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Opportunities for English Language Learners and Their Struggles in Schools Today

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It takes roughly five to seven years for a child to become fluent in the English Language. Struggling English Language Learners are facing devastating consequences because they are at greater risk of academic failure in school, early school dropout, and eventually lower-paid employment or unemployment (Dixon, 2014, p. 414). They are becoming discouraged because they are not meeting the New York State Common Core Standards. This literature explains the strengths and weakness our English Language Learners are facing in a plethora of schools. There needs to be a knowledge base about cultural diversity in curriculum, students well-being and the community. My research focused on surveying fourteen teachers in the Grey Elementary Schools K-5, focusing on the best practices and strategies for English Language Learners to become academically successful.

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Abstract

It takes roughly five to seven years for a child to become fluent in the English Language. Struggling English Language Learners are facing devastating consequences because they are at greater risk of academic failure in school, early school dropout, and eventually lower-paid employment or unemployment (Dixon, 2014, p. 414). They are becoming discouraged because they are not meeting the New York State Common Core Standards. This literature explains the strengths and weakness our English Language Learners are facing in a plethora of schools. There needs to be a knowledge base about cultural diversity in curriculum, students well-being and the community. My research focused on surveying fourteen teachers in the Grey Elementary Schools K-5, focusing on the best practices and strategies for English Language Learners to become academically successful.

Opportunities for English Language Learners and Their Struggles in Schools Today

Immigration is driven by diverse factors such as economic improvement, job opportunities, educational opportunities, family reunion, political persecution, natural disaster, and war asserts Dixon (2014, p. 414). Research states the greatest numbers of English Language Learners are found in the southern states, such as California, Florida, and Texas and in states that are heavily populated urban areas, such as Illinois and New York (Oliveira, 2015, p. 209). Education researchers working within the sociocultural tradition have asserted that the most effective means of constructing knowledge is through dialogue arising from cooperative inquiry according to Guccione (2011, p. 568). The majority of immigrants will encounter challenges, among which learning the language and culture of the host country may be the most radical, states Dixon (2014, p. 414). The struggle many of these immigrant children face have devastating consequences where they are at greater risk of academic failure in school, early school dropout, and eventually lower-paid employment or unemployment (Dixon, 2014, p. 414). The students become discouraged when they cannot reach the expectations of the New York State standards.

The law requires the inclusion of English Language Learners in its assessment mandates; accordingly, these students must make annual progress as measured on standardized tests of both English language proficiency and academic content. However, because the tests currently being used across the United States to measure content knowledge are administered in English, language proficiency impacts the performance of English Language Learners according to Menken (2010, p. 121). We have to take into

consideration that English Language Learners could take up to five years to become fluent in the English language and it important to attend different professional developments about English Language Learners and apply different strategies to strengthen their knowledge in the English language asserts Menken (2010, p. 121). Schools need to make sure they are providing the essential materials to help these students become successful.

According to Dixon and Wu, in 2014, the United States, it has been accepted that families are the first source of literacy development for children, with federal programs such as Even Start and Head Start incorporating components that promote parents' engagement in home language and literacy practices with their children (2014, p. 415). It has been shown that more input in one language will enhance the learning of that language, but detract from the other states Dixon (2014). Once a child starts school, the language of schooling often comes to dominate his or her repertoire (Dixon, 2014).

Decoding and fluency difficulties have been seen as the cause of many students' struggles with reading comprehension. However, even children who display fluent reading behaviors and strong decoding skills can lack reading comprehension abilities because of limited background knowledge and underdeveloped vocabulary states Guccione (2011, p. 568).

Book readings with children have been shown to predict later literacy success among monolingual children better than socioeconomic status alone according to Dixon (2014, p. 415). Research shows higher income families tend to engage in more of these literacy-promoting activities than low-income families, low-income parents who do engage in these activities reap similar rewards for their children's literacy developments

