiency assessments to measure LEP students' English proficiency, programs were redirected toward short-term language goals (Escamilla, 2018). Kim et al. (2015) argues that the success of our early bilingual programs in the U.S. were a result of two way-immersion (TWI) programs which equally supported a student's primary and secondary language in a 90:10 or 50:50 model. Today, we understand that, in the absence of TWI programs, an EL program will take four to seven years for a child to learn language at grade level (Thomas & Collier, 1997, as cited by Kim et al., 2015, p.238). We must keep in mind that when BEA was passed, bilingual/EL instruction was a new concept; therefore, research on the topic was virtually non-existent. Bilingual and EL students were all but neglected until progressive researchers, like Jim Cummins and James Crawford, put their efforts to the whetstone and began to refine and sharpen language instructional strategies. What follows is a bit of insight into the contributions of these two pioneers in the field of bilingual education, but the focus must remain

within context of the ROS. The ultimate goal was to gain understanding and insight into what is considered to be the most effective method of instruction for ESL and LEP students. Recall, the problem is not solely teaching English language acquisition to our ESL and LEP students, but providing tandem instruction that addresses language skills while maintaining and enhancing an ESL students' academic ability, as measured by standardized testing.

2.3 Review of Relevant Methods

Cummins (1979) was the first bilingual/ EL researcher to present the concept of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Cummins's work (2000) recognized that language fluency assessments were both biased and discriminatory, due to the fact that they were not created to distinguish between an EL student's differing ability in BICS versus CALP. Although Cummins's (2016) initial proposal of distinctions between BICS and CALP may have been dismissed by legislatures, today there has been extensive research, including psychological assessments of immigrant children, longitudinal studies of ELs, and analytical data presented that clearly shows the differences between a student's BICS and CALP; furthermore, Cummins (1979, 1983, 2000, 2016) used relevant research, such as Tucker's linguistic perspectives and the results of the French-Canadian language immersion program, to argue that an EL student's language development in their primary language (L1) directly corresponded to their success in developing their secondary language (L2). What follows is a look into Cummins's (1979) article on the interdependence of linguistics in bilingual students, supported by decades of Cummins's continued research and work on the topic of bilingual and EL students' language development.

When the BEA was passed, there was no framework that came with it to direct districts as to what an innovative or experimental bilingual program was supposed to accomplish, much less

what it should look like. Cummins (1979) understood that in the absence of a "coherent framework" that differentiated BICS and CALP and sought to include a student's cultural background and values, schools would suffer in creating a program that had positive academic outcomes for bilingual students (p. 225). So, then, what programs were readily available to distinguish what was or was not a successful bilingual program?

Cummins (1979, 1983) turned to the French immersion programs of Canada, and found that bilingual students were having great success in L2 when the programs purposefully sought to develop both their L1 and L2 in tandem with each other. Cummins (1983) later identified that another variable with the Canadian program's success was that Canada's programs were staffed by bilingual teachers who continued to promote biculturalism and biliteracy, emphasizing the importance of a student's primary language. Tucker similarly argued that L2 success was directly tied to a program embracing and reinforcing a student's cultural values and traditions while simultaneously developing their L1 skills (as cited by Cummins, 1979, p. 224). What became overwhelmingly apparent was that a student's success in L2 was directly linked to their academic strength and development of their L1 (Cummins, 1979, 1983, 2000, 2016).

The realization that the success of bilingual students' language development was an instructional task of interdependence and degree of transfer between L1 and L2 was what directed Cummins to develop BICS and CALP. It is now understood that a student's conversational fluency, or BICS, can be acquired within two years; however, it takes five to seven years for a bilingual student's CALP to catch up to that of a native speaker (Cummins, 2000). After BEA's passing, educators sought to develop students' L2 through immersion, and in this they unknowingly created subtractive programs in which bilingual students not only suffered in learning English, their L2, but regressed in their academic abilities in their primary language, L1 (Cummins,

1979). Cummins (1979) created a "developmental interdependence hypothesis," in which he

further argued that if a bilingual child has learned partial competence in their native language, or

L1, they will have tremendous success with that same concept in English (p.233). Evidence of this

hypothesis came in the form of San Diego's bilingual education program, in which their

longitudinal data showed that students who were instructed 60% of the time in Spanish, L1, and

40% of the time in English, L2, lagged somewhat behind norms in elementary school; however, by

6th grade, those students outperformed their unilingual counterparts (Cummins, 1983). Further

evidence to support Cummins's (1979) hypothesis came from a Swedish study on Finnish

immigrant children and additional U.S. studies on Mexican immigrant children, all of which reach

the same conclusion, that developing a child's L1 had significant, positive correlations in learning

a second language. What is clearly evident is that Cummins's (1979, 1983) proposed development

of both bilingual students' L1 and L2 did not subtract from their academic ability in either

language; rather, it allowed for the students to grow more naturally in their ability to use both

languages beyond BICS.

   Cummins's (1979) introduction of the two different types of language, BICS and CALP,

along with his argument that a bilingual student's language development is interdependent on

continuing to develop his primary language (Cummins, 2016), proved the success of bilingual,

bicultural programs' ability to effectively teach bilingual students English, but his argument for

biliterate, bicultural students has become adulterated by politics. James Crawford's work from the

early '90s until today presents a narrative in which partisan ideals have left bilingual students in

their wake, holding districts accountable through assessments, and neglecting the developmental

science behind students' cognitive development. Let us take a look into why Crawford's voice was

groundbreaking in the history of bilingual education, and why his voice is still relevant to bilingual

education today.

Crawford has been a constant political voice advocating for bilingual education for the past three decades. In Wiley's (1994) review of Crawford's book, *Hold your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of "English Only,"* she sheds light on Crawford's historical analysis of the American nativist movement that was equated to patriotism after WWI; however, prior to the turn of the 20th century, linguistic diversity in the U.S. was not the norm, but was a direct result of European immigration, Latin American immigration and the "multitude of indigenous tongues," as well as a product left over from slavery (p. 306). Furthermore, Crawford presented the question that if "English only" was a reaction to immigration and cause for nationalism, then why were English-only policies so selective in choosing their targets (as cited in Wiley, 1994, p. 307)? Crawford presents this English-only movement more a result of "Hispanophobia" than a call for educational reform (as cited by Wiley, 1994, p. 308). So, then what, according to Crawford, was the appropriate solution to equitable language programs for our bilingual and EL students?

Crawford (1998) referred to the works of Ramirez (1991), Willig (1985), and Greene (1998) to offer conclusive evidence that "well-designed bilingual programs can produce high levels of school achievement over the long term, at no cost to English acquisition" (p.51). Like Cummins (1979) and the results discussed with Coral Way's biliterate, bicultural model, Crawford's (1998) research arrived at the conclusion that "developing fluent bilingualism and cultivating academic excellence are complementary, rather than contradictory, goals" (p. 51). The problem has been that modern legislation, such as the formerly-known No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), are assessment-driven, focusing on accountability and annual yearly progress (AYP) that is determined by English tests that are written for native English speakers (Crawford, 2007). The system of accountability is structured in a way that law encourages districts to push students

toward English language acquisition as fast as possible (Crawford, 2007), and as a result, the understood success of biliterate and bicultural programs is delegitimized (Crawford, 1998) because those bilingual programs, despite being successful, take too long for students' academic success to be reflected in a district's AYP. Legislation like NCLB did not take into account how bilingual and EL students learn; instead, NCLB focused on benchmarks, quantifiable student achievement evidenced by state assessments, and district accountability, completely ignoring the time that must be invested in order for bilingual and EL students to become successful in academic English, or CALP (Crawford, 2004). So, if we understand what types of programs have been successful with bilingual and EL students, and we know the disparity that legislation creates in being able to adequately address the instructional needs of those students, what did Crawford propose we do?

Crawford (2007) had two proposals: (1) demand dual-language, two-way bilingual programs, and, (2) have parents and educators rally against biased, high-stakes testing. For Crawford's (2007) first suggestion, he understood that the parents and community of bilingual and EL students cannot be the only ones advocating for bilingual programs. Parents of native English-speaking students, who understand the merits of educating their children to be biliterate, need to join the cause for bilingual, two-way programs (Crawford, 2007), such as that implemented in Coral Way Elementary. Together, and only through a common vision, will we see bilingual programs finally coming to fruition. Next, the focus must not be on assessment reformation because we inherently understand that the accountability system is misguided and biased toward non-native English-speaking students (Crawford, 2007). The push then must be for non-native English-speaking students to be held accountable on the content they are expected to learn, not the language, and so, they should be allowed to test in the language that would best highlight their academic, not linguistic, aptitude (Crawford, 2007). Ultimately, what must be understood is that

the modern system of accountability does not place emphasis on bilingual programs that work or assessments that are fair and measure a student's academic ability. Instead, Crawford (1998, 2004, 2007) pointed out how the era of accountability is about quick, short-term results that do not truly allow for bilingual and EL students to learn academic CALP English.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks and Studies

When you look back over the four presented seminal moments and concepts presented by Cummins and Crawford, one can see a direct correlation and a timeline of how each moment led to the next. Beginning with Coral Way Elementary, there was no real program in the U.S. to point to that showcased the success of a two-way, bilingual education program that presented quantifiable data showing both native and non-native English- speaking students could and did excel in a bilingual, bicultural setting (Inclan, 1972; Logan, 1967; Pellerano, 1998). The success of Coral Way's program directly helped set the stage for President Johnson and Senator Yarborough to push through a federally-funded program to help support bilingual students, and what resulted was the creation of the BEA (Sinclair, 2018). The BEA was instrumental in bringing to light a national debate on what instruction and programs work best for bilingual, and later, LEP, students, and although the BEA did not provide an actual framework from which districts could operate (Escamilla, 2018), the work of Cummins (1979), and later Crawford (1998), gave educators conclusive data of what does work, which are bilingual, two-way programs, but Crawford (2004, 2007) also showed how modern legislation pushes for immediate results and does not allow for the implementation of long-term, effective academic language-acquisition programs.

2.5 Closing Thoughts on Chapter II

When given the insight of these two influential moments and pioneering works of Cummins and Crawford, it is clear that Place Independent School District's (PISD) English as a

Second Language (ESL) program is struggling to address the long-term academic language needs of its bilingual and EL students. In the absence of a bilingual program, PISD's pull-out ESL model allows for bilingual students at the primary level to get language supports for a portion of the day; however, the supports given are usually structured for BICS, or social language, and do not address enough CALP, or academic language. As a result, EL students become long-term ELs around fifth and sixth grade, and though their BICS is on par, and often not distinguishable from native English speakers, these EL students lag grade levels behind their peers when it comes to CALP. The intent of my record of study (ROS) is to do the following:

1) Analyze quantitative state assessment results, identifying specific academic gaps between EL and non-EL students in STAAR and EOC scores (Domain I);

2) Administer a closed-question survey to gather insight into K-12 teachers' understanding of the demographics of the students PISD serves, understanding of our district's ESL program, understanding of professional development offered by PISD, and understanding of better ESL instructional practices

3) Conduct open-ended, semi-structured interviews with English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) teachers to garner insight into ELAR teachers' perception of what have been the most effective tools, resources, and/or professional development to help address the specific learning needs of our EL students.

The ultimate aim of this ROS is to clearly identify the root cause of our bilingual and EL students' academic disparity between their native-English-speaking counterparts, understand teachers' perception when it comes to the problem of our bilingual and EL students' academic gap, and propose a solution to take corrective action in our district's bilingual/ESL program. The final culminating product will be a detailed presentation to PISD's board and campus administrators, in

which the results of the survey and interviews will be shared in tandem with professional

suggestion for the direction of the ISD's ESL and bilingual programs.

CHAPTER III: SOLUTION AND METHOD

3.1 The Problem Revisited

PISD needed an ESL and bilingual program evaluation, and this had been an ongoing

discussion among leadership and central office since the start of the 2017-18 school year. In the

middle of the 17-18 school year, PISD was searching for a new superintendent, and in the absence

of a superintendent, our interim superintendent empowered campus administration by delegating

district duties to the administrative team. In a meeting with all of PISD's administration and a

representative from the local service center, the collective team began reviewing all of PISD's

special programs. It was at this meeting, which took place in late November of 2017, that we all

determined an audit must be conducted of our ESL and bilingual program. I was tasked with

finding an auditor whose expertise centered on EL students and ESL/bilingual programs. My

search culminated in hiring the services of El Saber Enterprises, Incorporated.

PISD requested an evaluation of the ISD's program for its EL students. In order to do this,

El Saber conducted interviews with the primary and secondary administrators. El Saber's

assessment review also analyzed the performance on the Texas English Language Proficiency

Assessment System (TELPAS) and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

(STAAR) assessments, as well as reviewed Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System

(PBMAS) and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR). The TELPAS review included a

review of the attainment rate, the percentage of students at each proficiency level, and the number

of years students have been enrolled in a U.S. school system. The STAAR review included a

review of the performance of ELs as compared to the general population of the district. The

program structure and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) codes used by

the district were also reviewed in this evaluation. Overall, the intent of this audit was to determine the district's implementation of a program model and how it impacted student performance; however, the audit did not attempt to assess or evaluate instruction practices and professional development offerings to teachers, and neither did it account for teacher input or feedback on ESL instructional practices.

El Saber's audit concluded that EL students plateau when they reach the advanced level of linguistic proficiency. The TELPAS test measures a student's ability to accurately read, write, listen, and speak in English, and a student's aptitude with English is labeled beginner, intermediate, advance, or advanced high. Once a student reaches advanced high and passes the state exams, they are then exited from the ESL program and monitored over the next two years, in order to ensure there is no backwards slide in linguistic skill with English. PISD's long-term EL students are not progressing beyond "Advanced", and this plateau of capability with English on TELPAS has a direct, negative correlation with their low performance in STAAR results in grades 3 through 8, in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, as well as in English language arts for EL students in high school. The recommendation from EL Saber was that PISD adopt a cohesive program model intent on serving all students PK-12. Precisely, El Saber's auditor, Mr. Smith, formally reported to the PISD board on the 23rd of April, 2019, that we needed to employ an EL director, create a committee comprised of stakeholders to provide directing and feedback on our ESL program, get teachers ESL certified, get teachers quality ESL instructional resources, and provide ongoing professional development for ESL instructional strategies. At the culmination of this presentation, PISD did create an ESL director position as well as an ESL/Bilingual program committee; however, the director position does not have a job description or autonomy to create program changes or ensure implementation of ESL/Bilingual program expectations. The

committee on the other hand, has met twice in the fall of 2019, and had recommended for PISD to begin a bilingual program, to be implemented in PK-1 in the fall of 2020. No additional instructional resources or ESL professional development offerings have been offered to teachers or staff. Though the ISD has encouraged teachers to obtain their ESL certification, the ESL certification is not a district mandate or expectation, resulting in few teachers challenging the ESL exam. What follows in chapter III is the outline of the proposed solution, justification of the proposed solution, study context and participants, proposed research paradigm, data collection methods, justification of the use of instruments, data analysis strategy, timeline, reliability/validity concerns, and ends with closing thoughts on chapter III.

