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### Schools to Learn From: Lessons From Minnesota Schools With High English Learner Language Growth

Gwen Rosha Anderson

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**Schools to Learn From:**  
**Lessons From Minnesota Schools With High English Learner Language Growth**

by

Gwen Rosha Anderson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in Educational Administration and Leadership

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## Abstract

Multilingual learners are K-12 students who speak an additional language to English and have been screened and identified as “lack[ing] the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English” (Minnesota Statute 124D.59, subd. 2, 2019). With all of the variability in multilingual learners, the multilingual learner population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the US (McKeon, 2005). In the fall of 2016, 4.9 million students in the United States were identified as multilingual learners, which is 9.6 percent of the total US student population (US Department of Education, 2019). In Minnesota during the 2017-2018 school year, 73,128 students, or 8.5 percent identified as English learners (MDE, 2019).

There is a legal and legislative history that exists both nationally and within Minnesota in support of multilingual learners and equitable education rights (Scanlan & López, 2015). In Minnesota, all school districts enrolling multilingual learners must implement an educational program that meets the linguistic needs of the students (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2018). Though language programs are critical to the success of multilingual learners, school and district leadership is second only to classroom teaching as a major influence on student learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006).

The study aimed to address the limited research on best practices of Minnesota schools with higher than average multilingual learner language growth as measured by language development assessments. The mixed methods study examined the common practices of leaders in schools identified under ESSA as achieving high language growth through qualitative and quantitative data from school administrators and multilingual program coordinators/lead teachers from four elementary schools in Minnesota. This data was evaluated using the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework of multilingual learner programming. It also identified the barriers encountered by the schools in implementing multilingual learner programs.

Findings suggested that the most utilized programming components with the highest average implementation were: Professional development targets classroom teachers, Support data-based discussions of individual student progress, and Use data to identify areas for improvement. Commonalities outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework included building relationships, communication, focus on writing, pull-out instruction, asset-based inclusion, and administrator support and knowledge of multilingual programs. Differences between school practices included common curriculums, focused core instruction, multilingual teachers being multilingual learners, and personalized learning. The main barriers identified by participants were around time, funding/staffing, bias, and the strategies to overcome the barriers centered on intentionality and advocacy.

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*Better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And above all, it takes a willingness to try.*

Atul Gawande. *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*

*Because in education...we're always looking for that perfect model, that perfect thing. Buy it, create it. It doesn't exist. So be okay with that. Keep looking at data, keep striving for 100 percent on everything. It's a constant work in progress.*

Principal C, 2020

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Multilingual learners are K-12 students who speak an additional language to English and have been screened and identified as “lack[ing] the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English” (Minnesota Statute 124D.59, 2017). In 2017-2018, 263 different home languages were reported for 884,852 students in The Minnesota Automated Student Reporting System (MARSS) (MDE English Learner Fall Report, 2019). Multilingual learners may be immigrants or refugees (Scanlan & López, 2015), migrant students (MDE English Learner Fall Report, 2019), have limited formal education (SLIFE, 2015), recently-arriving in the U. S. (MDE, 2017b), born in the U.S., or long-term multilingual learners (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007), or combinations of the aforementioned groups. These students vary in actual age and language-learning age, in home language proficiency levels, in levels of prior academic success, and in likes/dislikes, self-esteem, motivation, anxiety level, attitudes, and cognitive and learning styles (Díaz-Rico, 2018), as well as proficiency in English (WIDA, 2019d). With all of the variability in multilingual learners, the multilingual learner population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the US (McKeon, 2005). In the fall of 2016, 4.9 million students in the United States were identified as multilingual learners, which is 9.6 percent of the total U.S. student population (US Department of Education, 2019). In Minnesota during the 2017-2018 school year, 73,128 students, or 8.5 percent, identified as English learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019).

### **Brief History of Language Instruction**

Historically, language instruction of multilingual learners has been divided into three time periods: the Permissive Period (1750 to 1850) which fostered bilingualism in schools; the

Restrictive Period (1850 to 1950), which saw a decline in the acceptance of language diversity; and the Modern Period (1950 to present), which reflects both permissive and restrictive ideologies (Scanlan & López, 2015). Numerous Supreme Court cases have been heard, and federal legislation passed, around language instruction—slowly working to promote language acceptance, with some setbacks (Wright, 2010; Sugarman & Widness, 1974; Scanlan & López, 2015; Gándara, 2018). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards aimed to bring additional attention to the need for implementation of content standards and language needs of multilingual learners (Common Core, 2010), while Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) brought accountability of multilingual learner achievement to the forefront of school improvement (García & Kleifgen, 2018; ESSA, 2015).

### **Minnesota Multilingual Program Requirements**

In Minnesota, all school districts enrolling multilingual learners must implement an educational program that meets the linguistic needs of the students (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2018). These programs are designed to increase multilingual learner student access to content standards while providing explicit language instruction to gain language proficiency (Echevarría, Frey, & Fisher, 2015). The program designs available differ in intended purpose/outcome and depend on the student needs and resources available (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Though language programs are critical to the success of multilingual learners, school and district leadership is second only to classroom teaching as a major influence on student learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). School leaders create the space necessary for successfully educating multilingual learners (Scanlan & López, 2015), including

professional development for all educators on teaching multilingual students within the same classroom (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Though much has been written about multilingual learners and language programming, there is limited research on best practices of Minnesota schools with higher than average multilingual learner language growth, as measured by language development assessments. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Report Card tracks statewide student achievement in academics, attendance, and graduation rate. According to this report, multilingual learners demonstrate lower academic achievement and academic growth in reading, math, and science, as well as lower four-year graduation rates than their non-multilingual learner peers (Minnesota Department of Education Report Card, n.d.). The disparities between middle-class White students and students who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, multilingual learners, or working-class is often referred to as the achievement gap (Gutiérrez, 2008). Milner (2010) stated that the achievement gap is created by an educational opportunity gap; students receive differing levels of support, school funding, resources within schools, affirming environments, high academic expectations, well-paid certified/experienced teachers, student-centered pedagogies, opportunities for family engagement and instructional technologies. Schools exist to provide a multilayered collective response that guarantees all students will learn no matter the gaps (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2010).

This study aims to provide a greater understanding of leadership practices that affect achievement disparities between multilingual learners and their non-multilingual counterparts. It also seeks to examine the common practices of leaders in schools identified under ESSA as



achieving high language growth. This study presents qualitative and quantitative data from school administrators and multilingual program coordinators/lead teachers from four elementary schools in Minnesota.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Study data was evaluated using the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework of multilingual learner programming. The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the work of Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) article, "How school and district leaders support classroom teachers' work with English language learners." In their work, the authors identify five components that are essential to establish an effective multilingual learner program:

1. Resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction—differentiation of grade-level standards in partnership with Title I, Special Education, and general education classrooms.
2. Blend district-level and school-level initiatives—creating an environment in which the community and families feel valued and welcomed and staff collaborate to support classroom instruction.
3. Communicate a compelling rationale—seeing multilingual learners as part of the regular school population and all take ownership for their learning.
4. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels—bilingual learning in the general education setting in elementary schools and an intentional focus on language and content learning in secondary schools.
5. Use data for instructional improvement—identifying areas for improvement and shaping professional development and training.

These five components reveal that leadership, at both the school and district level, are crucial in creating and sustaining systems of support for classroom teachers who work with multilingual learners.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The multilingual learner population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the US. From 1990 to 2001, multilingual learner enrollment increased by more than 105 percent, with only a 12 percent growth of total student enrollment during the same period (McKeon, 2005). In the 2017-2018 school year, 73,128 students, or 8.5 percent of all Minnesota students, were identified as multilingual learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Because of the achievement and opportunity gaps that exist between multilingual learners and non-multilingual learners, school leaders seek to find the most productive best practices and resources that will create better learning environments and increased outcomes for multilingual learners. The purpose of the study is to examine four Minnesota elementary schools identified in 2018 and 2019 within the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English Language Proficiency and analyze their leadership practices using the five components identified by Elfers and Stritikus (2014). While a mandated focus on multilingual learners exists both in ESSA and Minnesota State Statute, no studies were found by the researcher which examine the common practices of high-EL growth Minnesota schools. This study seeks to determine if there are leadership practice commonalities between the high-growth schools based on best practices in research by describing and contrasting strengths and barriers encountered by teacher leaders and administrators in schools, districts, and charters when implementing multilingual programming. The findings from this investigation may afford other school leaders with proven

productive strategies that could have a direct correlation to the academic growth for multilingual learners in Minnesota.

### **Research Questions**

To better serve multilingual learners, Gorski (2018) states that educators require an understanding of inequity in order to respond to and redress inequities in informed ways, while eliminating the barriers that confront students. School and district leaders are two of the factors that drive successful school reform (National Implementation Research Network, 2019), including reform to improve learning outcomes of multilingual learners (Scanlan & López, 2015). Using the work of Elfers and Stritikus (2014) as the conceptual framework for this study, the following are the study's research questions:

1. To what extent do schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014)?
2. What are commonalities of these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
3. What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
4. What barriers have schools with high Progress toward English Language Proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers?

### **Assumptions of the Study**

The following statements were assumed to be true for the purposes of this study:

- a) Participants answered the survey and interview questions truthfully.
- b) Effective leaders are necessary to achieve high student outcomes (Scanlan & López, 2015; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Russel, 2018).
- c) Collaboration among stakeholders is necessary to achieve high student outcomes (Scanlan & López, 2015).
- d) An intentionality around educational programming is essential in increasing student academic success (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Theoharris & O'Toole, 2011; Scanlan and López, 2015).

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations are parameters or limits of the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The researcher had control of the delimitations of the study. This research study was limited in scope to the highest five percent of Minnesota Schools for their progress toward English language proficiency in the 2018 ESSA accountability index. Respondents were limited to the principal of the identified buildings, or their designee, as identified by the Minnesota Department of Education, as well as multilingual program coordinators or lead teacher of the district or building.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Achievement Gap*: Achievement disparities between middle-class, White students and students who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, MLs, or working class (Gutiérrez, 2008)

*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD)*: Students who grow up in families with a variety of mother tongues. Using the terms EL or ELL “fail to capture the heterogeneity...the

social, cultural, and linguistic capital that these students bring” (Scanlan & López, 2015, p. 3).

*English Learner (EL)*: “A pupil in kindergarten through grade 12 or a prekindergarten student enrolled in an approved voluntary prekindergarten program under section 124D.151 or a school readiness plus program who meets the requirements under subdivision 2a (2019) or the following requirements: 1. the pupil, as declared by a parent or guardian uses a language other than English; and 2. the pupil is determined by a valid assessment measuring the pupil’s English language proficiency and by developmentally appropriate measures, which might include observations, teacher judgment, parent recommendations, or developmentally appropriate assessment instruments, to lack the necessary English skills to participate fully in academic classes taught in English” (Minnesota Statute 124D.59, subd. 2a, 2019). This term is the Every Student Succeeds Act’s (ESSA) version of ELL, as well as the most commonly used term in Minnesota statutes and policies.

*English Language Learner (ELL)*. Same intent in definition as English learner, though an older term that is not utilized frequently. “An individual who is in the process of actively acquiring English, and whose primary language is one other than English. This student often benefits from language support programs to improve academic performance in English due to challenges with reading, comprehension, speaking, and/or writing skills in English. Other terms that are commonly used to refer to ELLs are language minority students, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, and limited English proficient (LEP) students” (Bardack, 2010).

*English as a Second Language (ESL)*: “A term often used to designate students whose first language is not English; this term has become less common than the term ELL.

Currently, ESL is more likely to refer to an educational approach designed to support ELLs” (Bardack, 2010).

*Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD)*: GLAD is a “staff training for language acquisition. Teachers are trained to modify the delivery of student instruction to promote academic language and literacy” (BeGLAD, LLC., 2019).

*Home Language*: language used at home by students and others (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018). Also referred to as heritage, first, or primary language.

*Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP)*: Formerly known as “Plan of Service,” the educational program to address the language needs of English Learners (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2018).

*Linguistic Repertoire*: Comprising language, dialect, style, register, code, and routines that characterize interaction in everyday life of a speaker (Busch, 2017).

*Long-term English Learners (LTELs)*: Neither Minnesota nor the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has a formal definition of LTEL, though ESSA requires states to report the number and percentage of all MLs who have not attained English language proficiency within five years of initial classification as an English learner and first enrollment in the local education agency [ESSA, Section 3122(a)(6)]. Students who remain classified as EL for an extended period, into their middle or high school years (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012).

*Mainstream Classroom*: A classroom in which the instruction is delivered and primarily planned for native English speakers (Enright & McCloskey, 1988).

*Multilingual Learners (ML)*: Term adopted by MDE in 2018 to refer to students whom speak a language in addition to English. This research will use the term MLs rather than the term English Learners (ELs) to maintain consistency to MDE terminology. Though a majority of the current research utilizes the term EL, ML will be used considering “when policymakers, educators, and researchers ignore bilingualism and its role in schooling, they perpetuate numerous inequities and discount the needs of children from linguistically diverse backgrounds” (DeMatthews, Izquierdo, & Knight, 2017, p. 1).

*Opportunity Gap*: Students receive differing levels of support from caregivers, preschools, school funding, adequately resourced schools, school support services, affirming school environments, high academic expectations, well-paid certified/experienced teachers, student-centered pedagogies, opportunities for family engagement, and instructional technologies, which create discrepancies in student group achievement (Milner, 2010; Gorski, 2018).

*Multilingual(ism)*: Refers to the existence of more than one language within a society (Abendroth-Timmer & Hennig, 2014).

*Plurilingual(ism)*: Whereas multilingualism refers to multiple languages spoken at the societal level, plurilingualism is relating to, involving, or actual fluency in a number of languages at the individual level.

*Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs)*: A K-12 student who has been identified as an English learner in Minnesota and who has been enrolled in a school in one of the 50

states in the United States or the District of Columbia for less than 12 months at the time of [state standardized] testing. A student can only be identified as an RAEL one time (MDE, 2017b).

