
IN THE TRENCHES:

Reflections on the Pedagogy and Policy of Teaching Los Angeles' English Language Learners

Charlotte Rose Krovoza

Urban and Environmental Policy

Professor Bhavna Shamasunder & Professor Robert Gottlieb

Senior Comprehensive

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ACRONYMS

ADA	Average Daily Attendance
BCLAD	Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development
CELDT	California English Language Development Test
CLAD	Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development
CST	California Standards Test
DLP	Dual Language Program
DoE	Department of Education (of the United States)
ELC	English Learner Coordinator
ELD	English Language Development
ELL/EL	English Language Learner/English Learner
EO	English Only
ESC	Educational Service Center (of East Los Angeles)
IFEP	Initially Fluent English Proficient
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LTEL	Long-Term English Learner
MBP	Maintenance Bilingual Program (also known as one-way immersion)
MMED	Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department (previously the Language Acquisition Branch)
MP	Master Plan (2013 EL Master Plan)
OCR	Office for Civil Rights (of the United States DoE)
OELA	Office of English Language Acquisition (U.S. DoE)
PD	Professional Development
RFEP	Reclassified Fluent English Proficient
RICA	Reading Competence Instruction Assessment
RSP	Resource Specialist Program
SEA	State Educational Agency
SEI	Standard English Immersion Program
TA	Teacher's Assistant
TBP	Transitional Bilingual Program
TE	Teachers Edition
UTLA	United Teachers of Los Angeles

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) enrolls the highest concentration English language learners in the United States at 31 percent. However, the district is notoriously known for low graduation rates among its English learners (ELs), at 33%.¹ In light of this, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) launched an investigation in March of 2010 to see if the district's English learners have been denied educational opportunities. After 19-months, the OCR concluded that ELs indeed were denied opportunities. As part of the settlement, the Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department of LAUSD formed a committee to assist in writing an EL Master Plan. The stakes are incredibly high and this effort has the potential to redefine an EL student's future. If a revamp of EL instruction succeeds, the achievement gap will significantly shrink. Recognizing that teachers would ultimately be the ones responsible for the implantation of this new plan, I sought to interview teachers in the 2nd largest school district in the nation to better understand their insights into how a closing of the achievement gap may be realized.

My research question is "How is LAUSD implementing the English Language Learner Master Plan, and in particular, how might LAUSD best support teachers to ensure the elimination of the achievement gap between English Language Learners and English Only students?" Teachers as well as administrators spoke candidly with me. Many reoccurring themes emerged, which in turn became my findings. Given my research on background information, my

¹ David Silvers, Marisa Saners, and Estela Zarate, *What Factors Predict High School Graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District?* (University of California Santa Barbara, 2008).

literature review, ideas from teachers and my own personal experience I came up with a list of corresponding recommendations for each finding. Lastly, I conclude with steps for further research, based on a finding not directly related to my original question: the push for bilingual programs.

INTRODUCTION

What happens in a classroom has the potential to change assumptions, lives and the world. In classrooms across America, pessimistic preconceived notions of a student's future sentence some children to failure. Alternatively, great teachers defy those notions and change lives and society for the better.

My interest in education and the opportunities it could unlock was sparked when I was elected to be the student representative to the Davis Joint Unified School Board my senior year of high school. I reviewed community proposals, attended seminars, made motions and voted on every item that came up before the Board. Additionally, I learned first-hand about the achievement gap ingrained across America while serving on an achievement gap task force. In college, my interest in the matter grew with my freshman-writing seminar, Hood Science 101, which introduced me to South Los Angeles and how community changes influence public education. I toured schools, participated in community events, and learned how effective pedagogies could transform the experience of all students.

Inspired, I began to simultaneously pursue my Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Environmental Policy and a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. My sophomore coursework, and the fieldwork I did for the credential, solidified what I already knew: I loved teaching and the classroom. In August 2011, I was buying books for my credentialing classes at Occidental

College when I heard the program had been canceled. Under no scenario could I earn my credential at Occidental College. I was beyond devastated. But while my undergraduate academic program changed, my resolve to become an inner-city teacher did not. I was accepted into Teach for America, and beginning August 5, 2013, I will launch my teaching career in Nashville, Tennessee. Education is the key vehicle to heightened social mobility in our nation. I want to be an enabler of social mobility as a stellar public school teacher.

It was during my sophomore year of teaching methods courses that I was first introduced to the continuous struggle English language learners in LAUSD face. In the kindergarten class, 83% were English language learners (EL). While the language barrier may easily be a struggle for students in their first year of formal schooling, I was startled that this was a continuing issue when I spent another semester in a 6th grade classroom. Thirty-seven percent of the students were still classified as ELs, having failed to be reclassified in prior years. Looking through their state test scores, 72 % of the class was at a 4th grade reading and writing level or below, with even lower math scores.

These students, who would be graduating from elementary school in just a few months and moving onto middle school, were not ready. Due to the very basic structure of middle school they could expect less stability, attention, and safety nets. They could expect to be placed in remedial level, larger classes. These classes, because they are remedial, are not prepared to put the students on track for A-G courses in high school, the courses that make students eligible to attend college. See Appendix 2. To add to it all, the students from the school are in a school

district with the 2nd lowest high school graduation rate in the country, at 40.6%.² Specifically, the students I worked with would be entering Franklin High School (unless pulled into a charter or a gifted program), which had less than half, or 49% of students, graduating in four years.³

Working with these fabulous children, while simultaneously familiarizing myself with the facts, worried me. How is the district addressing the issue of the achievement gap, especially between English Language Learners and English Only students? Is all hope lost? What can I do now to help? With English language learners being a subgroup of those on the lowest end of the achievement gap, I was determined to learn more about policies that could have a lasting positive effect on these students.⁴ A consistent theme of education reform has always been the achievement gap. But what is not always covered is a subset of those who in addition to socioeconomic factors are not performing at their best because of language barriers.

When exploring this topic, I met with LAUSD Board Member and Occidental Adjunct Professor Steve Zimmer, who shared with me that LAUSD had a new ELL Master Plan being implemented due to the recent U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) settlement. This immediately sparked my interest--a chance to work on something that was part public policy, part pedagogy. It was a perfect mix of my majors and minor,* using all

² “LAUSD 2nd Worst HS Grad Rate in US; CA Ranks 41st Among States - California’s Children,” *California’s Children*, June 30, 2010, <http://californiaschildren.typepad.com/californias-children/2010/06/hs-grad-rates-plummet-in-ca.html#.UMbfMYWmCrR>.

³ LAUSD, “Franklin High School Report Card,” 2011, http://getreportcard.lausd.net/reportcards/linker?school_type_code=S&cost_center_code=1864301&school_year=2011&language=ENG&location=INDIVIDUAL&grade_level=HIGHSCHOOL&district=&school_name=franklin&partner=&descr=BENJAMIN+FRANKLIN+SENIOR+HIGH.

⁴ Margarita Calderón, Robert Slavin, and Marta Sánchez, “Effective Instruction for English Learners,” *The Future of Children* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 2011): 103–127.

* Urban and Environmental Policy and Spanish Double Major, Education Minor.

that I knew from teaching and studying educational practices through the Occidental College Education Department, my understanding of policy implementation and urban issues with the Urban and Environmental Policy department, and my first-hand knowledge of language acquisition and linguistics with the Spanish department. Steve Zimmer introduced me to Hilda Maldonado, director of the Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department for the district, who was in charge of the development and implementation of the plan.

Given my interest, I sought to determine what would be plausible to study in a year. I identified this research question: “How is LAUSD implementing the English Language Learner Master Plan, and in particular, how might LAUSD best support teachers to ensure the elimination of the achievement gap between English Language Learners and English Only students?” As I researched the plan itself, sat in on the administrator training sessions, and talked to Hilda Maldonado, I realized LAUSD is spending a significant amount of money implementing this plan as it works to disseminate the details and expectations of the plan to the classroom teachers. However, no matter how great the training the school principals received or the retreat the LAUSD superintendents attended, the plan could only work if the teachers believe in it, and deliver it in the best manner. With personal knowledge of the hostile environment for teachers in today’s schools, and how hard they work for the little pay they receive, I was curious how teachers would work with the plan and, specifically, what types of support they would like to see the district provide to help them best serve their EL students.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A REVIEW OF NATIONAL, STATE AND LOS ANGELES ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER POPULATION, PRACTICE AND POLICY

The current national conversation on immigration is extremely relevant to the presence of ELs in the classrooms because many immigrant children and those whose parents or grandparents were immigrants are not native English speakers. In the second presidential debate this past October, a question was raised regarding immigration policy in the United States. In his response in this town-hall style debate, President Obama stated:

We are a nation of immigrants. We're just a few miles away from Ellis Island. We all understand what this country has become because talent all around the world wants to come here. People are willing to take risks, people who want to build on their dreams and make sure their kids have even bigger dreams than they have.⁵

In this quote, the president accentuates the importance of immigrants in America, and says nothing to suggest that the continuous flow of immigrants into the United States will subside. His statement is substantiated by evidence. In the last 30 years, more than 30 million authorized and unauthorized immigrants have arrived in the United States. It is assumed that this trend will only continue. When the United States reaches a total population of 438 million, 82% of the increase will be attributed to immigrants. A total of 67 million immigrants and 50 million

⁵ "Presidential Town Hall Debate with Candy Crowley" (CNN, October 16, 2012).

whose parents or grandparents are immigrants, will be come to the U.S. with or without documentation in the next few decades.⁶

While much of national politics has been focused on immigrants entering the country, there has been relatively little discussion about the children they bring with them or who are born in the United States. Currently there are 16.2 million children in immigrant families, 5.3 million (10.7%) of whom are ELLs.⁷ EL students come from a range of different native languages. The most predominant is Spanish at 73.3 percent, then Chinese at 3.8 percent, and Vietnamese at 2.7 percent. What follows (<2%) is French/Haitian, Hindi, German, Korean, Arabic, Russian, and Hmong, and Other (10.4%).⁸ Over 150 different native languages are spoken in our schools nationwide. It is crucial that we understand the presence of immigrant and first generation students in our classrooms, and realize the special language needs they may have.

A NATIONAL ISSUE

Educational policy and best practices for ELs in the nation is for the most part left up to state and local school districts. However the DoE influences local districts through its Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). According to its website, its primary roles are:⁹

⁶ *U.S. Population Projections 2005-2050* (Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2008).

⁷ “MPI | National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy - English Language Learner Center,” accessed December 11, 2012, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/integration/ellcenter.cfm>.

⁸ National Center on Immigration Integration Policy, “Top Languages Spoken,” accessed December 11, 2012, http://www.migrationinformation.org/ellinfo/FactSheet_ELL3.pdf.

⁹ US Dept. of Ed, “The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA),” accessed December 12, 2012, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html>.

- Support systemic reform efforts carried out by State Educational Agencies (SEA) and Local Educational Agencies (LEA)
- Build and maintain capacity of SEAs to access Department of Education resources in order to effectively serve Limited English Proficient (LEP) students.
- Build and/or enhance Local Education Agency (LEA) capacity to provide an education of high quality to LEP and language minority students.
- Build and enhance LEA and SEA capacity to provide quality foreign language programs for elementary and secondary students.
- Support and assist institutions of higher education (IHEs) to develop creative professional development programs for teachers, principals and other school-based educators.
- Provide programmatic leadership to enhance and share the knowledge base of issues related to limited English proficient students with other offices in the Department and the education community in general.
- Provide technical assistance and support to the Student Achievement and School Accountability Group in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

However, as Calderon et. al point out, “Although the federal government requires school districts to provide services to English language learners, it offers states no policies to follow in identifying, assessing, placing, or instructing them.”¹⁰ It appears as though the biggest role the Department of Education plays in EL policy is in its oversight capacity along with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Specifically, when it comes to ELs the OCR can conduct a compliance review because of the district’s federal funding. Specifically, districts must be in compliance with Title VI, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. With respect to ELs the department issued a memorandum on May 25, 1970 entitled “Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin.” It further clarified OCR policy by stating, “School districts must take affirmative steps to address the language needs of limited English proficient students.”¹¹ Because of this language and OCR’s mission statement, the U.S. Department of Education has a clear role in ensuring the

¹⁰ Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez, “Effective Instruction for English Learners.”

¹¹ Arthur Zeidman, “Case Number 09-10-5001,” October 11, 2011, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/09105001-a.pdf>.

quality of education EL students receive. The OCR can investigate districts and demand change if a district's ELs are not succeeding, which is what occurred with LAUSD two years ago.

ALL EYES ON CALIFORNIA

California is one of four states that share a border with Mexico, and it has the highest number of immigrants, with over 10.1 million in 2010, making up 27% of the state's population. Additionally, there are over 4.4 million children in immigrant families, making up 50% of all children (18 and under) in California. Among California students, 1.5 million (24.3%) are English Language Learners, although 45% speak a language other than English at home.¹² What we can infer from this data is that California is of particular importance, specifically with regard to immigrant children's experience as ELs and their future success. Much like the US Department of Education, the California Department of Education does not make clear what they do at the state level for ELs. Online they explain that they "support" in two different ways:¹³

- Ensure that English learners acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible and attain parity with native speakers of English;
- Ensure that English learners, within a reasonable period of time, achieve the same rigorous grade-level academic standards that are expected of all students;

When speaking with Delaine Eastin, the former California state superintendent of public instruction, she explained that while the State Board of Education sets the EL policy such as standards and curriculum, there is not much the state can do to ensure districts are absolutely serving their ELs. To begin with, the CDE has a relatively small number of personnel. "We had 1,600 people to oversee 9,300 schools, in 1,000 school districts. Keep in mind we served more

¹² "MPI | National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy - English Language Learner Center."

¹³ "Facts About English Learners in California - CalEdFacts (CA Dept of Education)," accessed December 12, 2012, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefelfacts.asp>.

lunches than the military and those 1,600 people include school transportation, early education as well as all the important areas of student achievement and accountability for that achievement. In comparison, the Department of Social Services had 78,000 employees.”¹⁴ What this meant for Ms. Eastin was a lack of capacity to insure the CDE was helping California's ever increasing numbers of ELs. Eastin continued:

“As a practical matter, the CDE does not really have much ability to go into most schools, especially in a large urban district like LAUSD, and do room visits to see if every teacher is doing a good job by our English Learners. It is rather an honor system, because the CDE lacks the staff to look into individual classrooms to make certain that good teaching of English Learners is occurring. That oversight has to be done by the district or by the county offices of education. More than 70% of the California State Department of Education's funding comes from the Federal government and Governors of both parties along with the legislature have kept the California Department of Education lean. This occurs in other states as well but they do not have the challenge of having nearly half of their students speaking a language other than English at home.”¹⁵

We can conclude that while the State Board of Education may set rules and regulations for EL policy, it lacks the ability to ensure that quality instruction is occurring in each classroom. Instead, the responsibility lies with the individual school district.