(Dixon, 2014, p. 415). This could be difficult if many parents speak another language or their work hours are different from school hours. “Teachers in high poverty, linguistically rich schools often find this involvement is difficult to attain” states Barone (2010, p. 377). The authors’ experiences at high-poverty schools were such that parents brought their children to school, but they infrequently interacted with teachers or the school staff. (Barone, 2010, p. 377). “Children of poverty and linguistically diverse students show increased risk of having limited background knowledge, underdeveloped English vocabulary and lower performance on reading comprehension tasks” states Guccione (2011, p. 568). Many parents are not in the picture or lack the knowledge in the English Language. According to the article Reading Acquisition Program for Spanish-Speakers, “Approximately 58% of Latino children ages 0-8 years are from low-income households and 26% live in poverty, despite the fact that most have one or more working parents according to Gorman (2012, p. 50). The same article states, 70% of English Language Learners are reading below the basic proficiency level by fourth grade and the way they addressed this gap, researchers and educators have increased their efforts to understand and foster the prerequisite skills that young children need to enter kindergarten ready to read stated Gorman (2012, p. 50).

Indeed, the number of English language learners is increasing faster than any other portion of the pre-K to 12 populations, and the fastest growing racial group, Latinos, may represent over 50% of the public school population by 2050 according to Tang (2012, p. 177). Presently, children of Mexican origin account for nearly two-thirds of school-aged Latinos in the U.S. (Tang, 2012, p. 177). The academic success of these students has key implications for the nation’s social and economic future, but debate is

ongoing concerning best educational practices for English-language learners (Tang, 2012, p. 177). As educators, our goal is to make sure these students understand the academics and differentiate lessons to meet their needs.

Teachers can support English Language Learners by providing challenging materials that will support their content and English language development, simultaneously. Many schools and districts in the United States have adopted scripted literacy programs that focus heavily on fluency and phonics in the primary grades states Guccione (2011, p. 568). However, educators need to keep in mind a student's level of English proficiency in order to offer educational experiences at adequate levels of challenge asserts Oliveira (2015, p. 209). When we understand differences this can allow educators to help English Language Learners navigate language difficulties they may face in school (Oliveira, 2015). The student's engagement and achievement are increased in school environments that ensure physical safety, promote positive social norms, provide opportunities to develop skills within warm, supportive relationships, and convey high expectations for academic achievement, states Bang (2011, p. 410).

According to the article, Meeting the Linguistic Needs of High-potential English Language Learners, there are qualities, strategies and actions of Linguistically Responsive Teachers. Advocating for English Language Learners by going beyond in the classroom context helps to ensure English Language Learners receive equitable opportunities in school. Teachers need to value the linguistic diversity by asking the English Language Learners to share essential vocabulary in their first language. Sociolinguistic consciousness means encouraging students to discuss differences between their own culture and the "dominant" culture. Teachers should bring in books and stories

or folktales from students' cultures that have the same theme as those in their reading books. As an educator, we need to learn the English Language Learners' language backgrounds, experiences and proficiencies by differentiation of instruction according to the language proficiency levels of English Language Learners stated by Oliveira (2015, p. 212). Teachers work in a community and need to make sure all the students feel welcomed and understood in the classroom.

Heritage school may both reflect home literacy practices and influence them (through homework). The heritage school practices then strengthens the child's literacy skills, which in turn may help promote literacy development according to Dixon (2014, p. 417). While young English Language Learners need explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and word recognition just as much as their English-speaking peers, they also benefit from meaning-rich activities that embrace their cultural and linguistic resources, enhance oral language development and facilitate opportunities to interact with print in meaningful ways asserts Guccione (2011, p. 568). Once the students have a better understanding of the English language, they can bring it home to teach their family members and this could encourage parental involvement.

The community context may also determine whether a heritage language school is available: this is more likely in communities with a high concentration of immigrants from the same literacy skill background stated by Dixon (2014, p. 417). Also, the community may offer a community-based family literacy program, which would seek to encourage certain home literacy practices (Dixon, 2014, p. 417). Interactive components were embedded in many aspects of this inquiry-based classroom, though they occurred most frequently during Book Club periods or when students presenting or sharing their

writing or research states Guccione (2011, p. 572). When teachers differentiate for their high English Language Learners, that instruction would allow them to learn English as they learn the same content as other students. The instruction needs to advance educational opportunities so the students can thrive and excel in school according to Oliveira (2015, p. 209).