*Refugees*: Individuals “unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Refugee Act of 1980, in de Jong, 2011).

*Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)*: The SIOP Model is an instructional model that has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners throughout the United States. The SIOP Model consists of eight interrelated components: Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review & Assessment (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.).

*Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE; also known as SIFE)*: SLIFE are typically new to the United States and have limited and/or interrupted schooling in their home country (SLIFE, 2015). The Minnesota Department of Education further defines it under statute as a student who meets three of the following five criteria: 1) comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken, 2) enters the United States after grade six, 3) has at least two years less schooling than the ML’s peers, 3) functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics, and 4) may be preliterate in the ML’s native language (Minn. Stat. § 124D.59, subd. 2a, 2019).

*Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL)*: TESOL is an international, professional organization. TESOL has developed English language development



standards used both in the United States and internationally. “TESOL International Association advances the expertise of professionals who teach English to speakers of other languages in multilingual contexts worldwide. We accomplish this through professional learning, research, standards, & advocacy” (TESOL, 2019a).

*World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)*: Housed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, WIDA developed English Language Proficiency standards and assessments utilized in forty U.S. states and abroad. Minnesota joined the WIDA consortium in 2010, adopting all WIDA proficiency standards and assessments PreK-12. (WIDA, 2019c).

*WIDA ACCESS*: This is an annual language proficiency assessment of consortium member states. The assessment is “administered to Kindergarten through 12th-grade students who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs); Is given annually to monitor students' progress in learning academic English; Meets US federal requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for monitoring and reporting ELLs’ progress toward English language proficiency; Corresponds to the WIDA English Language Development Standards (2019b); Assesses the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing” (WIDA, 2019a).

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 contains an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, operational definitions, delimitations of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature as it pertains to multilingual

learners. Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed in conducting the study, including an overview of methods, research design, setting, participant process, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 details the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 delineates the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Research indicates that there is a linguistic and academic gap between English-proficient and multilingual learners (Thomas & Collier, 2002). According to the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) *English Learner Education in Minnesota: Fall 2018 Report* (2019), multilingual learners demonstrate lower academic achievement and academic growth in reading, math, and science, as well as lower four-year graduation rates than their non-multilingual learner peers. To better serve multilingual learners, educational leaders need to equip themselves with the understandings of inequity in order to respond to and redress these realities in informed ways, for "there is no path to equity that does not include a direct confrontation with inequity" (Gorski, 2018, p. 102).

The review of related literature serves to provide context for the study's research and is divided into four main sections. The first section discusses the purpose of focusing on language instruction in education, including equity and the history behind language education. The second section outlines multilingual learner demographics and categories of language learners. The third section presents research on how language is learned and second language acquisition. The final section elaborates on researched best practices for multilingual learner programming, including the research framework of Elfers and Stritikus (2014).

### **Why Focus on Language Instruction?**

The multilingual learner population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the US. From 1990 to 2001, multilingual learner enrollment has grown by more than 105 percent, compared with only a 12 percent growth of total student enrollment during the same period (McKeon, 2005). The percentage of public school students in the United States who were

multilingual learners was higher in fall 2016 (9.6 percent, or 4.9 million students) than in fall 2000 (8.1 percent, or 3.8 million students). Nine US states have a multilingual learner population higher than ten percent of the total student population (US Department of Education, 2019). In the 2017-2018 school year, 862,160 K-12 students were enrolled in Minnesota public schools with 73,128 students, or 8.5 percent identified as English learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019).

### **Equity in Education**

Though the populations are well-documented, the terms and acronyms used to describe student and programming vary greatly throughout history up to current usage (see Operational Definitions, pp. 19-21). The lack of common language for discussing multilingual learners is a manifestation of the challenges facing schools today (Dormer, 2016). “The lack of understanding of [multilingual learners], of multilingualism, and of multiculturalism can have damaging consequences—not only for teachers and students involved, but for the school” (Dormer, 2016, p. 2). Due to a linguistic and academic gap between English-proficient and multilingual learners (Thomas & Collier, 2002), multilingual learners need to acquire oral and academic English while also keeping pace with native English-speaking peers in content learning (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). Minnesota multilingual learners exhibit lower academic achievement and academic growth in reading, math, and science as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments and lower four-year graduation rates than their non-multilingual learner peers. However, multilingual learners have a greater school attendance average than their counter group of non-multilingual learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019).

A review of the literature on the performance of multilingual learners and that of their non-multilingual learner counterparts revealed the existence of the relationship between English language proficiency levels and academic performance in core content areas (Cook, Boals, & Lundberg, 2011). Cook, Boals, and Lundberg (2011) share an analysis of one state's results of English language proficiency and academic content reading assessment. The analysis shows that as the English language proficiency grew, the reading scale scores also increased. They also report that several other states demonstrated similar trends in the analysis of English language proficiency and academic content reading assessments. There is similar data from the Minnesota Department of Education, showing the relationship between Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and the ACCESS test of English language proficiency (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017b). Another study reveals that second grade multilingual learners with advanced English language proficiency show academic growth similar to academic growth of native English speakers (Gutiérrez & Vanderwood, 2013). Uccelli, Galloway, Barr, Meneses, and Dobbs (2015) similarly demonstrate that fourth grade multilingual learners with higher English language proficiency display higher scores on core academic language assessments. Grant, Cook, and Phakiti (2011) outline the correlation of higher English language proficiency with higher achievement in mathematics. Students identified in the lowest English language proficiency level on annual English language proficiency tests have also demonstrated the highest growth during core reading interventions (Burns, Frederick, Pulles, McComas, & Aguilar, 2017). Even with these correlations, Umansky (2018) cautions the use of high-stakes summative assessments given to multilingual learners, citing limited validity and reliability as native language assessments are underdeveloped and underutilized.

In consideration of the correlation between English language proficiency and content learning, researchers have begun to identify disparities between middle-class White students and students who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, multilingual learners, or working class (Gutiérrez, 2008), often referred to as the achievement gap. The dangers of focusing on the achievement gap include offering a “static picture of inequities, supporting deficit thinking and negative narratives about students of color and working-class students, perpetuating the myth that the problem (and therefore solution) is a technical one, and promoting a narrow definition of learning and equity” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 357). The deficits are not within the students but in the systems that are meant to serve them (Paunesku, 2019). Milner (2010) stated that the achievement gap is created by an educational opportunity gap; differing levels of student support, school funding, resources within schools, affirming environments, high academic expectations, well-paid certified/experienced teachers, student-centered pedagogies, opportunities for family engagement and instructional technologies. All of these differences contribute to a wide variety of educational experiences that students receive based on where they live. Though education was designed to be the great equalizer for many students, the system is not designed for all students to succeed (Gorski, 2018). School leaders must lead for social justice at the school and district levels; if not, they will interpret and apply law and policy in ways that further segregate and marginalize students (Capper & Frattura, 2009).

Schools must provide a multilayered collective response that guarantees all students will learn (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2010). Espinoza (2007) highlights the fact that the concepts of equity and equality in social and public policy have no clear definitions. “Most of the definitions of ‘equity’ and ‘equality’ are frequently used by many researchers, evaluators, policy-

makers, policy analysts, scholars and educators as if they were interchangeable. As a result, it is very common to see in the literature ambiguity and confusion among those social scientists using these concepts” (p. 359). Equality connotes sameness in treatment of all persons, while equity is fairness or justice and takes individual circumstances into consideration (Corson, 2001). To better serve multilingual learners, educational leaders need to equip themselves with the understandings of inequity in order to respond to and redress these realities in informed ways by directly confronting inequities (Gorski, 2018). Response and redress includes addressing inequities and eliminating barriers that confront students. We must also examine our own ideologies, as they influence our interpretations of students, families, barriers and successes (Gorski, 2018). There is no strategy that will make us better educators if our view of students and their families is, “muddied by the ideological roots of inequity” (Gorski, 2018, pp. 58-59).

Gorski (2011) defines deficit ideology as “...a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities – standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment, for example – by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities” (p. 153). An example of deficit ideology involves blaming students for low achievement rather than examining what adult behavior or system contributes to the perpetuation of low performance (Gorski, 2011). The language of deficit ideology is not the problem, but the beliefs behind the language used (Harry & Klingner, 2007). Teachers’ beliefs about multilingual learners’ lack of readiness for rigorous activities creates a rigor gap between multilingual learners and native English-speaking peers, resulting in less critical thinking and more drill-memorization tasks (Muniz, 2019). Eliminating deficit ideology will also assist in creating a school culture of inclusivity where students will feel emotionally and physically safe and supported (Capper &

Frattura, 2009), which will also improve student learning by lowering the affective filter (Krashen, 1982).

Capper and Frattura (2017) articulate that full inclusion of multilingual learners in traditional classroom settings has many benefits for all students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and gifted/talented. The authors offer many examples, such as better learning outcomes, better preparation for a diverse workforce, better preparation as professionals, improved cognitive skills and critical thinking, more friendships and larger social networks, and increased empathy. Specific to multilingual learners, research implies that when grouped heterogeneously with native English speakers, multilingual learners will have greater achievement gains, have better models of English, and experience higher teacher expectations.

In contrast to inclusion, Hakuta (1987) states that, philosophically, the United States is highly monocultural and monolingual. However, our demographics clearly show that we are a pluralistic society, both culturally and linguistically. Preserving home languages as well as acquiring English has benefits. Brisk (2006) states that students learn faster when they are educated in both their home (first) language in addition to English, and this is supported in many studies (Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Barac & Bialystok, 2012). In a study of bilingual students in New Mexico, results showed that an initial higher proficiency level in the students' home language of Spanish led to higher rates of English acquisition and higher content learning rates in English language arts and math (Arellano, Liu, Stoker, & Slama, 2018). Building on students' cultural experiences and capitalizing on home languages are scaffolds for their success in school (de Jong, 2011). Bilingualism is linked to higher cognitive abilities, delayed onset of dementia in later years, and increased work and study opportunities (Dormer, 2016). Bilingual



programs that serve native English speakers and multilingual learners promote interaction between students learning a new language and increase opportunities for language learners to practice language with native speakers (Brisk, 2006). Students' home languages present in the classroom affirms their identities as bilingual and bicultural individuals (de Jong & Gao, 2019) which enhances self-esteem and identity formation (Secada & Lightfoot, 1993). Students who demonstrate balanced bilingualism and "roughly equal abilities in each of their languages show greater advantages than those who are imbalanced, or more dominant in one language" (Espinoza, 2015, p. 44), giving more argument for maintaining both languages of the students. Multilingualism increases the ability to learn about the culture connected with the language, increases opportunities to develop relationships with monolingual speakers of the home language, and builds behavioral or cognitive reserves (Mahendra & Namazi, 2014).

Maintaining a home language also helps with identity conflicts by removing negative feelings toward one's own culture, caused by the pressure to conform and assimilate to white society (Nieto, 1996). Identity is the social result of the contact we have with others (Moraes, 1996) and eliminating the language we use eliminates a piece of an identity. In her book, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*, Bell Hooks states that,

Language reflects the culture from which we emerge. To deny ourselves daily use of speech patterns that are common and familiar, that embody the unique and distinctive aspect of our self is one of the ways we become estranged and alienated from our past. (pp.79-80)

Repressing language in schools eliminates the opportunity for students, parents, and community members from participating in school activities (Semali, 2002). Rodriguez (1982)

writes of his own experiences, speaking Spanish at home while learning English in school.

Through the pressure to learn English, his identity transformed from a Spanish-speaking one to an English-speaking one, ostracizing him from his family for letting go of his family's culture.

Heath (1983) points to a hidden agenda underlying the attempt to repress home languages by imposing Standard American English as the official language of the United States:

Throughout the history of the United States, whenever speakers of varieties of English or other languages have been viewed as politically, socially, or economically threatening, their language has become a focus for arguments in favor of both restrictions of their use and imposition of Standard English. (p. 10)

In wanting to standardize the language of the United States by disallowing the home languages of our students, families, and communities, it is seen as work that will help them be more like us (McIntosh, 1998). When multilingual families are disconnected from the school environment by eliminating the family's first language, multilingual learners are left without linguistic supports afforded to English speaking students, leaving the multilingual learners to feel excluded and alienated from both school and home (Semali, 2002). Despite the fact that immigrants have been coming to the land now known as the United States since the early 1600s, there still exists ethnocentrism, discrimination, prejudice and bigotry in the United States toward black and brown hues, which stems from xenophobia—the fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign (Merriam-Webster, “xenophobia”, n.d.). Curran (1975) defines xenophobia as the distrust of strangers; because of fear, strangers pose a threat to the “culture or natives” (p. 12) Culturally (and linguistically) marginalized people are

seen as evil, such as the Yellow Peril of the Chinese and the Red Scare of Russians during the McCarthy era.

Schools have long played a key role in social and cultural settings, in which students acquire cultural capital of knowledge and skills, symbolic capital of respectability, and also linguistic capital, the ability to use appropriate forms of knowledge (García, 2009). Eliminating languages other than English from the classroom and school setting is a form of language discrimination. Linguicism is the discrimination based particularly on language (Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1998). Such language oppression may intersect with race, ethnicity or class. Linguicism denies multilingual learners the opportunity to learn in a language they understand and in schools that respect their cultural identities and backgrounds (Schneidewind & Davidson, 2000). When people lose their language to English, they do not become white and gain social acceptance; they lose the language as a tool for accessing the help that their families and communities can provide for them (Fishman, 1991). Another form of linguicism is social class placement. Social status is in part determined by which language is spoken in public discourse. Some languages are seen as prestigious in US society, such as French. Other languages, such as Spanish or Somali, are connected to poverty. Even dialects of English are seen as superior to others, such as British English to a southern drawl (Alvarez & Kolker, 1985). Semali (2002) states that "...denying the first language and its potential benefits on the development of the student's voice constitutes a form of psychological violence and functions to perpetuate social control over subordinate groups through forces of cultural invasion" (p. 60).