California Superintendent Tom Torlakson has recently been applauded for the state's very recent uptick in graduation rates from 74.8% ('09-'10) to 76.3% ('10-'11). Additionally in those two years the EL graduation rate rose from 56.5% to 60.2%. In a press release on June 27, 2012, Torlakson thanked all who had played a part. "These numbers are a testament to the hard work of teachers and administrators, of parents and, most of all, of the students themselves.

While they are a great illustration of all that is going right in California schools, they should also

¹⁴ Delaine Eastin In Person, March 12, 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

remind us that schools need our support to continue to improve so that every student graduates prepared for college, a career, and to contribute to our state's future."¹⁶ While this percentage increase is a step forward, it still identifies a very serious concern---close to half of California students who are non-native English speakers are not being properly served. If they were, the graduation percentage would be significantly higher. To add to that, of the 60 % of ELs who do in fact graduate, we have no data on their college acceptance or college graduation. This is a missing link that, once tracked, would provide a more complete understanding of whether California schools do actually prepare ELs for life beyond high school. ¹⁷

LAUSD IN THE SPOTLIGHT

With a robust understanding of the facts and data surrounding immigration and EL success in the nation and California, it is now time to narrow the focus Los Angeles, the school district with the most English language learners in the country. LAUSD has a current population of 604,498 students enrolled, making it the second largest school district in the country, with a mere 45.8% graduation rate in 2009.¹⁸ Of those students, 371,783 (61.5 percent) are either currently enrolled as an EL (173,511), a former EL student (Reclassified Fluent English Proficiency –RFEP-) (171,547) or a Long-Term English Learner (LTEL) (56,725).¹⁹ A brief background on these three terms is important:

¹⁶ Tina Jung, “Graduate, Dropout Rates Released - Year 2012 (CA Dept of Education)” (Sacramento, CA, June 27, 2012), <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr12/yr12rel65.asp>.

¹⁷ MetisNet, *Improving Graduation and College Readiness of English Language Learners: A Briefing of Key Issues and Strategic Opportunities for Investment*, 2008, <http://www.metisnet.net/papers/High-School-ELs-Briefing.pdf>.

¹⁸ LAUSD, “ELL Master Plan Institute Workbook,” 2012.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

- An EL is a student who has yet to pass the CELDT test (proficient or higher). Based on their CELDT score, the student may be considered an ELD 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5
- A Reclassified Fluent English Person (RFEP) is a student who was originally classified as an EL student but has since achieved a proficient performance or higher on the CELDT test, to be considered RFEP.
- A Long Term English Learner (LTEL) is an EL student who has yet to be reclassified in his or her five years with the district (not English proficient). These students are found mostly in high school and have very low graduation rates.

All eyes have always been on LAUSD as it has attempted to address the achievement gap with ELs. However, for all intents and purposes its efforts have fallen flat considering the number of LTELs present and RFEP students who do not graduate.²⁰

The bottom line for all of these statistics is that LAUSD wants EL students to be reclassified to RFEP as soon as possible. Elementary schools have been designed in a way to support EL students and have more EL specific resources available, including teachers with BCLADs. This is contrary to middle school and high school, which are very different environments and not set up for ELs. Unfortunately, this mission to ensure all students are reclassified in a reasonable amount of time has failed. In a study of ELs in LAUSD since kindergarten, 52.6% of them were initially classified as ELs. LAUSD followed these students until fifth grade in 2010, and looked at their current status. Fifty-four percent of the students who entered Kindergarten as ELs were reclassified as RFEPS by the fifth grade. However, 46% of those students had not gone anywhere, and were still ELs by the end of the fifth grade.²¹

Looking at EL students' California Standards Test (CST) scores, it was clear that the English and Language Art scores were not going anywhere either. Over half scored far below

²⁰ Laurie Olsen, *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkempt Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners*. (Californians Together, January 2010).

²¹ LAUSD, "ELL Master Plan Institute Workbook."

basic or below basic (54.1%), 39.7 % scored basic, 5.6% proved to be proficient and a meager .6% fell in the Advanced category.²² These low scores were also reflected in the math and science CSTs. This means that these 46% who were not reclassified will be entering middle school without English proficiency. To make up for this, they will be put into a remedial English course and sheltered courses of other topics. Because they are placed in the most basic class, the class is not on track to move the student onto an A-G course that would help make the student college eligible. Without taking A-G courses, there is little if no chance to move onto college. This cycle is vicious; after all, it is the achievement gap. It has yet to be interrupted. The new LAUSD Master Plan's goal is to break this pattern and help students become proficient, high-school-graduation-ready and prepared for college.

THE 2012-2013 ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER MASTER PLAN: ITS DEVELOPMENT AND INCEPTION

"What happens in L.A. really does set trends for across the nation. More and more school districts are dealing with this challenge"²³

- Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights.

In March of 2010, the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, launched a federal probe of LAUSD instruction and support of EL children.²⁴ Specifically, it was charged with determining if “students who entered school speaking limited English, most of whom are Latino, were receiving adequate instruction.” Throughout the year, the OCR visited the district on multiple occasions and conducted on-site visits at twelve elementary, middle, high,

²² Ibid.

²³ Howard Blume, “LAUSD Agrees to Revise How English Learners, Blacks Are Taught - Los Angeles Times,” *Los Angeles Times*, accessed December 11, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/11/local/la-me-1012-laUSD-feds-20111011>.

²⁴ Zeidman, “Case Number 09-10-5001.”

and continuation schools in local districts 1 and 6, and to district and local district offices. During these visits, OCR interviewed 295 teachers, visited 340 classrooms, conferred with 17 district-level administrators, 22 local-district administrators, 40 site principals and assistant principals, 26 guidance counselors, and 31 coordinators/coaches.²⁵ The OCR also examined student placement and achievement data for current EL and former EL students at the schools visited, and conducted an in-depth review of cumulative files for approximately 200 students that contained their educational history and academic progress. Additionally, OCR conducted meetings with 377 parents and 146 students in both local districts.”²⁶

While the OCR did recognize the presence of an EL Program, the personal conversations and data collection they received raised concerns regarding program effectiveness. With their findings, the OCR and LAUSD came to a voluntary settlement, to perform a complete revision of the ELL Master Plan by December 15, 2011. The plan was to be created bottom-up, but monitored top-down by the attorneys to ensure compliance.²⁷ This was announced in a joint press conference on October 11, 2011 with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy and DOE Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Russlyn Ali. At the press conference they pressed the idea of how monumental the settlement is, being the first Obama administration Civil Rights Investigation.²⁸ Reaction to the settlement was generally positive but some remained skeptical. LAUSD School

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Blume, “LAUSD Agrees to Revise How English Learners, Blacks Are Taught - Los Angeles Times.”

Board President Monica Garcia applauding it, saying “It is very appropriate for the Office of Civil Rights to come and stand side by side with our students.”²⁹ On the other hand, civil rights attorney John Affeldt, who specializes in educational equity issues, stated, “They hit all the right areas. It’s pretty sweeping in scope what they’re promising to do, but it’s pretty short on benchmarks and enforcement details.”³⁰

Since the buzz of October 2011, it has been fairly quiet on the media front with no recent articles written or news segments. The plan itself was released March 2012, and submitted to the OCR for review. The process began in January 2012, with a steering committee tasked with the responsibility of submitting a new Master Plan by March 2012. The steering committee was made up of 13 teachers, community members, parents and administrators. There was also an “Ad Hoc” committee made up of 80 members of the community. Throughout the process there was also a total of 13 external support providers and consultants.³¹

In a conversation with Hilda Maldonado in November 2012, she pointed out that this new plan was not drastically different from the plan LAUSD has, dating back to the 1990s. Nor did it step outside of the typical EL district program box— the plan was generally in line with best practices. Maldonado observed that other than the involvement of the OCR attorneys in

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kathryn Baron, “LAUSD, Feds Reach Rights Accord | Thoughts on Public Education,” *Thoughts on Public Education*, 21 2011, <http://toped.svefoundation.org/2011/10/12/lausd-and-feds-reach-civil-rights-accord/>.

³¹ LAUSD, “English Learner Master Plan 2012,” August 2012, http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_ORGANIZATIONS/FLDR_INSTRUCTIONAL_SVCS/INSTRUCTIONALSUPPORTSERVICES/LANGUAGE_ACQ_HOME/LANGUAGE_ACQUISITION_MASTER_PLAN_REWRITE/TAB1211308/MASTER%20PLAN%20UP%208-24-12.PDF.

monitoring the progress of the district, there were a few significant changes that would or should affect elementary classes. These included, according to Maldonado:

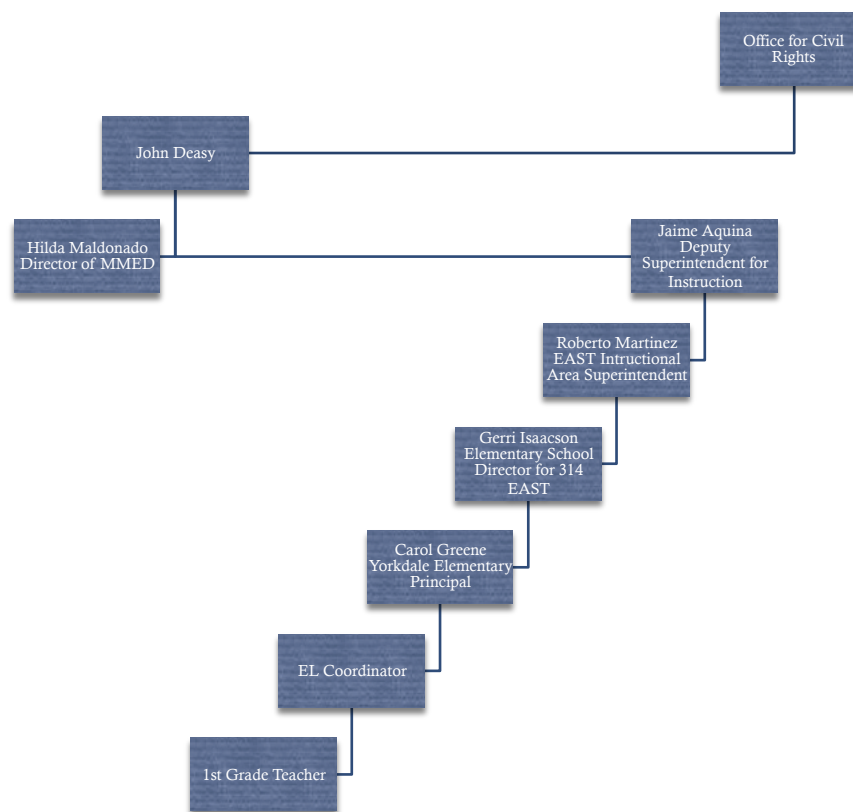
1. The high pressure to reclassify students (should not take more than five years of classes in LAUSD), which would mean if an EL student began school in kindergarten, they should be ready to be reclassified by the end of 4th grade. The goal is for students to move up one ELD level a year.
2. Increased ELD instruction time from 35 minutes to 45 minutes – 1 hour.
3. Development and implementation of the Transitional Bilingual Education Program and the Maintenance Bilingual Education Program.
4. Academic English Mastery Program inception.

With the plan in hand, LAUSD’s Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department was tasked with disseminating the information and ensuring the richest of its forms would be delivered to children.³²

EL MP ORGANIZATIONAL ROLL-OUT CHART

Attached is an example of the complex organizational structure of LAUSD (Figure 1). It illustrates the “chain of command” for a teacher at the neighboring Yorkdale Elementary School who works with EL students. Or rather, how the information, trainings and meetings on the plan would be passed down to the teacher. The teacher would rely on the people “above” for more detailed information on the plan. The teacher would have also received a copy of the paperback EL Master Plan, like all teachers did (this was significant, and expensive, purchasing the books for every classroom teacher). The chart is in the most basic form, with even more people at each level. It is simplified to show the basic idea and rollout.

³² Hilda Maldonado, “Meeting # 3” Oral, November 4, 2012.



As one can conclude by looking at this chart, the system itself is very bureaucratic with few safety nets or support systems. Essentially, if the point that the district wants portrayed gets twisted in any part of the dissemination, it disrupts the entire message.

STRUCTURED ENGLISH IMMERSION

An estimated 94% of EL students are enrolled in the Structured English Immersion (SEI) program, therefore this program is the central component of my analysis.³³ The goal of SEI is “acquisition of English language skills and access to core content so that ELs, including those with disabilities, can succeed in a mainstream classroom.” SEI is designed to ensure that ELs develop English proficiency and receive appropriate supports to make grade level content standards accessible. High-quality ELD instruction and scaffolded content instruction are

³³ Ibid.

provided with primary language support for clarification. SEI is the designated default placement for ELs who are “less than reasonably fluent” (ELs at ELD 1-3).”³⁴ The teachers qualified to teach this class are anyone with a California teaching credential, although those with a BCLAD certification are preferred. There are five specific program components:³⁵

1. 60 minutes minimum of ELD instruction at the students’ assessed level of English language Proficiency
2. Teaming for ELD as needed within or across grade levels to provide ELD at the appropriate student proficiency
3. Standards-based instruction in all curricular areas.
4. Differentiated instruction in reading, writing, math, science and social science, delivered through specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) methodology, utilizing state-adopted, district-approved, standards-based materials and supplemental materials.
5. Primary Language support to motivate, clarify, direct, and explain, is provided according to student need and availability of staff and materials

For each of the programs, the Master Plan presents the minimum benchmarks each student must make. Every EL student is expected to move up one level in his or her ELD. See Appendix 9. This means someone who began kindergarten, as an ELD 1 would be an ELD 2 by the start of the first grade. It is expected that they will be English proficient, with an Advanced score on the CELDT, by their fifth year. This level change is determined by the yearly-administered CELDT test along with teacher feedback. Failure to meet English proficiency by their fifth year will result in a new classification—Long-term English learners. These students, as I mentioned earlier, will face a whole new wave of issues in middle school and high school. It is absolutely essential that ELs are reclassified and proficient in English as soon as possible.³⁶

Students are supposedly receiving this specialized instruction one hour a day if they are ELD

³⁴ LAUSD, “English Learner Master Plan 2012.”

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

level 1-3, in addition to other core subjects. This is a change. It used to be only half of an hour. It is during this hour that the teachers are expected to work on ELD, through the ELD component of the ELA curriculum *Treasures*, to enhance student English proficiency.

California is one of the few states that tells districts which textbooks can be used in schools. As of now, California offers three different instructional programs that districts can pick from for their English Language Arts instruction. The previous ELA curriculum was *Open Court* and the ELD component was separate and called *Into English*. LA converted to the *Treasures* curriculum in August 2011. Hilda Maldonado felt that adopting *Treasures* was the district's best option of the three choices, but acknowledged there were definite shortfalls to the curriculum and it was up to teachers to pick and choose what materials they wanted to use and what to leave behind. She emphasized the need for creativity with the material and knowledge of which teaching techniques are the most successful. She stated, "Teachers must be critical consumers of curriculum and design."³⁷ Teaching is a very active process and teachers must be actively analyzing and revising their pedagogical techniques for English language learners.