3.2 Outline of Proposed Solution

This study used three driving questions to help fill the gaps in PISD's current program model. As PISD's ESL/bilingual program continues to evolve, it was pertinent that the ISD clearly identifies and understand where the academic gaps between our EL and non-EL students, are, and what is needed to bridge those academic deficiencies. Next, teacher perspective was necessary to gain insight into what was or was not being provided to our teachers to implement the district's program model both successfully and with fidelity. Initial teacher perspective was gathered through a closed question response survey focusing on ISD teachers' (1) knowledge of PISD's ESL and bilingual program, (2) ESL instructional expertise, (3) quantity of ESL PD offerings by the district, and (4) the quality of ESL PD offered by the district. Lastly, the data findings showed specific academic needs of EL and non-EL students. The results of the survey shed light on teachers' aggregate perception of the ISD's ESL program, but to fully understand the narrative which led to the ISD's academic disparity between EL and non-EL students, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers across all six campuses in the district. The culmination of

analyzing district data, collecting survey responses, and conducting interviews yielded a solution for addressing the aforementioned academic disparity between EL and non-EL students.

3.3 Justification of Proposed Solution

In the fall of 2017, PISD's district leadership recognized that the Hispanic population, which was once ¼ of the district's population, had become the majority at ¾ of the total student body. Likewise, the EL student enrollment, which did not constitute more than 10% of the overall student enrollment, now made up 1/3 of the entire student body. Despite the sharp change in demographics and the specific need for language development for the rising EL population, the ISD had not changed their instructional mindset. Though the student body continued to evolve and change shape, the teacher instructional perspective remained the same. It was in this meeting in November of 2017 where the collective leadership across the ISD came together and determined that something must be done, but a glaring problem kept leadership from gaining any initial traction. The district's program had never been evaluated. This was where I was tasked to find an outside auditor to come in and conduct a program evaluation, in order to begin a dialogue with ISD leadership on what needed to be addressed.

Initial findings showed that primary grade levels have ESL certified teachers that serve the academic needs of ESL students. At the secondary level, the English language arts and reading (ELAR) teachers are required to be ESL certified, and they serve the ESL students; however, the requirements of teachers serving ESL students to be ESL certified are not strictly enforced by the ISD at any level. Furthermore, ESL instructional resources are purchased and acquired on a teacher-by-teacher basis instead of systematic plan of material acquisition. There are no defined instructional practices or resources for the ISD's ESL programs. This results in no continuity of instruction, as a teacher at any grade level may request any resource to address the instructional

need(s) of their students. With no defined expectation in curriculum or instruction, there is

likewise no defined professional development plan or requirements for teachers serving ESL

students. Without an ISD defined expectation of ESL instruction, supported by systemic, ongoing

PD and corresponding instructional resources, teachers either struggle in their attempt to support

EL students' academic needs or do not differentiate the specific learning needs of an EL student

versus a non-EL student. This ROS will attempt to understand in greater depth the issues that have

culminated in a conclusive, academic disparity between EL and non-EL students as evident in

Domains I and III of the STAAR and EOC. The study will also culminate with recommendations

to the school board and district leadership, with the aim of addressing these deficits.

Lastly, the results of this study will be used as a quality improvement project, meant to direct

the PISD's ESL program for teacher refinement in ESL instruction. The results of this study will

not be generalized or published in anyway.

3.4 Study Context and Participants

PISD uses the IPT Oral Proficiency test for identification of ELs. As required by law, all

new students who enroll in grades 2-12 are also assessed with a standardized achievement test.

The ISD administers the Terra-Nova Standardized Achievement Test for the reading and language

components as part of the identification process to identify students in grades 2-12. Student

placement is determined on the campus by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee

(LPAC). The LPAC meets and determines program eligibility and at that time, the parent

permission letter is sent home to be signed. When the parent permission form is returned, the

student is placed in the campus's ESL program. ESL students are mainstreamed and placed in

general education classes, and at the secondary level, ESL students have a dedicated teacher to

support newcomers. Each campus has an ESL coordinator, who is LPAC trained, and monitors the

progress of the students and of the campus's program.

PISD has both pull-out and content-based ESL programs from PK-12. The primary campuses and alternative campus all offer a content-based program, but the junior high and high school offer a pull-out program as a result of not having enough ELAR teachers who are ESL certified. Currently, the ISD does not offer a bilingual program; however, the plan for the coming 2020-21 school year is to begin a PK-1 bilingual program. The program will not be offered to all students, and placement will be determined by the LPAC. Prior to the coming 2020-21 school year, PISD has submitted an annual bilingual exception to TEA. TEA's expectation for all ISD's in Texas is if an ISD has 20 or more students in a single grade level, who are non-native English speakers, the district is required to offer a bilingual program; however, as of the 2019-20 school year, there are only 4 teachers in PISD who have the required bilingual credentials to teach in a bilingual program.

EL Saber's work with the ESL program audit did result in positive conclusions. Once such inference came as a result of looking at PISD's longitudinal data, such as our PEIMS reports. Similarly, when I pulled those our PEIMS data since the start of 2013-14 school year, I found that PISD's percentage of total EL student enrollment was consistently between 30 and 32% for the last seven years. Table 3.0 provides the specific EL student enrollment and overall percentage of EL students enrolled from 2013 to present day.

Table 3.0 **PEIMS Report of EL Student Enrollment**

School Year	El Enrollment	% Of Total Enrollment
2013-2014	740	30%
2014-2015	783	32%
2015-2016	757	32%
2016-2017	692	30%
2017-2018	641	29%
2018-2019	698	31%
2019-2020	690	31%

Research suggest the ideal ESL program would offer a bilingual program PK-5 and a content-based program at the secondary level for ESL students. PISD's current model offers a content-based program at the primary and alternative campuses and a pull-out program at the junior high and high school campuses. The program offerings were determined based on current staffing credentials. A bilingual program requires bilingual certified teachers, and a content-based program requires that all core, content teachers be ESL certified. Limited staffing credentials has led to PISD's tentative plan to implement an early exit bilingual program, which will result in a bilingual program being offered PK-3. Once more, PISD's intent is to begin implementing a PK-1 program starting in the 2020-21 school year, and every subsequent year add 1 more year to the program, up to 3rd grade; though the ISD has begun to work toward a bilingual program model, there has been no plan to push a content- based program at the junior high or high school campus,

nor is there a plan of action for continuity to offer PD on best practices for ESL instruction. The

final component in this current model is the communication and feedback loop between the ISD

and stakeholders impacted by the ESL/bilingual program offering.

This study intended to include all six campuses in PISD. Those six campuses were a pre-

kinder and kindergarten campus, an elementary, an intermediate campus, a junior high, a high

school, and an alternative school; however, the intermediate campus participated in all but the

survey component of the ROS. The 2018-19 TAPR showed that PISD has a total of 2,233

students, with a total of 698 EL students. The study reviewed the overall academic performance as

measured in Domain I, which is measured by all students' achievement on the STAAR for grades

3-8; however, high school achievement in Domain I is determined by STAAR (40%), percent of

graduates who meet college/career/military readiness (CCMR) (40%), and graduation rates or

annual dropout rates (if there is no graduation rate) (20%). The study also included surveying

English teachers across the entire ISD, of which there were 74. Additionally, there was a follow-

up interview with the goal of obtaining two participants from each campus, for a total of 12

interviews, but once more, all but the intermediate campus participated in the interviews.

3.5 Proposed Research Paradigm

The study will use a quantitative to qualitative Mixed Methods Action Research (MMAR)

design and analyze publicly available data, such as the state's TAPR reports for PISD. Next, there

will be an administered structured survey to the core, content teachers, of which the district's 2018-

19 TAPR identified the ISD as having a total of 185 teachers. Of these 185 teachers however,

there are approximately 74 who teach kindergarten through 12th grade. The survey will be

focusing on the following four topics: ((1) knowledge of ISD's ESL/bilingual program, (2) ESL

instructional expertise, (c) frequency of ESL PD, and (d) the quality of EL PD offered by the

district. Lastly, there will be both semi-structured and structured interviews, which will be conducted using a stratified, purposeful sample. The goal is to interview twelve teachers, a minimum of one ELAR teacher from each of the six campuses in PISD's 4A district. It is necessary to conduct the interviews as a purposefully chosen sample; because the ISD's ESL program is a content-based program at the primary grade level and a pull-out program at the secondary level (Patton 2015). In order to best understand teacher perception of the district's ESL program and program services, it is imperative that the teachers who are directly responsible for implementing the program are those that are interviewed. It is unnecessary then to survey or interview all teachers; rather, only those who are part of the ISD's ESL program

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The survey used for this study was adapted from *The English Language Learner Program Survey for Principals*. This principal survey was requested for development by the National Center for Education and Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), and the survey itself was created by REL Northeast & Islands at Education Development Center, in partnership with the English Language Learners Alliance. The results of the original survey were compiled in a report in June 2014 and presented to the Rhode Island Department of Education; though the original intent was to gather information on school-level policies, practices, and PD offerings, the survey has been adapted to be directed at teachers serving in an ESL/bilingual program and focuses on the following areas: (1) knowledge of ISD's ESL/bilingual program , (2) ESL instructional expertise, (c) frequency of ESL PD, and (d) the quality of EL PD offered by the district. Refer to Appendix A to see all 20 questions of the survey in its entirety.

This study will include a semi-structured interview conducted using a stratified, purposeful sample. The goal is to interview twelve teachers, two from each campus with one being an ELAR

teacher. The survey is structured in this way based on the ISD's ESL program model.

Interviewing a teacher who is not required to have an ESL certificate nor serve the ESL student

population, will not yield insight into the research question. The reason for this stratified,

purposeful sample "is to capture major variations rather than to identify a common core" (Patton,

2015, p.305). The following questions will be posed to each teacher participant (refer to Appendix

B).

3.7 Justification of the Use of Instruments

Survey data will be used to make sense of how teachers perceive, feel, use, and determine

the value of PISD's ESL program. This approach "aims to capture the essence of [this] program

participants' experiences (Patton, 2015, p. 116). The initial data will come from public resources

such as TAPR reports. The intent is to first establish where the academic deficits lie for EL

students. With the public data analyzed and used to highlight specific ISD needs, a survey will

then be administered to all core teachers in the ISD. Crawford (1998) and Cummings (2000) both

argue that the preparation of the teacher with respect to language acquisition is key in developing

an EL student's academic language.

With this in mind, the survey itself will focus then on PISD's teacher perception of the ESL

program, instruction, and professional development.

The survey (Appendix A) opens with a brief explanation of the intent of the survey, lets

participants know that the survey itself will take 10 to 15 minutes, provides them with insight into

their rights, includes contact information for the surveyor, and ends with the intent of the research's

findings. PISD's superintendent has already signed and approved that this research be conducted

in district. The survey itself will not collect any personal identifiers and will be limited to one

response from any participant with a valid ISD email account. No personal data will be collected

at any time during the survey.

At the culmination of the survey and data findings, a semi-structured interview will be conducted with 2 participants from every campus. Similar to the survey, participants will volunteer, sign consent forms for their participation (Appendix C), will be notified of their rights, and advised that the face-to-face surveys will take 45 minutes to an hour. No interview participants will be distinguished by individual campuses and all will have pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The only identifier will be whether that participant is a primary or secondary teacher. This is particularly important because the ISD's program models are the same at the primary level and secondary level but require different teacher certification qualifications. Prior to these interviews, participants will also be given the results of the TAPR findings. This is necessary to facilitate the dialogue not only on the participants' specific perspective of the ISD's ESL program, program model, and instructional expectations, but to allow the interviewee to draw connections and conclusions between the district's data and their personal belief on EL student and teacher need.

3.8 Data Analysis Strategy

Quantitative data findings from TELPAS and the surveys will be aggregated and presented in the study, but the interviews will all be collected and interpreted through a phenomenological perspective. Patton (2015) describes the phenomenological approach as identifying an "essence" or "shared experience" in that of the subjects who are being researched and interviewed (p. 116). In the case of this study, all participants are required to have ESL certifications and have EL students in their classrooms. Those specifically being interviewed are, by their campus's program model, identified as the primary instructor who serves EL students' language needs. Their shared essence then becomes their professional role with respect to serving EL students' academic needs,

as well as how the ISD has prepared them as educators to fill that instructional need.

The ISD's public data will be analyzed to determine specific areas of need regarding EL student performance in Domain I. The 20-question survey will be administered by a Google form. The interviews will be transcribed and examined for commonality in themes. Those themes will be organized and cross referenced with the data and survey results for overlapping findings. The intent is to determine if and where the ESL program model falls short in order to rectify that shortcoming. This study will use a comparative data analysis model, and final results will be compiled in a table and reported in a narrative.

3.9 Timeline

The proposal defense was conducted in September of 2020. The months of October through December was used to collect and analyze the ISD's publicly available TAPR and TELPAS reports; to administer the 20-question survey; and to conduct the 12 interviews. Originally the following spring was planned to collect and analyze all final data for chapters 4 and 5 of this ROS; however, COVID put a halt on the ROS, and then I left PISD for a new venture in central administration. Life led to two additional moves, including two job changes, and it was not until the fall of 2022 that I was able to get back to writing chapters 4 and 5 of the ROS. Chapters 4 and 5 were completed in December of 2022. The goal is to finish all final edits in order to defend in February of 2023.

3.10 Reliability and Validity Concerns

Creswell (2014) defines triangulation as the use of "different data sources of information" to determine "if themes are established" and thus, adding validity to the study itself (p. 201). This ROS will pull public data from PISD's TAPR reports, compare those findings with a general teacher perception of the ISD's ESL program acquired through a 20- question survey, and place

both the data and survey results in the perspective 12 teachers' personal narratives on what is or is not happening with the ISD's EL students and ESL program model. The study's findings are limited to ISD insight and program understanding, and because the scope is narrowed to the ISD's six campuses, the findings cannot be generalized to a broader understanding of the program or even to districts with comparable demographics. All six schools of the ISD have been included because all campuses are required to have an ESL program based on student enrollment of students identifying another language other than English as the primary language spoken at home. Participants for the survey and interviews are determined based on campus-specific, ESL models of instruction. Lastly, my role as the research and administrator employed by the ISD does yield question with respect to my objectivity. "The ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice… they ignore the intrinsically social nature and human purpose of research" (Patton, 2014, p. 58). Data findings, survey questions, and interview questions may all be a subconscious, objective construct of mine with the aim of proving the need to improve the ISD's approach to their ESL program. I would be remiss if it was not clearly stated, the intent of this ROS is to improve the ISD's ESL program. This is why the use of three data sources will be used, to help provide a wider berth between the researcher and the research's findings.