## **A Brief Legal and Legislative History**

Though focusing on student needs and eliminating discrimination are paramount, there are court rulings and legislation passed that make it imperative that language learning exists in educational conversations. Scanlan and López (2015) outline three time periods distinct in language ideologies in the United States around language education. From 1750 to 1850, the Permissive Period was characterized by fostered bilingualism in schools. It was common for communities to organize bilingual schools to maintain home languages spoken at home, as well as English. The double standard of second languages (typically German) was encouraged for middle-class to upper-class native English-speaking students, while discouraged for immigrant students. The Restrictive Period from 1850 to 1950 had a noticeable decline in acceptance of linguistic diversity in society and schools. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruled that separate but equal school facilities were constitutional (Wright, 2010) Immigrations into the United States were restricted, though not for all. The restrictions intensified during World War I with thirty-four states eliminating instruction in languages other than English. School leaders felt pressure to unify under English, the common language, and assimilate immigrant populations (Scanlan & López, 2015).

The Modern Period from 1950 to the present reflects both permissive and restrictive ideologies (Scanlan & López, 2015). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) reversed the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision (Wright, 2010). The Civil Rights Act (1964) prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in all federally assisted programs, including public schools. National origin was also interpreted by the Office of Civil Rights to include language (Gándara, 2018). Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1968 attempted to

promote bilingual education through the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), though over time it fostered English-only instruction (Scanlan & López, 2015; Gándara, 2018; US Dept. of Education, n.d.). In the 1974 case, *Lau v. Nichols*, the US Supreme Court ruled that same education is not equal education under the Civil Rights Act and that schools must take affirmative steps to overcome educational barriers faced by multilingual learners such as additional language instruction (Sugarman & Widness, 1974). The Lau remedies that were created include identifying English language skills of multilingual learners, determining appropriate pedagogy, determining when multilingual learners are to be placed in mainstream classes, and what professional standards teachers of multilingual learners are to meet (Wright, 2010). From *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981) came the Castaneda standard which mandates that multilingual learner programs are based on sound theory, implemented effectively with sufficient resources and staff, and are evaluated to determine effectiveness (Wright, 2010). A reauthorization of ESEA in 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) created a new label for multilingual learners: limited English proficient, which focuses on the deficit of English fluency. NCLB repealed the BEA, eliminated references to bilingualism, removed support of home-language development (Scanlan & López, 2015) and created a performance-based accountability system created around student standardized test results (García, 2012). The law started to recognize the unique linguistic needs of multilingual learners by requiring that schools place an emphasis in language through assessments (García & Kleifgen, 2018) and also mandated that multilingual learners be placed in language instruction education programs to increase proficiency in English and learn content (Wright, 2010).

With the release of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and math in 2009, states hoped to create common learning expectations between grade levels (García & Kleifgen, 2018). There were two pages of acknowledgement of multilingual learners which included these students may require additional time, appropriate instructional support, and aligned assessments as they acquire both English language proficiency and content area knowledge (Common Core, 2010). The CCSS focused on grammar and vocabulary in English only, being taught in a linear and progressive order, and proved difficult for multilingual learners who need authentic language use and practice, not instruction of skills in isolation. To address concerns with the CCSS and multilingual learners, New York and California each developed bilingual common core standards and common standards for language development, respectively, and WIDA and ELPA21 emerged as resources for language and content learning (García & Kleifgen, 2018). ELPA 21 is an assessment system that measures student growth and mastery of standard state academic language demands, based on a set of English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards (Clear Expectations, 2019).

From the age of NCLB and CCSS came Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. ESSA was designed to continue preparation of students for career and college readiness while providing flexibility for states that NCLB lacked (García & Kleifgen, 2018). According to Section 3003 of ESSA, “English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement, the goals of ESSA’s Title III are to help ensure that multilingual learners attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English and content areas; to assist educators in establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching multilingual learners; and

promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of English learners (Section 3012, 129 Stat. 1954). ESSA moved the accountability for multilingual learners to Title I, incorporating multilingual learners not as an add-on, but as part of the entire school community (García & Kleifgen, 2018). It also stipulates that an assessment for English language proficiency is included in the accountability calculations and that goals specific to multilingual learners are included in goal-setting. It continues the requirements of having standardized screening, entrance and exit procedures, annually assessing multilingual learners for English language proficiency, and provide appropriate accommodations in the language and form most likely to demonstrate the students' learning in the content area assessed (García & Kleifgen, 2018; MDE Minnesota Consolidated Plan, 2018a).

Minnesota's consolidated state ESSA plan has the purpose and vision for meeting ESSA requirements. The plan contains a focus on equity for all students, conditions of fairness, justice, and inclusion so that all students have access and opportunity to learn (MDE, 2018a). In addition to ESSA's focus on equity, Minnesota's World's Best Workforce (WBWF) legislation states that "districts must also have meaningful strategies in place for improving instruction, curriculum, and student achievement, including the English and native language development and academic achievement of English learners" (MDE, 2018a, p. 13). Former multilingual learners are also included in testing for accountability for four years after exiting the language instruction program. Recently-arrived multilingual learners are not included the first year of testing for accountability, but are counted in the second year for academic progress and in the third year for academic achievement, allowing for more time in language and content learning environments

before included in accountability. The plan incorporates growth toward English language proficiency. Establishing a baseline of academic English proficiency on the WIDA ACCESS annual assessment in 2016, individual timelines were created by MDE for all multilingual learners based on the level of proficiency and grade of the student's first ACCESS test. Timelines range from two to seven years (Minnesota ESSA Plan, Title I, Part A).

In addition to the Minnesota ESSA plan, the Minnesota Learning for English Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act passed in 2014 (MDE, 2018b), focused on multilingual learners. Representative Carlos Mariani Rosa and Senator Patricia Torres-Ray recognized the opportunity gap for multilingual learners through disparities in accountability results from unprepared teachers, lack of school district guidance from the state on multilingual learner education, and funding cuts and restrictions to multilingual learner programs. The LEAPS Act's key provisions include viewing multilingualism as an asset; amplifying teacher and administrator skills and knowledge about multilingual learners and academic language development in home languages and English; recognizing the diversity of multilingual learners (including screenings of home languages, promoting bilingual programs, and differentiating supports for SLIFE and LTELs); as well as engaging multiple voices through family engagement surveys and promoting home language literacy (MDE, 2018b). The comprehensive goals of the law are to develop academic English proficiency, gain grade-level content knowledge, and develop multilingual skills.

### **Who Are Multilingual Learners?**

Across the United States, multilingual learner enrollment in schools is increasing (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Minnesota is no exception, enrolling 68,512 students with English



Learner (EL) status in 2014 and 73,128 students in the 2018-2019 school year (MDE English Learner Report, 2019). There is a significantly greater number of younger learners in Minnesota than older learners, almost triple the third graders as seniors in 2017 (MDE, 2017a). The multilingual learners are not solely in the seven-county metropolitan area surrounding Minneapolis and St. Paul. Metro and non-metro Minnesota have seen gains in multilingual learner student enrollment since 2013 (MDE, 2017a). In 2017-2018, 263 different home languages were reported for 884,852 students in The Minnesota Automated Student Reporting System (MARSS), compared to the 255 home languages reported for 2016-2017. The top twelve languages in Minnesota other than English are Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Karen, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese/Mandarin, Russian, Afan Oromo/Oromo/Oromiffa, Amharic, Lao/Laotian, and Cambodian/Khmer (MDE, 2017a).

### ***Student Groups***

Immigrant students are aged 3 through 21, are not born in any of the 50 states (the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico included), and have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than 3 full academic years (non-consecutive months included) (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965). Scanlan and López (2015) clarify how immigrant status can be confused with refugee status. An immigrant, though born outside of the United States, may not be a refugee. Refugees are a group of recent arrivals to Minnesota from another country, in locations determined by the government; over time, the groups may move closer back to their homeland and more compatible for the people in culture or climate. There has been a decrease in the number of refugees arriving in

Minnesota over the past year, with Stearns, Hennepin, and Ramsey counties seeing the greatest additions to the population (MDE English Learner Report, 2019).

Migrant students are defined as a child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including dairy or fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work —

- a) has moved from one school district to another;
- b) in a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
- c) resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

Migrant students face unique social, language, and academic challenges due to high mobility, “including unaffordable housing, low wages, limited resources to purchase nutritious foods, lack of affordable health and dental care and/or over-/under-immunization, health hazards (e.g. exposure to pesticides or other occupational harm), receiving appropriate academic placement, and difficulty with credit accrual” (MDE English Learner Fall Report, 2019, p. 19). Since 2007-2008, Minnesota has seen a gradual decline in number of migrant students in both school year and summer programs, though there was a slight increase in both programs between 2016 and 2017 (MDE, 2017a).

Three additional categories of students and student backgrounds—students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), recently-arrived English learners (RAELs), and long-

term English learners (LTELs)—offer more considerations for multilingual learner programming. With educating SLIFE, it is important to build upon the students' funds of knowledge, establish a starting line of meeting the students' socio-emotional, physiological, and acculturation needs, work within the Zone of Proximal Development, and consider additional wraparound academic and social supports that may be beneficial for the students (SLIFE, 2015). RAELs are within twelve months of arriving to the United States and will be included in state testing (MDE, 2017b); these students may also be SLIFE. Therefore, it is imperative that the school reviews the academic records and home language proficiency of the student prior to enrollment in classes (SLIFE, 2015). Research suggests that most LTELs have not had the opportunity to benefit from consistent programs of language support or some LTELs experience disruptions in programming as a result of moving back and forth from the United States (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2007).

### ***Student Background and Proficiency***

Díaz-Rico (2018) provides additional examples of important student background information that should be considered and understood by all school leaders when providing language programming. First, understanding naming conventions and forms of address show respect to the learner and the culture from which he/she comes. The importance of age presents in two ways: at which age the student first learned a home language both socially and academically, at which age an additional language was (or languages were) learned both socially and academically. Knowing the level of proficiency in the home language aids students in learning an additional language through the ability to build upon current understanding of language. The higher the proficiency in the first language that a student demonstrates links to a

higher rate at which the student can acquire an additional language. Knowing the level of prior academic success of a student may offer a sense of the student's strengths and weaknesses and/or areas in which the student has not been best served. Other examples include likes/dislikes, self-esteem, motivation, anxiety level, attitudes, as well as cognitive and learning styles.

Born out of the No Child Left Behind legislation, the Wisconsin Department of Education created WIDA. WIDA developed English Language Proficiency standards and assessments utilized in forty US states and internationally, including the state of Minnesota (WIDA, 2019c). In order to help educators develop a greater understanding of English language proficiency levels, WIDA has developed performance definitions for receptive and productive language (WIDA, 2019d.). The definitions describe a performance range of student performance as part of a multistage process to define and classify multilingual learners, ranging from level 1 for low English proficiency to a high level 6 for “a range of grade-appropriate oral or written language for a variety of academic purposes and audiences, automaticity in language processing is reflected in the ability to identify and act on significant information from a variety of genres and registers” (WIDA, 2019d). The criteria are useful for educators in communicating with one another about a student's progress in English language development, in grouping students for classwork, and in planning for differentiated instruction and assessment (Gottlieb, 2016). Gottlieb (2016, p. 49) offers an abbreviated version of the performance definitions as outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Abbreviated Performance Definitions for Receptive and Expressive Language*

|                              | Comprehend (Through Listening And Reading)  | Produce (Through Speaking And Writing)  |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Language proficiency level 5 | A broad range of academic vocabulary in a variety of sentences of varying language complexity in extended discourse of each content area  | Cohesive, organized, and fluent language that includes multiple registers and genres, varied sentence structures related to content-area topics, purpose, and audience, along with precise vocabulary   |
| Language proficiency level 4 | Specialized academic and technical vocabulary in sentences of varying language complexity within discourses across content areas with some instructional supports                                   | Organized language that flows and includes several registers and genres that contain a variety of sentence structures and a range of specialized academic vocabulary related to the content-area topics |
| Language proficiency level 3 | General academic and some specialized vocabulary related to the content areas presented in a variety of expanded sentences within discourses that rely on visual, graphic, and interactive supports | Language that includes a sense of register and genre with some sentence variety and length, along with specialized academic vocabulary related to content   |
| Language proficiency level 2 | General academic language related to the content areas presented in simple and compound sentences within discourses that rely on visual, graphic, and interactive supports                          | Words and expressions presented in short, often repetitive sentences that relay a generalized meaning of the communication within a genre   |
| Language proficiency level 1 | Some phrases and short, simple sentences that rely on visual, graphic, and interactive supports   | Pictorial and graphic representation of language and sporadic words, phrases, and memorized chunks of language  |

## **An Overview of Language Acquisition Theories and Research**

Ellis (1997) defines second language acquisition (SLA) as “the systemic study of how people acquire a second language” (p. 3), and how people learn a language other than his/her home/native language, inside or outside of a classroom. Krashen (1982) states that understanding language theory provides input on decision-making around methodology and resource selection. In this section, there are overviews of language learning theories, second language learning theories, as well as research around questions about language learning practices. These theories are not mutually exclusive; together they help explain different components of language acquisition, building upon one another to create a more comprehensive understanding of SLA (Dormer, 2016).

History provides much research around language learning theories. Skinner (1957) and the behaviorist theory focus on language imitation and reinforcement. Chomsky (1959) introduces the concept of universal grammar, in that humans are programmed to develop language. Piaget (1964) and his cognitive constructivism describe how humans mentally construct meaning that makes sense to them, which affects how and what they learn. Lenneberg (1967) discusses the critical period of language learning—childhood through adolescence—as the optimal time frame for people to acquire or learn a language. Vygotsky (1978) presents the zone of proximal development (ZPD), linked to social constructivism. He defined ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development . . . under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Another importance of ZPD is that language is best learned through

social interaction, that language is learned through language use, that learners help each other make sense of their input (Díaz-Rico, 2018).