Welcome Families: A Parent Literacy Project in a Linguistically Rich, High-Poverty School, the Program for Beginning Reader offered suggestions for parents to help their child develop beginning reading and writing skills through reading to their child, conversing about the book, writing: It is targeted to English Language Learners with all materials printed in English and Spanish asserts Barone (2010, p. 380). They want parents to have books that supported their Spanish knowledge, had clear text-to-illustration clarity, and were easy for kindergarteners to read (Barone, 2010, p. 380). After school programs are another great way to keep the English Language Learner students engaged and thriving in the education system. Such support can be set as a place and time for students to complete their assignments, helping them manage their after school hours efficiently and ensuring an environment that is conducive to academic work according to Bang (2011, p. 410). When educators take the time to structure students' after school schedules and offer additional resources, it can increase the time students dedicate to academic work and now homework has a positive association. The English Language Learners can benefit from the language support provided by teachers, gain insight and learning strategies by working with peers and develop skills in using reference materials that can help them in future assignments (Bang, 2011, p. 410). Parent involvement is key to helping children excel in their academics. The language barrier

may cause a lack of parental involvement, however, if the students feel confident in school, they will feel confident at home.

Studies have shown children in the intervention group demonstrated immediate posttest gains, but 2 years later, their reading and real word spelling skills were no greater than skills of children in the control group according to Gorman (2012, p. 50). This article states preschool intervention may also need to address language skills to yield greater benefits to later literacy (Gorman, 2012, p. 50). Beginning in early elementary school, underachievement is especially pronounced among Latino children whose home language is Spanish, stated by Tang (2012, p. 178). Spanish-speaking Mexican American families' involvement in school-based activities and their children's literacy: The implications of having teachers who speak Spanish and English, states kindergarten involvement was positively associated with kindergarten literacy and third grade literacy. Higher involvement at both time points predicted better literacy scores, contemporaneously. Second, lower literacy scores at kindergarten predicted higher family involvement in school-based activities at third grade, evidence consistent with the beginnings of a negative feedback loop states Tang (2012, p. 182). The article, Spanish-speaking Mexican-American families' involvement in school-based activities and their children's literacy: The implications of having teachers who speak Spanish and English, without fluent bilingual teachers, communication barriers may interrupt parents' ability to get involved in school-based activities, but utility of involvement appears similar regardless of teachers' Spanish fluency according to Tang (2012, p. 185). These programs are becoming popular in many schools. It is very beneficial to English

Language Learners and families to feel accepted. The earlier we implement this into our curriculum, the greater family involvement will increase over the years.

According to the article, Spanish-speaking Mexican-American families' involvement in school-based activities and their children's literacy: The implications of having teachers who speak Spanish and English, discussions on best educational practice for Latino students, in general, have focused on early education (pre-K to third grade) as a leveler promoting achievement according to Tang (2012, p. 177). Similarly, for Mexican-American children, in particular, the early elementary school years have been a point of focus states Tang (2012, p. 177). This same study showed, consistent with a negative feedback loop whereby low achievement at kindergarten triggers increased family involvement and, in turn, increased involvement promotes achievement. But, as expected, this chain of events appeared to function best for Spanish-speaking families if their children had Spanish-English bilingual teachers throughout the early years of school states Tang (2012, p.185). "Without a shared language between family and classroom teachers, links between early achievement and later involvement appeared partially disrupted" asserts Tang (2012, p.185). The last thing we need is for our students to feel defeated and lost during the foundation years of school.

There is a persistent gap in reading achievement between Latino students and their white and Asian peers, resulting from myriad factors (Gorman, 2012, p. 49). "How can educators support this strategy with families who have a home language other than English and live in poverty circumstances? Literature about the importance of shared reading to children's literacy development is shared in tandem with the importance of building parent and school collaboration" states Barone (2010, p. 377). The library is a

great resource to open up a few times a week or month, for the students and their family members. Barone talks about how hard it is to communicate the important parts of shared book reading when they do not speak the language to parents (2010, p. 377). They experience a conundrum—they value shared book experiences between parents and children but they are not sure how to pragmatically make these experiences happen (Barone, 2010, p. 377). It is during kindergarten that elementary school teachers first have the opportunity to recognize academic struggles and reach out to parents for increased involvement. And by third grade, literacy outcomes predict a range of academic and behavioral problems in the future, as children increasingly rely on their reading skills for learning in all academic disciplines asserts Tang (2012, p. 179). These are the foundation years, educators use these opportunities and recognize these struggles early on so they can grow and continue their succession in school.