3.11 Closing Thoughts on Chapter III

There are three driving questions for this record of study, all of which lead to mixed methods, action research approach to understanding the academic disparity between El and non-EL students in PISD. The Mixed Method Action Research will be used to provide depth of understanding to the data findings from the TELPAS reports, and those findings will be shared with PISD's school board and district leadership. The results of this proposed MMAR will help PISD to develop a plan of action to address the EL student academic needs by revamping the

district's ESL program, with specific focus on PD and EL teaching resources.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Introducing the Analysis

This ROS sought to identify the academic gap between EL and non-EL students as it pertains to PISD, with the aim in providing corrective action to help bridge this academic gap. The determined need was originally made evident through a formal review of district and regional accountability scores, in which TEA had identified EL students as a sub population that was identified as being underserved in both the ISD and across the region. While this study does review regional and state data, its aim focused first on district-wide accountability ratings to ascertain the areas in which EL student outcomes differed from their non-EL peers. The findings were then followed by a survey to better understand what the ISD was doing in relation to professional development, teaching practices, and ended with interviews with teachers.

4.2 Presentation of Data

Accountability in Texas has changed significantly over the last five years. TEA (2015) changed state accountability in terms of the state assessment and what was measured back in 2012 by the TAKS test, by simply introducing the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). During this time, TEA (2015) allotted districts a "phase-in" period in which the assessments standards and expectations were staggered and slowly introduced to districts with annual, rising expectations. The intent was to allow ISDs an opportunity for adjustment to the new expectations, allowing instructional changes, new PD, and providing the districts with a timeline to begin "closing gaps" between student sub-populations and the overall student population enrolled. As a result of these constant fluctuations in accountability, chapter 4 will begin with a look at Place's ISD's last five

years of Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) reports, specific to Domain I, as outline by TEA.

TEA's (2020) *Accountability Manual* defines Domain I, Student Achievement, as a method of calculation in which students' scores are determined on a level of performance that are defined as "Approaches Grade Level or above, Meets Grade Level or Above, and Masters Grade Level Standards" (p. 13). The Student Achievement Domain, or Domain I, measures all student performance, including EL, using the state assessment STAAR in grades 3 – 8 and end-of-course exams (EOC) in all subject areas. With respect to EL students in their first year in a U.S. school, they are excluded from any performance calculations; however, any EL student that is in their second year or more is part of an ISD's accountability measures. Looking specifically at Place ISD's last five years' TAPR data, we find the following results in Table 4.0.

Table 4.0 **All Grades ELA/Reading at Approaches Grade Level or Above**

Year	State	District	EL (Current & Monitored)
2019	75%	74%	58%
2018	74%	73%	53%
2017	72%	72%	49%
2016	73%	71%	52%
2015	77%	72%	53%

PISD's aggregate scores for Domain I in ELA and reading, across all grade levels, is comparable if not on par with the state mean for the last five years. From 2016 on, PISD is 1 percentile point

below the state average; however, when you compare all students with that of EL student performance, there is an evident disparity in scores. EL students, from third grade to twelfth grade, score on average 19 percentile points below their peers; however, the academic gap's range does decrease over five years from 23 percentile points to 16 percentile points.

Many educators would argue the state's math STAAR and EOC does not only measure a student's ability in math, but it also is a measurement of a student's ability to read and interpret information. This is partly true for all students on account of the state assessment's use of word problems. It is safe then to assume that a student's results in reading would have a similar correlation to how they would perform in all assessments, not just math. The next table presents the TAPR findings for math, across all grade levels, at Approaches or higher.

Table 5.0 **All Grades Mathematics at Approaches Grade Level or Above**

Year	State	District	EL (Current & Monitored)
2019	82%	82%	73%
2018	81%	78%	63%
2017	79%	76%	61%
2016	76%	70%	52%
2015	81%	84%	72%

Similar to reading, PISD's results are on par or slightly below the state mean. In 2016, PISD is below the state by 6 percentile points; however, the year before in 2015, the district was 3 percentile points ahead of the state. The range for EL student results when compared to all

students fluctuates between 9 and 18 percentile points behind their peers. Across this five- year

period, EL students are, on average, 14 percentile points behind all students in math.

Unlike reading however, there is no clear trend in whether or not this academic gap is closing. In

five years, the range and results are too inconsistent to determine what is taking place.

Unlike reading and math, which is assessed every year from third grade through 8th grade,

and in grades nine through twelve through English I's, English II's, and Algebra I's EOC, writing,

science, and social studies are only measured by a state assessment a few times over the span of a

student's academic career. Table 6.0 provides the aggregate results for writing.

Table 6.0 **All Grades Writing at Approaches Grade Level or Above**

Year	State	District	EL (Current & Monitored)
2019	68%	66%	47%
2018	66%	63%	39%
2017	67%	70%	55%
2016	69%	63%	40%
2015	72%	64%	40%

The writing results directly mirror the reading results for Domain I, with respect to student

outcomes as measured by Approaches or Above. The district scores below the state average, with

the exception of 2017's results. More importantly, all students, on average, perform 21% higher

than their EL peers. EL student results fluctuate between 15 and 24 percentile points behind the

rest of the non-EL students. The range and results of EL performance is very similar to that of the

state's reading scores for PISD.

Science is assessed three times, once in 5th grade, once again in 8th grade, and once more in high school biology. For the last five years, the state means for science across all grade levels, at Approaches Grade Level or Above, has consistently fluctuated around 80% (plus or minus 1%). Table 7.0 provides the aggregate results for PISD's science scores for the last five years.

Table 7.0 **All Grades Science at Approaches Grade Level or Above**

Year	State	District	EL (Current & Monitored)
2019	81%	85%	68%
2018	80%	83%	63%
2017	79%	77%	49%
2016	79%	73%	36%
2015	78%	66%	37%

It is imperative to note that in the 2018 and 19 school years, PISD scored 3% and 4% above the state average; however, the ISD's performance from 2015 to 2019 shows significant growth. In 2015, the district was 12% below the state average, and grew 19% over the next five years. Despite surpassing the state's average performance in science, the district's growth is not equitable across all student sub populations. During this same period of time, EL students remained, on average, 26.2% below their non-EL peers. In 2016, when all students in PISD were just 6% below the state mean, EL students were 37% points below the performance of all students in science. Over the five-year period, the gap between EL students and non-EL students did lessen. Removing

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2016's results as an outlier shows a 12% consistent growth for all EL students. This growth, however, is not consistent with that of the 19% from all students.

Lastly, social studies are assessed through U.S. History in 8th grade and once more in high school's U. S. history course. The findings in Table 8.0 definitively show that social studies, from 2015 to 2019, has the greatest academic disparity in student performance between EL and non-EL students. See table 8.0 for how PISD performed in Social Studies at Approaches grade level or above.

Table 8.0 **All Grades Social Studies at Approaches Grade Level or Above**

Year	State	District	EL (Current & Monitored)
2019	81%	72%	39%
2018	78%	71%	41%
2017	77%	69%	35%
2016	77%	72%	31%
2015	78%	55%	15%

The district as a whole has seen measurable growth between the 2015 and 2016 school year. All students grew 17% in social studies in just a single year; however, when looking at EL performance in isolation of all other students, EL students grew 16% in a single year as well. The growth is on par with all students; however, EL students still remained 40% to 41% behind all other students. The growth rate itself was proportionate to all students across the district, but it did not lessen the academic gap between EL and non-EL students. Furthermore, the district fluctuated

between 9% and 5% below the state's performance from 2016 to 2019. During this same time, EL students performed 36.5% below all students in PISD.

Now considering all five areas of academic performance, one can see that the smallest academic gap between EL students in PISD and all students lies in math, with a 14% disparity between all students and EL students. Social studies show by far the greatest academic gap, with a mean of 35.6%, followed by science at 26.2%, and both reading and writing are similar with EL students performing 20/21% behind their non-EL peers. Published TAPR reports from TEA clearly identify the academic disparity between EL and non-EL students, as it pertains to Domain I for PISD. What is not clearly evident from the TAPR data is what the district is doing to prepare teachers to address the academic needs for its EL students. This perspective was captured from the survey used in this ROS. Once more, the focus of the survey was to shed light on PISD's teachers' perception of the ESL program, ESL instruction, and ESL professional development.

In the fall of 2020, the ESL/Bilingual Survey was administered to 74 teachers in PISD. As defined in chapter three, participants in the survey portion of the study were determined based on the campuses' individual models of instruction. As a reminder PISD elementary schools have a content-based program, which means all content-based teachers (math, reading language arts, science, and social studies) are required to have their ESL certification. The district has 185 total teachers; the ISD serves its EL students through a content-based program at the primary grade levels and through a pull-out program at the secondary grade levels. This means that of the 185 total teachers, there are 74 teachers across the district that are directly accountable to acquiring an ESL certification. These teachers are required to obtain their ESL certifications, and if they are not ESL certified, they are given a one-year waiver in which they earn their ESL certificates or are either non-renewed or transferred into a content area that does not require the ESL certification.

Though all teachers do have ESL students, only these 74 are the ones who provide direct, language- acquisition instruction to PISD's EL students. This is a result of the district's ESL program model, and by extension, the ESL/Bilingual Survey was only administered to those 74 teachers.

The survey was administered in late September to early October of 2020, and its results reflect the teachers' perception at that particular time. This survey utilized three different types of multiple-choice questions and some open-ended questions as well. The survey has questions that use Likert scales; questions with the response choices of "yes", "no", or "don't know/undecided"; and questions in which the participants can select PD experiences from a list of commonly available PD offered for EL instruction. The survey is a snapshot of the participating teacher's perspectives on 4 particular areas relating to the ISD's ESL program: (1) knowledge of PISD's ESL and bilingual program, (2) ESL instructional expertise, (3) quantity of ESL PD offerings by the district, and (4) the quality of ESL PD offered by the district. It is important to note that these initial survey results constitute the baseline data for this study. The survey results offered here on the qualitative gatherings may no longer reflect the participants thoughts or feelings on the given subject matter; however, the survey still gives us insight into a particular point and time and sets an understanding that will be further expanded upon by the results of the interviews. To begin, the following table 9.0 provides base line information on the participants' experience with PISD and their ESL certification.

Table 9.0 **Participant Information from ESL/Bilingual Program Survey**

Eligible Participants	Participated	Did Not Participate	
74	30	44	34.50%
Tenure (0 to 1 yr.)	2 to 3 years	4 to 5 years	5 or more years
2	3	2	23
ESL Certified	Not Certified		
19	11		

Section 1 begins with a question regarding teacher's knowledge of how their campus's current EL instructional model works. Table 10.0 shows respondents' perceived home campus's program model that the ISD uses for ESL instructional support.

Table 10.0 **Participants' Perceived Program Model(s)**

One-Way	Two-Way	New Comer	Pull-Out Prog.	Unsure
1	2	9	17	2

The ISD's ESL/Bilingual program page has information from 2017, which has not been updated to reflect the district's current model. The ISD's website states that kindergarten has the only content-based program, and all other campuses are utilizing a pull-out model; however, as of the 2020-21 school year, Kinder has a two-way dual language class, and all primary campuses use a content-based model. The responses from this single question vary so much that it is evident that teachers have a variety of misconceptions regarding how their own campuses serve their EL students. The resulting disparity is most likely a result of the new program model, that of the dual language

program, being in its first year of implementation. Teachers who are not part of the bilingual

program are simply unaware of any program model changes.

In question four, participants are asked to reflect on the regularity of EL PD offered by the

ISD. See table 11.0 below.

Table 11.0 **Regularity of ESL PD Offered by PISD**

4. In the past three years, have you received professional development that is specific to the education of ELs?	
Yes	No (Skip to question 9)
23 Responses	7 Responses

23 responded that they have had PD specific to the needs of EL students. The other 7 participants,

who responded that they have not had any EL PD in the last three years, were then prompted to

skip to question 9. Questions 4 through 8 focus on what EL PD has specifically been offered in the

past three years. Table 12.0 provides the number of professional development hours the

respondents have attended as a result of ESL specific PD offered by PISD.

Table 12.0 **Total Hours of ESL PD Offered by PISD**

5. In the past three years, how many hours of professional development have you received in total (best estimate), that is specific to the education of ELs?					
1 – 2 hrs.	3 – 4 hrs.	5 – 6 hrs.	7 – 8 hrs.	8 or more	No Response
4	5	4	5	6	6

9 respondents reported to receive less than 4 hours of ESL specific PD in the past 3 years. To

contrast, 15 respondents reported to have received 4 or more hours of EL-specific PD. This is striking when one considers that across all 6 of PISD's campuses, around a third of their students are identified as EL and are served through the ISD's ESL/Bilingual program. Also note that though 23 responded that they have received EL-specific PD, and the other 7 respondents who reported to have received no EL PD were prompted to skips questions 5 through 8, there were 24 total respondents in questions 5 and 6. This means that 1 of the 7 respondents, who should have skipped these two questions, still reported in. The survey offers complete anonymity. It is not possible to identify which individual should have skipped questions 5 and 6. It is important to note then that the responses for both questions should have a plus or minus 1 margin of error when interpreting results; because one respondent, who should have skipped to question 9 responded to both questions 5 and 6.

Both questions 6 and 7 offer a list of 13 common PD offerings for ESL instruction. Refer to table 13.0 for how respondents identified what ESL-specific PD has been received and provided by the ISD, and which ESL-specific PD they would like to receive more of.