### ***Second Language Acquisition***

From the research of language acquisition comes the second language acquisition theories. Skinner (1957) and the behaviorist approach present the audiolingual method, defined by its drills, repetition and memorization. Chomsky (1959) presented the critical period hypothesis, though Hakuta, Bialystok and Wiley (2003) presented that the critical period theory is not supported by new research.

Krashen (1982) presents five second language acquisition theories: the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Krashen states that there are two distinct ways that humans learn language: acquisition (subconscious) and the unawareness that one is learning language, and learning (conscious) of language rules, being aware of the rules and being able to speak of the rules. The natural order is that language and structures are learned in a predictable order, that some grammatical structures are learned early on and others later in learning. The monitor hypothesis is that learning comes when learners make changes to their utterances when they have time, can focus on the form of language, and when they know the rules. The input hypothesis states that learners will acquire language when it is “a little beyond” (p. 21) where they are currently. The affective filter hypothesis relates to student motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. If a student is motivated and has self-confidence, they have a low affective filter. When the student is unmotivated or is anxious, their affective filter is high, which will lower the

amount of acquisition and learning in the classroom. “The affective variables [act] to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device” (p. 32).

Another aspect of language acquisition and learning is the differentiation between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1980). BICS includes accent, oral fluency, and sociolinguistic competence, which work in tandem with the CALP of language proficiency and cognitive ability/memory function. Cummins (1984) further defines CALP as language involved in higher cognitive processes in Bloom’s taxonomy, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Context-embedded, face-to-face communicative proficiency (BICS) can develop in new language learners within two years though context-reduced (academic) communicative proficiency comes within five to seven years (Cummins, 1981, p. 16).

There exists great variability between learners in learning or acquiring language. “Variability in [second language] attainment at the individual level is conditioned by factors that may be experiential, biological, intellectual, linguistic, conative, educational and identificational” as well as age and individual motivation to learn language and engage in culture, and identify with [home language] speakers (Birdsong, 2018, p 1). Based on neuroscientific research, we have learned that from the earliest days of life babies have the capacity to hear, process, and learn multiple languages (Espinoza, 2015). Collier and Thomas (1989) found that students that arrive to the United States between the ages of eight and eleven years of age reached the 50th percentile on all five standardized tests (reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social science) after five to seven years’ length of residence in the United States. For younger arrivals, ages four to seven upon arrival, it would take seven to ten years to reach the 50th percentile.



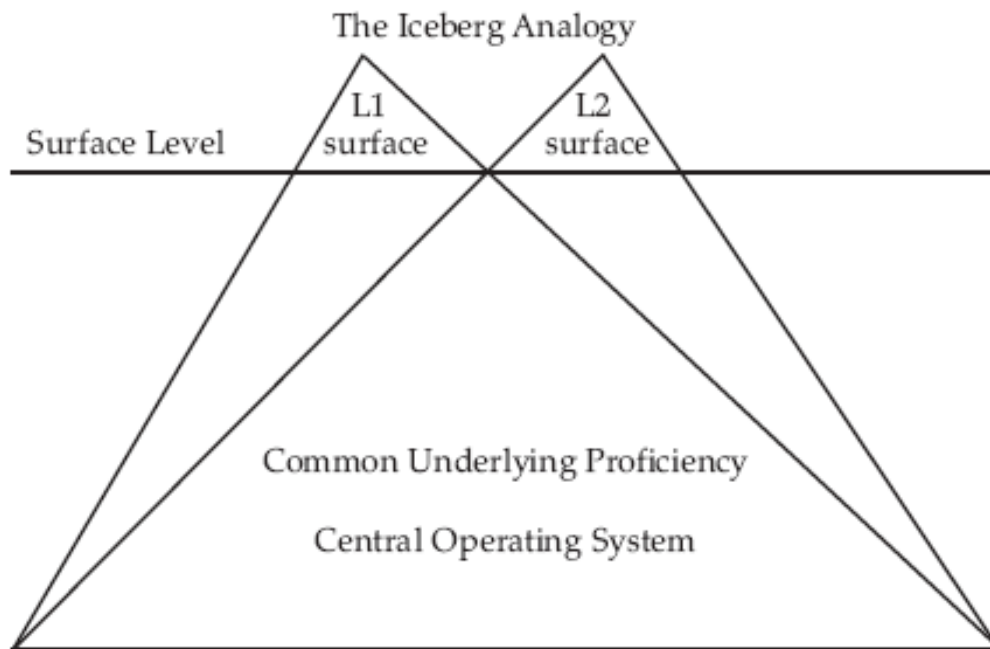
Twelve-year-olds to sixteen-year-olds taking the eleventh grade standardized tests had the lowest scores. The results show that seven to ten years is not enough time to reach the 50th percentile before graduation from high school; it takes a minimum of five to ten years for the most advantaged multilingual learners to acquire English for academic purposes and the most successful long-term achievement comes with an emphasis in home and English language development. Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) found that oral proficiency takes three to five years to develop and academic English proficiency can take four to seven years. Differences in timelines can be attributed also to specific content acquisition, formal v. informal learning, quantity of exposure to language, and proficiency in a learners' home language (Cummins, 1981).

### ***Home Languages***

The influence of home language is another component of language learning. Cummins (1981) discusses the common underlying proficiency of the home and new languages (Figure 2). The model shows that (a) languages are seen as common or interdependent, (b) that experience in either language will promote development of the proficiency underlying both languages, and (c) learning one language will bolster learning in an additional language.

**Figure 2**

*Cummins' Dual Iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency*



### ***Bilingualism***

Knowing that languages are interdependent, bilingualism is a component of language learning. According to García (2009), “bilingual education is not simply one language plus a second language equals two languages” (p. 7). The term bilingualism is defined in a variety of ways. Macnamara (1967) defines bilingualism as possessing at least one of the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) even to a minimal degree in his/her second language. Bloomfield (1933) states that traditionally, full fluency in two languages is considered to be bilingual. Grosjean (1989) defines bilingualism as having competencies in two or more languages “to the extent required by his or her needs and those of the environment” (p. 6). Hakuta (1987) begins his definition with one similar to Macnamara and adds that one may argue

to include only native-like control of the languages, though “native-like” is difficult to define. He attributes part of bilingualism to the entire process of second language acquisition, and the study of bilingualism should include the circumstances around the creation of bilingualism.

Two aspects of bilingual/multilingualism which allow for more than one language in the learning process are codeswitching and translanguaging. When a person is using one language and switches to another while speaking, it is referred to as codeswitching (de Jong, 2011). Codeswitching is a normal part of the language learning process, as one is learning the linguistic rules of which switches are allowed and which are not accepted. It allows the learner to fill the gaps in communication both in speaking and in writing (de Jong, 2011). García and Kleyn (2016) state that codeswitching relies on two language systems, and they promote the concept of translanguaging as a more supportive method of language learning. They define translanguaging as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire, which does not in any way correspond to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (p. 14). Rather than viewing the languages as separate (an external social view of language), the learner uses his/her one language system (an internal linguistic view) which gives recognition to learner strengths and encourages them to leverage all of their understanding of content and language as well as promotes multilingualism in society. Translanguaging allows and encourages educators to counter, top-down mandates by paying more attention to individual learner strengths, needs in learning, and language development (Hornberger & Link, 2012).

### *Culture in Language Learning*

Another important component of language education for individual learners is the implementation and integration of multicultural education (Nieto, 1996). Watson (1994) defines culture as all the collective qualities that define us as humans.

Culture is the nuances, the looks, the sayings, the lesson, the jokes, the quiriness, the rituals, the rules, the connectors, the contexts, the designs of our lives that we as members of groups have in some way allowed to emerge, not only from our past but from what is being created right here and now in the circle of our families, our classrooms, our support groups – our lives. (Watson, 1994, p. 31)

Chun and Frodesen (2014) explain that culture is more complex than simply food, music, and dress. United States culture also varies between age groups, ethnic groups, regions (west coast vs. south) and lifestyle. Since language and culture are inextricably linked (Fishman, 1991; Nieto, 1996), language education cannot exist without the cultural component added to it. Language does not exist outside of social relations; without culture, language education is a truncated and distorted understanding of language learning. Multiculturalism focuses on the dialogical existence of people and language (Moraes, 1996).

### **Multilingual Learner Programming**

In Minnesota legislation passed in 2018, all districts enrolling one or more multilingual learners must implement an educational program that includes “a written plan of services that describes programming by English proficiency level... [and it] must articulate the amount and scope of service offered to [multilingual learners] through and educational program for [multilingual learners],” also referred to as the Language Instruction Educational Program

(LIEP) (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2017). There are four critical elements that all LIEPs must include: LIEP placement procedures, LIEP description, amount and scope of instruction, and communication of LIEP information. The plans must be developed in consultation with teachers, parents, researchers, administrators, community, and institutions of higher education, in addition to being made available to parents (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2017).

### ***Language Program Principles***

The purpose of language programs is to increase multilingual learner student access to content standards, to create an environment conducive for student learning, to maintain high teacher expectations of student learning, provide clear expectations for students, and to provide explicit language instruction to gain language proficiency (Echevarría, Frey, & Fisher, 2015). The aims of a language learning program include: communicative competence, knowledge and use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and sociolinguistic competence: rules of language use in culturally appropriate ways, and how to communicate effectively with speakers of the target language (Chun & Frodesen, 2014). When schools consider multilingual learner programming, a considerable quantity of research exists around second language acquisition, multilingual learner needs in classroom instruction, and what constitutes effective instruction for multilingual learners (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus & Knapp, 2013). Language learning principles for educators exist from TESOL and WIDA, among others such as Cambridge Assessment and the State of California.

TESOL and WIDA are national and international principles for English instruction. TESOL outlines their *Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners*. The six principles are:

1. know your learners,
2. create conditions for language learning,
3. design high-quality lessons for language development,
4. adapt lesson delivery as needed,
5. monitor and assess student language development, and
6. engage and collaborate within a community of practice (TESOL, 2019b).

Similarly, WIDA (2019b) created ten guiding principles for language development, which include:

1. leveraging learner assets,
2. developing language over time for increasing knowledge,
3. considering learner social-emotional needs,
4. learning language through multiple modalities,
5. using language to interpret information,
6. drawing on metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness,
7. using learners' full linguistic repertoires, and
8. using language to interpret and present multiple perspectives (WIDA Guiding Principles, 2019).

### ***Language Program Types***

When planning for and creating a program to best serve multilingual learners, it is important to consider a variety of program types as well as the intended results/outcomes of each (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005). In selecting which program to implement, leaders should consider that student populations and the availability of resources will vary from school to school.

Miramontes, Nadeau, and Commins (2011) state that the framework and focus should be on how to best match the needs of students and the community with the resources available. The authors argue that it is the nature and the quality of the instruction the students receive, mainly through English, though a bilingual approach in supporting content acquisition through home language support may provide more access for learners. These programs, they acknowledge, range from those expecting all students to learn English after simply exposing them to the language and treating them like all other students, to those specifically designed to support students' academic and linguistic development through the use of their home languages (García & Kleifgen, 2018). García and Kleifgen (2018, pp. 32-33) outline the continuum of language education programs: "Types of Educational Programs for Multilingual Learners"; see Figures 3a and 3b.

**Figure 3a***Types of Educational Programs for Multilingual Learners I & II*

|  | Language used in instruction   | Components  | Duration  | Goals   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <b>I. Nonrecognition</b>   |  |   |   |   |
| Submersion (Sink or swim)  | 100% English   | Mainstream education; no special help with English; no teachers qualified to teach multilingual learners  | Throughout K-12 schooling   | Linguistic assimilation (shift to English only)                               |
| <b>II. ESL/EL</b>  |  |   |   |   |
| ESL/EL Pull-out (submersion plus ESL)  | 90-100% in English; may include some home language support   | Mainstream education; students pulled out for 30-45 minutes of ESL daily; teachers certified in ESL   | As needed   | Linguistic assimilation; remedial English                                     |
| ESL/EL Push-in   | 90-100% in English; may include some home language support   | Mainstream education; ESL teacher works alongside the subject teacher as needed; teachers certified in ESL  | As needed   | Linguistic assimilation; remedial education within mainstream classroom       |
| Structured English immersion (sheltered English, content-based ESL, stand-alone ESL) | 90-100% in English; may include some home language support   | Subject-matter instruction at students' level of English; students grouped for instruction; teachers certified in ESL; should have some training in immersion   | 1-3 years   | Linguistic assimilation; exit to mainstream education                         |
| High-intensity English language training   | 100% English; focus on English features; usually combined with mainstream or sheltered English for content | Focus on features and structures of the English language, usually combined with mainstream or sheltered English for content; teachers certified in ESL/English-Language Arts for language instruction | 1-3 years, especially used in high school and middle school and anti-bilingual education school districts | Linguistic assimilation; remedial English focus; exit to mainstream education |



**Figure 3b***Types of Educational Programs for Multilingual Learners III & IV*

| <b>III. Bilingual Education (BLE)</b>   |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Transitional BLE (early-exit BLE)   | Initially 50-90% home language and 10-50% English; home language reduced gradually to 10% and English increased to 90%                      | Initial literacy usually in home language; some subject instruction in home language; ESL and subject-matter instruction at students' level of English; sheltered English subject level instruction; teachers certified in BLE                          | 1-3 years; students exit as they become proficient in English  | Linguistic assimilation; English acquisition without falling behind academically |
| Developmental BLE (late-exit BLE, one-way dual-language BLE)  | 90% home language initially; gradually decreasing to 50% or thereabouts; home language instruction always available OR 50/50 from beginning | Initial literacy focus is in home language, although English simultaneously introduced; always some subject instruction in home language; ESL initially and English subject-matter instruction at students' level of English; teachers certified in BLE | At least 5-6 years   | Bilingualism and biliteracy; academic achievement in English                     |
| Two-way BLE (two-way dual-language BLE, dual-language BLE, two-way immersion BLE, dual-immersion BLE) | 90/10 model; 90% home language, 10% additional language in early grades; 50/50 model: parity in both languages                              | English speakers AND speakers of language other than English taught literacy and subjects in both languages; teachers certified in BLE  | At least 5-6 years; more prevalent at the elementary level   | Bilingualism and biliteracy; academic achievement in English                     |
| <b>IV. Blend</b>  |   |   |  |  |
| Dynamic bi/plurilingual education   | English and students' home languages in dynamic relationship; students are the locus of control for language used; peer teaching            | Teacher-led whole classroom in English, coupled with collaborative project-based student learning using home language practices   | Suitable at the secondary level, when students have already developed literacy in their home languages | Bilingualism, academic achievement in English                                    |

### ***Program Leadership***

As critical as language frameworks and program design are for the success of multilingual learners, school and district leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). Effective operations of a school increases or decreases a student's chances of academic success (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Elfers et al. (2013) demonstrate through an analysis of four school districts that both district and school leadership play a crucial role in creating, aligning, and sustaining supports for classroom teachers who serve multilingual learners.