QUESTIONS REMAIN

After studying the Master Plan extensively, viewing the levels of implementation and reflecting on all the information presented, I still feel there are questions. LAUSD is 710 square miles in area. In addition to L.A., it serves children from 32 other cities. It has a staff size of 59,811 people, 31,748 of whom are teachers. The district serves 671,648 students in its 1,278

³⁷ Maldonado, "Meeting # 3."

schools.³⁸ Considering the sheer size of LAUSD, is implementing this new plan even possible? Will we actually be able to see a change? How do the teachers feel? Do they think it's plausible? The plausibility of the plan and the opportunity to make change will not take place before this paper is completed. The district began to roll out the plan only three months ago. What I can look at is the teacher aspect. Specifically do teachers feel supported by the plan?

After all of the time, energy and money spent in the development and implementation of this plan, what it comes down to is the teacher. Will they be able to deliver it in an effective way that makes a difference? If the teacher does not agree with the plan, or is not able to deliver the material successfully, this process will fail. Millions of dollars will have been wasted. The settlement will not have been met, and legal procedures will begin, sanctioning the district, and federal money will be withheld. However, the greatest issue of all is the future of our country. If this plan fails, EL students will have been denied the opportunity to succeed. To ensure success, it is absolutely essential that teachers feel supported, informed and excited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to diving into the research on teachers of ELs in Los Angeles, it's essential to review the current published literature available on the topic. While there is much research on teacher best practices, pedagogical approaches and reports on EL success, I found little research on what could be done to help support teachers. Still, there were some that I found informative and helpful for familiarizing myself with the current state of best teacher support practices. I also came across research on EL teacher challenges, which are important to name and recognize

³⁸ LAUSD, "Fingertip Facts 12-13," 2013 2013, <http://home.lausd.net/ourpages/auto/2011/12/22/46088560/Fingertip%20Facts%2012-13%20EN.pdf>.

when launching a more specific study. LA is unique, and so is the situation, so I wanted to be sure to take a holistic and critical look at what is currently out there.

WAKE-UP CALL

Californians Together, the English language learner advocacy group in California that was born out of the passage of Proposition 227, published a “wake-up-call” study. *Reparable Harm* thoroughly examined the results of California Long-term English Learners. Specifically, these students -- who based on the amount of time in our public schools should be able graduate - - are still “...not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits.” Performance data on 1/3rd of California’s secondary ELs and 40 school districts were studied. The findings offer a “startling picture of students left behind, parents uninformed, educators unaware and districts largely stumped on what to do.”³⁹ Their major findings included:

- The majority (59%) of secondary school English Learners are LTELs (6 plus years without being reclassified).
- California school districts do not have a shared definition of LTELs. Only 1 in 4 districts has a formal definition or designation and “normative” years vary.
- ELs become LTELs in the course of their schooling experience. The factors that contribute to this are:
 - Receiving no language development program;
 - Curriculum received was not for ELs;
 - Enrollment in weak EL program and inconsistent programs;
 - Narrowed curricula and only partial access to the full curriculum;
 - Social segregation;
 - Linguistic isolation; and
 - Cycles of transnational moves.
- By the time that LTELs arrive in secondary schools there is a set of characteristics that describe their overall profile:
 - Struggle academically;
 - Distinct language issues e.g., high functioning social language, very weak academic language;

³⁹ Olsen, *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkempt Promise of Educational Opportunity for California’s Long Term English Learners*.

- Significant deficits in reading and writing skills;
- Stuck at intermediate levels of English proficiency or below, if higher, academic knowledge is not on par;
- Significant gaps in academic background knowledge; and
- Socially may have developed habits of non-engagement, learned passivity or invisibility on schools.
- The majority of the LTELs aspires to go to college, not knowing whether their academic skills, record and courses are preparing them adequately for higher education

To put a stop to the continuous flow of LTELs struggling in their secondary schools, Californians Together cited eight key things that need to occur, especially at the beginning of their schooling experience. As the report concludes, what is needed from school districts are “1) clearly defined pathways and clear descriptions of program models in English Learner Master Plans; 2) providing professional development (including coaching and collaborative time) for teachers and administrators in understanding the needs of English Learners and strategies to meet those needs; 3) communication and clarity of expectations about what quality instruction looks like; 4) curriculum materials that facilitate differentiation for varying levels of needs; 5) published expectations of growth and achievement for English Learners by length of time in program and by proficiency levels; 5) systems of observation and mechanisms for monitoring student progress; 6) emphasis on articulation between levels; 7) systems for holding site administrators accountable for high quality programs for English Learners; and 8) increasing access to preschool programs designed for English Learners.”⁴⁰ From what I can initially tell, LAUSD has made an effort to follow these guidelines, however it ultimately falls on the teacher, and that’s who I focused on.

Lastly, the report points out that “Civil rights legislation and court action have been necessary in the past decades because schools, on their own volition, were not adequately

⁴⁰ Ibid.

including or addressing the needs of English Learners.” This is the case with LAUSD and the reason for the formation of the new Master Plan. Unfortunately it is the pressure from the federal government that is getting districts like LAUSD to take action, it is not occurring in an organic manner.

Reparable Harm is extremely relevant to the study of elementary EL programs because what does not occur in elementary school (full English proficiency) catches up with students in later years and ends up seriously harming their future. The report shows that it is essential that students in their primary years reach a functional and academic level of proficiency in English as soon as possible. It is the knowledge of this dismal reality for LTELs (and the OCR) that is driving the movement for all EL students to reach English Proficiency within their five years of initial schooling in LAUSD.

TEACHER CHALLENGES

To best understand the challenges teachers face when working with ELs, we can turn to the 2005 empirical study led by Patricia Gandara of the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Center. Much research has been done on sound effective EL instruction and skills that contribute to successful teaching. Examples of knowledge and skills that contribute to successful EL teaching include: 1) Ability to communicate with students; 2) Ability to engage students’ families; 3) Knowledge of language uses, forms, mechanics, and how to teach these; and, 4) A feeling of efficacy and with regard to teaching ELLs.⁴¹ Additionally it is essential that these factors be considered in ensuring effective instruction. The elements for effective instruction are: 1) Knowledge of Teaching and Learning; 2) Deep Content Knowledge; 3)

⁴¹ Mr. A In Person, February 6, 2013.

Experience (language); and, 4) Full certification in field. None of the above captures support for teachers themselves and an analysis of their potential challenges.

The study by Gandara et. al. is very similar to what I am exploring. However, the survey data from 2005 was much larger (5,300 Californian teachers), and did not focus specifically on one specific EL program. Only 15% polled were in SEI programs, while 100% of teachers I interviewed were a part of it. Specifically the study looked at: 1) the most difficult challenges teachers faced in EL classrooms; 2) How teachers themselves view their knowledge and preparation for meeting the needs of these students; and, 3) their views on professional development and other support that would best help them meet those challenges.⁴² The research findings are useful to my own project.

Reviewing the findings for teacher challenges proves essential because understanding the challenges is the only way the district can address the teachers' concerns. The report prefaced this section with a note that they found the "majority of teachers felt positively about students' willingness and determination to learn and about parents' desire to support their children's academic achievement." Below are the most commonly reported challenges, in order of difficulty:

1. The inability to connect with parents, inform them of standards, expectations, and ways to help was the most commonly named challenge for K—6 teachers.
2. Having enough time to teach EL students all of the required subject matter, including ELD.
3. Teachers expressed frustration with the wide range of English language and academic levels often found in their classrooms.

⁴² P. Gandara, J. Maxwell-Jolly, and A. Driscoll, "Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners: A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences, and Professional Development Needs" (2005), <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6430628z.pdf>.

4. Teachers were challenged by the lack of appropriate assessment materials and instruments.
5. The more preparation that teachers had for working with English Language Learners, the more likely they were to cite challenges involving shortcomings in instructional programs and resources for these students.

When it came to the effects of teacher certification and professional development, researchers found:

1. Greater preparation for teaching ELs equaled greater teacher confidence in their skills for working with these students successfully; and
2. Over the last five years many EL teachers had little or no professional development designed to help them teach these students and the quality of training was uneven.

Teachers also classified their support needs as follows: Teachers most often chose paraprofessional help, more time to teach and to collaborate with peers, and better ELD Materials when presented with choices of additional assistance.

By reviewing the findings in this report, I am able to establish a baseline for teachers across the state and how they feel about teaching ELs. This is a valuable starting point and provides a good context for my interviews. Many charts were referred to and those can be found in the appendix.

TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers, to keep things exciting and cutting-edge, must receive constant training and support, no matter how many years they have been teaching. An article published last year by Margarita Calderon et. al, lays out a clear “where we are now” and the importance of “getting it right” with English Language Learners. After reviewing all aspects of a program such as leadership structures, parent and community involvement, language and literacy development, cooperative learning and tutoring, the authors conclude that the most effective part of a program is teacher quality. “Experts on teacher education, language minority children, and general

reading and writing instruction agree that effective teaching is critical to student learning.”⁴³ Specifically, they point out the role professional development plays in improving teachers, based on a study by Rafael Lara-Alecio, who concluded that “on-going bi-weekly professional development improved kindergarten teachers’ work with English learners”.⁴⁴ In conclusion Alecio stated, “What these teachers need today from the nation’s schools are the structures and support that will enable them to move in these directions (advanced understanding). Without better support for teachers, we cannot expect better student outcomes.”⁴⁵

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

It should also be mentioned that the ELD standards have changed since the inception of the new Common Core State Standards. This means a lot for teachers, as it is a significant shift, with standards changing from breadth of content to depth of content. The 2012-2013 academic year has been a pilot year for some grades in LAUSD as they implement the standards, but what is not known yet is what it means for ELs. Stanford University’s *Understanding Language* department has been on the forefront of this conversation, having put together a series of videos and works that address this question. In an article by Maria Santos et al. she concludes that “the content, performance and language demands of the new standards and aligned assessments will augment the challenges for English language learners. Teacher preparation and professional development programs will need to be designed to support the deeper content, performance and language demands expected of students. Consequently, the content, quality and delivery of professional learning opportunities will need to support teachers’ deeper understanding of

⁴³ Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez, “Effective Instruction for English Learners.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., 114

⁴⁵ Ibid., 119

content and mastery of instructional.” With this awareness I was able to also ask about the Common Core Standards and how teachers were preparing for them considering the large number of ELDs in their classrooms, and the new challenges it would present.

METHODS

After conducting background research necessary to understand what the Master Plan for English Language Learners is and how LAUSD is implementing it, I conducted an extensive literature review to comprehend best practices for teachers with English Learners and the challenges they face. Once equipped with this background I began the heart of my research: interviews with teachers, administrators and stakeholders involved in the conversation. I narrowed my study to public elementary schools in the East Los Angeles Education Service Center area (ESC East) because this district has the highest concentration of ELs in the district, approximately 70%. See Appendix 6. Therefore finding teachers and administrators with extensive experience working with ELs did not prove to be difficult. My purpose in interviewing administrators and stakeholders was to provide context for what is happening inside the classroom. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to two hours, with the average interview taking about an hour. In an effort to allow the teachers and administrators to speak candidly, they are listed anonymously throughout the findings. I used my interview data to compile my findings in a narrative form. I want to give the reader a raw perspective of where teacher and administrator views.

TEACHERS

Teachers were my primary research subjects. Initially I had planned to do in-depth interviews with three veteran teachers. Given the budget cuts and loss of teachers with little

seniority, every teacher I interviewed was a veteran teacher that had been working for at least 15 years. Contacting teachers was difficult because LAUSD e-mails are kept confidential. Fortunately, due to my connections with schools in East Los Angeles, I established contacts that referred me to other teachers. Once I started interviewing teachers, it became clear that experiences teaching ELs varied greatly depending on the grade level. I sought to interview teachers with experience from every grade level, something that I was successful doing. In the end, I conducted in-depth conversations with seven teachers and one Teacher's Assistant. The essential question I asked toward the end of each interview was "What would you like to see the district do to best support you, which in turn you believe would lead to a higher rate of reclassifying ELs?"

ADMINISTRATORS

Directly overseeing the work of teachers with ELs are the EL Coordinators (also known as coaches) and principals. I was fortunate enough to interview two EL Coordinators and two principals from different sites across East Los Angeles. Because EL Coordinators are funded by each school's budget, some principals elect to not have EL coordinators, and instead use the money to fund other services. Because EL Coordinators and principals do ideally play a significant role in the support of the teachers, I figured they would have a lot to say on this matter.

STAKEHOLDERS

While not core to my research, I interviewed professionals who had a vested interest in the success of the Master Plan and/or could provide a historical background to ELs in California. Because of the specificity of their job, these participants are named. I spoke with:

- Shelly Spiegel-Coleman, President of Californians Together, Master Plan committee member
- Cheryl Ortega, Director of Bilingual Education for the United Teachers of Los Angeles, Master Plan committee member
- Hilda Maldonado, Director of Multilingual and Multicultural Education for LAUSD
- Delaine Eastin, Former Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of California

These individuals informed my findings, the background information, and the further research for my study.

FINDINGS

Teachers were excited to share their thoughts on the Master Plan and teaching ELs. One even compared our interview to a “therapy session.” All of the teachers had very strong opinions with evidence to back up their statements. Throughout every conversation, similar themes were raised and rarely were they positive. I was able to separate what was said into six themes that had either a positive or negative relationship with EL success: *1) Comprehension of the EL Master Plan, 2) ELD Professional Development and Curriculum, 3) Parent Involvement, 4) Portfolios and Reclassification Pressure, 5) Time Restrictions and Testing, and 6) Classroom Support.* Each theme follows with a detailed explanation of what I found based on my interviews with teachers, administrators, and stakeholders.

I. COMPREHENSION OF THE EL MASTER PLAN

In an unprecedented move, the Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department of LAUSD (MMED) printed paperback books of the Master Plan to distribute to every classroom teacher in the hope that teachers would refer to the book and be completely aware of the district’s expectations. When I asked the teachers initially if they had a copy of the plan, five out of the seven denied having seen the book. After I described it, teachers were able to recall

something. “Oh, wait, I did receive some white book. I remember tabbing it up, it seems normal and fine I guess,” said Mr. A.⁴⁶ Still, two out of the seven were confident that they never received it. For the teachers that did receive it, they remembered little about it. When asked if they recalled anything new or different about the plan, none of the teachers felt anything had changed. “They might be calling it different things and changing it with different names but really it is the same strategies with scaffolding, vocabulary development, lots of verbal interaction between the students,” said Mr. R.⁴⁷ By his response, it is clear that there is little understanding of the Master Plan, as he spoke of teaching techniques that were not present in the published book.