“Phonological processing is one of the most robust predictors of English Language Learners reading achievement, yet relatively little is actually known about their development” according to Gorman (2012, p. 50). For English Language Learners, the resulting emphasis on drill and practice of decontextualized literacy skills results in an inadequate focus on meaningful literacy practices that better ensure equal access to content—and therefore to equal educational opportunity, states Guccione (2011, p. 568). English Language Learners typically do not perform well on the tests used to comply with the mandates of NCLB. They score an average of 20-50 percentage points below native English speakers on state assessments of English language arts and other content-area subjects and thus majority of English Language Learners fail to achieve a score of proficient or meet adequate yearly progress goals according to Menken (2010, p.

125). This needs to change before it's too late. If English Language Learners continue to not perform well, the sooner they will want to stop trying and this leads to dropping out of school. According to the article, Meeting the Linguistic Needs of High-Potential English Language Learners, research has shown that proficiency in oral English takes 3 to 5 years of English Language Learners, whereas proficiency in academic English can take 4 to 7 years stated Oliveira (2015, p. 209). When administration and teachers are provided adequate educational experiences to English Language Learners, such as teaching them the content necessary to perform well on standardized assessments as well as their everyday language, they will become successful according to Oliveira (2015, p. 209).

The schooling of Latino students has become a national priority not only because of their growing numbers, but also because, on average, they demonstrate some of the lowest achievement levels in the country states Tang (2012, p. 177). Results from national assessments demonstrate that, as a group, Latino students under perform in reading, mathematics and science (Tang, 2012, p. 177). According to the article, NCLB and English Language Learners: Challenges and Consequences, states the reality is that when a test is given in English to English Language Learners, it becomes impossible to entirely divorce language proficiency from content knowledge asserts Menken (2010, p. 123). It is not fair to give English Language Learners a test in English because their lack of knowledge in the English proficiency. It does not show their knowledge in the content whereas, if it was read in Spanish, the results might be different. These tests, involve two layers of accountability; not only are used to evaluate an individual student's performance and thereby determine high school graduation, but the test scores are also

used to evaluate schools under the adequate yearly progress requirements of NCLB according to Menken (2010, p. 123). The state exams are challenging for our English Language Learners, in order to help, prepare them with example questions for homework or during morning meeting. These questions can vary from easy to difficult, however, by providing three different types of questions, it allows the students to feel accomplished, yet challenges them at the same time.

These students are struggling with completing their homework because of the language barrier. According to the article, *Newcomer Immigrant Students' Perspectives on What Affects Their Homework Experiences*, "because homework can be tailored to individual students' learning needs, appropriately designed assignments can offer valuable learning opportunities for immigrant youth who need to review course materials and practice specific skills" stated by Bang (2011, p. 408). If the students are unable to understand the homework, they will not be able to complete it. This leads into students getting frustrated with school, teachers and attendance starts to drop. As educators, it is our job to make sure these students are engaged.

Along with the struggle of completing homework, family conflicts are another factor that need to be added into these children's lives. Immigration is a stressful event that often brings about changes in the family system, causing some relationships to be strained and conflictual reports by Bang (2011, p. 410). Immigrants are asked, at a young age, to take on responsibilities beyond their years, such as child care, translation and negotiation, which can sometimes lead to exchange of roles between parents and children and thus undermine parental authority (Bang, 2011, p. 410). Many of the immigrant children are learning behaviors from parents and switching household roles. This can

cause deterioration of their psychological well-being and academic engagement according to Bang (2011, p. 410). Another struggle immigrant students and teachers encounter is limited parental involvement. Many of these parents have received limited formal schooling or education in another language, and they may not be able to provide as much help with schoolwork as they would like (Bang, 2011, p. 410). This could be a disadvantage to our English Language Learners because studies linked parental involvement in their children's schooling to improved achievement across grade levels and ethnic background states Bang (2011, p. 410). It is our job as educators, to remind these parents to be involved by providing emotional support and encouragement, ensuring that their children's homework is completed and minimizing noise and distractions.