School and district leaders are part of the components that drive successful school reform (National Implementation Research Network, 2019). With systems intervention, facilitative administration, and decision support data systems, school and district leadership guide building and district leadership teams through technical and adaptive changes, support staff, and sustain outcomes. Both technical and adaptive changes will require teams to clearly identify problems, generate solutions, monitor tasks, define success, and allow for all voices on the team to be heard in the decision-making process. Defining the problem and process may be difficult adaptively, but focusing team effort on aims and having leadership support at all levels will create an environment for positive change (National Implementation Research Network, 2019).

School leaders and policymakers think that the answer is to create better multilingual learner programs—either ESL or bilingual—though these programs cannot replace the large numbers of instructional hours that multilingual learner students spend in mainstream classrooms taught by non-specialists (Elfers et al., 2013). Leaders eliminate student marginalization by recognizing the student needs and rights to fully participate in the mainstream classroom and by

advocating for educational equity and access (Scanlan & López, 2015). Effective learning models are inclusive for all students, regardless of language needs or ability (Scanlan & López, 2012; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Capper & Frattura, 2009). Supporting teachers' professional learning through targeted preparation and other school supports build teacher capacity (Elfers et al., 2013). In a study from López, Scanlan & Gundrum (2013), the authors examined to which degree each state's teacher preparation programs reflect current best practices in English learner (EL) theory and related this in turn to fourth grade Latinx EL reading outcomes in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Their research demonstrates that multilingual learner preparation for teachers positively affects multilingual learner's reading scores. Additionally, in states that require multilingual learner specialist certification and where all teachers have some specialized training to meet needs of multilingual learners, there tends to be higher student achievement than states that do not have these requirements. States with requirements for knowledge on native language literacy, how to adapt curriculum, and assessment in literacy all led to gains in student achievement scores. These findings support their theory of requiring specialist certification in either bilingual, or English as a Second Language (ESL), or at least one bilingual or ESL course for mainstream teachers, in addition to understanding language development and formative assessment.

To enact the change necessary to support multilingual learners, building collaboration with the school principal has been linked to a school having clear mission and goals, as well as healthier school climate, teacher attitudes, classroom practices, curriculum and instruction organization, and student learning opportunities (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Fullan (2014) demonstrates how principals are key in leading learning, leading change in the building

and district, and being a change agent. Change agency includes understanding and discerning the school's needs and the application of clearly articulated and shared educational values through layers of time and context-specific practices embedded in the school's work, and culture and achievements. Done well, these components will improve and sustain effectiveness (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). In one study of high-performing, high-poverty, Latinx-majority elementary schools, the significantly different role of the principal is a stronger organizational manager that can support a multi-faceted plan. The principal is a leader of learning who keeps all stakeholders focused on student learning, and builds strong relationships both internal and external (Hodges, 2015). Russel (2018) describes a qualitative case study of school-wide professional learning in diverse urban high schools; one of the main supports being the role and vision of the principal in the planning and implementation. Specifically, in regards to multilingual learner programming, principals both enable and obstruct practices through knowledge and lack of awareness of the policy's intention, which will reflect social justice leadership when implementing policy for multilingual learners. The principals must leverage the policy implementation to enact equitable instruction for multilingual learners (Mavrogordato & White, 2019).

In addition to school principals, successful superintendents are also critical in creating a district and school culture that supports and maintains student success by providing clear communication to all stakeholders, engaging internal and external publics, and using data to evaluate programs (Dolph & Grant, 2010). One study highlights the important role of the superintendent in supporting equity in school reforms, such as: dual language education, leading social justice efforts, taking advantage of political opportunities, mobilizing networks of support, and framing the work that will inspire and mobilize stakeholders (DeMatthews, Izquierdo, &

Knight, 2017). “School leadership creates the learning architecture for successfully creating CLD students” (Scanlan & López, 2015, p. 19).

### ***Multilingual Program Frameworks***

Research provides multiple frameworks for multilingual learner programming with administrative support. August and Hakuta (1997) identified the following conditions which lead to high academic performance for multilingual learner students:

A supportive school-wide climate, school leadership, a customized learning environment, articulation and coordination within and between schools, use of native language and culture in instruction, a balanced curriculum that includes both basic and higher-order skills, explicit skill instruction, opportunities for student-directed instruction, use of instructional strategies that enhance understanding, opportunities for practice, systemic student assessment, staff development, and home and parent involvement (p. 171).

Three of the programming frameworks derive from the work of Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990), Theoharis and O’Toole (2011), and Scanlan and López (2015). Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) explored eight features of high schools that promote the achievement of multilingual learner students:

1. value on the students’ language and culture,
2. high expectations for students,
3. school leaders prioritize the education of multilingual learners,
4. staff development is designed to help teachers and staff serve multilingual learners more effectively,
5. a variety of courses and programs are offered for multilingual learners,

6. counseling programs give special attention to multilingual learners,
7. parents are encouraged to become involved, and
8. staff share a strong commitment to empowering multilingual learners through education.

Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) found that inclusive multilingual learner services were most beneficial for multilingual learners, observing two schools whose reform practices included: eliminating pull-out multilingual learner services, focusing on building a school community, professional development for all staff, and collaboration. Pull-out services are English language instruction when MLs leave their mainstream classroom to receive basic English instruction in grammar, vocabulary, oral language, and spelling (Díaz-Rico, 2018). Scanlan and López (2015) focus on three components in their theory of action: effective school leadership with ambitious expectations; successfully educating CLD students through sociocultural integration, cultivating language proficiency, and ensuring academic achievement; and creating a learning architecture through communities of practice and an integrated service delivery model.

A recent study from Elfers and Stritikus (2014) revealed that there is a critical link between school leadership practices and multilingual learners, outlined by five components. Throughout these five components, the leadership at both the school and district level is crucial in creating and sustaining systems of support for classroom teachers who work with multilingual learners. There are five components to their researched framework: “(1) resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction, (2) creating a productive blend of -levellevel and school-level leadership initiatives, (3) communicating a compelling rationale, (4) differentiating support systems at elementary and secondary levels, and (5) using data for instructional improvement” (p. 305).

Focusing on high-quality instruction is often defined as effective teaching practices and contexts for learning (August & Hakuta, 1997). The goal of an effective and inclusive service delivery for multilingual learners is widely embraced and supported though infrequently attained (Scanlan & López, 2012). Without an intentional focus on this issue, leadership efforts and supports for multilingual learners can become compartmentalized, or work in silos, often left for the multilingual learner coordinator or teachers to make improvements (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). “A lack of understanding translates into lack of action or inaction” (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014, p. 319), which leads to the multilingual learner department left out of general education conversations around district curriculum and instruction. A servant-leader administrator will ensure that teacher and student needs are of the highest priority in being served and inspire others to accompany the initiatives (Greenleaf, 1977). Studies have shown that administrative support includes knowledge, time, and interest in the students, which directly impacts teacher retention (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Johnsen (2013) outlines three cornerstones for garnering administrative support: administrators learning more about the programming, showing how strategies are beneficial for all students, and describing how adaptations can be made without additional funds or resources. Supportive district leaders also invest time and resources in staffing considerations, specifically in hiring teachers and support staff with knowledge of language learning; they also support professional development through training and follow-up coaching. The instructional leadership of the multilingual learner department is led by district-level personnel and supported through differentiation in all buildings in partnership with Title I, Special Education, and general education classrooms (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Training all teachers and support staff in practices that support language learning and acquisition (such as GLAD or SIOP) emphasizes

teaching for all students within the same classroom (Elfers et al, 2013; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). All students will have access and support to be successful in mainstream classrooms with grade-level content (Scanlan & López, 2012). Theoharis and O’Toole (2011) report on the successes of inclusion by eliminating pull-out programming, engaging in co-teaching or dual-language programs, and collaboration with colleagues around professional development in service of student needs. Job-embedded professional development around effective core instruction for multilingual learners will increase teachers’ use of evidence-based reading practices and abilities in meeting the needs of their multilingual learners (Cavazos, Linan-Thompson, & Ortiz, 2018).

Collaboration also exists in blending district and school-level initiatives. Drawing on the connection and relationship built and maintained with the community, districts must create an environment in which the community and families feel valued and welcomed (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Partnerships among schools, families, and communities are not a luxury but a necessity, and schools need assistance from families and communities to engage in students’ learning (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). In order to create a truly equitable and welcoming school experience for students free of blame for the student’s behaviors, culturally responsive school leaders “must lead schools with community perspectives at the center of their leadership behaviors” (Khalifa, 2018, p. 11). Administrators are responsible for creating a culture of collaboration in their schools, and this collaboration affects students’ academic growth and achievement (Ketterlin-Geller, Baumer, & Lichon, 2015). Both district and school resources align to support classroom instruction. District and building leadership should maintain a strong relationship and participation in building leadership should come from all staff. Because of the relationship and trust, there is shared ownership in decision-making from district and school-



level personnel. Professional development plans are created at the building level based on student and staff needs, and the district redistributes resources as needed to ensure that prioritized needs are met. The district will maintain control of decisions such as funding and staffing, though school leadership creates and develops supports for teachers. Though the initiative may lie at the district office, the district will engage and energize staff within the schools. Providing a vision for multilingual learner work for effective multilingual learner instruction is critical at the district level, though the ownership of the work is important at the building level to create and maintain teacher and staff support of a system (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). With the district support of resources and time, school teams can work collaboratively and take collective responsibility for the learning success of each and every student by focusing on results (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). District leaders must lead strategic planning with external and internal stakeholder groups to build consensus and a sense of ownership for all students and plans; in turn, student achievement is seen as a collaborative effort by all and achievement will rise with combined efforts (Heimerl, 2012). Strategic planning in the communication process, including determining best methods of communication for stakeholders and which information to communicate, will increase communication efficacy and garner additional support for students and schools (Cox, 2014).

Communicating a compelling rationale includes focusing on the needs of each and every student, seeing multilingual learners as part of the regular school population and collective ownership of their learning (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). As best practices are examined, it is critical that educators maintain an awareness of the context in which learners may be segregated, advocate for students by pushing back against social and institutional challenges that prevent

students from receiving the assistance they deserve (DeMatthews, Izquierdo, & Knight, 2017).

Another component of the rationale includes encouraging the responsibility of all staff to serve multilingual learners. The emphasis extends to all classroom teachers and support staff, including all adults in training, coaching, and resources for multilingual learner supports. “When [multilingual learner] strategies were framed as helpful for all students, leaders indicated that general education teachers were more likely to engage with these supports (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014, p. 327). Leaders should view best practices for all students and remove thinking of strategies only for multilingual learners (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Using disaggregated student data is one manner in which to focus on the learning and achievement of all students, for the data may demonstrate that some of the students may require additional supports from the staff. Teachers and support staff preparation, training, and professional development may not focus on the needs of all learners, and it remains the district’s responsibility to provide the supports the adults need to best support students (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Russel, 2018).

Selected and supported instructional practices of educators must serve diverse learners, which may include focusing on social and cultural norms, structures, and activities of students and families (Russel, 2018). Such a stance is also known as culturally responsive teaching, defined as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical referents to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 13). Culturally (and linguistically) responsive teaching benefits all students, though best benefits students who have not been successful academically, socially, or behaviorally in school. A student’s lack of success is because a school has not been responsive to the students’ academic, social, or behavioral needs (Hollie, 2012).

It is necessary to differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Elementary multilingual learners are best served in general education classrooms with bilingual learning, when possible, or in English using strategies to make language and learning more accessible for students. Some districts spread the students and supports evenly throughout classrooms, and others cluster students and supports into fewer classrooms. When students receive bilingual instruction, supports are concentrated into these classrooms due to the need for specialized training. Students formerly identified as English learners are also monitored to ensure supports are consistent as needed. Secondary settings see fewer opportunities for language and content teacher collaboration. In secondary settings, language instruction is seen as separate from the content instruction, posing an additional challenge for teacher collaboration. Some secondary administrators believe that elementary schools receive more funding and supports from the district-level, believing the elementary schools are seen as a higher need (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). One secondary administrator adds, “We can’t control the kids, you can’t control the mood, you can’t control anything else, but we can create the system that gives them the money and resources and the time to do those pieces” (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014, p. 333). Secondary schools focus on creating systems of support for teachers, distributing expertise of language teachers throughout content areas and maintaining support in teacher strategies in language learning, as well as modeling ways teachers can support multilingual learners. A primary way teachers and leaders can serve multilingual learners is by valuing students’ first language and culture in instruction (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Students bring funds of knowledge such as home language, family values and traditions, social connection and communication, history, home activities, likes/dislikes, and previous experiences, which all

inform culturally relevant pedagogy in concept and skill development (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

The use of data for instructional improvement, guides leaders to identify areas for improvement, shape training and professional development, and support a culture of learning (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). No Child Left Behind legislation brought data and accountability to the forefront of school improvement and conversations around student growth. Formal and informal assessments provide feedback for possible modifications in pedagogy and determine where more student support is needed. Having multiple sources of data is helpful to accurately assess multilingual students' needs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Bernhardt (2013) outlines five categories of data necessary for school improvement: demographics, perceptions, achievement, process, and fidelity. Analyzing the intersections of these categories will allow educators to create a more accurate portrait of the student, staff, and school needs (Bernhardt, 2013). Many teachers feel that data from state standardized tests are not ideal for analyzing student performance and driving instructional decisions; this leads to the development of non-test-based assessments, student writing samples, and data from informal and formal classroom visits to guide additional real-time data for educators to use in instruction (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006). Student perception of the classroom environment is data that can provide real-time feedback for teachers to monitor and adjust pedagogy implemented. One study demonstrates that when student feedback on the classroom experience is received, processed, and used in pedagogical changes, student feedback is more positive on subsequent assessments and teachers reported that the data was feasible for use in instruction (Nelson, Ysseldyke, & Christ, 2015). To best use data for improvement, staff require self-efficacy in accessing the data without

assistance, seeing value in the data provided, and access to resources and/or support in making the data comprehensible for use in improving instruction (Svinicki, Williams, Rackley, Sanders, & Pine, 2016; Kerr et al., 2006). School systems as a whole play a critical role in supporting schools and educators in how to use the data, including high-stakes state assessment data, classroom assessments, common grade assessments, benchmark assessments, and college-ready indicators. The data should drive teacher collaboration around data analysis and use in instruction, coaching plans for staff in using the data, ongoing professional development in using data and a data management system, and scheduled time to complete these tasks (Farrell, 2015). Taking all of the data through a comprehensive needs analysis and determining a root cause of the concern will aid educators in creating an improvement plan that is implemented, monitored, and adjusted based on reviewing data of the implementation process (Bernhardt, 2013).