Although the EL coordinators were instructed to roll out the chapter-by-chapter training modules to teachers during the weekly Tuesday Professional Development sessions, six out of the seven teachers did not remember receiving training modules. “I received the book but we haven’t done any training with it. We haven’t gone through the modules, I’m not even sure what that is,” explained Ms. E.⁴⁸ And Ms. J echoed this statement, “We have not received modules on the Master Plan yet. I’ve received the book but we’ve only gone through it very quickly. So there hasn’t been any type of in-depth PD in that. I’m sure it will come along eventually. Nothing that I could tell was really different with this new plan, nor have my practices changed.”⁴⁹

The teachers’ comments stood in stark contrast to what the EL coordinators and principals told me. To be fair, all but one of these administrators were at different sites than the teachers I interviewed. The principals and ELCs were confident that they delivered the modules

⁴⁶ A, interview.

⁴⁷ Mr. R In Person, February 13, 2013.

⁴⁸ Ms. E In Person, March 8, 2013.

⁴⁹ Ms. J In Person, March 5, 2013.

effectively. “First thing at the beginning of the year I went through all of the modules with the teachers, and gave each one a white book. I think it went very well so there should be no confusion about what is expected, and what the plan is” said Coordinator V.⁵⁰ However two of the four administrators said they felt the number of modules given at each Tuesday PD session was excessive. Principal Z stated, “They rolled out too many modules that we had to present.”⁵¹ Coordinator H also felt this year had an unusually high number of modules to be shared, “We have been doing big PD throughout the year. So first it was the MP then the Common Core modules, which is a big deal and were also trying to do the teaching and learning frameworks, which is a big deal. So these three massive initiatives have been like thrown at everybody and I’m anticipating we are going to get hit with the Common Core ELD before we’ve digested anything else. So I think that we need to get steeped in it and continue to be supported in being learners.”⁵²

It was apparent in my research that the principals and ELCs were familiar with the district’s expectations, and felt they were doing all they could to disseminate the plan. I was especially impressed by the ELCs who appeared to like the training and support they were receiving. As Coordinator V put it, “The district is doing their part in training us, we have the monthly meetings so they do provide a lot of support... especially with the new *Treasures* they’re trying to keep up with the new changes.”⁵³ However, ELCs also felt that the district’s message regarding ELs may not be reaching the teachers or the principals in the same way the

⁵⁰ Coordinator V In Person, February 11, 2013.

⁵¹ Principal Z In Person, February 22, 2013.

⁵² Coordinator H In Person, February 20, 2013.

⁵³ V, interview.

ELCs understand it. Coordinator H stated, “When I go to a coordinator meeting, I will get three hours on ELD instruction, and so I come back to the school site with a greater sense of urgency. My principal will get that same training for 20 minutes ... because he’s covering so much of the other things. So I feel lucky that he supports it, but he also has the burden of all of the implementations that has to happen and gauging how far you push for what.”⁵⁴

There is a top-down approach for the dissemination and instruction of the new plan. While this method seems to have succeeded in reaching the EL coordinators, it appears to have fallen flat with the teachers I spoke with. Teachers were confused, most could not recall ever hearing about the modules, and they felt that the training (if they had received it) lacked any real in-depth instruction. To check for understanding, I asked what stood out to them as something new in the plan and only one teacher could point to a change.

II. ELD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM

RESISTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING *TREASURES*

Two years ago, LAUSD adopted a new English Language Arts curriculum, *Treasures*. According to Hilda Maldonado, director of multicultural and multilingual education for the district, the California Board of Education has approved three ELA curriculum programs. LAUSD picked *Treasures* because it felt it was the best of the approved programs. Five out of the seven teachers, and all administrators, felt that *Treasures* was better than *Open Court*, the previous ELA program. Because *Open Court* did not have an ELD component, *Into English* was adopted as an adjunct program. Both programs were dissolved when *Treasures*, which has an ELD component, was endorsed. Those using *Treasures* felt it was an upgrade. “*Treasures* has a

⁵⁴ H, interview.

lot of really great components, especially for the ELD students. *Into English* was hard to tie into *Open Court*. In *Treasures*, the ELD component is built in, and that has made a world of difference. It's all there," said Ms. J.⁵⁵

I did interview one teacher who had not yet used *Treasures*, let alone open the box he was given two years ago. As I sat in the classroom talking to him he pointed to the clear plastic box with the shrink-wrapped books next to him and said, "Nothing has changed, not with me in particular because I still use the old system just because they've never given me the time just to sit down and play with the new system."⁵⁶ Mr. A felt as though he had not received quality PD. He was not opposed to using *Treasures* and was actually intrigued, but wanted full and in-depth PD on how to implement its ELD component. As of February 2013 he had only received a one-day training, which he said was no different from all of the other LAUSD trainings he'd attended. "The trainings, I just call it mochi trochi--you know, half-assed. I went to TE (teachers edition) training where everyone is just concerned with the bagel at the table."⁵⁷

Ms. T found the training to be insufficient as well. "I first went to a training two years ago when they released the *Treasures* curriculum. It was really not a good training. We came and just had to help out each other and try to figure it out."⁵⁸ Even after receiving the PD, Mr. A felt that it would take too long to actually figure out the new curriculum. "I can try the *Treasures* but by the time I get used to this I will have lost a couple of kids by me learning this system whereas

⁵⁵ J, interview.

⁵⁶ A, interview.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ms. T In Person, March 8, 2013.

the other system I've got it down to routine, and I'm comfortable with it and it's worked, it hasn't failed me yet. And I can back it up--look at my test scores" he said.⁵⁹

TREASURES ELD CRITICISM

The teachers using *Treasures* and its ELD component generally liked it, although they felt it was lacking in "interactivity," as Ms. Tang put it. Ms. Y said, "I like *Treasures*, except that there are no chants like in *Into English*. *Treasures* is much more academic but not very fun for kindergarteners. So at this point I've enhanced it with all of the stuff I've always had."⁶⁰ Ms. T agreed. "With the new *Treasures* there's not that much interaction. (The kids) pair-share and stuff but that's about it. I didn't add onto *Treasures*, I just worked out of the book, what they told me to do" she said.⁶¹ This slip into complacency was also expressed by Ms. E who made it clear that, "I do what they give me; I'm not going to change it so I use the materials they give me. I don't fight it."⁶²

Teachers also pointed out materials needed to fully implement the ELD component were lacking. "*Into English* did have cassettes so I could have a listening center and in *Treasures* the listening center was in CD form and I don't have any CD listening centers, only the cassette tape ones." Ms. J said.⁶³ When asked if the principal knew about this, she said that she indeed did, but was not sure the principal could do anything about it because of the lack of money. Ms. E also

⁵⁹ A, interview.

⁶⁰ Ms. Y In Person, February 11, 2013.

⁶¹ T, interview.

⁶² E, interview.

⁶³ J, interview.

raised a question about accessibility saying, “I have an entire class of all ELs but only six books of every kind. I don’t even have a full set. So I pair them up to pair-read the book.”⁶⁴

INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS

Because the ELD component of *Treasures* is directly tied to ELD instruction, it is imperative that teachers are able to fully implement the curriculum with enhancements and understand how the Teacher’s Edition (TE) is supposed to work. Additionally, all teachers should have the materials to fully implement the program. As Ms. E put it, “Right now I’m still trying to get to use it properly. How to use the *Treasures* ELD component TE would be really helpful.”⁶⁵

From these conversations, I gathered that no teacher felt that they had received effective ELD professional development in general pedagogy, SDAIE or the ELD component of *Treasures*. Many mentioned the decline of ELD PD. Ms. T said, “We don’t see a lot of professional development like we used to before, where some expert would come in and train us in certain things.”⁶⁶ Although Tuesday’s are shorter school days to accommodate the after-school PD, teachers did not seem to think of it as PD. “The Tuesday PD session used to be trainings but now we have grade level meetings and then we’ll have a staff meeting and banking time,” Ms. T continued.⁶⁷ Mr. R expressed confusion. “I would say we do minor training, that’s what those after-school PDs are, but not on ELD.”⁶⁸ One veteran teacher stated the lack of any ELD PD in

⁶⁴ E, interview.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ T, interview.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ R, interview.

her history of teaching, “I don’t think I’ve ever touched professional development for ELD,” Ms. E said.⁶⁹

ABSENT PD, UNLESS AT DISTRICT OFFICES

ELCs and principals expressed their longing to help with PD but admitted that they are occupied with compliance pieces and keeping up with the paperwork. While they all say they rolled out the modules explaining the plan, no one mentioned continuing, structured ELD PD, although they all expressed the wish for it. Principal Nava emphasized its importance. “What it really comes down to is we can have any standards but if our teachers don’t have good teaching practices and good pedagogy, the kids aren’t going to be able to access those standards, so for me I need support for PD that I feel will really enhance our teaches’ ability to teach. But all of it takes money.”⁷⁰ He expanded on his final point, saying, “N178 (professional development money) was eliminated at every school by the district within the last year or so. They took the money and centralized it and they’re doing PD but it’s kind of a top down, like this is our priority, instead of before when we had the money this was a local decision where we said this is (our school’s) needs.”⁷¹ His point was further confirmed by Ms. T, who said, “They’ll post about district PDs in the Learning Zone, but I don’t look at the posts often so I don’t know if there are ELD trainings. But if I did go to them they’d probably be far away on a Saturday or Sunday.”⁷² Mr. A pointed out that now almost everything is voluntary, including PD. “They used to pay us to stay after school. Why would I get stuck in traffic for 25 bucks? That’s not even going to pay

⁶⁹ E, interview.

⁷⁰ Principal C In Person, February 27, 2013.

⁷¹ T, interview.

⁷² Ibid.

for gas going home and the tax rate goes up on you. If you want high quality teachers to do high quality stuff, you're going to have to pay them."⁷³

III. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In every interview, teachers and administrators stressed the need for parent involvement, and its involvement in EL reclassification. For Mr. R, he found that “the ones that have low scores are the ones that you barely have any contact with their parent... There’s a huge correlation with kids stuck as ELs and lack of parent involvement or parent ability.”⁷⁴ Ms. Y saw the same results in her classroom, “The parents that are the most involved with the high expectations tend to have the best performing kids.” Given this information and scholarly articles to support it, it is essential that if we are going to have a conversation about reclassification, parents must be involved.⁷⁵

INVOLVEMENT FLUCTUATES WITH GRADE LEVEL

When I initially asked how involved parents were in their classroom, the response differed between the lower- and upper-grade teachers. Ms. Y pointed out that every parent gets excited for kindergarten, because it is such a big step for many kids, especially those who have not participated in a Pre-K program. “I definitely have great parent support from almost all the parents. I mean, it’s kindergarten, they’re all cute at this time and the parents are really excited.”⁷⁶ Ms. J echoed this statement. “In the primary grades where the parents are very eager

⁷³ A, interview.

⁷⁴ R, interview.

⁷⁵ Y, interview.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

to participate and help out, it makes things easier. They show up for parent conferences, they show up for family project days, they're still really engaged. From what I remember when I taught fifth grade, the parent involvement drops off dramatically once the kids get older." When asked why she speculated, "We are doing these kind of cute activities, like Easter egg hunts etc. and as the kids get older the novelty has worn off a bit and the activities that the kids are doing may not be as cute-sy."⁷⁷ The novelty wearing off certainly could be a part of the equation because many teachers spoke of this so called "third grade drop off." In this grade test scores may drop, students may become disengaged, and parent involvement seems to fade into the background.

Upper-grade teacher comments absolutely reinforced this point, with all saying that they lacked strong parent support. "It's like pulling teeth to get them to the school and involved," stated Mr. A.⁷⁸ Mr. R said that while his school does parent outreach, it's not academically focused. "They have parent events but it's all real social. Now we're in a bad situation 'cause there is no accountability, and when the child is misbehaving you call the parent and let them know. But now the culture has changed and it's all about what's wrong with the teacher," he says. "The parent support is pretty minimal. Parents are busy and trying to make ends meet and so basically, you know, you're the only form of support the students have."⁷⁹

Teachers also talked about the value of reading at home, and how that was the ticket to success. However, getting students to read at home has proved difficult. For Ms. T, "At home

⁷⁷ J, interview.

⁷⁸ A, interview.

⁷⁹ R, interview.

they don't really emphasize the necessity of reading, so it's a struggle getting my students to read 30 minutes every day."⁸⁰ Ms. E felt similarly, "Our students aren't reading at home and that's my mantra: read at home, read at home. I tell the parents. 'Read!' The ones that read the most are the ones that have the most success at school. And (I tell them) to have in mind that your kid will want to watch TV when you're watching TV, so set an example."⁸¹

INCOMPLETE NATIVE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Another issue is that the students do not really know their native language, especially on an academic level. One well-known indicator of EL English proficiency is fluency in a native language. "One of the challenges is that the students don't really know either language, they don't really know Spanish or English so it's really hard, where some students if they have some knowledge of Spanish you can work around a lot of cognates and that helps with learning new vocabulary, but when they don't have that sort of knowledge, like good vocab in Spanish, then it's really hard," says Ms. T.⁸² Mr. R has found that, "If they know Spanish and read Spanish and their parents are articulate in Spanish, then they reclassify really quickly. But the ones that are illiterate in Spanish and only speak Spanish and they don't know Spanish, those are the kids that are stuck forever...because they just haven't learned language one way or the other."⁸³

⁸⁰ T, interview.

⁸¹ E, interview.

⁸² T, interview.

⁸³ R, interview.

MINIMAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION

Teachers also noted that students' breadth of experience outside of the classroom was very limited, which in turn leads to a lack of English or Spanish vocabulary. Ms. T felt that this was especially relevant.

“They don't have a lot of exposure to different activities, or going to different places. You know, when you go somewhere new, you learn new vocabulary, you're exposed to new words and things.” For example, I have to draw things on the board because they've never seen it. We were working with the word “bill.” They didn't understand that there's two meanings for the word, like the beak of a bird and the thing you get at a restaurant. They don't have knowledge of that sort of vocabulary because their experiences are limited.”⁸⁴

Ms. L agreed, and said she tries to create opportunities for exposure during the school day. “I've never seen the kids share so many ideas and discuss their learning more than when we are at the LACMA, the Petersen, or even just the garden. There's a lot to be gained when the students are guided outside the classroom and given the freedom to ask questions, touch and explore on their own.”⁸⁵

EXPLANATIONS FOR LACK OF INVOLVEMENT

When asked to speculate why there is a decrease in perceived and actual parent involvement as students get older, there was not a clear consensus. Factors include the parents' education attainment and where they were taught. “I know parents who have just told me, ‘I don't know how to do long division. I don't know how to multiply.’ Sometimes there's also this conflict that in Mexico they teach (one) way and you're teaching them a different way so they get intimidated, especially in math,” explained Ms.⁸⁶ T. Ms. J saw that as a possible reason for

⁸⁴ T, interview.