Table 13.0 **Types of ESL PD Offered by PISD**

	Received	Requesting
6. (**Received**) In the past three years, in which of the following areas have you received professional development that is specific to the education of ELs? (Check all that apply)		
7. (**Requesting**) In which of the following areas would you like to receive professional development that is specific to the education of ELs? (Check all that apply)		
Second language acquisition	12/24	7/21
Culturally responsive education practices	0/24	8/21
Family and community involvement strategies	9/24	7/21
Research-based instructional methods for ELs	17/24	8/21
Assessment practices for Els	8/24	5/21
Els in special education	2/24	6/21
Els in the gifted and talented program	0/24	5/21
EL teacher evaluation	2/24	2/21
English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)	19/24	3/21
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	14/24	0/21
ESL program exit criteria	7/24	4/21
ESL identification process	5/24	4/21
Response to intervention (RTI) for Els	8/24	12/21

In question 6, the participants reflect on the specific ESL PD offerings they have taken or been

provided to take through the ISD. Of the 30 participants, 24 responded to question 6 and 21 of the

30 participants responded to question 7. For question 6, the two areas in which participants responded they received the most PD included training specific to TELPAS and instructional strategies for ESL students. None of the participants responded to have received any PD specific to culturally-responsive practices; nor did anyone respond to having any GT PD for ESL students.

The follow up question, question 7, denotes which ESL-specific PD participants would like more of. The most requested PD is tied with 8 of 21 participants who responded, requesting more culturally-responsive PD and more research-based instructional practices provided. The two topics least requested were TELPAS training, which has 0 requests, and only 2 of 21 respondents requested PD specific to EL teacher evaluations.

Question 8 was open ended, allowing for participants to include any other additional training that they may have received. Of the 17 participants who responded to question 8, 13 stated that there was no other training they received that was specific to EL students or the ESL/Bilingual program. The other 4 respondents listed in-service as having some activities pertaining to EL students, but only one respondent was specific in stating they received additional "SIOP" training. SIOP stands for Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, which is the common instructional model for EL students. Other statements from respondents on other PD received vary from "no" and "N/A" to "I do not believe so," and "Not that I can recall."

Similar to question 8, question 9 was also open-ended, allowing for participants to write what specific EL training they would like to receive. Of the 30 participants, 16 responded; however, of those 16, only 7 inquired or request about additional training. The other 9 responded with "no" or something to the effect of not desiring any additional training for EL students or the EL/Bilingual program. One respondent requested "2nd language, processing, what goes in a learner's brain" as a training topic. Another asked for more "language acquisition and culturally

responsive education practices." More training specific to EL learners in GT and SPED was also

requested. A comment on how the Reading Academy training was going was included, which

though it is not specific to EL PD, this training does include topics on bilingual and EL learners. A

final comment was made that was enlightening. A participant stated that [they] "don't know how

best serve them, [EL students], in the class. I understand language is needed." The responses were

limited but revolve around how to best serve EL students.

One requirement of an EL/Bilingual program is that teachers daily plan for and include

both language and content objectives. The purpose for this is that the teacher must purposefully

plan for language and content acquisition, as it pertains not only to EL students but to all students,

and second, both Language Objectives (LOs) and Content Objectives (COs) should explicitly be

taught and internalized by both the teacher and the teacher's students, in order to give students

direction and ownership of the day's objectives. Question 10 pointedly asks participants if the LO

and CO is posted with the day's lesson. Refer to Table 14.0 to see how participants responded on

the use LOs and COs with EL and non-EL specific teachers.

Table 14.0 **Use of Language Objectives & Content Objectives by Teachers**

EL teachers who utilize LOs	15 – yes 4 – no 10 – uncertain
EL teachers who utilize COs	17 – yes 3 – no 10 – uncertain
Non-EL teachers who utilize LOs	16 – yes 4 – no 9 – uncertain
Non-EL teachers who utilize COs	17 – yes 3 – no 9 – uncertain

Of the participants, 10 responded that they were unsure of whether or not LOs and COs are posted with any regularity. Recall, that all 30 of the 74 eligible participants are part of the ISD's ESL/Bilingual program. The questions specific to EL teachers and the utilization of LOs and COs should, based on best practices and program design, have had 30 of 30 participants using LOs and COs in the classroom. A district that accepts Title I federal funds and is required by law to have an ESL/Bilingual program, which should include Language and Content objectives with each lesson. Ideally, all respondents should have responded with a "yes" for both LOs and COs. Regardless of compliance necessitating all teachers who serve EL students should, in best practices, post LOs and COs, all students could benefit from daily knowing what they are expected to learn (the content objective), and how they are expected to provide evidence of their learning (the language objective: i.e., by writing, thinking, speaking, listening, and/or reading).

To take question 10 a step further, question 11 then asks the participants to reflect on their colleagues who are not directly accountable to teaching English acquisition to EL students. Interestingly, 16 participants responded that their colleagues do regularly post LOs, and likewise, 17 participants reported the same for COs. Exactly 9 respondents did not know what their colleagues did for both LOs and COs, and 4 responded that their colleagues did not post LOs, while 3 responded their colleagues did not post COs. Considering that those teachers who are required to have their ESL certifications and are part of the ISD's ESL program did not all respond to post their objectives daily, one could ascertain that their colleagues would be less inclined to regularly post Content and Language objectives. On the contrary, participant perception is that teachers, regardless of their accountability in relation to the ISD's ESL program, have similar consistency with LOs and COs. 15 of the participants answered that both they and their colleagues post objectives with regularity.

This may be a result of campus expectations in relation to teacher evaluations; or perhaps the use of LOs and COs is perceived as "best practice" for all students. This finding was not illuminated in the survey or later in the interviews, and it is evident that further discussion and study on this particular item is worth merit.

Question 12 transitions from objectives into academic services provided to EL students. Specifically, participants are asked if EL students are provided response to intervention (RTI) support. Table 15.0 provides the participants responses to questions 12 through question 14, which all relate to RTI services specific to EL student support. See table 15.0 below.

Table 15.0 **RTI and EL Student Support**

Question 12: Are ELs on your campus provided with response to intervention services?	21 – Yes 2 – No 7 – Don't know
Question 13: When RTI services are provided to ELs in your school, is RTI screening offered with appropriate linguistic support?	17 – Yes 3 – No 10 – Don't know
Question 14: Does your campus differentiate between RTI services for English language proficiency and RTI for content-area mastery?	10 – Yes 7 – No 13 – Don't know

70% of participants (21) responded that EL students do in fact receive RTI support. 2 respondents said EL students do not receive RTI, and 7 responded that they were unsure. When asked as to how EL students are screened to determine RTI offerings that have appropriate linguistic support, most participants, 16 in all, did not know how RTI is determined for EL students. The final question with respect to RTI and EL students, question 14, asked participants whether their campus differentiates between RTI services for language acquisition and RTI for content mastery. This question provided the most varied responses. 13 respondents did not know what their campus does;

while 10 responded that their campus differentiates between the 2 needs (language vs. content), and 7 participants stated their campus does not differentiate the type of intervention provided to their EL students. As a former campus administrator, a wide variance like this comes as a result of guessing. Participants either do not know their campus's intervention model for RTI as it pertains to language acquisition or their campus does not have a program model that differentiates between BICS and CALPS.

Questions 15 through 18 ask participants to use a Likert scale when responding to the inquiries. The first of these Likert scale responses has participants reflecting on their familiarity which is captured in table 16.0.

Table 16.0 **Participants' Familiarity with EL, Research-Based Instruction**

No Familiarity	Little Familiarity	Familiar	Very Familiar	Well-Versed
5	7	14	2	2

The results show that just under half of the respondents, 12 to be precise, have little to no familiarity with best practices for EL instruction. This has a similar correlation to the fact that 11 of the 30 participants reported to not have their required ESL certification. You can draw a conclusion then that 1 participant, who is ESL certified, reported in either the little or no familiarity column. One can infer that the certification process does not directly address teacher understanding as it pertains to practice and use of ESL practices. Once more, this is an interesting finding that is not directly illuminated or answered by the survey or the subsequent interviews; however, it is a worthy topic for further research and understanding.

Question 16's Likert scale has participants responding with "strongly disagree," "disagree," "agree," and "strongly agree" when reflecting on various questions in relation to language acquisition for EL students. These questions are specific to what helps EL students in obtaining a higher level of language proficiency. To preface the results of these series of sub- questions from question, 16 refer to the following table 17.0. In addition, allow the following Likert scale responses to be given a numeric value: strongly agree = 2, agree = 1, disagree = -1, strongly disagree = -2. Now, all the of the responses can be summed to determine the overall response, negative or positive, for any given statement. Table 17.0 shows the aggregate response of the participants for question 16.

Table 17.0 **Participants' Aggregate Response to Survey Question 16**

Question Number	Question	Aggregate Likert Value
6A	The acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language literacy.	33
6B	ELs learn English best when they are immersed in an English-only environment.	0
6C	Teaching ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English.	24
6D	Providing native language support for ELs helps them to learn academic content.	37
6E	For both ELs and native English speakers, the acquisition of academic English is critical to success in content areas.	38
6F	ELs typically develop social English proficiency (for example the ability to speak with their peers in English) more rapidly than academic English proficiency.	42
6G	ELs who speak English fluently outside the classroom (playground, gym, hallways, etc.) should be moved into a general education classroom.	17

When asked whether or not the acquisition of English (L2) is aided by the continued development of the EL student's native language (L1), 9 participants strongly agreed, 17 agreed, and 2 disagreed. When asked if EL students learn best if they are immersed in an English-only environment, 4 strongly agree, 9 agreed, 11 disagreed, and 3 strongly disagreed. When asked if teaching ELs to read in their native language (L1) promotes higher levels of reading in their non-native language, English (L2), 9 strongly agreed, 13 agreed, 5 disagreed, and 1 strongly disagreed. When asked if providing native language support helps in acquiring academic content, 10 responded they strongly agreed, 18 agreed, and 1 responded they disagreed. When asked whether or not academic language acquisition is imperative for the success of both native and non-native speakers, 12 strongly agreed, 16 agreed, and 1 strongly disagreed. When asked if ELs typically develop social English proficiency (for example, the ability to speak with their peers in English) more rapidly than academic English proficiency, 18 responded strongly agree, 9 agreed, and 2 disagree. Lastly, for question 16, when asked if ELs who speak English fluently outside the classroom (playground, gym, hallways, etc.) should be moved into a general education classroom, 4 strongly agreed, 15 agreed, 7 disagreed, and 3 strongly disagreed.

When reflecting on the value of these responses, given that the questionnaire and the respondents' answers are only reflective of the value of the participants at the time the questionnaire was given, we must understand that no generalizations can be taken away from their answers at that given time. Since the time the questionnaire was given, PISD strived to implement a new bilingual program initiative to expand their current program into an "early exit" program, that strives to see bilingual students enter in kindergarten and successfully exit the bilingual program and be culturally literate students of English by the 3rd grade. Also, the ISD, as the result of this study, began to seek out and provide more PD specific to ESL instruction; however,

COVID's disruption for instruction and face-to-face learning placed a significant limitation on

what could be accomplished during the fall and spring of the 2020- 21 school year. Regardless,

there is still a level of value and insight that can be garnered from this question in the survey.

Specifically, question 16 deals with the development of an EL student's L2, English, through the

support and development of their L1, the primary language spoken at home. The participants are

required to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements regarding best

practices for EL students' L2 language development.

The lowest response, 6(b) pertains to whether or not an EL student learns best through

immersion in an English-only environment. It is evident that respondents are split in this question,

half believing immersion is a best practice and half disagreeing with this method. The most

positive responses are those where the participants agreed that native language support is

beneficial, academic language acquisition is important for the growth of all students, and that EL

students develop social language skills more easily than academic language.

Question 17 has 11 parts to it and continues the Likert scale response. Table 18.0 best

captures the survey results of question 17.

Table 18.0 **Participants' Responses to Survey Question 17**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17.A – When teaching content to ELs, teachers should modify their instruction to account for EL students' level of proficiency in the language of instruction.	1	1	23	5
17.B – Teachers who are not EL teachers, but who have EL students in their classrooms, need special training to reach ELs effectively.	1	0	20	9
17.C – If a teacher is effective with general education students, they will be effective with ELs as well.	3	18	8	1

Table 18.0 **Participants' Responses to Survey Question 17 Continued**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17.D – When teaching content to ELs, teachers should be encouraged to draw on the cultural experiences of EL students.	0	0	19	11
17.E – Teachers are most effective when they understand the cultural backgrounds of their EL students.	0	1	16	13
17.F – Teachers should acknowledge cultural differences when making sense of EL student behavior.	0	1	18	10
17.G – The strategy that a teacher uses to discipline an EL student should depend on that student's cultural background.	6	9	10	5
17.H – Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in culturally responsive education practices.	0	3	19	7
17.I – Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in how to communicate with the parents of ELs.	0	3	19	8
17.J – School leaders should work to build partnership with the ELs' families and their communities.	0	0	16	14
17.K – The district should work to build partnerships with ELs' families and their communities.	0	0	15	14

The responses are mostly positive, reporting on the side of what is considered to be "best" or better practice for EL instruction and EL inclusion. There are a few questions' responses that stand out prominently however. In 17.D, all respondents report that drawing on an EL students' cultural background is an effective resource when teaching EL students. Arguably, this can be considered a best practice for all students with various cultural backgrounds, but in the context of how the 30 participants of this study report on other questions, it is positive to see all 30 come to a consensus in at least one area of EL instructional practices. On the other hand, the results of 17.G, which

deals with teacher discipline and an EL student's cultural background/values, all 30 participants of

the survey are equally split. 15 respond that discipline should be in context with a student's

cultural value and norms; while the other 15 respond that culture should not come into context with

respect to discipline. Having been both a teacher and a campus principal in communities where the

majority of students were Hispanic but the majority of instructors were Caucasian, I can attest that

many discipline issues came as a result of cultural misconceptions. Regardless, the survey did not

reveal a root cause in the results of this particular question; however, the interviews, which come

later in this ROS, do shed light on the topic of discipline between EL students and teachers whose

backgrounds and cultural values do not align with the EL students being served. Lastly, both 17.J

and 17.K both deal with the topic of building partnerships in the EL community from the

perspective of school and district leadership. All 30 participants, once again, unanimously agree

that outreach and partnering with the EL community is a necessity for an ESL/Bilingual program's

success.

The final Likert scale question, Question 18, which focuses on the extent to which

participants agree or disagree with the following statements about EL students and learning

disabilities, has 3 parts. Please refer to table 19.0 below, to see how participants responded to

question 18.