### **Summary**

This literature review briefly outlined the importance of focusing on language instruction and multilingual learners, including equity and legislation and court cases. It provided relevant research on language learning and second language acquisition. It then focused on multilingual learner demographic information and types of multilingual learners. Finally, it reviewed research-based best practices of multilingual learner programs, including Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) framework for successful multilingual learner program design. As can be ascertained from this literature review, multilingual learners benefit from schools and districts focusing on multilingual learners' needs in education. There is a tie between school and district leadership and increases in student achievement. Through intentional data review, strategy planning/implementation/review, and strategic inclusion of community and family perspectives

and needs, schools and districts can collectively improve educational systems and instruction for multilingual learners.

An understanding of who are multilingual learners, how language is learned, and what comprises successful multilingual programs are important in providing a foundation for this study. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of this study's facets, such as: research design, an overview of the survey and interview tools, and other details related to how research questions will be reviewed. Details about how the data will be gathered and analyzed are also contained within.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Study Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine the commonalities of practice across five Minnesota elementary schools identified in the ESSA Identifications (MDE, 2017a), as the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency, using the five components identified by Elfers and Stritikus (2014). This study sought to determine if there are commonalities of practice between the high-growth schools based on best practices in research by: describing and contrasting the components of multilingual programs of high-English language proficiency growth schools in Minnesota and barriers encountered by teachers, administrators, schools, and districts when implementing multilingual programming. The data collected may be used by public and private school administrators and school leaders to evaluate the implementation of best practices in multilingual programming and increase student learning and achievement. The data will also assist in identifying roadblocks to successful program implementation and monitoring.

The multilingual learner population is the fastest-growing population of public school students in the United States (McKeon, 2005). In 2016, 4.9 million students in the United States were identified as multilingual learners, comprising 9.6 percent of the total U. S. student population (US Department of Education, 2019). In the 2017-2018 school year, Minnesota saw 73,128 students, or 8.5 percent identified as English learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Over time, multilingual learners have seen a variety of program offerings, ranging from bilingualism in schools (from 1750 to 1850) to a decline in language acceptance (1850 to 1950) to both permissive and restrictive ideologies (1950 to present) (Scanlan & López,

2015). National and state legislation have worked to promote improved educational programs for multilingual learners, though set-backs have withheld progress (Wright, 2010; Sugarman & Widness, 1974; Scanlan & López, 2015; Gándara, 2018). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) brought accountability of multilingual learner achievement to the forefront of school improvement (García & Kleifgen, 2018; ESSA, 2015). In Minnesota, all school districts enrolling multilingual learners must implement an educational program that meets the linguistic needs of the students (Minn. Stat. § 124D.61, 2017) though the beliefs and outcomes of the programs vary greatly (García & Kleifgen, 2018).

Research demonstrates the disparities between middle-class White students and students who are Black, Latinx, Indigenous, multilingual learners, or working class (Gutiérrez, 2008), often referred to as the achievement gap. School systems focus on the achievement gap in such a way that conjures views of the students as the problem, support deficit thinking and negative narratives about students of color, perpetuate the myth that the problem and solution are technical fixes, and promote a narrow definition of learning and equity (Gutiérrez, 2008). The deficits are not within the students but in the systems that are meant to serve them (Paunesku, 2019). Research of Capper and Frattura (2017) demonstrates that full inclusion of multilingual learners in traditional classroom settings has many benefits for all students, including students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and gifted/talented. Taking an asset-based approach to teaching and learning and ensuring students are educated in both their home (first) language in addition to English, enables students to learn faster (Brisk, 2006; Francis, Lesaux, & August 2006; Barac & Bialystok, 2012). In one study, students with an initial higher proficiency level in their home language of Spanish, led to higher rates of English acquisition and higher content



learning rates in language arts and math (Arellano, Liu, Stoker, & Slama, 2018). Building on students' culture and home languages are scaffolds for their success in school (de Jong, 2011).

Fullan (2014) demonstrates how school leaders are key in leading learning, leading change in the building and district, and being a change agent. Language frameworks and program design, and ultimately the success of multilingual learners, is led by the school and district leadership as the second-most important aspect of education, second only to classroom teaching (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). "School leadership creates the learning architecture for successfully creating CLD students" (Scanlan & López, 2015, p. 19). Effective learning models are inclusive for all students, regardless of language needs or ability (Scanlan & López, 2012; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Capper & Frattura, 2009). It is essential that school leaders support all teachers' professional learning through targeted preparation in language learning and other school supports, such as teacher collaboration, to build teacher capacity (Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013).

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the following four research questions:

1. To what extent do schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014)?
2. What are commonalities of these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
3. What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?

4. What barriers have schools with high progress toward English language proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers?

### **Research Design**

In order to determine which methodology to employ in this study, the researcher ascertained how many principals of the five identified schools were willing to participate in the process. Upon verbal or email approval from all five leaders, the researcher used a convergent mixed methods approach in the form of a survey and follow-up interview.

Mixed methods research is defined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) as research in which the researcher collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data in response to research questions and integrates the two forms of data and their results. Specifically, in convergent research design, both the qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously and both sets of data are compared (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Often, one form of the data collected in mixed methods is more primary than the other (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); in this study design, the qualitative component is nestled within the design of what is a predominantly quantitative design. Benefits of utilizing a mixed methods approach include the ability to hear a respondent's voice not present in quantitative research and reducing the researcher bias that may be present in solely quantitative design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Respondents in the study were principals or their designees and the multilingual coordinator or lead teacher of the schools identified in the 2018 and 2019 ESSA Identifications as the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency. This study employed mixed methods research in forms of a survey and structured interviews to

gain a greater understanding of the common practices of the Minnesota schools with the highest consistent language growth among multilingual learners. Respondents completed a questionnaire administered through an electronic survey tool. This type of quantitative inquiry is defined as a descriptive study, selected to describe the natural or social phenomena as it relates to other phenomena (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 3). This nonexperimental descriptive study was selected to “study phenomena as they exist at one point in time” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 289). Though the survey was implemented with a small number of respondents, this type of methodology was used in order to allow the respondents the time to reflect on the continuum of responses as well as the current status of his/her school setting in regards to the programming components and to not simply read the prompts to the respondents when completing the survey.

A qualitative study through the interview component of this research aided in obtaining direct quotes from participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge base (Patton, 2015). Data were collected in order to ascertain the frequency of necessary components, identified in research, implemented within multilingual learner programs. Data collection also identified barriers encountered by the school leaders while implementing and monitoring the multilingual learner program.

A mixed methods data analysis allowed the researcher to report the frequency of Elfers and Stritikus’ (2014) five components of effective multilingual programs being implemented at the time of the study. Further analysis of the interview data allowed for expounded clarification on necessary program components and barriers to programming that affect the efficacy of the instruction and implementation. A survey instrument with a follow-up interview were developed

by the researcher due to the lack of an existing tool to measure the existence of the five components in multilingual program implementation.

There were two instruments used for this study, a Qualtrics online survey tool (Appendix A) and follow-up interview questions (Appendix B). The researcher created the instruments based on the research in Elfers and Stritikus' 2014 article "How school and district leaders support classroom teachers' work with English language learners." Efforts were made to reduce measurement error by writing quality items and practicing sound statistical methodologies, including selecting a sample that would have adequate knowledge of the topic and aligning the survey items to the research questions. A consultation with doctoral faculty with expertise in research methodology was also conducted in order to ensure the quality of items and sound statistical analyses. The survey and interviews were piloted with two different groups of current doctoral students from various backgrounds in the field of education who have some level of understanding regarding multilingual learner programming. Following the pilot process, the survey and interview questions were adjusted to make the questions clearer for the actual study participants.

### **Study Participants**

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) reported in 2018 that there were twenty-nine schools identified as the highest five percent of schools in the state for progress toward English language proficiency as measured by the state's annual English language proficiency assessment, the WIDA ACCESS 2.0. In 2019, MDE reported that only five of the twenty-nine schools were included in the 2018 list of schools identified as the highest five percent of schools in the state for progress toward English language proficiency. In this study, 100% of the

principals of these identified schools were invited to participate. Principals could have designated another individual in their school or district to complete the survey (whose position was identified in the survey) with more knowledge of multilingual learner programming implementation in the school or district. In addition to the principals or designees, 100% of the district multilingual coordinators (or lead multilingual teachers, if no district coordinator position existed) of the identified schools were invited to participate.

Respondents of this study included four principals of the schools in Minnesota identified in 2018 and 2019 as one of the highest five percent of schools in the state for progress toward English language proficiency or their designee. For the purpose of this study, those individuals identified by MDE as principals of the school were considered potential respondents. Contact information for these principals was obtained from the MDE Report Card (n.d). Respondents also included four multilingual coordinators or lead multilingual teachers of the identified schools. Sampling error was not a factor in the study, as all principals and multilingual coordinators/lead teachers of the identified schools were invited to participate.

### **Human Subject Approval**

The researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the rights of the human subjects in the study. In order to ensure consent and privacy of the participants, an Institutional Review Board approved a consent form that was signed by all participants. A copy of the consent form was provided to each participant and copies of the content forms retained by the researcher. The participants were informed that their participation was optional and that they could end participation in the study at any time. The researcher

communicated researcher availability to the participants for questions about consent or questions regarding the study in general—before, during, and after the completion of the study.

### **Procedures for Data Collection**

Once the initial, potential participants were selected, the researcher gained consent from districts and participants, sent the electronic survey link to participants, set up an interview date and location, conducted the interviews, and followed-up with interviewee transcript reviews.

### ***Data Security***

Data and any documentation used in this study were confidential and retained in a locked and secure location for the duration of the study. All audio and transcribed data were stored on an encrypted laptop with password protection. The laptop was in the possession of the researcher at all times when not in a locked cabinet inside a locked home. All printed documentation was stored in the locked cabinet in the locked residence of the researcher. Upon awarding of the degree, all data and documentation will be deleted and destroyed.

### ***Participant Consent***

The potential participants were initially contacted via email to generate interest in participation. In the initial email, there was an explanation of confidentiality and opportunity to opt out from the study at any time. Upon IRB approval, all districts were contacted to request permission to conduct research in the district. Upon district approval, all study participants were contacted via email with an official invitation to be involved in the study. Once (and if) potential participants agreed to take part in the study, a date and time for the interview was arranged. The researcher informed the participant that a printed consent form needed to be signed before the

interview started. During the interview, the participants signed the consent form. The researcher retained the original for the sake of record-keeping and the participant was given a copy.

### *Compensation for Participants*

No monetary or gift compensation to participants were associated with the study; however, each participant was offered a copy of the complete dissertation online upon completion.

### *Qualitative Component of the Study*

The survey instrument (Appendix A) consisted of three sections. Section one collected information on participant role, school demographics, and district demographics. Demographic information was limited to determining the size of the participating schools and district, whether or not the district had a multilingual learner coordinator, and whether or not the district had a language instruction educational program (LIEP) plan. Section two focused on research question one and collected information on the degree to which the multilingual program aligned with the Elfers and Stritikus 2014 framework. The survey consisted of twenty-three questions with responses on a Likert scale (1: Not at all 2: Minimally 3: Some of the Time 4: Most of the Time 5: All of the time). Section three consisted of a short-answer question: “To which of these components do you perceive led to your school’s high growth on the ACCESS test?”

In the quantitative portion of the study, data were collected using a mixed-mode methodology. In mixed-mode methodology, survey administration was not limited to paper-based, online, telephone, or in-person modes and “may also be combined in ways that capitalize on the advantages of and minimize the disadvantages of each” (Robinson & Leonard, 2019, p. 199). Primarily, data collection for the initial components was completed through an online survey via Qualtrics, though respondents were given the opportunity to request and submit a

paper copy. Benefits of online surveys include availability with predesigned survey formats, built-in analysis tools, time-efficient for administration, and easy to implement when a list of respondent emails are generated (Robinson & Leonard, 2019).

### ***Treatment of Data***

Data collected from the survey respondents were analyzed by the researcher to examine and report on each of the research questions. Data were collected in order to discover and report the frequency of the level of implementation of essential characteristics of multilingual learner programming, as identified in research. The frequency was reported in the form of a percentage.

In addition, the researcher analyzed and reported the frequency of encountered barriers by public school districts when implementing multilingual programming. The frequency was reported in the form of a percentage.