With the lack of support in school for the English Language Learners, links have been correlated to increased high dropout rates for English Language Learners. According to the article, NCLB and English Language Learners: Challenges and Consequences, English Language Learners dropout rates have increased by nine percent points in the year since the state began requiring these students to pass Regents exams to receive a diploma (Menken, 2010, p. 126). The data also shows the dropout rates are higher and graduation rates lower in states requiring high school exit exam.

It takes time for the state to change things, however, as educators', we can make these changes to meet the needs of the students in our community. We do this on a regular basis. Collaboration needs to take place weekly, during meetings. Teachers need to discuss ideas about lessons and share resources to help all learners become successful. As educators, we need to create opportunities for growth in all learners. According to the

article, Success Despite Socioeconomics: A Case Study of a High-Achieving, High-Poverty, teachers felt the way to gain school wide succession, common planning, collaboration, and the development of common assessments and instructional pacing guides allowed them to pinpoint areas of students' weakness according to Tilley (2012, p. 304). Teachers worked to create exciting and welcoming learning environments and displayed student's art work around the classroom. The teachers in this article felt it was essential to push to work collaboratively and change teaching methods as necessary because this allows for continuous improvement (Tilley, 2012, p. 307). Another beneficial way to develop relationships with parents of English Language Learners is allowing them to volunteer in the classrooms. "Volunteers were utilized for academic support, working with students on reading and math skills" states Tilley (2012, p. 308). Parent support after hours; open the library to allow parents to read to children or math activities to participate in. These are just a few implementations schools can work on or adapt in their school community to increase attendance and academic knowledge in English Language Learners such as, opening up the library, once a week, after school and encourage students to practice reading library books as well as reading to parents. It could encourage parents to read to their children whether the book is in English or Spanish.

Introduction to the Study

English Language Learners have difficulties understanding and responding to educators in their learning environments because of the language barrier and are facing daily challenges. Students who face these obstacles may find themselves feeling overwhelmed and unable to address their needs. When English Language Learners are

feeling anxious, students may react in various manners, such as isolating themselves from other students, aggression or incomplete assignments due to the lack of understanding of the English language. In this research study, I looked into the best academic practices for English Language Learners to thrive in classrooms. The purpose of finding these strategies to further support English Language Learners is to help them feel more comfortable in their classroom environment as well as in their community.

In this study, I sent out a survey to teachers in bilingual classrooms, special education teachers and general education teachers, as well as English for Speakers of Other Language providers in the Grey City School District, K-5 buildings. I am the Librarian shared between both elementary schools, collaborating with the teachers to creating engaging activities, curriculum focused, for our students. I teach students about the library, however more importantly, I implement grade level curriculum into my lessons to support students' learning and address their learning needs.

My role in this study was to survey teachers in bilingual classrooms, special education teachers, general education teachers and English Speakers of Other Language providers in the Grey Elementary Schools (K-5). I sent out a survey and spent time observing teacher's interactions with English Language Learners. I analyzed which strategies were more effective or considered best for meeting the needs of our English Language Learners. The goal was to see if the strategies being used by the bilingual teachers and ESOL providers were beneficial to our English Language Learners and how I could help teachers implement these techniques into their classrooms.

Research Stance

I am currently certified in Early Childhood and Childhood Education, grades birth to sixth. I am currently enrolled in Childhood Special Education Program working towards my certification and gaining my permanent teaching license. While I am working towards this certification, I am currently employed as a long-term librarian substitute for the school district I was born and raised in.

My role in this study was as a surveyor. I gathered feedback over four weeks through my five question survey which was sent out the week of February 9th, 2016 and February 22nd, 2016. As the respondents' answers were sent back to me, I made notes on the research data collected. I investigated the responses from special education providers, general education teachers and the bilingual teachers that implement the best academic practices for the English Language Learners in our classrooms. I analyzed their opinions and strategies they use and/or found to be successful for our students.

Method Section

Context

This study was designed to determine some of the best academic practices that can be implemented into the curriculum for English Language Learners. This study focused on best practices staff members in the Grey City School Districts; k-5th grade buildings in upstate New York. Many of our English Language Learners are coming into classrooms with no English and it is our job to provide these children with a successful environment and help them grow in the community.