Table 19.0 **Participants' Responses to Survey Question 18**

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
18.A – EL students who have a harder time learning English compared to their non-EL peers tend to have learning disabilities.	6	15	7	2
18.B – EL students without learning disabilities will benefit from the same intervention as general education students with learning disabilities.	5	13	9	3
18.C – EL students with learning disabilities should receive the same types of interventions as general education students with learning disabilities.	5	4	19	2

When studying Table 19.0 it is evident that 2/3 of the participants do not believe that a learning disability is tied to the an EL's language acquisition. When asked whether ELs without learning disabilities will benefit from the same interventions as general education students with learning disabilities, the response from participants is split 3/5 here. It is not clearly evident that all EL teachers agree that intervention for students with learning disabilities differs, or should differ for students whose need is isolated to language skills. Similar to the first question, when asked if ELs with learning disabilities should receive the same types of interventions as general education students with learning disabilities, participants had a 2/3 split response. The majority believe EL students with learning disabilities would and do benefit from the same programs of those students without a language need but who do have a learning need.

The survey ends with two final questions that pertain to the district's new initiative for the 2020-21 school year, the ISD's new bilingual program in kindergarten. Question 19 asks if the participants support this new program. The survey shows that 15 are undecided, whereas 10 are in favor of the program and 5 are not for the program. Please keep in mind, PISD has submitted a

waiver to the requirement of having a bilingual program every year until the 2020- 21 school year,

citing the inability to garner bilingually certified teachers as the rationale for not meeting this

federal mandate. In other words, this school year is the first in which the district has met this

federal expectation. The large number of EL students requires that PISD has a bilingual program.

The final question asks participants to consider their perspective of the community and whether the

community supports PISD's new bilingual program. 11 responded "no," 6 "yes," and 13 were

undecided at the time of this questionnaire.

      Once again, this survey is a snapshot of the participating teacher's perspectives on 4

particular areas relating to the ISD's ESL program: (1) knowledge of PISD's ESL and bilingual

program, (2) ESL instructional expertise, (3) quantity of ESL PD offerings by the district, and (4)

the quality of ESL PD offered by the district. The final responses show that at the time of the

questionnaire's administration, less than 2/3 of the participants understand the district's and/or

campus' ESL program; however, 2/3 responded that they have received recent (3) and relevant (4)

PD with respect to EL instruction. With respect to ESL instructional expertise, questions such as

the use of LOs, COs, RTI services, and what is best for language acquisition resulted in a 50/50

split response. Either teachers were strongly in favor of and were using best practices or they were

not using best practices and did not acknowledge their intrinsic value. Specific tasks tied to best

practices, such as posting regular language objectives had a split response in whether or not the

participant or their colleagues met this objective. Responses that dealt with concepts regarding best

practices for EL students had an overwhelmingly positive response, in which participant answers

aligned with best practices. Overall, the 30 participants have a working knowledge of the ISD's

program; nevertheless, there are outliers which account for almost 1/3 of the participants, who

consistently responded negatively with respect to professional expectations for EL teachers and

best practices for EL instruction.

The TAPR reports and ISD data present a singular narrative that shows an evident academic gap between EL students and their non-EL peers. The ESL Program Survey helps to illuminate some of the narrative behind the data findings. Specifically, the survey results show that though the 30 participants who took part in completing the survey may not accurately know their campuses' ESL services or programs, or what constitutes the ISD's ESL/Bilingual program, the majority of their responses on how to serve EL students fall in line with best practices. The problem with the survey, though, is that some of the findings of the survey yield limited insight. The limitations are a result of not being able to further pursue or inquire as to the root cause of a particular issue, and so the results, though interesting, are still stagnant; because of this, the final part of this mixed-methods ROS was to conduct interviews with 2 ELAR teachers from each of PISD's six campuses.

The prerequisites for the interviews being conducted were (1) the participants came from the pool of the 30 teachers who completed the ESL Program Survey, (2) the participants agreed to and signed off on the Informed Consent Form found in appendix C, and (3) all interviewees were given anonymity so that they might speak candidly during the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted using semi-structured, open-ended questions, which are found in appendix B. The aim of the interviews was to shed light on each teacher's perception of the state assessment results showing a clear disparity between EL and non-EL students, and to shed light on the survey results.

The interviews were all conducted in person and followed district guidelines for COVID. The interviewee was always six feet or more away from myself, the researcher, and a recording device was placed between the two of us. Of the 10 participants, all but one opted to remove their mask for clarity of speech. Everyone's responses were transcribed and organized into common

themes using descriptive coding and a comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The end

result was over 500 units of analysis that came from 10 interviews and yielded 4 themes and 11

subthemes. Refer to Table 20.0 for the common themes, sub themes, descriptions, and interviewee

examples.

Table 20.0 **Interview Themes, Sub-Themes, Descriptions, and Examples**

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
EL	Definition	Interviewees focused on a common theme of ability in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in English	"Um, it's pretty simple. An EL student is a student who is learning English. It's not their first language" (Griffis 255, 11th).
EL Needs	Definition	The needs of the EL student consistent included consideration of their **Background**, the relationship between the **Teacher/Student**, and the notion that EL students must be **Immersed/Included** with their non-EL peers.	"An EL student to me is a student that is not proficient in English. And that could be their, not just their speech, but their understanding and comprehension of the language" (Fores 97, 8th).
EL Needs	Background	An EL student's background was defined by interviewees from both an academic perspective and from a quality of life or life experience point of view.	"Like, what were their, their basics and the start of everything? So, it depends on if these children have been spoken to, if they had conversations at home, if they have language; because a lot of these kids, even [if] they're not EL, or EL, you know, they are coming to school with very little language" (Garza 208, Kindergarten).

Table 20.0 **Interview Themes, Sub-Themes, Descriptions, and Examples**

Continued

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
EL Needs	Teacher / Student Relationship	All who participated in the interviews emphasized the student teacher relationship as being a critical factor to an EL student's academic success.	"…if there is already a language barrier between the teacher and the student, you don't want there to be a relationship barrier [too]" (Forest 113, 8th).
EL Needs	Immersion / Inclusion	9 of the 10 interviewees explain that EL immersion and inclusion in the classroom is instrumental in their learning.	"They're sitting there, in your classroom, silent. It's very important for the teacher to come over next to them and include them. Don't isolate them. Don't put them in the corner because you don't know what to do with them" (Smith 9, 3rd).
EL Program	Definition	Interviewees all spoke to the quality of their EL Program with respect to **PD/Resources** or **Teacher Perception/Need**.	"We have a pullout program with Mrs. Silva. She sees him for 45 minutes, 25 minutes on a computer program, and then 20 minutes of Really Great Reading" (Davis 385, 1st).
EL Program	PD / Resources	The common notion from interviewees is that the ISD provides adequate PD and EL instructional resources.	"I strongly believe that Place ISD has gone to great lengths to prove us with experts to come to our campus [and] give us the tools we need to be able to better serve our ELs (Smith 27, 3rd).
EL Program	Teacher Perception / Need	Teacher perception is divided. Participants see the value in the EL program; however, all take note of program changes due to leadership changes at the campus or district level.	"Well, I mean, potentially our ESL program is changing every year. So, there's no consistency there for the teachers, the ESL coordinators, or the students" (Griffis 296, 11th).

Table 20.0 **Interview Themes, Sub-Themes, Descriptions, and Examples**

Continued

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
Future Program Needs	Definition	The needs of the ISD's program are given from the scope of the EL program's **History/Future**, **Student Need**, and **Teacher Need**.	
Future Program Needs	History/Future	Participants either described the historical issues of the ISD with respect to serving EL students and/or what is needed for the program to continue toward success.	"You know it's good to keep tradition. I do agree with that, but you don't even include everyone" (Forest 139, 8th).
Future Program Needs	Student Need	Various needs were presented to help the ISD's program grow, ranging from arrival centers to literacy resources. All had the similar aim in supporting EL students.	"More help for these EL students, whether it be a new arrival center… but [something] that puts all of them at a level playing field where they would want to be successful" (Davis 451, 1st).
Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
Future Program Needs	Teacher Need	Exclusively, interviewees define future program needs in relation to teacher need as negative, requiring teacher perception of EL students to change into something more positive.	"I would like to see our English learner students treated like they're teachable and capable of learning" (Smith 52, 3rd).
Teacher Need	Definition	Teacher need is defined in relation to **PD/Resources**, the teacher's **Background/Experience**, and lastly teacher **Perception**.	

Table 20.0 **Interview Themes, Sub-Themes, Descriptions, and Examples**

Continued

Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
Teacher Need	PD / Resources	The sub-theme emerged noting program PD/Resources as positive, but accountability in using them with students as inconsistent on the part of teachers.	"I feel that our PD has gotten better. But nobody's holding anybody accountable to put it into practice in the classroom" Griffis 281, 11th).
Teacher Need	Background / Experience	Interviewees acknowledge that to be successful with EL students, teachers need to know EL students' background and experiences.	"I think if you're, if you're teaching EL, you really do need to get to know your students… You need to know if there's something going on" (Watson 463, Alt 9th/10th).
Teacher Need	Perception	Despite having various outlooks on colleague or personal teacher perceptions, one evident subtheme that emerged is overall perception needs to shift toward a more positive perspective.	"Baby sips, just do not bombard [us]. And this sip, if it works well, just give it to us gently; because change is hard, and you know, so many of us have been here a long time" (Smith 26, 3rd).

4.3 Results of Research

All interviews began with the common open-ended question, asking participants to explain what an EL student is to you, and then immediately segued into their professional opinion on the needs of an EL student. Recall, Place ISD has 6 total campuses which include a kindergarten facility, an elementary campus, an intermediate campus, a junior high, a high school, and an alternative campus that facilitates specific instructional needs for both at-risk students and/or disciplinary placed students. Of those 6 campuses, 5 had 2 participants each that participated in

these semi-structured interviews. It is the collective responses of these 10 interviewees and their definition of an EL student that resulted in 4 common themes: EL Student Needs, EL Program, Future Program Needs, and Teacher Needs. The progression of this section will follow the natural order of the questions posed to participants, which will take us in chronological order of the aforementioned themes. Refer to table 21 for the pseudonym chosen for the interviewees, the grade level taught at the time of the interview, and the date in which the interview took place.

Table 21.0 **Interviewee's Information**

Pseudonym	Grade-Level	Date Interviewed
Garza	Kindergarten	10/14/2020
Davis	1st	10/12/2020
Rodriguez	2nd	10/21/2020
Smith	3rd	10/14/2020
Anne	7th	10/06/2020
Forest	8th	10/07/2020
Williams	Alt. 9/10	10/07/2020
Brown	10th	12/02/2020
Griffis	11th	10/21/2020
Kay	Alt. 11/12	10/05/2020

To begin with, participants' responses mostly centered around EL student need. Recall that there were 500 units of analysis across all the interviews. Of these 500 units of analysis 184 tied directly back to the overarching theme of "EL student need". Interviewees gave their definition of

an EL student, and all interviewees defined an EL student contingent upon his or her ability to access L2 (English); however, Garza was the most adept at shedding light on how an ISD identifies an EL student. Garza explains that this process begins at registration with the Home Language Survey, which requires parents and guardians to report what language they use at home with their child and what language their child uses.

Contingent upon the response, a child will either be identified as EL or not EL. Simply put, "an EL student is a student who is learning English; as English is not their first language" (Griffis 255, 11th).

Then in response to what EL students need most, three common sub-themes emerged: Background, which includes academic background, cultural background, and the personal life experience of the EL student; the relationship between the student and the teacher; and Immersion/Inclusion, which is the need for EL students to be both immersed in an English-speaking environment and included in the instructional environment. The first sub-theme, background, interviewees recognize that a student's L2 development is directly aided by the strength of their L1. "If your first language is a little weak [L1], then I've got to really break out some visuals and some additional synonyms, additional examples" (Anne 152, 7th). The development of L2, in this case English, is aided by a student's proficiency in the native, L1. Garza, however, points out that there is a difference in a student's academic proficiency versus their conversational proficiency. "… we're working on social language, and we know that research shows academic language takes a while to develop" (Garza 205, Kindergarten). Rodriguez further expands on L1's direct correlation to L2 stating students with a "strong Spanish background" tend to "transition to English" more easily because of their formal schooling in their native tongue (Rodriguez 367, 2nd). Though academic background is commonly considered to be a key factor in

an EL student's linguistic development, there are common misconceptions shared among respondents. For instance, Rodriguez admits to translating a lot for EL students and infers that being bilingual as a teacher is necessary to teach EL students (Rodriguez 365, 2nd). Likewise, Brown also explains that providing translations and being bilingual is key in reaching EL students (Brown 62, 10th). Nevertheless, the common notion is a student's academic background and experience is beneficial in the development of their L2. In other words, it is easier to develop L2 if the EL student has a strong reading/ language arts background in his or her L1.

The second sub-theme relating to EL Need is the teacher/student relationship. Seven of the interviewees believe that the rapport between the teacher and the student must be positive in order to help the EL student's learning. Forest puts it best saying "that there's already a language barrier between the teacher and the student. You don't want there to also be a relationship barrier" (Forest 113, 8th). Anne goes on to further say one cannot "identify strengths or weaknesses without establishing some, some form of relationship" (Anne 167, 7th). Anne describes this process through a metaphor of a bridge, in which the teachers' EL instructional tools and practices help EL students to overcome their language gap. If a positive relationship yields a positive correlation in an EL student's L2, it is no stretch to wonder if the opposite rings true. Griffis addresses this in stating "…if a teacher is very hard, and, and demeaning of students, they're not learning as well as if they were in a classroom of a different teacher, that was, you know, more kind and loving" (Griffis 266, 11th). Of the 10 interviewees, 9 reference the relationship between the EL student and their teacher to have a direct positive or negative correlation on student learning. The better the relationship, the more receptive the EL student is to the learning process and vice versa. Arguably, a positive relationship with the teacher for any student is helpful to their learning, but as Griffis points out, EL students do not need an additional barrier on top of language to keep them from the

learning process.

The final sub-theme of EL Needs focuses on how the EL student is either immersed or included in the learning environment. Smith describes a classroom in which the EL student sits in silence, lost in the language and noise of the classroom, and so it is incumbent on the teacher to find a way to include them. In Forest's interview, they recognize that it is easy for a native English speaker to take for granted that [they] "have lived here forever," and so we can easily take for granted how an EL student can understand "idioms and things like that," that come naturally to a native speaker (Forest 102, 8th). Griffis takes this a step further in putting themselves in the shoes of the EL student, recalling a time in Mexico where they were lost. "I don't understand any of it [Spanish]. Then one person comes up to me and speaks English to me, to make me feel comfortable, and not like an outsider" (Griffis 264, 11th). The need to ensure the EL student is immersed in the language, L2, and included with their peers is well argued by all participants; however, Davis does mention, albeit briefly, that not all teachers take the time to ensure their EL students are included. This idea, however, is further expanded upon in the Teacher Need section.