⁸⁵ Ms. L E-mail, March 9, 2013.

⁸⁶ T, interview.

disengagement as well, saying “Parents may also feel in the upper grades that there may not be as much that (they) can help with anymore, and also they’ve gained confidence being comfortable with the school.”⁸⁷ In terms of English assistance, some teachers felt it was a lost cause. “I would say that most of the parents are not really able to help the kids with their English homework,” said Ms. F.⁸⁸ Principal C echoed this, saying, “The parents really want to help their children, but when it comes to language, they’re at a loss, they can’t really do much, so we focus on math because that’s pretty universal.”⁸⁹

According to Mr. A, “A lot of it is the culture, they just trust the teacher and don’t think their kids are their responsibility. Also when it comes to reclassification, they should have known these things but don’t and they blame the system but it’s because they’ve never taken the time to learn what the process is.”⁹⁰ Mr. R believes the problem is “Kids are never disciplined anymore by their parents and so they don’t behave well and the parents just don’t care.”⁹¹ To address these concerns and encourage parents to get involved, Ms. L suggests, “Teachers and administrators should try to learn the student’s language, use translators during conferences, host workshops during the school year to help parents become familiar with the curriculum so that they can help their children with homework. Also, two parent conferences a year is definitely not enough.” Because many teachers did mention the language barrier (especially with Filipino and

⁸⁷ J, interview.

⁸⁸ Ms. F Telephone, March 9, 2013.

⁸⁹ C, interview.

⁹⁰ A, interview.

⁹¹ R, interview.

Vietnamese students) it is imperative that a lack of parent involvement is acknowledged and addressed by teachers and administrators if the school is adamant about parent support.

IV. PORTFOLIOS AND PRESSURE TO RECLASSIFY

ELD portfolios are folders, with standards written on them, meant to track a student's ELD progress. There are five separate folders, each labeled ELD 1 through 5. Based on CELDT scores, students are initially placed at a level. According to the Master Plan, students should move up one ELD level a year. By ELD level 4 or 5, they should be able to pass the CELDT test, and as long as their grades and CST scores are adequate, the student can be reclassified. The portfolios are to be reviewed by the EL coordinator prior to parent teacher conferences. If a teacher would like to move a child up from one ELD level to the next, the teacher must bring the portfolio to the ELC and show that the student has a three or higher on each standard. Inside the portfolio folder is the student's work collected over months to justify each standard's score. For an example of an ELD 1 folder, see the appendix.

MANAGING ELD PAPERWORK IS TIME-INTENSIVE

By far, the biggest challenge for almost all EL teachers is the strain of managing the ELD portfolios. To put it mildly, they are hated. Depending on how many ELs the teacher has, the portfolios are described as a simple "pain" all the way to "debilitating." For Ms. T, When I just brought up the word to Ms. T, she said, "Just thinking about them gives me chills. I've stayed up all night doing them and coming to work asleep."⁹² The reaction was eerily similar for Ms. F when I brought them up, "Oh my God. They are a complete nightmare."⁹³

⁹² T, interview.

⁹³ F, interview.

There are numerous reasons why teachers, principals and ELCs do not like them. The reasons boil down to time consumption, lack of understanding and subjectivity.

The number one thing people did not like about the portfolios is how time consuming they are. To prove that a student has met just one of the 30+ standards, Ms. J explains that “Having to pull samples from here, samples from there, match them up with the standards, grade them, make sure that their grade matches their level...it takes a lot of time and is a lot of paperwork. And you’re not being paid any extra for doing all this paperwork.”⁹⁴ With the high concentration of ELs she has in her class, the time that it takes to fill out each portfolio adds up. “This year I had to take a sick day off just to catch up on the paperwork. And I’m thinking, well that’s not fair, why am I taking one of my sick days just to be able to keep up with this additional workload that other teachers at my grade level don’t have to do?”⁹⁵

“ARE YOU GONNAPUNK ME INTO IT?” - TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS

Every school decides how to pick its EL teachers differently, but from what I could tell, it was based on whether the teachers held a Bilingual Cross-cultural Language Academic and Development (BCLAD) certification and the teacher’s preference, which is done by seniority. However, for many teachers, it’s a mystery to them why they keep on getting the ELs. While the majority of the teachers were okay teaching the ELs there was an apparent feeling of jealousy, because the teachers who teach EOs do not have to deal with the portfolios. “Before (the influx of ELs) it was like okay it’s a little bit more work, that’s fine, but now it’s like oh my goodness, I can’t do this year after year after year. It needs to be rotated, something needs to change so that

⁹⁴ J, interview.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

it's not placed in your lap every year," shared Ms. J.⁹⁶ Mr. A commented on the dynamics of choosing the EL teacher:

"You're going to work harder than someone who isn't going to have to do all of that testing, all of that portfolio paperwork. ELD classes with students take more time just in terms of paperwork. When figuring out who's going to teach these classes, they're going to have issues of whether you are gonna punk me into teaching that class or oh I think you're the best teacher so you're gonna have to teach it, oh I don't want that class I want all the EOs, no but you're gonna have to teach it, now all of a sudden I'm negative, my feelings toward the class isn't the same, you've got another issue. If you are going to hold me accountable to CST scores, I wouldn't want to teach ELD."⁹⁷

NO METRIC OR CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR TRACKING ELS

There was also a cloud of uncertainty around the portfolios – no one was confident they were doing them right, even the ELCs. One teacher mentioned the delay in getting them, "I mean they're so disorganized that we didn't get our portfolios forever so like they'd already done the CELDT and everything before we got them. We got the portfolios in November."⁹⁸ This same teacher had minimal background knowledge of them. "I have no idea what constitutes an ELD 3 and what it would take to move them up. I'm not sure what the rubric is...I haven't really worked or looked at the portfolios at all this year. I think the EL coordinator is doing that" he said.⁹⁹ The rest of the teachers were much more familiar with the content and routine, but, because the standards and grade ranges are so vague, none were clear if what they were doing was right. Even coordinator V, who monitors them, does not even feel 100% confident that what she telling her teachers is correct.. "The portfolios are a tool, but they're highly subjective. The

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ A, interview.

⁹⁸ R, interview.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

district has not given us any kind of anchor. I assume that the school next door is doing something entirely different from what I am with these portfolios. The district needs to give us samples of what the expectations should look like. It's the interpretation of the standards that's really muddy. I try to help guide my teachers."¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, while the district is attempting to track student progress and be transparent via the portfolios, it appears to be only another bureaucratic hula-hoop many teachers feel forced to reluctantly jump through.

CONFUSING STANDARDS

A common message was that the ELD standards repeat themselves, which some teachers interpret as a trick the district is playing on them, trying to see if they are paying attention. "Some of the ELD standards are really confusing and don't relate to anything that we're teaching in the grade level, and I remember that was more of the case with third or fifth and they were asking the ELD students to do something even more difficult than what the EO students were asked to do," said Ms. T.¹⁰¹ Ms. Y agreed and said, "I always feel like I am missing something checking off a student for a standard, because they are so general."¹⁰²

SUSPICIOUS ELD LEVELS

Lack of clarity may also be leading to what many are saying are incorrect ELD levels. Five of the seven teachers expressed their annoyance that they were receiving students whose ELD level was not correct. Rarely did they receive students whose ELD level was lower than their actual level, but instead students whose ELD level was significantly higher than their in-class performance. For Ms. E, "Some of the students have been moved up so quickly that they do

¹⁰⁰ V, interview.

¹⁰¹ T, interview.

¹⁰² Y, interview.

not belong in that level...sometimes I'm dismayed that some 4th graders are at the 4th ELD level yet they cannot read, they cannot write."¹⁰³ The same was the case for Ms. T who said:

“My problem has been that previous teachers have passed them to the next level very rapidly so when they get to 4th grade it's like...What? You know how to independently write a persuasive letter with relative evidence when you're struggling to capitalize your sentences? And put periods and add details? It's frustrating to get these kids who have been moved up way too fast. Then again they are pressuring us to move them up.”¹⁰⁴

Her last point is something that came up for one of the teachers who did feel the pressure to reclassify, so was quick to bump the students up ELD levels. “I think the school puts stress on teachers to bump kids up the ELD levels, so it's easy to do that because they are still ELDs so they aren't being truly classified as an EO. Now if you are going to bump them up so high and put the pressure on people to do it, you're gonna cheat, you're gonna do what you can so you're going to get those mis-scores,” said Mr. A.¹⁰⁵ He was quick to admit that he would bump students' ELD scores because “I've seen what happens to them in high school, so I know what will happen to these guys if they don't reclassify.” However, he did report a backlash from the other teachers. “It irritates the shit out of me, teachers will ask me ‘why do you say he's this level and he's not?’ well it's like come on...They'll say it jokingly...but still...under my program they're good. Not my fault they don't show it in your class.”¹⁰⁶ He also added the discrepancy teacher to teacher and ELD to ELD. “Some teachers are diligent with keeping up

¹⁰³ E, interview.

¹⁰⁴ T, interview.

¹⁰⁵ A, interview.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

with the ELD students, others know that the next teacher will take care of it. Then you get coordinators that are anal about the portfolios, others that are not. It's subjective."¹⁰⁷

AWARENESS OF LTEL REALITY

Three out of the seven teachers made it clear that they understood what would happen if the students became LTELs (did not reclassify before heading into middle school). They shared this knowledge with the parents. "You have to make the parents aware of what will happen if their kid does not exit this program. Every conference I'll let the parents know about these goals and expectations and what will happen if they don't meet the goals so they are aware and take an interest in whether their kid moves up. They ask me what they need to do and how they can help, and I tell them to read" said Ms. T.¹⁰⁸ For Ms. Y, "I let the parents know but then again I don't feel like the ELs are that different from the rest of the kids because no one really knows the language well."¹⁰⁹ One teacher, who having taught in middle school understood the seriousness of not being reclassified, felt it was better to not have the ELD levels at all.

"I think it is better to air on the side of not putting them as ELD in the upper grade levels. Because if you keep them as that, then by the time they hit middle school it affects them so deep because in high school ESL classes don't count towards high school graduation or an A-G course. Anytime after 3rd grade if you've been here and they know that you've gone through the process of okay I've sent you to Saturday school, I've sent you to after-school school and you're still not passing the CELDT apparently someone has to catch on, hello there's an issue here, find out what it is. And by then, it's throw your ass in the water."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ T, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Y, interview.

¹¹⁰ A, interview.

ASSUMED INABILITY TO RECLASSIFY: RSP

Many teachers showed me their EL student information sheet, which had their EL classification (RFEP, IFEP, ELD 1-5) and how long they had been at that ELD level. All but one teacher was able to explain the data sheet. Once Mr. R understood it, he pointed out most of the ELs on the sheet and said, “These all are at RSP, so it’s like how would they reclassify them anyways?”¹¹¹ This was a something that came up in six out of my seven teacher interviews. Teachers were quick to note that the reason some of their students would not be reclassifying was because they are in the Resource Specialist Program (RSP). This was the case for Mr. A who pointed to all of his EL students on the list and said, “What’s happening here are a lot of them are special needs kids. If you can’t write a simple sentence by the fifth grade that child hasn’t been caught or someone’s just passing them along.”¹¹² Coordinator V echoed this statement saying that the reason many of the students aren’t reclassified quickly is because “A lot of the time it ends up being a learning disability.”¹¹³ Principal Z stated the same thing when asked about a 4th grade class, in which all the ELs were in RSP. “A lot of the students that are ELs will also be here in this stage of the game (RSP) because not only are they having an English learning issue that’s challenging them, they’re having other learning disabilities, processing issues, whatever.”¹¹⁴ Hilda Maldonado was very aware of this assumption. “There is

¹¹¹ R, interview.

¹¹² A, interview.

¹¹³ V, interview.

¹¹⁴ Z, interview.

an overrepresentation of English Language Learners with IEPs. In fact there are twice as many ELs than-African American students. Something is up,” she stated.¹¹⁵

LEFT OUT OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

When speaking with Maldonado, she acknowledged the problems with the ELD portfolio. “The portfolios are at the top of my list for things that need to be changed, especially given the new ELD standards.”¹¹⁶ Because the California ELD standards have changed, to match up the incoming Common Core standards, a new monitoring system will have to take the portfolio’s place.¹¹⁷ Teachers were excited and eager to suggest alternatives to the portfolios. Ms. J said, “I have always wished that there was a little booklet assessment that we could give the student and if they pass, they pass that ELD level...That would really speed up the process if there weren’t that paperwork that is required now.”¹¹⁸ Ms. T agreed. “Maybe a mini report card could be a good replacement, or an assessment, not too lengthy When it came to offering these suggestions, I found teachers and EL Coordinators were ecstatic to share their thoughts and even a bit confused, making comments like, “Wait, you want to know what I think? Hmmm, where do I even begin?” It was clear that teachers have not felt involved in the policy-making decisions. Even principals expressed these sentiments to an extent with Principal Z expressing disappointment that the district was spending money without principals’ input. “We have no money for resources so we have done non-stop fundraising. We are in the process of raising money for the Leap Frog. A few years ago, the district gave us these Leap Pad things but people

¹¹⁵ Hilda Maldonado In Person, March 26, 2013.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Californians Together, “Press Release - California State Board of Education Unanimously Adopts New ELD Standards,” November 12, 2012, <http://www.californianstogether.org/reports/>.

¹¹⁸ J, interview.

didn't really like it. We had no input, but district wide they just bought them. Please, just consult us first. I would have much rather had that that money and chosen how to spend it."¹¹⁹

V. TIME AND TESTING

*"My Dad always used to say, you don't fatten a hog by weighing it more often."*¹²⁰

-Delaine Eastin, Former California State Superintendent of Public Instruction

While not all teachers explicitly stated it, many expressed dismay at what they see as the overwhelming number of tests they have to administer and the students have to take. Many expressed the pressure they received from principals and others (similar to the ELD levels) to raise their students' test scores. While all agreed testing can be useful, they found the amount of time spent in the classroom to prepare students for the tests and during the test took away from prime instructional time. "There's high pressure for testing that you're forgetting to teach the basics. We spent two whole weeks testing not including the prep," said Mr. A.¹²¹ Mr. R felt the same way. "Because of all of this testing and requirements, teachers can't really teach, they're sitting there filling forms out and giving tests they didn't create."¹²² A major focus of SDAIE and ELD pedagogy is the interactivity factor. Unfortunately, there is nothing interactive about testing.

¹¹⁹ Z, interview.

¹²⁰ Eastin, interview.

¹²¹ A, interview.

¹²² R, interview.