Participants

Grey Elementary School has a very diverse population of students and community members. A majority of the population, attending Grey Elementary School, come from families with Spanish as their first language and English as their second. This means many of our families speak their native language with their families and understand very little English – only words or phrases their children bring home. I sent my survey out to fourteen teachers in the kindergarten through second grade building and the third through fifth grade building in the Grey City School District. The four survey questions were also given to the two special education teachers, three bilingual teachers and three push-in and pull-out consultant providers in the kindergarten through second grade building. Many of the special education teachers are push-in and pull-out consultant providers throughout the building. In the third through fifth grade building, I sent my survey to seven teachers, two of them being the special education teachers; two classroom teachers and three push-in and pull-out consultant providers.

Materials

Four survey questions were sent out to twenty staff members in both elementary schools. The survey questions were:

1. What strategy/strategies do you use for reading in the classroom for ESL students? Writing? Problem Solving Skills?
2. How do your ESL students respond to these strategies? (examples please)
3. What types of technology (if any) strategies do you find beneficial for your ESL students? (If not, what other strategies do you use?)
4. Additional advice or information you have to offer.

Design

The four question survey I created was sent to fourteen staff members in the k-5th grade buildings in the Grey City School District. Teachers are busy all year round and it was ideal to create a survey that would not take any longer than ten minutes to complete. I collected their hand-written responses and reviewed the common answers that were detected. This created categories and the respondents' answers were sorted by similar response and tailed.

Procedure

I placed the four question survey, I constructed, in teacher mailboxes. I spoke with my teachers in advance to make sure they were able to take a few minutes out of their day to complete the survey. They were instructed to complete the survey and return it by February 12th, 2016, just before Winter Break, in my mailbox located in the faculty room.

I wanted to come up with a study that would help future or current classroom teachers that are teaching a population of English Language Learners. I currently work with a population of students that speak very little or no English at all and I struggle to build connections with them. If we had more resources for our schools to provide to these students, this could help our English Language Learners thrive. It is said that it takes an English Language Learner five to seven years to become fluent in the English Language. Our goal should be to decrease the time it takes them to learn the English Language and we can do that by providing more resources to help them become successful.

Data Collection

I received eight out of fourteen surveys where I decoded the open ended questions and determined, based on the responses, the best practices of culturally relevant instruction for English Language Learners to become successful students and members of our community. Their responses to the questions were based on what they have found works best for our English Language Learners in their classrooms. No consent form was needed because I was collaborating with teachers that worked with English Language Learners on a day to day basis, in Grey Elementary Schools.

Data Analysis

Responses to survey question one: What strategy/strategies do you use for reading in the classroom for ESL students? Writing? Problem Solving Skills?

- “A strategy for reading is use of pictures and scaffolding of the language structure. Making connections to students’ lives. For writing-picture/word webs, picture cards, letter/sound relationship.”
- “Reading-small groups, visuals, modeling, choral reading, vocabulary review, HF word work with games, flash cards, notebook writing. Writing-personal word walls with visuals of needed and words written in native and English language. Modeled or shared writing to model correct conventions.”
- “build background knowledge/schema, visuals, vocabulary, manipulatives”
- “modeling, anchor charts, sentence stems, vocabulary development, visuals, partner work, “show” what you know-draw it-model it, restatement of information multiple times, frequent checks for understanding, word splashes, word banks, manipulatives, act it out”

- “reading -if a student has limited reading/language skills, I provide so many opportunities as possible for them to hear English by reading to them. This could be a listening center, a peer or teacher reading to them or stories that are read to them on the computer. I also try to find books for them to read that have pictures that will support the understanding of the story. Classroom objects are also clearly labelled (door, window, computer, chair, etc.) so that they can begin to make connections with real life objects and words. This is also important in writing-word lists may include pictures to help. Also sentence starters could be used to help students get started. I also would use picture prompts instead of having kids have to come up with their own ideas. I also to try to include a great deal of non-fiction books and writing opportunities as this is often easier for them to understand. Writing-lines can be put on paper for each word the student wants to write. This is a good self check strategy.”
- “many visuals! Language is the heart of understanding. Pictorial representations of reading strategies, alphabet charts, content is beneficial throughout the learning process.”
- “scaffolding: visuals, visual aids, using graphic organizers, purposeful grouping at the rug (English/Spanish buddies), using background knowledge.”
- “preview books using pictures-picture walk, preview challenging vocabulary-meaning/photos/pictures, thumbs up when you hear the word in text, initial read-guided with teacher model, I read/you read- take turns with same text. Many rereads for fluency and comprehension, flash cards for high frequency words.”