The subsequent theme that emerged focused on the effectiveness of the ISD's EL Program. It is interesting to note that the second and third question in the interview first asked participants to consider what their colleagues need in order to address EL students' learning needs, and then asked them to reflect on the efficacy of the ISD's ESL program and quality of PD offerings for ESL instruction, and though both questions are generally related, the resulting conversations focused more pointedly on the EL program and its two sub- themes: PD/resources and teacher perception/teacher need.

The first sub-theme yielded 33 individual units of analysis from 5 participants. As a whole, the teachers describe a district that provides "…tons and tons of resources, year after year, like

Chromebooks, iPads, eBooks, SIOP training, ESL trainers" and even sends teachers to state training in Austin, El Paso, and elsewhere (Smith 28, 3rd). Similarly, both Brown and Anne share how the support at the junior high in particular is good. Anne explains the campus ESL teacher always goes around with "new resources" and takes the time to "laminate them" and share new material with the campus teachers (Anne 177, 7th). Brown appreciates that on "professional development days, they actually have trainers come in and do staff development" for ESL instructional strategies (Brown 79, 10th). Smith does point out how the volume of ESL specific PD does become overwhelming. At times, the teachers feel as if the ISD is doing "…this for ELs, ELs, ELs, and I think a lot of that just feels like it is too much" (Smith 43, 3rd). This feeling of too much being focused on EL student need and teacher specific training to address this is further exacerbated in the second sub-theme of teacher perception/need.

The teacher perception/need, as it pertains to the EL Program of Place ISD, is divided regarding seeing the value of the program, but 6 of the participants comment on the struggle of implementing the program with fidelity amidst an ever-revolving door of leadership. "We've had 4 superintendents in 4 years and 4 high school principals in 4 years and things are constantly changing" (Griffis 295, 11th). New leadership doesn't always constitute a change in program design and implementation; however, Griffis further states that the "…ESL program is changing every year. So, there is no consistency there for teachers, the ESL coordinators, or the students" (Griffis 296, 11th). This is also echoed by Davis, who references prior leadership "…did not really [offer] support or any help for teachers," and although there were "resources," they were never "brought out to life" (Davis 428, 1st). In the absence of training and instructional modeling, ESL instructional resources will inevitably fall short. Despite the uncertainty that comes with changes in management, Garza spoke of a new direction and focus from the ground up that is allowing

PISD to head in a more consistent direction. "As it, [the ESL program], grows, you know, we really look for people who are passionate about it, who are well versed, and maybe have the experience in growing the program" (Garza 238, Kindergarten). The narrative is most definitely strained, due to changes in management. Despite this, teacher perception remains overall positive about the ISD's ESL program. This is primarily due to the common belief that the right people are on board to help guide, grow, and support the program moving forward.

The third overarching sub-theme that emerged from the interviews described historical issues of the ESL program, with the singular aim of improving the program as it moved forward. Three sub-themes emerged from 60 total units of analysis: history/future, student needs, and teacher needs. All of these sub- themes remain in the perspective of how to improve program design and implementation as the program continues to grow and serve more students.

The first sub-theme, history/future, builds on the justification of the proposal that is previously outlined in chapter three. The history of Place ISD had a community demographic that was more than ¾ Caucasian, and with the increase in migrant farming, oil, and energy in the early 90s, the population shifted drastically. In 2017, the shift resulted in a Hispanic majority community at ¾ of the overall population, leaving a ¼ minority in the Caucasian population. Forest recalls this shift as a perception from the community at large as "they are taking over our town! See that? They're taking over our schools!" (Forest 137, 8th). For Forest, it took gaining a Hispanic son-in-law to help them personally change their perception of culture and inclusion. Brown describes this subtle shift as "everybody coming together to discuss it" in a manner to help foster positive, inclusive change (Brown 92, 10th). It first starts with "having people in the office that are bilingual" to ensure "that parents feel welcomed" and to get more parental involvement (Garza 253, Kindergarten). Understanding that equitable access is imperative to student and

familial growth, participants explain that the ISD had to work on removing potential barriers that limited some families. Moving forward, Griffis calls for a more "defined and consistent ESL program across all campuses," to help minimize any potential changes from "new administrators" coming in (Griffis 299, 11th). Likewise, for the ESL program to continue with "fidelity" and "for it to be successful," it needs "champions that are going to fight for the program" (Garza 246, Kindergarten). In the interviews, 7 of the 10 participants speak to this common need of consistency to ensure continuity of program services as the district continues to grow and serve more ESL students.

Continuing with the future program need, 4 participants had specific suggestions and ideas on how to directly support ESL students. With the ever-growing use of technology and tech integration into the classroom, Smith argues for a program that helps engage ESL students in "project-based activities" (Smith 53, 3rd). The need goes beyond language acquisition and pushes for students to be literate in the use of technology, which is its own language. Brown advocates for more transparency that recognizes ESL student growth and progress (Brown 91, 10th). Too often there is no reward for growth or progress, and schools need to find ways to recognize ESL students that will help to engage their parents and families. Anne encourages the ISD to consider a program that continues to develop L1 while growing a student's proficiency in L2, English (Anne 182, 7th). Similarly, Davis describes a "new arrival center" that helps students by providing a "level playing field" where instruction is provided in L1 and L2 is slowly integrated (Davis 451, 1st). The suggestions, though they all vary, focus on helping to grow the EL students and their support systems.

The third and final sub-theme under Future Program Needs pertains to teacher needs. Exclusively, the 6 participants that spoke to this sub-theme describe future teacher need, with

respect to the program, as negative in nature, and though there are only 16 units of analysis that make up this sub- theme, they are nevertheless insightful. Smith recognizes a need to change "how we view our English learners," and infers that some colleagues do not treat EL students like they are "teachable and capable of learning" (Smith 51-52, 3rd). Anne also wants "to see teachers more invested in the EL students," and offers more teacher accountability as the solution to address this negative perception (Ann 198-200, 7th). The problem is defined by both Garza and Griffis. "A lot of the teachers that you hear don't need help have been teaching ten plus years" (Griffis 292, 11th). It is these seasoned teachers who are "less and less accepting" (Garza 250, Kindergarten). Garza acknowledges that this is a generalization, and not all experienced staff holds this negative perception toward ESL students and the Spanish-speaking community; yet, as we come into the final theme of teacher need, it becomes more and more evident that one root cause of the disparity between EL and non-EL students may be negative teacher perception.

Teacher need is defined by PD/resources, teacher background/experience, and teacher perception. The final theme of "Teacher Need" had the second most units of analysis at 139. This is just behind EL student need, which has a total of 184 units of analysis. Second to student need is teacher need. The first sub-theme, PD/resources, is about teacher use and implementation of those resources. The common problem shared is that "we're just checking off a box and fulfilling a requirement by the state… but [little] is actually put into practice" Griffis 267, 11th). Kay continues with this theme in pointing out that there should be a positive correlation when teachers are getting resources and PD. "The more training you have a s a teacher, the better off you should be to help these [EL] kids" (Kay 343, Alt 11/12). Anne adds that there is "really no amount of PD that you can provide," when the problem is teachers are choosing what to do and what to use (Anne 154, 7th). Once more, the problem is not the quality of PD, the frequency of PD offerings,

or the accessibility of ESL instructional resources. It is the "likelihood of that info put into the real classroom practice… but if the accountability and support is there, it's a game changer" (Smith 17, 3rd). All 10 interviewees responded in kind, and they commonly described a need of accountability to ensure common practice was in place to benefit ESL student outcomes.

The second sub-theme for teacher need emphasizes the teacher's background and professional experience. This sub theme had a total of 70 units of analysis and had participation and insight by all interviewees. First of all, teacher professional background should result in the understanding that students are "not all on the same level," and there is "no blanket play" of supports or instruction that will address the needs of all students (Brown 73, 10th). Teachers have to take the time to "build student relationships" and show interest in ESL student culture (Forest 114, 8th). The more you pay "attention to the students and spend a little bit of time" asking questions and making connections, the better you will understand their background and by extension their needs (Anne 160, 7th). If you can "relate to a student, they're going to want to learn from you and do better for you" (Davis 422, 1st). All participants argue that insight to an ESL student's culture and building a rapport significantly aids in their ability to grow and learn. It is this common sub-theme of background and experience that helps to shed light on the relationship-driven nature of ESL students.

The final sub-theme for teacher need is perception. In the definition for this sub- theme, Smith describes a need for a gradual change in how teachers perceive the ESL program. This is partly due to the overall feeling from the interviewees that the in recent years, there has been a strong emphasis on ESL specific training, resources, and initiatives. For instance, some teachers still have a misperception of what constitutes better teaching methods for ESL students. "When I go my [ESL] certification, they said you don't have to be able to speak Spanish or another

language… to reach those kids" (Kay 320, Alt 11/12). Similarly, Davis recalls that ESL instruction goes beyond being "bilingual" or using "Google translate," but this is still a prevalent misconception some teachers have. The problem once more is not with the available resources in training in district, but rather it has become an issue of time. "Educators need to take the time, but the time is needed to teach lessons… but it, [ESL instruction], needs to be part of their everyday experience" (Smith 26, 3rd). Having access to training and resources does not equate to teachers internalizing their value, much less how to implement those ESL specific strategies. In the absence of time, teacher perception reverts back to what they know, which may or may not be what is best for ESL students and student outcomes.

4.4 Interaction between the Research and the Context

Place ISD had 2 participants from each campus, except for the intermediate campus, participate in the semi-constructed interviews. The intermediate campus, whose leadership and staff comprise the most historically divisive educators when it comes to ESL instructional methodology, never responded to emails, inquiries, or requests for a meeting to offer transparency regarding this record of study. Aside from reaching out directly to the campus administration and inquiring if additional explanation or support was needed, there is no additional insight as to why no participation ever came from this particular campus. The study conducted was purely participatory, and the survey did not collect personal identifiers, and does not provide campus-specific insight. Its results are reflective of the ESL program at the district-level, but the intent of the interviews is to go beyond readily-available state and district data and to provide a narrative that could identify potential answers to the original question: What is the cause of the academic disparity between EL and non-EL students as it pertains to Place ISD?

4.5 Summary

In the end, 10 participants from the kindergarten/early child hood center, the elementary campus, the junior high, the high school, and the alternative campus participated in these semi-constructed interviews, which on average lasted about 50 minutes each. When the results of the interviews were transcribed and the interviewer's questions and inquires removed, what is left is 500 individual units of analysis. These units of analysis had the four common themes of EL Student Need, EL Program, Future Program Needs, and Teacher Need. The final product is direct insight into a consistent narrative, where the biggest factors for ESL student outcomes go back to teacher accountability in the use of ESL-specific resources and teaching, developing relationships between students and teachers, and changing the mindset of teachers to more receptive and positive in serving EL students.

4.5.1 COVID Update

In the spring of 2020, Place ISD's superintendent at the time was bought out of his contract. Going into spring break, PISD did not have a superintendent. The new superintendent's first day would be the 1st of April, 2020. During spring break, however, the number of COVID incidents in the county would result in the closure of school for the remainder of the academic school year. State-wide, STAAR and EOC would be waived as COVID cases increased and forced many districts to close and go toward providing instructional services in an online model.

I was the principal of the junior high at the time and our junior high campus was in its third year of a 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Specifically, the campus teachers had agreed to "flip the classroom" once a week for the 19-20 school year. Flipping the classroom means that a "student first gains exposure to new material outside of class" (Brame 2013). Usually, this exposure would be in the form of an instructional video between three to five minutes in length, a short article, or

an activity that builds upon prior knowledge. The goal is to engage students' prior knowledge, ensure a common foundation of understanding, and the following day in class the teacher spends more time engaging, supporting, and helping students through the learning process. The intent is to make instructional time more productive and help mitigate work done outside of class. This initiative was particularly important for our campus, because the students and families that we served did not all have equitable resources to help their children. If students left with homework and projects, they would often come the next day with them unfinished. This is not because families did not support their children. It was most notably a result of not being able to provide support with language being a barrier, instruction insight being a barrier, and limited time due to work and family dynamics creating a barrier. To combat this, PISD provided Chromebooks, community hotspots for internet, and the campus initiated the "flip your classroom" all prior to COVID closing the school

When the junior high campus did not return from spring break in 2020, the teachers, students, and stakeholders were already familiar with our online systems and resources that were in place. We were also the only campus in the district that opted to provide both asynchronous and synchronous instruction. Students had set times to meet virtually with their teachers for primary instruction and academic support. Teachers hosted virtual office hours before and after the regular school day in order to accommodate familial needs. In addition, teams of teachers, counselors, and administrators went out into the community, while practicing COVID safety protocols, and met with any student who had not logged onto class daily. It was a combination of these cooperative efforts that resulted in little lapse of instructional services.

During the subsequent school year, TEA would proctor the state STAAR/EOC but waive all accountability measures tied to academic outcomes. Leading into COVID, the junior high

campus had an "F" rating on the A-F accountability rating summary, and the campus was in

"improvement required." Despite the COVID learning loss, which resulted in an overall decline of

student academic outcomes state-wide, the junior high grew 17 points from the 2019-20 school

year to the 2021-22 school year. Refer to table 22.0 for the academic growth of Place ISD's junior

high and refer to table 23.0 for Place ISD's academic growth.

Table 22.0 **Place ISD Junior High: Pre- and Post- COVID Accountability Rating**

Accountability Year	2019	2021	2022
Overall	59	N/A	86
Student Achievement	72	N/A	85
STAAR Performance	72	81	85
CCMR	N/A	N/A	N/A
Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A
School Progress	70	N/A	90
Academic Growth	59	N/A	72
Relative Performance	70	83	90
Closing the Gaps	30	N/A	78

Table 23.0 **Place ISD: Pre- and Post- COVID Accountability Rating**

Accountability Year	2019	2021	2022
Overall	87	N/A	91
Student Achievement	87	N/A	89
STAAR Performance	78	81	86
CCMR	92	90	90
Graduation Rate	95	95	95
School Progress	89	N/A	90
Academic Growth	73	N/A	87
Relative Performance	89	88	90
Closing the Gaps	83	N/A	92

The junior high grew a total of 17 points from the 2019 school year to the 2022 school year. Though district and campus had a state-wide accountability scoring of "declared state of disaster" for the 2021 school year, TEA did release limited accountability data, in the form of raw component scores for STAAR performance, CCMR (if applicable), graduation rates (if applicable), and relative performance. The results show growth continuing, once more, despite COVID.