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS

Two teachers mentioned a fear of their students becoming wary of school because of the testing. In Ms. T's classroom, "The students always complain to me, what? Another test? I mean, we just spent a good two days on testing and then you fall behind on what you're trying to teach."¹²³ For Ms. J, "There is just too much testing. There's a lot of assessments that happen, it feels like we're working towards a test, instead of just doing really authentic teaching we're just constantly working towards a test. So it's trying to create that balance where you want your kids to enjoy their school experience. Especially in K and 1st. This is when they're forming their opinions of school and this is when they're forming their opinion of who they are."¹²⁴ Out of curiosity, I posed this question to her; "Say it's the day before the first day of 1st grade. What tests can I expect to take this year?" She responded with:

"Oh God, where to begin? Let's see there's the. Dibels beginning-of-the-year, Dibels middle-of-year, Dibels end-of-year (if you don't do well on one of those then you have to take a weekly progress monitoring test), five end-of-unit *Treasures* tests –spread out over three to four days, three math benchmark tests, 20 or so end-of-topic math test, beginning of the year assessments, sideboard test, end-of-year test by *Treasures*, one literacy performance assessment test, just writing, and another LPA. Oh and the CELDT for the ELs. I think that's it. Keep in mind these are six-year-olds."¹²⁵

THE MORE TESTING, THE LESS LEARNING

The testing is not just for the younger grades. Instead the frequency of tests only continues, and all teachers agreed that the pressure goes up. "By the 6th grade our focus is almost

¹²³ T, interview.

¹²⁴ J, interview.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

entirely on the tests, that's all they look at."¹²⁶ Same for the 4th grade teacher who has seen an increase in attention to the tests and the amount of pressure on her is stressful. "When I first started teaching there wasn't that emphasis on test scores. But in the last five years that changed. Now we have these quarterly reviews where we review how students are basically progressing. That really stressed me out. You know there are so many variables, sometimes these kids have problems at home and I can't do anything. I've had kids whose mom has left them or died, it runs the gamut. I don't have any control over these things that affect their scores."¹²⁷ She also echoed the feelings of all teachers I interviewed when she said, "I would definitely prefer more hours to work with the students in exchange for less testing. The benefits of testing do not outweigh the loss of instructional time. This is especially the case for ELs."¹²⁸

Teachers were not the only ones concerned about testing. I pointed out to Principal C, that although the school's budget had shrunken dramatically in the last 10 years, test scores had been steadily rising. He explained:

"In reality, if we go back to test scores, yes the school is improving its scores. But why? Because they're really focusing on the tests. Graduation rates have gone up, but what I've seen is that when I go to schools that have pretty good test scores and I start talking with students, and I start asking ... open-ended questions, they will sometimes struggle with answering them because they are used to close-ended questions-- a single response, because that's how our tests are. So I can tell that the school is really focusing on the testing as opposed to learning. A lot of schools take that pragmatic approach: we don't want to be in Program Improvement, we don't want to be penalized so let's teach to the test. Let's get these scores. ...And I can't blame them because in a sense it's a numbers game right now and until our society decides okay we need to invest more money into education and testing is just one way of knowing what our kids are learning

¹²⁶ R, interview.

¹²⁷ T, interview.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

then I think the shift will go back to like true learning as opposed to just testing, because honestly I look at my 5th graders this year and they have three quarterly assessments for LA, three quarterly assessments for math, they do a placement test for the middle school, and then they do CSTs, they have a writing exam, I mean, it's like on and on and on and on and just continual testing so when we look at how much instructional time is lost for testing, it's like a whole month's worth of testing that they lose instruction."¹²⁹

While all expressed the need for tests to an extent, everyone also made it clear that the amount of testing now is too much and denying many students valuable contact and direct instruction from their teacher, something that is especially damaging for ELs. By spending valuable instruction time prepping, administering, taking and grading (some tests) this time is lost.

LITTLE SCIENCE, LITTLE SOCIAL STUDIES

Because most grades are only tested on ELA and Math, social studies and science get pushed to the side, because teachers will not be tested on them. Ms. L observed, "It seems that the focus is so intense on English development, that the other subject areas get lost. Especially science."¹³⁰ For Principal C, he's found "that teachers are cutting off social studies and science and that's kind of a dangerous game we play because as you know we have a shortage of people going into math and science and here we are at the elementary level, in a sense, believing it's not important because it's now all about the testing."¹³¹ The issue of instructional time lost is tie to both the pressure to do well on tests and the overwhelming amount of standards and time requirements mandated. Because there is so much for teachers to cover and the pressure to

¹²⁹ C, interview.

¹³⁰ L, interview.

¹³¹ C, interview.

perform well on Math and ELA tests are high, it results in a deadly combination. The focus is narrowed to ELA and Math and teachers have found it difficult to justify including the other subjects for instruction. Principal C especially felt this continued to be the case as the district increased the time requirement by 10 minutes, to a total of 45 minutes required ELD instruction a day. According to Principal C:

“With the increase in the time requirement it’s a game of slashing other things to squeeze in that time. And now the focus in this high accountability testing system is language arts and math and in 5th grade some science, but that only accounts for five percent so even science isn’t a big priority. And unfortunately that’s steered many schools and school districts into really just focusing on the language arts and math and more so just prepping for tests, opposed to engaging in really high quality learning that needs to be measured in other ways, not just the CST’s,”¹³²

Ms. J admitted that this was true in her classroom, but felt she had no other option. To work in everything the EOs are sent to the neighboring class for science instruction during ELD time. “The ELDs do not get a science lesson as in depth as the EOs, and that’s something I have to deal with, I have to think what do I want my EL students to have to miss? Nothing. I don’t want them to miss anything but I realize that the more time I take with them now, the less they are going to miss in the future. So even if they are missing a bit of science now, I have to justify it in my head that they will be able to absorb more in the future.”¹³³ Maldonado acknowledged that this was the reality for many teachers. Because of the necessary ELD time, ELs “In some ways get shorted an hour of their regular instructional time, but if you don’t give them that extra hour then you really take five hours of instructional time because they don’t understand what’s

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ J, interview.

happening in the other five hours if you don't teach him or her the language. It's not always easy to make that time, but it is necessary."¹³⁴

Like many teachers who felt at a loss when trying to incorporate everything, Coordinator H sincerely asked, "Show me how you give them instructional minutes, the two and a half hour of ELA, the one hour of ELD, the hour of math, the 20 min of PE, then you have social studies. I mean it does not fit in mathematically. And you have to factor in the bloody nose, the transition time between lessons. I would like them to endorse a real schedule. And don't pad it with just five minute cushions on either end, but pad it with a little bit of reality."¹³⁵

VI. CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Almost all teachers reported feelings of good camaraderie and a high level of teacher morale, even when there were rifts with the principals. However, it quickly became very clear that teachers felt exhausted and overworked. "I think teachers at this school are tired and stressed. Most teachers are very motivated and they're here because they love teaching, we are not here to just get a paycheck, it's something we love. The morale here is high and we've had good principals" said Ms. T.¹³⁶ Much of this stress seemed to come from the demand of the job but also the decrease in in-class support. "I remember when we used to have literacy coaches and math coaches and all this personnel assistance and I could go to them when I needed help, but now, they are gone and it's all on you. And if I need to do stuff I need to take a day off to do

¹³⁴ Maldonado, interview.

¹³⁵ H, interview.

¹³⁶ T, interview.

it.”¹³⁷ Principal C saw the same thing occur at his school, “Several years ago a small elementary would have a principal, assistant principal, math coach and literacy coach. But now those schools only have principals. Every teacher gets one to two hours of TA support a day, where before it was three to four.”¹³⁸

NEED FOR IN-CLASS SUPPORT

In-class support came up as the number one thing teachers felt could help them help reclassify their EL students. Particularly, in-class support was often referred to as a TA. Teachers I spoke with had anywhere between zero and one and a half hours of TA-time a day, all of whom said was nice, but insufficient. TA’s were assigned to a range of duties, including reading intervention sessions, pull-out CELDT practice, testing, grading and more. Ms. T has been waiting for a TA all semester, saying, “They say they will get me a TA, but so far I haven’t received one, so hopefully that will happen because right now I don’t have any support.”¹³⁹ Echoed Ms. E, “We absolutely need TA time, that would be fabulous. I only have a TA for an hour and a half. And it’s not during the ELD time when I have almost 35 kids.”¹⁴⁰ Principal Z felt that TA presence in the classroom was so important to student success that she hired a handful of TAs instead of an EL coordinator. “We have seen a lot of success with that choice, we see it make a difference,” she said.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ C, interview.

¹³⁹ T, interview.

¹⁴⁰ E, interview.

¹⁴¹ Z, interview.

TA'S NEED TRAINING TOO

Additionally, TAs do not necessarily know what they are doing. “I don’t have a TA right now and that’s tough. But when I did have one he was a knucklehead and didn’t even know how to do long division.”¹⁴² I was curious if TAs participated in the ELD trainings or received any initial training. When I asked Ms. L, she said “Very surprisingly, there was no training to become a TA. I had to ask other TAs and rely on the teachers I worked with. And even now, there has been no follow up and I haven’t been able to receive any ELD training (I’m not invited to the Tuesday PD sessions) even though the majority of my time is spent working exclusively with ELs.”¹⁴³ Ms. L did however feel that the support she did provide was extremely valuable. “For seven students during one school year, I raised their reading scores by an average of 34%. Most often, they learn best when they have one-on-one attention, and that's what I aim to give them every day” she said.¹⁴⁴

LACK OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Instructional support also seemed to be lacking for many teachers. Hilda Maldonado mentioned that MMED was working on transitioning the ELC position into compliance and support. “The ELC position has been really a compliance person and a paperwork person but not necessarily seen as a professional developer and that’s where I think our directors and principals need to do a better job of using them as a resource. They’re like an untapped resource.”¹⁴⁵ While the compliance piece seemed to be present, many felt a lack of support from the ELC. For Ms. L,

¹⁴² A, interview.

¹⁴³ L, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Maldonado, interview.

she was technically doing the ELD work with students under the direction of the ELC but had not seen her more than twice. Ms. T said, “The EL coach has observed in my classroom but not anymore ever since we’ve been reducing the budget they don’t have time to walk around or peek into classrooms or anything anymore.”¹⁴⁶ This same, sort of background role was echoed by others “She (ELC) checks with me and we chat, but I haven’t really seen her to talk about these portfolios yet this year” said Mr. R.¹⁴⁷ Ms. Y said “Our EL coordinator is supportive, but I don’t seek help from her regularly, we just review the portfolios during the grading period time, like three times a year.”¹⁴⁸ And for Ms. E she felt, supported by her ELL coordinator. “She’s there to do whatever we need, like make copies for us, and print the new ELD portfolio folders.”¹⁴⁹

At the same time, Ms. J is hesitant to ask her EL coordinator for anything. “I feel like our EL coordinator is overwhelmed so I don’t want to put any more work on her, I know she doesn’t have any time, so I’ve kind of got to take my time and do this. I know what it used to be like and that was great, but now everything has just been cut.”¹⁵⁰ When speaking with the EL Coordinators, albeit from different schools, they said they tried to support the teachers, but acknowledged that they were still learners as well and wanted-in school support themselves. “I think there needs to be more experts around. If that is me, then I can’t be wearing a million other hats, too,” said Coordinator H.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ T, interview.

¹⁴⁷ R, interview.

¹⁴⁸ Y, interview.

¹⁴⁹ E, interview.

¹⁵⁰ J, interview.

¹⁵¹ H, interview.

A PUSH FOR SMALLER CLASS SIZES

Another factor that proved helpful for many teachers was small class sizes. “Having less than 20 kids is absolutely wonderful, I love the size of this class. Thank God we have class size reduction, but I feel bad for those in the upper grades that don’t,” said Ms. J.¹⁵² With the smaller class sizes, similar to the benefit of having TA’s, students are able to receive more individualized education. But this too, costs money. “One of the biggest things that we ask for is monetary support so that we can do more intervention or even reduce class sizes for these classes that are full of English learners and then with the small group instruction we are able to better model standard English to the students, give individualized support,” explained Principal C.¹⁵³ One teacher, who ended up with a small class size this year said, “At 20 to 1, I am fine with them all being together. But at 30 to 1? We need super small class sizes or divided classes. At least for math and English. For social studies, you can kind of get away from it.”¹⁵⁴ When asked what he meant when he said divided classes, Mr. R responded “You know, instead of having this whole mixed thing they need to have...you go...your resource kids go to resource teacher. ELLs go to your ELL teacher. Grouping, segregating, whatever you want to call it, I’m in favor of.”¹⁵⁵

While all the other themes mentioned are essential when considering EL success, it is clear that classroom support from a TA or ELC or simply a smaller class is something teachers strongly believed would increase reclassification rates.

¹⁵² J, interview.

¹⁵³ C, interview.

¹⁵⁴ R, interview.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One could absolutely arrive at a recommendation for each finding and sub-finding. So while I suggest individuals fully review my findings and come to their own conclusions I have outlined some of my largest takeaways. Since reflecting on my conversations with teachers and administrators, I have developed recommendations for each finding. While I understand that at the heart of many of these points is money, I believe all are reasonable suggestions that LAUSD should take into serious consideration when planning for the fall of 2013 and beyond.

I. COMPREHENSION OF THE EL MASTER PLAN: REVIEW WORKSHOP

The EL Master Plan must be reviewed by teachers and principals again. It was frighteningly clear that the majority of the teachers I interviewed had very little knowledge of the new EL Master Plan. This was apparent when I asked them about what they liked or disliked in the plan and the way many struggled to explain to me what the plan meant for their students. The only teachers who were knowledgeable were the ones involved in its creation and who had studied it independently. Even these people claimed to have received little to no training at their school sites.

When I spoke with Hilda Maldonado in April, she updated me on what had been in the works since we last met in November. To begin with, Title III coaches, who are funded by the federal government to give instructional support, are being reassigned and placed at schools with the largest EL populations. “For the 187 positions that I had, I reassigned them just based on the numbers of ELs. We made that decision internally. We had a school with 800 API and 20 English learners and a full time coach and then just down the street we had 400 ELs that did

better but didn't get a coach," she shared.¹⁵⁶ MMED is expecting that by fall all Title III coaches will be in their new locations, and able to provide support for the EL Coordinator, principal, teachers and more.

When these coaches take their spots, it is a perfect opportunity for them to thoroughly review the plan with the teachers once more. This review workshop should be engaging and question-based. It should also be used to ask the teachers what expectations they have of the EL Coordinator, principal and possible coach. I would recommend that a similar training occur at other sites with ELs even if they are not assigned a Title III coach. Because many teachers already feel overworked and under-appreciated it is crucial that this workshop be done during paid hours and before the school year starts. Comprehension of the plan itself, while not terribly exciting to some, is absolutely essential. The plan has seven separate chapters and it is important that staff members at the school are familiar with all of them. EL parents expect that their child's school knows the program and options that are out there. The current state of inconsistent information must be addressed.