### ***Securing Qualitative Research Participation***

Two emails were used to contact potential respondents to the survey study. The first email included an explanatory/permission letter from the researcher to the superintendent of the district (Appendix C), which included a link to the survey document. The initial email requested permission of the superintendent to conduct research in the district and to respond with permission or refusal of participation. When permission was granted from the superintendent, the second email was sent to respondents and included an explanatory letter from the researcher (Appendix D). Each email contained the following information in varying forms:

- Professional sender information
- Informative subject
- Appeal for help



- Selection criteria
- Importance of the respondent
- Usefulness of the survey
- Access the survey
- Confidential and voluntary
- Contact information
- Thank you

### **Quantitative Component of the Study**

The researcher developed a structured interview to obtain an in-depth understanding of the common practices in Minnesota elementary schools with the highest English language development growth (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) also explain that interviews allow for more open-ended exploration of a concept and allow for responses unique to each participant.

In order to improve the validity and reliability of the study, the interview protocol was reviewed by a convenient sample of doctoral students in an Educational Administration and Leadership (EDAD) cohort before the interview data collection. The members of the EDAD cohort all had some experience with multilingual programming and had familiarity with research techniques in order to provide appropriate feedback about the interview protocol. Through the review of the interview protocol by the doctoral students, the researcher gained input on the quality of interview techniques and validity of the interview items related to the research questions. The interview items and techniques were then adjusted to reflect the feedback. The

interviews were scheduled and conducted within a three-month period and lasted between thirty minutes to an hour.

The participants all verbally agreed to participate in the study after an explanation of the study and sample selection criteria; this was to guide selection of research methodology. Before the interview, there were emails sent and phone calls placed to determine a date, place, and time for the interview. A final email was sent to each participant before the interview as a reminder about informed consent, an overview of what was going to happen during the interview and a confirmation of the date, time and location of the interview.

During the interview, audio data were gathered using two recording devices. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that a drawback of recording devices is equipment malfunction; therefore, two recording devices were utilized. The primary device was a handheld device with the ability to record and upload to a computer. The backup device was a laptop with a voice recording program that comes with Windows 10. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also add that recording the interview will preserve all the data for later analysis.

### ***Administering the Interview Protocol***

The location of the interviews was within the identified school building or district offices. The researcher reserved a study room or an office with the assistance of a building assistant, for the date and time chosen by the participant. Study rooms secured privacy and silence for clear recording of the interview.

The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and an hour. After an initial greeting, the researcher turned on the recording devices. The interview started with a review of the consent form that outlines the confidentiality measures that were taken and a reminder about the option

to opt-out of the interview or to not answer specific questions, at any time. The researcher then provided a printed copy of the interview items to the interviewee and proceed to solicit responses to the items in the order that they were listed. The interviews concluded with a reminder of the researcher's contact information, the interviewee transcript review process, and an explanation of next steps.

### ***Interview Items***

The participants were provided with a printed copy of the seven open-ended questions, labeled as "interview items" for clarity in organization of data in Chapter 4 of this study. In order to increase reliability, the interview items were presented to all of the participants in the same order. In order to improve validity, the researcher created interview items that related to the research questions. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "Using words that make sense to the interview, words that reflect the respondent's world view, will improve the quality of the data obtained in the interview (p. 117).

1. Looking at the list of programming components from the survey you completed (list from Elfers and Stritikus' 2014 study), are there any components that you perceive as most beneficial to your multilingual programming?
2. What additional factors do you feel attribute to your high growth on the ACCESS test?
3. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for students in improving student language growth?
4. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for teachers and support staff in improving student language growth?

5. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for school and district administrators in improving student language growth?
6. What are the challenges or barriers do you face in implementing multilingual programming, and how have you addressed the challenges or barriers?
7. Do you have any additional comments?

A formalized version of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix B. The interview protocol included probing questions (placed below some items) to ensure that the interview items were understood and addressed as completely as possible (See Appendix B). Questions based on participant responses were asked during the interview in order to allow opportunities to clarify and expand on topics discussed. After the interviews were completed, the participants were given the opportunity to clarify or add any additional comments. The closing of the interview included a thank you, and an explanation of next steps. A follow-up email was sent to each participant with a transcript of the interview.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected during the interview via recording devices. The main recording device was a handheld recorder specifically designed for recording interviews. The backup device was a laptop with an internal microphone. The purpose of multiple recording devices was to protect against loss of data. All data were captured electronically to avoid notetaking and interviewer distractions in recording interviewee responses; the primary aim of the researcher during the interview was to be engaged in listening to the interviewee. If any notes were necessary during the interview, they were written using a pen and paper to avoid typing noises while conducting

the interview. The recording of the interview were transcribed by hand, by the researcher, for accuracy of the transcription process.

### *Treatment of Data*

The interview data were coded according to concepts and themes. Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The researcher used the coding process to describe the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis; the most popular approach is to use a narrative passage to demonstrate the findings of the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The thematic categories fall into one of three types of codes: expected, what the researcher would expect to find; surprising, what the researcher could not have anticipated before the study began; and unusual, of conceptual interest to the readers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The next step for analyzing the data categories was further theorizing about the meaning of those categories in relation to the research questions. The researcher understood that the categories would not explain the entire story; the need to link the conceptual elements together in a meaningful way would provide a clearer analysis and explanation of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In a mixed methods study, there exists a need for convergent data analysis and interpretation; after reviewing both quantitative and qualitative data separately, the researcher merges and analyzes the two databases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Analysis of this manner allowed for understanding the ways in which the results confirm, disconfirm, or expand with each other and resolve any differences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The comparison of

results was represented in tables, by concept, to determine in which ways the data confirm, disconfirm, or expand each other.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Research Overview**

The purpose of the study was to examine the common practices of five Minnesota elementary schools identified in the 2018 ESSA Identifications, and again in 2019, as the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency using the five components identified by Elfers and Stritikus (2014). This study sought to determine if there were commonalities of practice between the high-growth schools based on best practices in research by: describing and contrasting the components of multilingual programs of high-English language proficiency growth schools in Minnesota and barriers encountered by teachers, administrators, schools, and districts when implementing multilingual programming. The data collected may be used by school administrators, leaders, and instructional staff to evaluate the implementation of best practices in multilingual programming and increase student learning and achievement, as well as assist in identifying roadblocks to successful program implementation and monitoring.

### ***Research Methods***

In order to determine which methodology to employ in this study, the researcher ascertained how many principals of the five identified schools were willing to participate in the process. Upon verbal or email approval from all five leaders, the researcher used a convergent mixed methods approach in the forms of a survey and follow-up interview.

This study employed mixed methods research in forms of a survey and structured interviews to gain a greater understanding of the common practices of the Minnesota schools with the highest consistent language growth among multilingual learners. Respondents in the

study were principals or their designees and the multilingual coordinator or lead teacher of the schools identified in the 2018 and 2019 ESSA Identifications as the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency. Respondents completed a questionnaire administered through an electronic survey tool. The interview component of this research aided in obtaining direct quotes from participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge base (Patton, 2015). Data were collected in order to ascertain the frequency of necessary components identified in research, implemented within multilingual learner programs. Data also identified barriers encountered by the school leaders while implementing and monitoring the multilingual learner program.

A mixed methods data analysis allowed the researcher to report the frequency of Elfers and Stritikus' (2014) five components of effective multilingual programs being implemented at the time of the study. Further analysis of the interview data allowed for further clarification of necessary program components and barriers to programming that affect the efficacy of the instruction and implementation. A twenty-three item survey instrument with a follow-up interview of seven questions were developed by the researcher due to the lack of an existing tool to measure the existence of the five components in multilingual program implementation.

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The data were analyzed and findings organized to match each research question. The survey tool answered research question one, and the interview protocol answered research questions one, two, three, and four. The study was focused on the following research questions:



1. To what extent do schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014)?
2. What are commonalities of these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
3. What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
4. What barriers have schools with high Progress toward English Language Proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers?

### ***Analysis***

Analysis of survey data was completed at the Saint Cloud State University Office of Statistical Analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Using the SPSS, Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items was computed to be .958 for the total scale. An alpha score above .9 indicates the sample has high internal consistency and reliability. Analysis of the data was undertaken using frequency statistics to analyze the results of the survey responses. The first section of the survey collected student count demographic information of the district and school, followed by determining if a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan is in place in the district and whether or not the district has a multilingual program coordinator (also referred to as English Learner, or EL, coordinator). The interview data were analyzed with a coding protocol and analysis of emergent recurring themes.

### ***Description of the Sample***

The study sample contained a potential of five principals and five multilingual coordinators/lead teachers from the five schools identified in 2018 and 2019 for their consistently high growth in Progress toward English Language Proficiency. The superintendents of four school districts were emailed to request permission to conduct the research. The fifth school district had their own unique request-to-research proposal process; so for the school in this district the researcher followed the required application process to ultimately be granted permission to conduct research. In the superintendent-request districts, three superintendents granted permission; in the fourth, the superintendent referred the researcher to the district's leader of the research department for approval; this district chose not to participate in the research. The school leaders of the remaining four schools were invited to participate via email. For the multilingual coordinator or teacher respondents, the researcher ascertained which person to participate based on the recommendation of the principal and multilingual coordinator (or lead teacher, if no coordinator was present in the district), based on which staff member was perceived to have the best working knowledge of the multilingual program implementation in the school.

The study's electronic survey was available through a secure internet link and consisted of three sections (Appendix A). Section one collected information on school and district demographics. Demographic information was limited to determining the enrollment size of the participating schools and district in multilingual and overall student populations, whether or not the district had a multilingual learner coordinator, and whether or not the district had a language instruction educational program (LIEP) plan. Section two focused on research question one and collected information on the degree to which the multilingual program aligned with the Elfers

and Stritikus 2014 framework. The survey consisted of twenty-three questions with responses on a Likert scale (1: Not at all 2: Minimally 3: Some of the Time 4: Most of the Time 5: All of the time). Section three consisted of a short-answer question: “To which of these components do you perceive led to your school’s high growth on the ACCESS test?”

The researcher developed a structured interview to obtain an in-depth understanding (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) of the common practices in Minnesota elementary schools with the highest English language development growth. An email was sent to each participant before the interview as a reminder about informed consent, an overview of what was going to happen during the interview, and a confirmation of the date, time and location of the interview. The participants were provided with a printed copy of the seven open-ended questions:

1. Looking at the list of programming components from the survey you completed (list from Elfers and Stritikus’ 2014 study), are there any components that you perceive as most beneficial to your multilingual programming?
2. What additional factors do you feel attribute to your high growth on the ACCESS test?
3. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for students in improving student language growth?
4. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for teachers and support staff in improving student language growth?
5. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for school and district administrators in improving student language growth?
6. What are the challenges or barriers do you face in implementing multilingual programming, and how have you addressed the challenges or barriers?

7. Do you have any additional comments?

Of the ten potential participants, two were removed from participation by their school district. The remaining eight participants were granted permission and chose to participate, resulting in a response rate to both the survey and interview of 80%.

***Demographics***

The survey was designed to answer the first research question developed by the researcher. Demographic information was requested in the first section of the survey instrument, which included participant role, school, and district demographic information around multilingual and overall student enrollment numbers, whether or not the district had a multilingual learner coordinator, and whether or not the district had a language instruction educational program (LIEP) plan. In order to generalize findings and draw inferences to a larger population, the researcher gathered these demographic data to gain a greater sense of the context and setting of these schools.

**Table 1**

***Demographics of Participants, Schools, and Districts***

| Demographic                              | N | %     |
|--|---|-------|
| Principal                                | 4 | 50%   |
| Multilingual coordinator/teacher         | 4 | 50%   |
| Students enrolled in school              |   |       |
| 251-500                                  | 6 | 75%   |
| 500+                                     | 2 | 25%   |
| Multilingual learners enrolled in school |   |       |
| 26-50                                    | 7 | 87.5% |
| 51-100                                   | 1 | 12.5% |

**Table 1 (continued)**

| Demographic                                | N | %     |
|--|---|-------|
| Students enrolled in district              |   |       |
| 1001-3000                                  | 2 | 25%   |
| 3000+                                      | 6 | 75%   |
| Multilingual learners enrolled in district |   |       |
| 0-500                                      | 6 | 75%   |
| 1001-3000                                  | 2 | 25%   |
| Multilingual coordinator in district       |   |       |
| Yes  | 3 | 37.5% |
| No   | 4 | 50%   |
| Missing response                           | 1 | 12.5% |
| LIEP Plan in district: Yes                 | 7 | 87.5% |
| LIEP Plan in district: No                  | 1 | 12.5% |

Survey participants were comprised of four principals (50%) and four multilingual coordinators/lead teachers (50%). Six respondents indicated his/her school enrolled 251-500 students (75%) and two respondents indicated his/her school enrolled more than 500 students (25%). Seven respondents indicated his/her school enrolled twenty-six to fifty multilingual students (87.5%) and one respondent indicated his/her school enrolled fifty-one to 100 multilingual students (12.5%). Two respondents indicated his/her district enrolled 1001-3000 students (25%) and six respondents indicated his/her school enrolled more than 3000 students (75%). Six respondents indicated his/her district enrolled zero to 500 multilingual students (75%) and two respondents indicated his/her district enrolled 1001 to 3000 multilingual students (25%). Three respondents indicated his/her district employs a multilingual coordinator (37.5%), four respondents indicated his/her district does not employ a multilingual coordinator (50%), and one

respondent did not answer this question (12.5%). Seven respondents indicated his/her district has an LIEP (87.5%) and one respondent indicated his/her district does not have a LIEP (50%).

### Research Question One

To what extent do principals and multilingual coordinators/lead teachers in schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014)? The following three tables refer to survey data.

#### *Survey results*

Table 2 data describe the frequency, and to what extent, respondents perceive that the schools follow these programming components. The respondents chose an indicator (1: Not at All, 2: Minimally, 3: Somewhat, 4: Nearing Full Use, 5: At Full Use and Fidelity) to rank each component provided by the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) programming framework. Table data present the frequency of responses to indicators and the mean of components' responses.