Similarly, PISD as a whole grew four points from 2019 to 2022. The ISD had gone from a "B" with an 87 to an "A" with an overall accountability summary rating of 91. The specific gains at the junior high were the highest in the entire region, and both the education service center and TEA reached out to commend and celebrate both the campus and the ISD.

In February of 2022, representatives from both the local service center and TEA traveled to the junior high campus and participated in a school-wide pep rally, commemorating the hard work of the students, teachers, staff, and myself as the former campus principal. COVID shut down many services nationally and internationally. All aspects of life were negatively impacted by the loss of a variety of services, and though it was a struggle for PISD to continue to operate in any normal fashion, the educators and stakeholders came together to provide the best support to the ISD's students, teachers, and staff.

4.5.2 Additional Updates – Emergent Bilingual

When initially reviewing all of the collected data, it was pertinent to once more validate the relevance of this ROS and its intent. Looking only at enrollment data for all students in comparison to those identified as EL and currently being served by the ESL/Bilingual program in PISD, there appeared to be a singular trend of growth in our EL population. Recall from chapter 1, of the 62 ISD served in PISD's region, PISD had grown to have the 3rd largest EL population. PISD's overall student demographic was just shy of 1/3 being comprised of EL students, which made the ISD the region's second highest in EL percentage-wise. The need for this study, to determine possible root causes for the evident disparity between EL and non-EL students, is not only appropriate to the scope of a record of study, but is necessary to help the ISD to continue to foster positive change in order to serve all students.

Lastly, it is the very nature of education to continuously undergo study, evaluation, and review, all in an effort to determine what practices and methods are yielding the best results for student and teacher social, emotional, and academic growth. Since the start of this study, the term "English learner" has been replaced at both the federal and state level. This change took place during the 2021-22 academic school year, and though TEA does have documents and resource that

still use the "EL" vernacular, all newly-produced and published resources are using the more appropriate term of emergent bilingual (EB). The need for this shift in terminology is most appropriately defined as the recognition of research that argues emergent bilingual students have historically been defined as being inadequate. Terminology "perpetuated inequities in the education of these children… and discounted the home languages and culture understanding," and further assume their needs to be that of a monolingual child (Garcia, Kleifgen, Falchi 2008). It is inappropriate to define a student by an assumed deficiency, such as language, for our EB students. All terms and labels used to define our emergent bilingual students come with different negative connotations, none of which acknowledge the strength of being linguistically and culturally diverse. So, moving forward "English learners" will be replaced with the more appropriate "emergent bilingual" terminology.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings from Chapter 4

PISD's accountability ratings from 2015 through the 2020 school year show a clear disparity between their EB students and the non-EB students. Tables 4.0 through 8.0 provide the overall aggregate gaps from the STAAR and EOC in literacy, math, writing, science, and U.S. history. The range of the academic deficit for EB students spans from 14% behind in math to 36% at its greatest in U.S. history. In literacy and writing, EB students are 19% and 21% their non-EB peers. The accountability ratings provide both historical and current insight into the academic areas in which this academic gap is most significant.

The surveys, which were all administered in the fall of 2020, provide additional insight into teacher understanding of their campus's EB/ESL program design, specific EB instruction, the quantity of PD offered by the ISD for EB/ESL instruction, and the quality of PD offered for EB/ESL instruction. The results demonstrate that half of the respondents do not clearly understand their campus's program model for the EB program. Similarly, when it comes to instruction, participants of the survey were not concise in defining best teaching practices. When it came to best practices with instruction, the incorrect responses varied from 30% to just over 40%. There are many misconceptions when it comes to what is considered best practices and how you both serve and instruct EB students. The perception of the quantity and quality of PD offering, however, is perceived to be very positive overall. The majority of survey participants selected very positive responses on the Likert scale questions that pertained to PD. They either "agree" or "strongly agree" that the quantity and quality of specific EB PD offered is effective and appropriate to the need.

The interviews provided the most insight into what could be the cause for some of the academic disparity between EB students and non-EB students, teacher perception. Overall, the interviewees reported that teachers who value relationship-driven teaching methods and who take the time to be inclusive of EB students have the best student learning outcomes. Although the interviewees themselves still report to use or maintain teaching techniques that are not considered best practice, such as relying on translation as the primary means to teach new material, the interviewees nevertheless agree that the common denominator of limited academic growth for EB students is negative teacher perceptions of EB students. The second conclusion yielded from the interviews was that the widening academic gap that is evident in our EB students can be directly attributed to the constant changes in leadership and the lack of accountability in ensuring EB services and accommodations are rendered.

5.2 Discussion of Results in Relation to the Literature

Students with a diverse linguistic and cultural background may not come to school with same level of academic English to make learning as accessible to them compared to a native English-speaking student. For an EB student, it can take 5 to 7 years to develop their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Paul & Vehabovic, 2018). To make matters more difficult for EB students, the majority of teachers are underprepared to work with EB students, are themselves predominantly white, are predominantly monolingual, and are teaching under policies that view EB students and their linguistic diversity as problems that lead to a deficit in English (Song, 2022). This notion, in which mainstream teachers have a negative perception toward serving and teaching EB students, is often a result of a lack of teacher training as well as teacher perception on the length of time it takes for EB students to learn English (Park-Johnson, 2020). It is important to note, however, that other studies that account for ESL/bilingual teacher's

perspective show that those particular teachers view language heritage and student/family culture to be an asset to tap into that aids in an EB student's overall academic success (Park-Johnson, 2020).

It is evident that a common finding regarding the success of EB students continues to be centered on teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward what EB students can accomplish (Lacorte & Canabal, 2005). Teacher perception matters. For change to begin, teachers and districts need to adopt pedagogies that value student and family culture, linguistic diversity, and help to foster and cultivate these differences in an equitable and sociologically conscious way (Kim, De Long, Ortega, & Kelly, 2019). Teachers need to seek ways to both acknowledge and reaffirm the value in having multilinguistic and multicultural students, thereby embracing these students' differences as a benefit and not a hindrance to English language acquisition (Cain, 2018).

Lastly, the COVID pandemic has only made matters worse for both students and teachers. COVID did not allow for bridging any academic gaps; rather, it inadvertently made more educational inequalities for all students. In particular, EB students who struggled to comprehend instruction in the classroom were left to grasp material in which there was little to no support for them linguistically (Song, 2022). When an EB student does not have the same opportunities to access CALP, they must be given the supports for the "language of instruction" in order to have the building blocks necessary to be academically successful (Gonzales & Hughes, 2021). Instruction must be equitably accessible for students to engage with, much less learn from. Both school districts and educators must emphasize that positive teacher-student relationships result in better student outcomes, that student and family identity are intimately intertwined with language, that cultural/linguistic differences do not immediately correlate with academic deficits, and that equitable opportunities matter most of all (De Long et al., 2019).

When reflecting on Place ISD's academic growth, specifically the significant growth found at the junior high campus, despite COVID, I cannot help be draw a direct correlation between this ROS findings and the philosophy found at the junior high campus. First, the survey and interviews conclude that relationships help aid students in learning positive learning outcomes. All other campuses withing PISD sent students home during COVID to receive instruction either from packets or asynchronous, online learning platforms. The junior high was the singular campus which required students and teachers to get on daily to engage with and support each other's learning.

In addition to the synchronous instructional methods, teams of teachers, staff, and administration regularly reviewed which students were logging on during these live sessions and which students did not. Those students who did not log into a live session with their teacher and peers were contacted directly by email, and their parents were likewise notified via email and through the school messenger. Any student or family that did not respond in 48 hours where then met by a team of educators, who wore masks, gloves, and socially distanced from the front door, to ensure that the family and student(s) was okay. The goal was not only to ensure students were actively included in the dynamic, online learning environment, but equally to confirm the student's needs were being met.

The ROS' outcomes emphasized relationship-based teaching, fidelity of teaching methods, and transparent practices yield to better outcomes for EB students. Despite COVID shutting down face-to-face instruction, the junior high campus had a "flip the classroom initiative" for the 2019-20 school year. Prior to COVID, teachers regularly required students to get onto their Google classrooms, complete an assignment, and at the same this initiative was publicized by the campus to parents and stakeholders, including hosting Google classroom nights to teach parents how to

login to their children's classes, see what work is required, and review any submitted work.

When COVID required Place ISD to shut down, the junior high campus had already a year of dynamic instruction, that included ample use of distance learning platforms; so though face-to-face instruction was no longer feasible for the remainder of the school year, instruction continued on immediately without any interruption. Students had already been on their 2nd year at 1:1 Chromebooks. The ESL program model and use of CBLI was in its 2nd year of implementation. Teacher instructional expectations were well defined, and student learning expectations were similarly well communicated and understood by students and parents alike. It is imperative to understand that COVID did not set EB student learning outcomes back, as it did across the state. PISD grew, were most everyone else had significant academic regression in both literacy and math.

5.3 Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

My professional experience has been in 3A and 4A districts of 1,200 to 4,200 total students. Every district in which I have worked thus far has had large populations of low socio-economic families, have had a high percentage of Hispanic populations, and have been at the top of each respective region's average for serving EB students. As a result of having a larger than state average population of EB students being served in either an ESL or bilingual program setting, and as a result of having communities that are predominantly impoverished, every district has been eligible for additional federal and state funding, but the funding models and transparency in how funds are allocated, how determination of needs are made, and what program models are being implemented to support EB student outcomes have all been anything but transparent.

As for my role in the improvement process, I have strived to provide a voice to those who feel disconnected with their local education agencies (LEA). One way in which I have given

underrepresented stakeholders a voice is by inviting stakeholders of minority backgrounds, those who are diverse both linguistically and culturally, to be part of district and campus steering committees to help establish district/campus needs and hold us accountable in attaining district/campus goals. It is my adamant belief that change comes when you allow your community to help take the reins and drive the wheels of change in a direction that is reflective of the community you are serving.

This ROS and the process undergone to collect data, research best practices, administer a survey, disseminate survey data, and interview teachers experienced in serving EB students has been a joy. I have always been drawn to data and have enjoyed studying it; consequently, I agree with the common notion that data in and of itself does not lie. Data is an accurate report of the end result, but in the absence of qualitative insight, data tells only the culmination of a story. For me, getting to engage with teachers, see their perception of district resources, and hear their thoughts on how to address EB student need was fascinating.

There were candid conversations in which interviewees asked for more administrative accountability to ensure student needs were being met. It is obvious that how to serve EB students in general was a point of contention for the district in which the ROS took place, but I am hopeful in finding that experienced teachers and relevant literature both argue for building relationships with kids. I agree that districts must have well-defined systems of support for teacher instruction, first and foremost. It is not appropriate to expect teachers to be able to serve any student in the absence of clear program guidelines, relevant professional development, and the tools necessary to carryout quality, equitable instruction. I argue that systems must first be established, but the immediate secondary requirement for success is building a rapport with your students and stakeholders.

Of the 10 interviewees, 9 spoke at great length about the value of building relationships with students. Kids want you to ask about themselves, what they are passionate about, and appreciate when you celebrate them personally. I can assure you that students remember which adults make it a point to cheer for them in the stands or at a recital. Teachers who take the time to get to know their students and engage with them on a level students understand are not only more appreciated, but inevitably those teachers can and do use their insight into their students to help motivate and inspire students to learn.

As much as this process was insightful and offered personal, professional growth, the ultimate findings were not surprising. Revolving doors of leadership are not conducive to teacher and student growth. In the absence of consistent leadership, program oversight and implementation likewise become inconsistent, and teacher misconceptions on how to best serve students can vary significantly due to a lack of common expectations and a common direction. I do not believe, as a whole, that educators seek ways to not serve students. I do believe what we see in this ROS, as in places elsewhere, is that teachers will revert to what they know, to what is easy, or to what is readily available. Teaching with purpose, ensuring the lesson is accessible to all students, and differentiating your teaching methods contingent upon student needs is a tremendous undertaking. It does not happen off the cuff, and it is more likely to be successfully implemented when program models are well defined and when teaching methods with students are relationship driven.

5.4 Implications for Practices

5.4.1 Connect to Context

Additionally, there is a significant emphasis on student and teacher relationships and the impact positive relationships have on student learning outcomes. The ROS demonstrates that

relationships are, from the teacher perspective, instrumental in student learning; yet, despite this finding being held as a common perception for experienced teachers, PISD does not have an expectation for teachers to build relationships with the students they serve. There is no process or PD in place that helps guide beginning teachers or teachers new to the district to be relationship-driven in the classroom. An increased awareness of how relationships are greatly beneficial for EB students is not only needed, but must become part of the ISD's program model.

5.4.2 Connect to Field of Study

The literature argues for culturally and linguistically responsive teaching which places a significant value on student and family diversity. School values must directly reflect the values of the communities they serve, including those that are marginalized or overlooked. Perhaps one of the greatest concerns that came from the interviews highlighted teacher apathy toward EB students and their familial culture. More PD is needed to help bridge cultural deficits that are held by some of PISD's faculty, staff, and leadership. Until families of diverse backgrounds can see themselves and their children valued in the eyes of the school district, there will continue to be academic gaps that widen between student sub-populations and the general student body.

5.5 Lesson Learned

The primary focus of action research is to identify a need within the context of an organization or community and aim to address that need by conducting a comprehensive need assessment. This process incorporates gathering qualitative and quantitative data to shed light on the problem at hand, and in the case of this ROS, to present your findings in order to foster a dialogue exchange, once more, to determine root cause and possible solutions. The historical data for district accountability in Place ISD definitively shows a growing gap between its EB and non-EB student populations. Based on teacher feedback, a lack of defined program models, little to no

monitoring of program implementation, and negative teacher outlooks on EB students has held back student learning outcomes. The more the district is willing to address potential barriers to student learning, in the form of engaging relevant stakeholders and analyzing requisite data, the better able PISD will be in not only accurately identifying barriers, but also in being able to overcome said barriers by empowering stakeholders to address those limitations.

By failing to follow up with the question, "Why?", regarding this academic gap, PISD was complacent in inadvertently heading down a path of negative accountability. Going beyond state and federal accountability expectations, this intentional indifference is more than just an oversight. Stakeholders whose children are identified as EB and are served in the ESL or bilingual program are not equitably represented in the ISD; nor are their values equally shared and upheld. Time would create further disconnect, division, and yield even larger academic deficits. If the study were to continue further, it would be imperative to include parents, guardians, and/or community members that have EB students in the ISD or are reflective of this particular community. Their voice needs to be garnered and utilized to review data, reflect on current district practices, and discuss what, if any, changes need to be made to help move the program forward.