II. ELD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM: COLLEAGUE OBSERVATIONS

While the refresher course for the EL Master Plan is a one-time thing, ELD PD for teachers with ELs and in SEI programs must not be. Teachers feel at a loss for fun, new creative ideas for teaching their ELs and many yearn for it. Teachers are learners as well, and it makes sense that their love of teaching translates into a love of learning. With that said, if teachers are

¹⁵⁶ Maldonado, interview.

not provided with fresh ideas, techniques, and support to keep LAUSD on the cutting-edge of excellent teaching, we will not see any change in EL success rates.

Teachers expressed the excitement they felt after receiving good PD, and how eager they were to bring back ideas to their classrooms. For many teachers, they defined good PD as a day-to-week-long event, with lots of interaction. Some expressed their distaste for PowerPoint presentations and instead wanted to watch good EL instruction in a classroom, with a real class. Watching others and collaborating is known to be a good way of internalizing practices. Therefore I would suggest that the district recognize a network of “lead” or “mentor” teachers who are known for their success with EL reclassification.

Beginning twice a year, teachers should be able to go and observe and speak with master EL teachers. This would be a day during the week they could take off to visit another teacher for ideas. This could take place inside or outside the school and the teacher would be paid. Details would obviously be worked out. However, the bottom line is that teachers must be encouraged to actively engage in understanding what fantastic EL instruction looks like and how to use the *Treasures* ELD component. Across the board teachers expressed disappointment with previous PD sessions and sought to observe and watch another successful colleague in action. This yearning to learn is an attitude that should be applauded and provided an outlet. This outlet would be observing other teachers in the ELD component of *Treasures*, general SDAIE strategies and EL pedagogical practices.

Given California’s adoption of the Common Core and the pending implementation of the ELD standards, there will be a new curriculum program on the market that teachers will once again be required to adopt. I suspect the new curriculum will come in about two years and at that

time, I hope it is “all hands on deck” in terms of the trainings. Many of the teachers expressed disappointment in the recent *Treasures* curriculum trainings so I would encourage the district to revamp the way it rolls out the new curriculum.

III. PARENT INVOLVEMENT: GRADUATION CEREMONY

While the heart of my research is not parent involvement, how to effectively engage parents is most certainly a factor that must not be overlooked. When I initially met with Hilda Maldonado, she mentioned the push for transparency within the EL program, especially, letting parents know where their child is in terms of reclassification. While there are many measures, such as parent-teacher conferences and initial outreach efforts, that can spark greater parent participation, one very direct idea that I have is the implementation of an “English Learner Graduation” or “English Proficient Celebration.”

Although it would take effort to organize, I sincerely believe that honoring the students each year once they have been reclassified would be a great start to including everyone in the effort to reach English proficiency. This could be a site-wide, annual event for any student who is reclassified. Children have a drive to make their parents proud and by publicizing this event and seeing it as something to look forward to, parents will pay attention. Parents love feeling proud of their children. Giving the children something to work towards could prove to be very empowering for the entire family.

This effort ties directly into MMED’s goal of keeping parents in the loop regarding their child’s status. Particularly, they are pushing for parents to understand their child’s future academic reality if not reclassified. Hosting a “graduation ceremony” for the exiting of the program would honor the students and their families for all of their hard work. This would bring

EL progression into the spotlight and encourage parents and teachers to work together to track the student's process. While the event may be time-consuming to organize, I would hope that school leadership would jump at the opportunity to invite parents to join them in planning the ceremony. Involving parents and recognizing the pinnacle role they play in their child's education is paramount. An event that would embody all of the above would be an annual "graduation" ceremony.

IV. PORTFOLIOS AND RECLASSIFICATION PRESSURE: TEACHER INPUT FOCUS GROUPS

As I mentioned in my findings section, teachers were ecstatic when asked to reimagine the current portfolio system. Although the point of the portfolio is to track and monitor EL students' progress toward attaining language, because of the subjectivity of the current portfolio, the consensus is they are difficult to follow, not to mention time-consuming. For some teachers, this actually created a disincentive to teach ELs. See Appendix 3, 4, and 5 for sample portfolios.

The portfolios will absolutely be changing in the near future, that I am sure of. Because California passed new ELD standards that are aligned with the Common Core, and the old ELD standards are listed on the current portfolios, they will have to be replaced. All teachers agreed that there should be some sort of monitoring system to examine student progress, but there was no consensus on what the right format should be. Frameworks, prompts, mini report cards, assessments and more were all ideas mentioned. Having them online in some way also proved enticing.

All teachers agreed the new monitoring system should be quick, easy, and have little room for discrepancy. However, hearing the variety of ways teachers envision the new portfolio, it is clear that focus groups should play a role. Teachers spend copious amounts of time on these

portfolios and it is imperative that the LAUSD gets the new monitoring system right. While I realize it will be difficult to find 100% consensus, I am sure something can be resolved given that seven out of the seven teachers agreed that the current system is not working.

In the next months I would highly recommend that the district reach out to teachers they have not spoken with before and assemble focus groups. To do this, I recommend putting together a sort of “idea lab” in the focus group to increase interactivity and ideas. It is not going to be simple but I am confident that, if taken seriously, teacher’s ideas and suggestions could create needed change. How questions are posed and how the groups are formatted may be up for discussion, but the teacher’s role in participating in the policy-making should not. Including teachers from the start in the creation of a tool they use daily will send a clear message that the district is listening. Additionally, the final product will be useful and effective.

V. TIME RESTRICTIONS AND TESTING: REDUCE TESTING & PROMOTE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Unanimously, teachers, ELCs and principals agreed that there was too much testing. Preparing, administering and (occasionally) grading the tests is time-consuming and directly takes away from instructional time. This is increasingly problematic in classrooms with ELs because interactivity and direct instruction is essential to becoming English-proficient. Certain tests could and should be eliminated, e.g., the Dibbles tests. While I doubt this is something that the instructional office can do, I hope that the board will do a thorough review of all testing and subject time requirements.

What gets measured is what gets taught. Therefore, English language arts and math are given high priority while science, social studies, art, music and more fall by the wayside. The push for high academic performance on test scores has backfired. While in high performing

schools little attention is paid to testing, in lower performing schools it is the focus. By trying to get these schools to succeed, the students are further being denied a holistic education. As a generalization, the students who are in lower-performing urban schools know how to read and write a test, not the subject.

While the presence of high-stakes tests must be reduced, I would also recommend the district outline and endorse a weekly schedule that shows how all the subjects that need to be covered are covered. This could be a “suggested” timeline and schools do not have to follow it, but at least it gives teachers a baseline of where to begin. I recommend scheduling ELD time in the morning to ensure it is not skipped. An official schedule is essential because teachers struggle to teach everything throughout the school day,. Re-assessing the need for each test, with children’s best interests in mind, and endorsing a weekly schedule, would help ensure class time is spent wisely.

VI. CLASSROOM SUPPORT: TA ORIENTATION AND POST-HIGH SCHOOL RESIDENCY PROGRAM

If we want ELs to succeed, the district must invest in in-class support. This means strengthening the skills of Teacher’s Assistants to ensure time in class is spent well, and working to get more TA hours in class. Ms. L spoke about not having to go through any training to become a TA. She heard that this was standard and that it was up to the TA to figure out the way things worked. There absolutely must be TA orientation training before they begin work. This is especially important for TAs who work directly with ELs. Understanding linguistics and cognition is not common background knowledge but is essential for TAs working with ELs.

Besides an initial required EL orientation for TAs, I also recommend that they are invited (and paid) to attend the Tuesday afternoon PD sessions. Currently many TAs do not know if they

are allowed to attend them and so do not. Much is discussed during those meetings, including campus climate, school news and observations about students. The EL MP modules were also rolled out during these sessions, and TAs were absent from its introduction. Keeping TAs in the loop, even though they may be part-time is very important and Tuesday PDs, if possible, should be a part of their schedule. This invitation into the school community is significant because many TAs do eventually pursue full-time teaching positions.

While the quality of the classroom assistance is key, so is the quantity. Because budgets are tight, I believe there should be a real push for getting more student teachers, college students or trade school students into the classrooms to help the teachers, and the students. There are many individual non-profits and student groups that whose members volunteer in classrooms. However I think a larger, district-orchestrated effort must be launched. While money to hire more TAs is limited, there are many young adults interested in education and who are exploring the teaching profession. Now could not be a better time to capitalize on this energy.

I am confident that creating a classroom environment that has more than one adult in the room -- especially a trained and enthusiastic one -- will make a difference to both the students' and the teacher's success. Teachers will be able to spend more time working directly with students themselves if they have well-trained assistance who are competent and familiar with language acquisition.

FURTHER RESEARCH

LOS ANGELES: A TRENDSETTER FOR ALL THE RIGHT REASONS

As an elementary school student I was fortunate enough to have attended a Spanish immersion program in my town. I have always been a proponent of the programs and have followed the politics of Bilingual Education off and on since high school. When looking at the data I was amazed by how few ELs were enrolled in bilingual programs. Throughout my experience studying education I have always been reminded of the importance of valuing a student's culture and what the child already knows as a platform to enhance his or her knowledge and stimulate interest in learning. In Los Angeles, where more than half of the students have a family member who speaks Spanish at home, the district could capitalize on a wonderful opportunity to develop both the student's Spanish and English academic proficiency. Unfortunately, the vast majority of ELs, 94%, are in the SEI program. The remaining 6% are in mainstream programs (no primary support), the Waiver to Basic bilingual program (3,000 students) and the Dual Language Program (7,000). (Some way to make this consistent? I can't tell what percentage 3,000 or 7,000 is, and how that compares with 6%.)

Tara Yosso's "Community Cultural Wealth" model looks at "wealth" in terms of "community cultural capital," the skills, knowledge, abilities and contacts of socially marginalized groups. She argues that those who appear to not have so-called capital actually possess more cultural wealth than the white society. Their "Community Cultural Wealth,"¹⁵⁷ is made up of six types of capital: linguistic, navigational, aspirational, social, familial and

¹⁵⁷ Tara J. Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91.

resistant. This point is extremely important because one (of the many) types of CCW capital that the vast majority of LAUSD students have is linguistic capital. “Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style. This aspect of cultural wealth learns from over 35 years of research about the value of bilingual education and emphasizes the connections between racialized cultural history and language.”¹⁵⁸ Given my understanding of the benefits of valuing the culture of students of color (which has for so long been viewed otherwise), I was not surprised when I spoke with educators who were pushing this agenda for LAUSD.

While this was not a finding when I spoke with most teachers, the second I spoke with stakeholders I found that many questioned whether SEI was really the best program for ELs. As mentioned earlier, when a child is first classified as an EL, it is the school’s responsibility to notify parents of the instructional program options. When I asked Coordinator V about this notification process she said, “I mean, we show them the video and everything but no parent has ever removed them from (our school) to get them in a bilingual program. Sometimes they think they are in a bilingual program here, that that is what the EL program is and they don’t want that. So we have to clarify.”¹⁵⁹ It was the same case at Principal Z’s school. “Never do we have parents opt out of the SEI program and into the dual immersion program. Because if they wanted that, they would probably initially go to a school that had that. I’ve never even had that come up. People, if they want dual language, will go to the dual language (program).” However, even she

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 79.

¹⁵⁹ V, interview.

admits, “We have flyers, but there’s not enough information for parents out there on dual language.”¹⁶⁰

Principal Z’s point about not having students and parents opt out of her school for a dual language program is significant. For one school I interviewed at, the enrollment was dropping drastically. It is a known fact that the area is being gentrified. Life-long residents are moving further east because rental and home value prices have skyrocketed. The families that move in are not sending their children to the neighborhood public school. Instead, many go to private schools or other public schools. What this means for public schools is that funding is dropping. For example, the school will receive less Average Daily Attendance (ADA) money if fewer students attend. I’ve put two and two together and I am curious why a principal would tell a parent about other schools their child could transfer to. Yes, it may be in the best interest of the child, but the reality is that principals want students to stay at their schools. In other terms, it appears as though there is a significant disincentive for teachers to even tell parents what other EL program options there are.

Maldonado recognized this point and said, “Principals have to be savvy and sell their program and sell their school well and they have to be almost charter- like in the sense that they have to tell them ‘this is what we do, this is what we do well,’ It does not really matter what program they’re offering, it’s the program giving you the results that you can then pin up a banner and say we went up 25 points on the API. So it’s about being an advocate for your school and your school program in a way that lets parents know that you’re offering quality education to

¹⁶⁰ Z, interview.

their child.”¹⁶¹ While principals should absolutely be “an advocate” for their schools there certainly is a glaring disincentive to introduce parents and students to the benefits of bilingual education.

Shelly Spiegel Coleman, director of Californians Together, was the first person I spoke to who brought up the topic of alternative EL programs, not just SEI. She was a part of writing the final draft of the Master Plan’s 2nd chapter, “Instructional Program Options.” While she acknowledged some needed changes to the SEI program, she was also quick to point out her anticipation that parents and students would begin to enroll in the new bilingual programs the district will be offering beginning next fall. “The research is here. We know how beneficial a bilingual education is, to ELs and EOs. We are also in a fantastic position to lead the way and increase the amount of graduates who are bilingual.”¹⁶² However she was wary that the programs will be widely available. “That has always been the issue, yes you may offer it but is it really accessible? It’s on the district to ensure parents really know what is out there and promote it.”¹⁶³

As I talked with more people I began to realize the injustice that is currently occurring regarding bilingual programs. The district has decided to not fund any new dual language programs. Therefore, if a school or the parents want to establish a DLP, they must fundraise. Starting a program is not cheap and requires qualified bilingual teachers, new curricula and intensive trainings. Ortega elaborates, “They only provided funding for existing programs, not new programs. Unless the school can provide its own funding, the parents in these communities

¹⁶¹ Maldonado, interview.

¹⁶² Shelly Spiegel-Coleman Telephone, February 21, 2013.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

are the recipients of these fundraisers. Not the promoters. So what's happened is you can have a dual language program if you're in a wealthy community."¹⁶⁴ What is happening in Los Angeles is that in wealthier parts of towns, EO parents who recognize the value of bilingual education (and are able to afford it) are advocating and fundraising for these programs. This dynamic sets up a schooling system that caters to rich white children and leaves communities of color behind. I see this as incredibly unjust and believe it must be addressed. This is especially relevant because we know of the benefits of bilingual instruction for ELs, yet these ELs are the students who are being denied access due to geographical distance, discouragement, or over-enrollment.