Summary of Survey Question One

Many of the responses were similar to one another. The participants agreed the students should have plethora of visuals throughout lessons, daily instructions and routines. These students should be provided with letter/sound relationship visuals such as pictures word webs or picture flashcards. Our English Language Learners should listen and model what a fluent reader looks and sounds like. When they are working in small guided reading groups, the teacher and the student can take turns reading the same text. The text could even be on a topic the student has a connection with. English Language Learners show higher responses to text that is connectable or a topic they are interested in.

Responses to survey question 2: How do your ESL students respond to these strategies? (examples please)

- “The students respond well and are able to use pictures/word webs for writing. Scaffolding of language structure helps to increase fluency. The letter sound relationship only works if student has more English language.”
- “Many of my ELL students are also classified with an IEP. Luckily, most of these strategies work very well with both types of learners, however, at times students learn at their own pace and certain strategies need to be used consistently in order to see progress. When these strategies are implemented, students take ownership over their learning because the learning becomes accessible. Also, students love to hear and see their native language in the classroom.”
- “Yes-need explicit instruction to comprehend and learn/practice skills/concepts, building words with hands on materials, picture walks, rich introduction.”

- “Rely heavily on anchor charts and sentence stems/word banks to support independent word. Are able to perform the task when they understand the task. Act it out-for math word problems and read aloud (example: charlotte’s web) to foster comprehension of story. Partner word-find support and understanding from partners, builds our learning community.”
- “Students feel more successful when they have these types of support in place. Students also benefit from restating their message several times to keep with them.
- “All students can engage with a picture/drawing. I find greater participation and more independence from ELL students when visuals are available.”
- “Overall, students respond very well to these strategies. Students engage in peer conversations, participate in discussions and/or show better understanding of text being read.”
- “Magnetic letters to make words. Personal writing dictionary-each student has one. Teachers write (the) word-student is expected to go back to it in dictionary during independent writing. Highlight words or sentences in reading passages. Highlight and number answers in passages to match questions asked (text-based evidence). Use of poetry for content and fluency. No opt out-call on student to participate in oral discussion-choose questions you know they can answer or have another student whisper to them and they repeat it out loud.”

Summary to Survey Question Two

The responses to question two generally focused on support and scaffolding language for our English Language Learners. The participants felt the students felt much

more confident once there was routine and consistency in place. They have found repetitiveness in instruction and messages is a beneficial strategy for the student as well as the teacher. When the English Language Learners are provided with explicit instruction, small group instruction helps them comprehend and learn, and practice skills and concepts to thrive in the classroom. Provide the English Language Learners' with picture/word dictionary to refer to throughout the day to engage in conversation with their peers. Depending on the age level you are working with, teachers could make their own to carry throughout the day. It could provide the picture and the task written below and the students could respond with a thumbs up or thumbs down or by using their own picture/word dictionary and flipping it the same the picture as the teacher.

Responses to survey question 3: What types of technology (if any) strategies do you find beneficial for your ESL students? (If not, what other strategies do you use?)

- “Any program that refers to the native language of the student when they get stuck.”
- “Games like computer-based programs have been very motivational for ESL learners. They enjoy a variety of ELA and Math iPad apps, smart board interactive lessons, as well as Imagine Learning and iReady.”
- “ipads-great apps for all skills and levels (ELA and Math), Smartboard, computers”
- “Smartboard for visuals, tape recorder-can dictate stories if don't have enough letter/sound knowledge to write them.”
- “Technology-listening centers-to hear English spoken in stories.”
- “Computer programs- to practice language skills.”

- “Websites (reading A-Z)- that will read books to the children.”
- “Our new program, i-Ready and other programs like Successmaker scaffold and differentiate automatically which is very beneficial for ELL students.”
- “Smartboard, Imagine Learning (Español)”
- “Imagine Learning (English/Spanish)-basic skills at individual levels, progresses students as they master skills. Also records their voices with reading out loud to increase fluency. Smart board-visuals/activating strategies with language and vocabulary. Capstone library-highlights words as it reads out loud to students. Pebble go- offers great visuals with passages for nonfiction.”