Lastly, I look at this ROS and the results through the lens of the district's central administration. I understand that systemic change is at times, contingent upon leadership values, including board values. Whatever is considered popular or valued can quite often be the singular topic at hand, and so other programs or concerns that are not valued by leadership can be overlooked or forgotten. This can be mitigated to a certain degree if district steering committees are truly comprised of the varied stakeholders they are said to reflect and serve. It is true that small districts suffer most in building these committees in an equitable manner. The same people that are willing to serve are already serving the ISD in some capacity elsewhere; or, they are employed by

the ISD and ineligible to serve as anything but in the role of a district employee. This very real hardship makes garnering stakeholder buy in and support difficult, but it is nevertheless the responsibility of the ISD to ensure the quality and depth of equitable representation.

5.6 Recommendations

The results of this study indicate a need to reevaluate PISD's bilingual program model at the primary grades and the content-based program model at the secondary grades. Program models and teacher responsibility need to be clearly defined for everyone. Survey results showed that teachers who serve in either program alone were unsure of what their campuses' EB services and programs were. Having clearer expectations is a start in ensuring EB student accommodations and services are being rendered.

Furthermore, the ISD needs to review, then establish, common teaching expectations for EB students. When there are too many guidelines, teachers can become overwhelmed and stifled in their creativity. On the other hand, when there are too few guidelines to follow, teachers have no direction, often resorting to quick resources that do not correlate to state standards. With a handful of best practices, clearly articulated and presented cyclically to staff in the form of PD via professional learning communities (PLCs) and other media, teachers can began using and refining these tools to assist EB students regarding their specific learning needs.

In terms of consistency, PISD has had a huge shift in the makeup of its stakeholders. This has happened only once in the last 3 decades, and so, the current make-up of the community is not likely to change anytime soon. With this understanding, despite what may or may not happen with potential personnel changes in district/campus leadership, stakeholders can and will remain a constant factor. If given an opportunity to be engaged in an action-oriented manner, stakeholders can help foster change that will live beyond any one employee's potential tenure. This will result

in better consistent long-term goals that the district is working toward, and with equitable representation of stakeholders on any relevant and appropriate committees, any singular strength or shortcoming on the part of leadership will be bridged by the strength and consistency in community leadership.

5.7 Closing Thoughts

This record of study intended to determine factors that led to the Place ISD's academic disparity amongst its EB and non-EB student population. The hope was that the process of reviewing data and engaging teachers in surveys and interviews would help shed light on the problem at hand. For me, this process was very personal. I had experienced the feeling of being a teacher and principal who fell short in serving EB students in particular and with respect to my role at Place ISD, along with the preliminary state findings that showed a significant academic gap amongst EB students, it was on my heart to initiate change that would benefit EB students and teachers alike.

At the campus on which I served, teachers were passionate about serving all students, including our EB student body. They, however, had shared a need to understand cultural and linguistic differences among themselves and that of the EB students, who as a whole, the teachers did not represent. In other words, the teachers recognized they did not share the same cultural or linguistic values and diversity that our EB students have. The teachers were candid in recognizing their shortcomings and were brave enough to speak out asking for support and direction. Why brave? Because it was understood that the values of our EB students and that of their families were historically not meant to be valued in the community, but as stated earlier, the drastic shift in demographics was a catalyst to cause a shift in how they approached teaching. Most teachers wanted and still want to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all kids, but many teachers

simply do not know how to successfully implement differentiation in their teaching.

Again, I see the desire for teachers to shift their teaching methods to reflect that of the changing community's values as insightful and appropriate for teachers. Teacher desire is limited by administrative oversight, but this once more can be combatted when equitable stakeholder representation is allowed to help guide and direct district/campus goals and expectations. Now, in my role as an assistant superintendent in another ISD, I take these lessons to heart. The team ensures that there is equitable representation from all parts of our community on every district steering committee, but the ultimate goal of helping remediate programs and potentially redirect PISD is no longer possible in my current state. Pointedly, many of the interviewees hoped these findings and recommendations would be presented to the board. It simply is no longer an option for me to be involved in the process.

It is evident that a place will outlast a person. It is also much easier to change a person than it is to change a place. A place, after all, is comprised of a great many people, all of whom have their own unique and varied values, concerns, and experiences. If we are to help move the ball of learning forward in a way that allows for learning to be equitably approachable and achievable for all students, then it is incumbent upon leadership to create instances in which stakeholders, who reflect the values of the community, are able to engage and create lasting, systemic change.

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ESL Program Survey

Please answer the questions below. Your individual responses will be kept strictly confidential.

This survey is part of the research study that is designed to get closed question responses on the following topics: (1) knowledge of PISD's ESL & bilingual program, (2) ESL instructional expertise, (c) quantity of ESL PD offerings by the district, and (d) the quality of ESL PD offered by the district.

The survey will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is strictly voluntary, and at any time you can leave the study by simply clicking the "x" button at the top right of your screen. No direct personal identifiers are being collected, but the results of the study will be part of a record of study with Texas A&M; however, no one will be able to identify you or your personal responses.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me at ddgarcia@tamu.edu or call/text me at (979)676-1470.

1. **How long have you been a teacher?**

Mark only one oval.

( )   0 to 1 years

( )   2 to 3 years

( )   4 to 5 years

( )   More than 5 years

2. **Do you have your ESL certification?**

Mark only one oval.

○ Y

○ N

3. Which EL instructional models are currently be used in your school? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

☐ English as a Second Language (ESL)
☐ Sheltered Content Instruction
☐ ESL Teacher and Pull-Out Program
☐ ESL Teacher and Content-Based
☐ Program Bilingual Education
☐ Two-way/dual
☐ language
☐ Newcomer
Program Don't
Know

Other: ☐ _____

4. In the past three years, have you received professional development that is specific to the education of ELs?

Mark only one oval.

○ Yes
○ No (Skip to question 9)

5. In the past three years, how many hours of professional development have you received in total (best estimate) that is specific to the education of ELs?

Mark only one oval.

○ 1 - 2 hours

○ 3- 4 hours

○ 5 - 6 hours

○ 7 - 8 hours

○ More than 8 hours

6. In the past three years, in which of the following have you received professional development that is specific to the education of ELs? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

☐ Second language acquisition

☐ Culturally responsive education

☐ practices Family and community

☐ involvement strategies Research-based

☐ instructional methods for ELs

☐ Assessment practices for ELs

ELs in special education

☐ ELs in the gifted and talented

☐ program EL teacher evaluation

☐ English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)

☐ Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

☐ (TELPAS)ESL program exit criteria

☐ ESL identification process

☐ Response to intervention (RTI) for ELs

7. In which of the following areas would you like to receive professional development that is specific to the education of ELs? (Check all that apply)

Check all that apply.

☐ Second language acquisition

☐ Culturally responsive education

☐

☐

☐

☐

practices Family and community

involvement strategies Research-based

instructional methods for ELs

Assessment practices for ELs

ELs in special education

☐ ELs in the gifted and talented

☐ program EL teacher evaluation

☐ English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)

☐ Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

☐ (TELPAS)ESL program exit criteria

☐ ESL identification process

☐ Response to intervention (RTI) for ELs

8. **In the past three years, have you received any other professional development that**

pertains to the education of ELs?

_____

I. **9. As a teacher, are there any other areas in which you would like to receive professional development that are specific to the education of Els?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. **On your campus, do EL teachers write student learning objectives based upon**

student growth in:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Language development? (Language objectives)	◯	◯	◯
Academic content? (Content objectives)	◯	◯	◯

11. **On your campus, do teachers who are not EL teachers write student learning objectives based upon student growth in:**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Language development? (Language objectives)	◯	◯	◯
Academic content? (Content objectives)	◯	◯	◯

12. **Are ELs in your campus provided with response to intervention (RTI) services? Mark only one oval.**

◯

◯

◯

13. **When RTI services are provided to ELs in your school, is RTI screening offered with appropriate linguistic support?**
Mark only one oval.

◯

◯

◯

14. **Does your campus differentiate between RTI services for English language proficiency and RTI for content-area mastery?**

Mark only one oval.

○
○
○

15. How familiar are you with the research on effective instructional practices for ELs?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not familiar at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very familiar

16. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements about language acquisition for Els.

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

The acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language illiteracy	○	○ ○	○
ELs learn English best when they are immersed in an English--only environment	○	○ ○	○
Teaching ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English	○	○ ○	○
Providing native language support for ELs helps them to learn academic content	○	○ ○	○
For both ELs and native English speakers, the acquisition off academic English is critical to success in content areas	○	○ ○	○
ELs typically develop social English proficiency ((for example, the ability to Speak with their peers in English)) more rapidly than academic English proficiency	○	○ ○	○
ELs who speak English fluently outside the classroom ((playground, gym, hallways, etc..)) should be moved into a general education classroom	○	○ ○	○

17. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements about language acquisition for Els.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

When teaching content to ELs, teachers should modify their instruction to account for EL students' level off proficiency in the language of instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers who are not EL teachers, butt who have EL students in their classrooms, need special training to reach ELs effectively	◯	◯	◯	◯
If a teacher is effective with general education students, they will be effective with ELs as wells	◯	◯	◯	◯
When teaching content to ELs, teachers should be encouraged to draw on the cultural experiences off EL students	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers are most effective when they understand the cultural backgrounds off their EL students	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers should acknowledge cultural differences when making sense off EL student behavior	◯	◯	◯	◯
The strategy that a teacher uses to discipline an EL student should depend on that student's cultural background	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in culturally responsive education practices	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in how to	◯	◯	◯	◯

communicate with the parents off ELs				
School leaders should work to build partnership with the ELs" families and their communities	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
The district should work to partnerships with ELs" families and their communities	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

18. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements about Els and learning disabilities.**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

	123			
ELs who have a harder time learning English than their EL peers tend to have	◯	◯	◯	◯
ELs without learning disabilities will benefit from the same interventions as general education students with learning disabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯
ELs with learning disabilities should receive the same types off interventions as general education students with learning disabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. **Do you support the district's new bilingual program?**

◯

◯

20. **Do you feel the community supports the district's new bilingual program? Mark only one oval.**

◯ Y

◯ N

◯ Undecided

APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Hello, thank you for both your willingness and time to help with this study. Allow me to briefly introduce myself and the intent of this study to establish a norm. I am Dimitri Garcia, principal of Perryton Junior High and Ed.D. student of curriculum and instruction with Texas A&M in College Station. The intent of this study it to determine the perspective of Perryton Independent School District (PISD) teachers on the topic of academic disparity between English learners (ELs) and non-ELs. This interview will be recorded by an audio device, and I am taking notes on your responses. After the interview, I will reach back out to you and provide a transcript of this interview. This will allow you to confirm the accuracy of the transcript, and, if you so wish, you may opt out of participation of the study. In the event you do discontinue participation in the study, any electronic notes pertaining to this interview will be deleted and hard copies shredded within 24 hours of the request. Please use my TAMU email, ddgarcia@tamu.edu to direct any request or inquiries regarding this study to. Lastly, your response will be kept confidential; though your name and identify is reported to myself, I will use a pseudonym with no identifiable characteristics in my study to maintain your anonymity.

Do you have any questions? (Report respondents answer below)

1. **Please explain both what an EL student is to you and your professional opinion on what the academic needs of an EL student might be.**

2. **What do you feel teachers need in order to successful address the needs of an EL learner?**

3. **Is PISD adequately addressing the teacher needs in terms of quality, relevant professional development for EL instruction and resources?**

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Please elaborate.

4. **What would you argue is the leading factor of the academic disparity between El and non-ELs in PISD? Please explain.**

5. **What would you like to see come of this study?**

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program Consent

Form

Project Title: *Addressing the*

Principal Investigator: Dimitri D. Garcia

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Dimitri D. Garcia a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the researcher or Texas A&M University. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

As a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University, I am conducting a study for my dissertation which surrounds digital learning in the classroom. The intent of this study it to determine the perspective of Place Independent School District (PISD) teachers on the topic of academic disparity between English learners (ELs) and non-ELs. This study will provide details about what is happening in the district's ESL program by looking at publicly available data, surveying all core teachers, and conducting follow up interviews with teachers.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a certified teacher who serves EL students as part of your campus' ESL program.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST?

Surveys and interviews will be conducted in October and November of 2020. The survey will

be open to all core area teachers who, by their campus ESL program, serve EL students. The

interview will be open for five business days, and once completed, interviews will begin.

IF I SAY "YES, I WANT TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH," WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, your participation will include an interview of approximately 45–60

minutes).

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE ASKED TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

There are approximately 65 core teachers at the primary grade levels and 24 ELAR teachers at

the secondary level in PISD, all whom serve EL students according to their campus' ESL

program. The survey will be sent to all of them with the aim of getting 80% participation. This

same group of teachers will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview, with the goal of 2

participants from each of the six campuses in PISD. In total, I expect to interview 12 teachers.

WILL PHOTOS, VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BE MADE OF ME DURING THE STUDY?

Yes, the researcher will make audio recordings during the interviews so that your perceptions of

PISD's ESL program can be documented. If you do not give permission of the audio recordings

to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study.

        I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during

participation in this research study.

        I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during

participation in this research study.

WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- **Someone will explain this research study to you.**

- **Whether or not you take part is up to you.**

- **You can choose not to take part.**

- **You can agree to take part and later change your mind.**

- **Your decision will not be held against you.**

- **You can ask all the questions you want before you decide**

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

The interview and observation are entirely voluntary and do not entail any foreseeable risks. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the researcher or Texas A&M University. All data will be maintained in a locked file in the researcher's home office throughout the duration of the study. Consent forms will be forwarded to the committee chair's office, Dr. Radhika Viruru at Texas A&M University. Every attempt will be made to secure your privacy and confidentiality as you participate in the interviews. Responses will be completely confidential, and no individual names or other identifiable information will be indicated in the course of this study, including the true name for Place ISD. Your name or Place ISD will not be associated with any research findings and the data will be stored in a secure place. The school and participants will be assigned a pseudonym.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your part in this research. However, possible benefits of participation may include a contribution to scholarly research and is extremely valuable for building teacher capacity for bringing about change and successful

implementation of ESL programs and positive academic outcomes for ESL students.

WILL THERE BE ANY COSTS TO ME?

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in this study.

WHO CAN I TALK TO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Dimitri D. Garcia, to tell her about a concern or complaint about this research at 979-676-1470 or ddgarcia@tamu.edu. You may also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Radhika Viruru at 979-862-8122 or viruru@tamu.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Texas A&M Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may talk to them at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in this study. The procedures, risks and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____

Printed name of participant

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Researcher   Date

_____

Printed name of Principal Researcher