LAUSD teacher Anne Zerrien-Lee who was on the MP Ad Hoc committee, saw the new MP as a historic way to revamp bilingual programs. In a letter to policy makers and members of her work group dating back to November of 2011 she wrote, "This is one moment in history when we can turn things around if we are willing to base our Master Plan on sound educational research regarding second-language acquisition. If LAUSD does this, it will send shock waves throughout the nation. We could be the leader, as we should be, in finally giving all English learners an education that empowers them to achieve at the highest levels and realize their full potential." See Appendix 1. Additionally she declared that, based on research, "Our English learners could achieve much higher levels of success overall if we allowed them to develop high levels of proficiency in their primary language while they are learning English." See appendix for full letter. While the push for dual-language programs (two-way-immersion) never materialized, a maintenance bilingual program was added (one-way immersion). However, the extent of its presence at school sites or success has yet to be determined.

¹⁶⁴ Cheryl Ortega In Person, February 21, 2013.

Cheryl Ortega, director of bilingual education for UTLA, expressed concern that part of the problem right now is that parents are not familiar with the program options nor are the benefits of bilingual education explained to them. She felt this especially became the case after Proposition 227 wiped out almost all of the bilingual programs in the state and promoted English Only instruction. However, bilingual programs can still be launched and can operate, waiver pending. The legacy of these negative sentiments about the Spanish language is still alive. “We are still having parents told, do you want your kid to go to college or be in a bilingual program? If you want them on the college track, you better put them in English immersion. The principals have not gotten the memo, or have chosen not to read the memo, about letting the parents know what their options are, that has not changed at all” said Mrs. Ortega.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, “Parents have received very mixed messages (whether Spanish is good or bad). If they really want to promote (bilingual education), they need to start with a media campaign. It’s all about marketing. The majority of the parents assume that the school cares about their children, that they’ll do the right thing. They’re very trusting” she said.¹⁶⁶

If time and money are going to be invested to ensure ELs are reclassified, then it is essential that we re-visit square one. The question that must be asked is, “Assuming quality teachers are in every classroom, what is the most culturally responsive, successful program for ELs that ensure English Proficiency and post-high school success?”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

I was once asked if I thought the achievement gap was intentional. While I'd like to think that no policy maker is actively seeking to maintain the academic disparity between two groups, such as EOs and ELs, due to the lack of direct, authentic attention to the matter, the gap becomes intentional. Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Jaime Aquino and Hilda Maldonado are saying the right things, and I strongly believe that EL reclassification is now a primary goal for the district. However, if marked and measurable change is going to occur, it is essential that the district listens to the teachers and invests time and energy in them. The teachers I spoke to were overwhelmed and at a loss. Just because they are veteran teachers, does not mean they don't like new ideas or support. Many were yearning for it but felt ignored and bypassed.

Additionally, I believe the district must seriously reflect on what their English-learning students bring to the classroom. As Yosso states, they very much bring linguistic capital. Acknowledging the great wealth children bring every day to school and working with that to cultivate learning is essential. Given that all ELs come to the classroom with knowledge of a language other than English I strongly believe the district should invest in a larger push for bilingual education. To not do this would be a missed opportunity that has future ramifications.

Teachers must know what is going on and also receive consistent and exciting professional development. If ELs are going to become English proficient, the district must be 100% committed and willing to go the extra mile to help teachers and administrators, including allocating more money to address these needs. While creating a solid and effective SEI program is essential, I hope the conversation can shift to the ways in which bilingual programs can be expanded to better serve ELs.

The current state of EL education is disappointing. This subgroup of students has been left behind. Although this was the pilot year for the EL Master Plan, it is clear that more s needs to be done. I believe MMED is working diligently on the matter and is truly committed. All eyes are on LAUSD so now is the time to be a trendsetter, and set an example for other districts across the nation. Now is the time to support and listen to EL teachers and to value all students.

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APPENDIX

November 14, 2011

To: Members of the Chapter 5 (Instruction) Workgroup

LAUSD Master Plan Revision Committee

From: Anne Zerrien-Lee, classroom teacher and UTLA appointee

cell: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I'm looking forward to working with all of you this afternoon on the Master Plan Chapter 5 draft we've received via email. I think we're all aware that the Office of Civil Rights review of LAUSD's inadequate progress in preparing English language learners for college and career success makes our work more important than ever.

So I want to ask a few key questions during our review of the Chapter 5 draft. Please keep an open mind in considering these questions. I think some excellent work has been done on the draft, particularly with regard to the need for primary language support and instruction for English language learners, and increased attention to the problems of English learners in middle and high schools. But after reading the draft and making notes in the margins, I am wondering if we are really seeing the big picture or if we are just fiddling with minor design adjustments, rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, so to speak.

For example, when the draft speaks of walk-throughs to verify that teachers are really teaching ELD on a daily basis, the implication is "If only those teachers had been teaching ELD every day we wouldn't be in this fix." I think that is a false premise. Every elementary classroom teacher I know, in English Immersion and Basic Bilingual classrooms, has taught ELD competently and creatively for years. Similarly, when the revision speaks of professional development, the implication is "If only those teachers had been shown *how* to teach ELD, we wouldn't be in this fix." I think that's another premise based on a misunderstanding, namely that teachers either did not receive professional development, or it was not the *right* professional development. I think professional development has been rigorous and often right on target, at least at the elementary school level.

I, for one, do not believe we can dig ourselves out of this hole with false assumptions.

And I have to ask, based on the limited view I've been given of only one Chapter, will the new Master Plan go far enough to change what we are doing in LAUSD for the better? Or will it be based on unfounded assumptions, hobbled by budgetary constraints and even warped by a political climate awash in xenophobia, or maybe I should say "linguaphobia" if there is such a word? Are we blinded by unspoken considerations that would lead us to foster partial solutions? Or solutions that ignore sound research on second language acquisition? Are we proposing to do essentially the same thing we've done for over a decade and expecting that strategy to yield different results? If that is the case, do we really think whipping teachers and students, figuratively speaking, to work harder will change the outcome?

Ever since passage of Proposition 227, we've been pushing students to learn English as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

- We've tried to make that happen by forcing all 5-year-old English learners to spend their first 30 days in school listening to a teacher speak to them in a language they do not understand. As a former kindergarten teacher, I can't imagine a less welcoming, less respectful or more frustrating and discouraging way to begin one's public school experience. This is truly shameful public policy, and an abominable educational practice.
- We've tried to make it happen by dropping elementary students of all ages into English immersion classes taught in a language in which they have little or no experience, often by dedicated and competent teachers who may or may not speak the students' primary language, and increasingly without the aid of bilingual paraprofessionals.
- We've tried to make it happen by treating students' primary language as a deficit rather than an asset.
- We've tried to make it happen by pushing students out of bilingual classes prematurely in first or second grade, so-called "early exit" which has no sound pedagogical foundation.
- We've tried to make it happen by "reclassifying" students as early as possible so they will no longer be considered English language learners.
- We've tried to make it happen by pretending newcomers only arrive in our schools during elementary grades, not during middle or high school.
- We've tried to make it happen by prescribing various forms of English Language Development (ELD) in elementary schools, with various curricula and materials.
- We've tried to make it happen by providing more and better professional development for elementary school teachers.
- We've tried to make it happen by providing coordinators, coaches and access-to-core specialists in elementary schools.
- We've tried to make it happen by shaming teachers based on student test scores.
- We've tried to make it happen by imposing top-down dictums and policies that are sometimes based more on political considerations than on sound educational research.

Some of these "solutions" have been admirable, others deplorable. The fact remains that taken together over more than a decade they have not brought the educational opportunity that all of our students need and deserve.

I want to posit that our past failures as a District are largely due to our repeated refusal to fully acknowledge the implications of sound research on second language acquisition and act accordingly. That's how we got to where we are today – despite having competent, caring, highly qualified and dedicated teachers who receive ongoing professional development – primarily because we as a District have limited our own progress by stubbornly persisting in expecting different results from trying essentially the same thing over and over again. That is the essence of folly, right?

We have an opportunity to change this. This is one moment in history when we can turn things around if we are willing to base our Master Plan on sound educational research regarding second-language acquisition. If LAUSD does this, it will send shock waves throughout the nation. We could be the leader, as we should be, in finally giving all English learners an education that empowers them to achieve at the highest levels and realize their full potential.

There are many people working on this revision project who are far more conversant with the research than I. But, as an elementary classroom teacher, I have to ask if in our revision of the Master Plan we are fully taking into consideration research that shows the following:

- 1) Students who achieve a high degree of proficiency in their primary language also attain higher levels of proficiency in a second language than students who have not had the opportunity to become proficient in their primary language.

- 2) It often takes an average of 5 to 7 years to become somewhat proficient in a second language, and 12 years to really master it.

The implications of these two findings are many. But at the very least, we would have to acknowledge that they seem to indicate our English learners could achieve much higher levels of success overall if we allowed them to develop high levels of proficiency in their primary language while they are learning English. It also seems to indicate that we should view the acquisition of proficiency, in both primary language and English, as a K-12 proposition – not as something that happens in just a few years. And we should advocate for this at both the state and federal levels. Then we should set out to prepare all English learners to graduate with the Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diplomas.

Basing our Master Plan on the two research findings above would mean a real change of focus. Instead of pushing our English learners into an English-only classroom environment, we should carefully design and expand programs that allow the vast majority of English learners to develop high levels of proficiency in both primary language (which for the vast majority of English learners in LAUSD is Spanish) and in English. This would mean expansion of dual language programs beginning in elementary school and continuing through middle and high school. There are ways to structure dual language programs to take advantage of the expertise of both our BCLAD teachers and our monolingual English-speaking teachers. We would also need to modify the Master Plan so students in immigrant neighborhoods that lack substantial EO populations could participate in dual language programs (as they do successfully in other districts.) And it would necessitate supporting basic bilingual programs and adding other forms of primary language programs on an interim basis for English learners who are already in the system, while we are constructing the expanded and enhanced dual language opportunities.

This would be a real change in direction that would truly empower our English learners to be successful. We can do this. We ought to do this. But will we?

Initial Classification Referral

What follows is an overview of the ELL Master Plan in LAUSD with specific attention paid to the process of determining EL level, the options a parent or student has for enrolling in different programs, and what the program will look like itself.

A part of the registration packet a new LAUSD enrollee's parents receive prior to the first day of school is a Home Language Survey. It consist of four questions to be filled out by the parent.¹⁶⁷

1. What language did the student learn when he or she first began to talk?
2. What language does this student most frequently use at home?
3. What language do you use most frequently to speak to this student?
4. Which language is most often used by the adults at home?

If all answers are “yes” than the student is classified as English Only. However, if any of the answers to the first three questions indicate a language other than English, the student is passed on to take the CELDT test. Also if an administrator has any reasonable suspicion that the answers may not be accurate, a CELDT test may be administered. An example of this is if answers to all the questions are “Ingles” and not “English.” After the administration of the CELDT test within 30 days of the start of the school year, students and parents will receive the scores. If the student scores between an ELD Level 1 to 3, they are classified as an EL. If they score between a 4 or 5 they are deemed Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) and placed in the mainstream English program.¹⁶⁸ For those classified as an EL, the parents are notified and

¹⁶⁷ A, interview.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

given information on the options for their students. The district has 5 programs that ELs may elect to join. It is not yet clear if they are actually able to join some of these other programs, or if there are at capacity or even close to the local elementary school. The options are:

- Structured English Immersion (SEI)
 - Program is targeted towards ELs 1-3 with a goal of “Acquire English language proficiency and gain access to grade-level academic core content via differentiated instruction and appropriate supports.” In this model the primary mode of instruction is English Language Development (ELD, native language support (L1 Support), and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE). If a parent with an EL 1-3 student wants this program for their child, they have to opt out of the SEL program and into mainstream. The district strongly discourages, based upon the fact that it gives no support to EL 1-3 students, which the district believes could benefit more from an SEL program.¹⁶⁹
- Mainstream English Program
 - Program targeted towards EL 4-5, IFEP, RFEP, EO with a goal of “Acquire English language proficiency and master grade level academic core content via differentiated instruction and appropriate supports.” In this model the primary mode of instruction is ELD and SDAIE.¹⁷⁰
- Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)
 - Program targeted towards EL 1-3 with the goal “Acquire English language proficiency and grade-level academic content through a combination of core content instruction via primary language, ELD and differentiated instruction in English.” In this model the primary mode of instruction is ELD, SDAIE, L1 support and native language instruction (L1 instruction). This was previously known as the “waiver to basic” bilingual program.
- Maintenance Bilingual Education Program
 - Program targeted towards EL 1-3, EL 4-5, IFEP, and RFEP with the goal “Acquire language proficiency and academic achievement in two languages: English and the students’ primary language” In this model the primary mode of instruction is ELD, SDAIE, LI support, and L1 instruction. This program is

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

currently not offered in LAUSD but may become available if funds come forward (many are doubtful, rightfully so).¹⁷¹

- Dual Language Two-Way Immersion
 - Program targeted towards EL 1-3, EL4-5, IFEP, RFEP and EO with the goal “Acquire language proficiency and academic achievement in two languages: English and the target language, as well as positive cross-cultural competencies for ELs and English-proficient students. In this model, the primary mode of instruction is ELD, SDAIE, LI support, and L1 instruction.”¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

The UC/CSU A-G Requirements

Required “A-G” Courses	
<p>a History/Social Science – 2 years required</p> <p>Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history, cultures and geography; and one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government.</p>	
<p>b English – 4 years required</p> <p>Four years of college-preparatory English that include frequent and regular writing, and reading of classic and modern literature. No more than one year of ESL-type courses can be used to meet this requirement.</p>	
<p>c Mathematics – 3 years required, 4 years recommended</p> <p>Three years of college-preparatory mathematics that include the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry. Approved integrated math courses may be used to fulfill part or all of this requirement, as may math courses taken in the seventh and eighth grades that your high school accepts as equivalent to its own math courses.</p>	
<p>d Laboratory Science – 2 years required, 3 years recommended</p> <p>Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of these three foundational subjects: biology, chemistry and physics. Advanced laboratory science classes that have biology, chemistry or physics as prerequisites and offer substantial additional material may be used to fulfill this requirement, as may the final two years of an approved three-year integrated science program that provides rigorous coverage of at least two of the three foundational subjects.</p>	
<p>e Language Other than English – 2 years required, 3 years recommended</p> <p>Two years of the same language other than English. Courses should emphasize speaking and understanding, and include instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading, composition and culture. Courses in languages other than English taken in the seventh and eighth grades may be used to fulfill part of this requirement if your high school accepts them as equivalent to its own courses.</p>	
<p>f Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) – 1 year required</p> <p>A single yearlong approved arts course from a single VPA discipline: dance, drama/theater, music or visual art.</p>	
<p>g College-Preparatory Electives – 1 year required</p> <p>One year (two semesters), in addition to those required in “a-f” above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts (non-introductory level courses), history, social science, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science and language other than English (a third year in the language used for the “e” requirement or two years of another language).</p>	

Source: Silicon Valley Education Foundation

<http://toped.svefoundation.org/2010/09/01/what-%E2%80%98s-meant-by-a-g-requirements/>