Summary of Question Three

Teachers have found an increase in vocabulary and fluency in English Language Learners through smart board activities with a plethora of visuals, listening centers and hands-on learning activities. Many of the teachers in the Grey Elementary School use the computer program called Imagine Learning which allows the English Language Learners to listen to short stories and then records the students reading the story and provides the teacher with the fluency of the student. The Grey Elementary Schools have also found the computer program, i-Ready to be very beneficial in reporting the English Language Learners comprehension levels, phonological awareness, fluency, math levels and more. This program differentiates to meet the needs of each student and then provides the teachers with different strategies to help improve those areas.

Responses to survey question 4: Additional advice or information you have to offer.

- “The strategies used depend on the level of the student’s language skills. It takes 5-7 years to obtain a new language proficiently. If the student is not proficient in first language learning, a second language becomes even more difficult.”
- “Always remember ELL students have double the learning to do-language and content. The more visuals and hands on learning, the better. Always connect new content to the children’s background knowledge so they can make connections.”
- “Embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity.”
- “ELL students benefit from as many real life, hands on experiences as possible.”
- “With ELL students, we have to remember there is an oral language barrier. We have to think of other ways to engage them in discussions to help them take on their second language. (examples: through pictures/ drawings etc.)

Summary of Question 4

This last question of the survey I left open to the teachers if they wanted to share any additional information or add information that I did not provide a question about. The teachers felt hands-on learning activities and real life experiences benefit our English Language Learners in the classroom and community. They stated that we need to embrace their culture and find ways to engage them in discussions to help take on English as their second language. As teachers, we need to make sure we find a way to make the content connect to their background knowledge so they can make a connection and be engaged.

Discussion

Special Education teachers, ESOL teachers, and classroom teachers are the most valuable resources to our English Language Learners. These teachers are working hard to

provide the best academic practices without eliminating English Language Learners cultural differences. According to one of the responses from my participants, “Embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity” and our special educators, ESOL educators, literacy coaches and classroom teachers are not here to hinder the English Language Learner students’ performance in academics, but expanding their knowledge in this culture to create a culturally diverse curriculum to help our English Language Learners grow. The academic success of these students has key implications for the nation’s social and economic future, but debate is on-going concerning best educational practices for English Language Learners (Tang, 2012, p. 177). As educators, our goal is to make sure these students understand the academics and differentiate lessons to meet their needs.

Conclusion

There are numerous strategies classroom teachers, special educators and ESOL educators are working to implement into the curriculum. The classrooms at Grey Elementary Schools are set up where each grade level has one bilingual classroom. The Spanish teacher is teaching for half of the day and they are also learning English the other half of the day. This creates a busy day for these teachers, but this seems to be showing growth and it is keeping the culture for our English Language Learners as well as demonstrating positive performances in their academics. Our special educators, ESOL educators and literacy coaches are reaching out to our classroom teachers without a Spanish background, providing knowledge to tackle this issue over how to meet or representation content to our English Language Learners. (The terms ELL also known as English Language Learner can also be referred or seen as English as a New Language or ENL. It is interchangeable at this time.)

The research shows that when we have created a positive relationship with the students and their community and when teachers differentiate for their high English Language Learners, that instruction would allow them to learn English as they learn the same content as other students. The instruction needs to advance educational opportunities so the students can thrive and excel in school according to Oliveira (2015, p. 209). Studies have shown that the more parental involvement and increase in afterschool programs, is a great way to keep the English Language Learners engaged and thriving in the education system. When such support can be set as a place and time for students to complete their assignments, helping them manage their after school hours efficiently and ensuring an environment that is conducive to academic work according to Bang (2011, p. 410). All students crave routines and consistency because many of our students might not be receiving that at home.

Out of my fourteen teachers, eight of them responded to the survey questions and shared their knowledge of working with English Language Learners. Majority of the teachers felt visuals, hands-on learning activities and creating a content connection with our English Language Learners will benefit their performance in academics. As teachers, we are constantly learning new information and reaching out to our faculty members for ideas to help our students perform well. They want the best practices for their English Language Learners and because this population of community members is going to continue to increase, it is our job to continue to learn, change and push for curriculum that benefits ALL learners.

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