**Table 2**

*All Respondents' Reported Use of Components of Multilingual Programs (by frequency count)*

| Component  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1. Focus on high-quality instruction, both grade-level and multilingual  | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 3.63 |
| 2. Building leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4.00 |
| 3. Professional development targets classroom teachers                   | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4.50 |
| 4. Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3.50 |
| 5. Leaders align, integrate, and coordinate                              | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 4.00 |

**Table 2 (continued)**

| Component  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| ...supports for teachers   |   |   |   |   |   |      |
| 6. *Blend -level and school-level initiatives                                  | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3.14 |
| 7. Focus on district workforce development practices                           | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3.38 |
| 8. Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively                      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4.25 |
| 9. Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students    | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3.25 |
| 10. Engage in strong two-way communication between school and district leaders | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3.88 |
| 11. Communicate a compelling rationale to all stakeholders                     | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3.88 |
| 12. Make instruction of EL students a priority                                 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3.75 |
| 13. Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students                        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 3.87 |
| 14. Focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners                 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3.63 |
| 15. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels           | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 3.75 |
| 16. Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students    | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3.25 |
| 17. Value students' language culture in instruction                            | 0 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3.50 |
| 18. Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students                | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3.38 |
| 19. Use data for instructional improvement                                     | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 4.38 |
| 20. Support data-based discussions of individual student progress              | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4.50 |
| 21. Use data to identify areas for improvement                                 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 4.50 |
| 22. Use data to shape professional development                                 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3.88 |
| 23. Use data to support culture of learning                                    | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4.00 |

*Note. Not at All: 1, Minimally: 2, Somewhat: 3, Nearing Full Use: 4, At Full Use and Fidelity: 5  
N = 8; \*One respondent did not respond to this question.*

Respondents reported three components with the highest average implementation: Professional development targets classroom teachers, Support data-based discussions of individual student progress, and Use data to identify areas for improvement ( $M = 4.50$ ). The subsequent five components with the highest average implementation were: Use data for instructional improvement ( $M = 4.38$ ), Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively ( $M = 4.25$ ), Building leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives ( $M = 4.00$ ), Leaders align, integrate, and coordinate supports for teachers ( $M = 4.00$ ), and Use data to support culture of learning ( $M = 4.00$ ).

Respondents reported five components with the lowest average implementation: Blend district-level and school-level initiatives ( $M = 3.14$ ), Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students ( $M = 3.25$ ), Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students ( $M = 3.25$ ), Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students ( $M = 3.38$ ), and Focus on district workforce development practices ( $M = 3.38$ ).

In addition to the highest and lowest averages of responses to the survey questions, there were components with concentrated responses and spreads of responses. For building leaders directly engaged in teaching and learning initiatives, all respondents were concentrated in reporting that their buildings were at Nearing full use (4), to At full use and fidelity (5). Another concentrated area of responses came in “Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students”; one person rated it at Somewhat (3) and the remaining seven respondents all responded with a Nearing full use (4). For Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students, one person reported Not at all (1) and the remaining respondents were spread nearly even across the remaining categories. For both Focus on district workforce development



practices and Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students, one person rated them at Not at all (1) and the remaining seven respondents rated them at Somewhat (3) to Nearing full use (4).

Table 3 data describe the frequency and to what extent principal respondents perceive that the schools follow these programming components, using the same indicators (Not at All, Minimally, Somewhat, Nearing Full Use, At Full Use and Fidelity) to rank each component provided by the Elfers and Stritikus programming framework. Table data present the frequency and the mean of each component's responses. The range of responses was from 3.33 to 5.00.

**Table 3**

*Principal Respondents' Reported Use of Components of Multilingual Programs by frequency count)*

| Component  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1. Focus on high-quality instruction, both grade-level and multilingual  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4.00 |
| 2. Building leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |
| 3. Professional development targets classroom teachers                   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5.00 |
| 4. Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4.25 |
| 5. Leaders align, integrate, and coordinate supports for teachers        | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4.50 |
| 6. Blend district-level and school-level initiatives                     | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3.33 |
| 7. Focus on district workforce development practices                     | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.75 |
| 8. Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively                | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |

**Table 3 (continued)**

| Component  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 9. Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students    | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3.50 |
| 10. Engage in strong two-way communication between school and district leaders | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4.00 |
| 11. Communicate a compelling rationale to all stakeholders                     | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3.50 |
| 12. Make instruction of EL students a priority                                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |
| 13. Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students                        | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4.00 |
| 14. Focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 4.25 |
| 15. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4.00 |
| 16. Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4.00 |
| 17. Value students' language culture in instruction                            | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4.00 |
| 18. Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students                | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3.75 |
| 19. Use data for instructional improvement                                     | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5.00 |
| 20. Support data-based discussions of individual student progress              | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |
| 21. Use data to identify areas for improvement                                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |
| 22. Use data to shape professional development                                 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4.50 |
| 23. Use data to support culture of learning                                    | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4.75 |

*Note. Not at All: 1, Minimally: 2, Somewhat: 3, Nearing Full Use: 4, At Full Use and Fidelity: 5*  
*N = 4*

Principal respondents reported two components with the highest average implementation: Professional development targets classroom teachers and Support data-based discussions of individual student progress ( $M = 5.00$ ). The subsequent five components with the highest

average implementation were: Leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives, Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively, Make instruction of EL students a priority, Support data-based discussions of individual student progress, Use of data to identify areas for improvement, and Use data to support a culture of learning ( $M = 4.75$ ).

Principal respondents reported three components with the lowest average implementation: Blend district-level and school-level initiatives ( $M = 3.33$ ), Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students ( $M = 3.5$ ) and Communicate a compelling rationale to all stakeholders ( $M = 3.5$ ).

In addition to the highest and lowest average principal responses, five components were reported with concentrated or spread responses. Both Focus on high-quality instruction, grade-level and multilingual and Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students were all concentrated on Nearing full use (4). There were spreads of responses for Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students (responses of 3, 4, 5 and 5), Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students (responses of 2, 2, 5, and 5), and Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students (responses of 2, 4,4, and 5). These three components' responses all ranged across Minimally (2) to At full use and fidelity (5).

Table 4 data describe the frequency, and to what extent, multilingual coordinator/lead teacher respondents perceive that the schools follow these programming components, using the same indicators (Not at All, Minimally, Somewhat, Nearing Full Use, At Full Use and Fidelity) to rank each component provided by the Elfers and Stritikus programming framework. Table data present the frequency and the mean of each component's responses. The range of responses was from 2.50 to 4.25.

**Table 4**

*Multilingual Coordinator/Lead Teacher Respondents' Reported Use of Components of Multilingual Programs (by frequency count)*

| Component  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 1. Focus on high-quality instruction, both grade-level and multilingual        | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3.25 |
| 2. Building leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives       | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3.25 |
| 3. Professional development targets classroom teachers                         | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4.00 |
| 4. Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students       | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2.75 |
| 5. Leaders align, integrate, and coordinate supports for teachers              | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3.50 |
| 6. Blend district-level and school-level initiatives                           | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 7. Focus on district workforce development practices                           | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 8. Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively                      | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.75 |
| 9. Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students    | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 10. Engage in strong two-way communication between school and district leaders | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.75 |
| 11. Communicate a compelling rationale to all stakeholders                     | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3.25 |
| 12. Make instruction of EL students a priority                                 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2.75 |
| 13. Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students                        | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.75 |
| 14. Focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners                 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3.00 |

**Table 4 (continued)**

| Component   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| 15. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels        | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3.50 |
| 16. Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2.50 |
| 17. Value students' language culture in instruction                         | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 18. Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students             | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3.00 |
| 19. Use data for instructional improvement                                  | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3.75 |
| 20. Support data-based discussions of individual student progress           | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4.25 |
| 21. Use data to identify areas for improvement                              | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4.25 |
| 22. Use data to shape professional development                              | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3.25 |
| 23. Use data to support culture of learning                                 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3.25 |

*Note. Not at All: 1, Minimally: 2, Somewhat: 3, Nearing Full Use: 4, At Full Use and Fidelity: 5*  
*N = 4*

Multilingual coordinator/lead teacher respondents reported on components with the highest and lowest rates of implementation. Three components were reported with the highest average implementation: Professional development targets classroom teachers ( $M = 4.25$ ), Use of data to identify areas for improvement ( $M = 4.25$ ) and Professional development targets classroom teachers ( $M = 4.00$ ). Three components were reported with the lowest average implementation: Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students, ( $M =$

2.50), Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students ( $M = 2.75$ ), and Make instruction of EL students a priority ( $M = 2.75$ ).

In addition to the highest and lowest average multilingual coordinator/teacher responses, five components were reported with concentrated or spread responses. Focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners was concentrated on Somewhat (3). Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students (responses of 3, 4, 4, and 4) and Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students (responses of 1, 3, 3, and 3) were slightly less concentrated, though closely related. There were spreads of responses for Focus on district workforce development practices (responses of 1, 3, 4 and 4), and Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students (responses of 1, 3, 4, and 4). Overall, the multilingual coordinator/teacher responses were more spread out and rated lower than the principal responses.

### ***Interview Results***

When the respondents were questioned around which of the Elfers and Stritikus framework components were perceived to be most beneficial to their programming, there were varying responses. Three respondents cited a focus on high-quality instruction at both grade-level and multilingual settings. Two respondents cited the use of data for instructional improvement. Making instruction of EL students a priority, Focus on instructional practices of diverse learners, and Value students' language and culture in instruction were each selected once by three separate respondents.

When examining the beneficial practices, themes of responses emerged during the qualitative data analysis. Seven of the respondents referenced Create opportunities for staff to

work collaboratively in various manners: collaboration, working together, connected, adults are working on the same goal, wraparound with stakeholders, vertical alignment, and supports my instruction. Principal A reported that the school has scheduled grade-level and multilingual teacher collaboration time weekly, though Teacher A found it difficult to actually meet with the collaborative team at that time. The teacher reported, “It’s more before or after school or quick in the hall, and it’s having those relationships with staff that allow me to have those collaborative conversations.” Teacher B enjoys the weekly collaborations with multilingual teacher colleagues, either via remote connections on the internet or in a once a month, face-to-face gathering.

Following along Elfers and Stritikus’ (2014) Resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction, six respondents referenced the alignment of grade level and multilingual instructional time and activities. District A has a multilingual curriculum that mirrors the grade-level language arts curriculum and standards. Principals C and D referenced the need to have vertical alignment of standards and instruction within language arts and multilingual instruction, while Principal B referenced the need to focus efforts on evidence-based practices around instruction.

When referencing Use of data, six respondents included the use of academic performance data as the data utilized. The academic data included Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), district standardized progress monitoring of language arts and math, formative classroom assessments and rubrics, and WIDA ACCESS English language development scores. Teacher B uses ACCESS data to target student needs. According to the teacher, “We look at our ACCESS results and identify which language domain was the lowest, and then we target that for the year.” All four multilingual coordinators/lead teachers also utilized English language

proficiency growth data in progress monitoring students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, though there was not one uniform method of progress monitoring across the districts. There were data points used outside of academic achievement as well. Principal C referenced a student engagement survey, Coordinator D referenced policy data in hiring practices, Principal B referenced efficacy data of professional development, and Principal D referenced fidelity data and the intersection of program use and student achievement.

In summary, schools reported three areas of the Elfers and Stritikus framework as the most utilized with the highest average implementation: Professional development targets classroom teachers, Support data-based discussions of individual student progress, and Use data to identify areas for improvement. The three areas of the framework with the lowest implementation were Blend district-level and school-level initiatives, Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students, and Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students. The range of the mean scores from all respondents was 3.14 to 4.50, indicating that all components of the framework are used Somewhat to At full use and fidelity. The range of mean responses from the four principals was from 3.33 to 5.00, while the range of mean responses from the multilingual coordinators/lead teachers was 2.50 to 4.25.

### **Research Question Two**

What are commonalities of these programs with high English language growth, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework? Though these responses relate to Elfers and Stritikus' framework, there were six recurring themes throughout the responses: (1) building relationships, (2) communication, (3) focus on writing, (4) pull-out instruction, (5) asset-based inclusion, and (6) administrator support and knowledge of multilingual programs.



### *Building Relationships*

Building relationships was evident in the interview transcriptions. Principals and multilingual leaders focused on building relationships with the students, the families, and the building staff. Teacher A reported, “I have good relationships with the kids and families, and when you have that mutual trust, respect, and understanding with the kids—when they know that you value them—will do anything for you.” Teacher C stated that the classroom teachers in the building also build an environment that is very nurturing and loving; the teacher saw how happy the multilingual students were when they spoke of their classrooms. Principal C spoke of the school’s “coffee talk” sessions with Somali parents; the open-ended agenda included simply listening to parents’ concerns, needs, and questions. The students of these families also noted to the principal that the principal was observed as interested in talking to the families, which the principal felt helped the students feel more at home in school. Principal D worked to ensure that parents were present at parent meetings, outside of the white, native English-speaking families, by finding ways for parents to volunteer for committees with interpreters, having family nights for all families, or working in the building with classroom supports. Coordinator D spoke to building multilingual teacher’s enjoyment of the time with students and creating a fun learning environment, expressing, “I do feel like it communicates something, and it allows students to be more open to learning... What we teach is important, but I feel equally important is saying, We’re glad you’re here. We recognize you. We see you. You’re not invisible.”

### *Communication*

Another recurring theme was communication. Such communication spread throughout all areas of the school and district, from the district leadership, to buildings, to classrooms, and to families. Principal B asserted that the communication of the district's strategic plan influences the work they do in their building, and communicating district-aligned building strategic plan back up to the district was essential for her building success. Teacher C was able to participate in all parent-teacher conferences with grade-level teachers. The teacher reported that having good communication with parents and students, showing all of them how happy the student is in school, increases student engagement in classroom activities. This schools' communication with families included the employment of multilingual supports, such as interpreters and cultural liaisons. Principal B reported that having bilingual cultural liaisons has enabled relationship building with families, which created a space for problem solving around student issues as a team of the family, the student, the teacher and principal, and the liaison. Constant communication between grade-level and multilingual teachers creates an environment where everyone works together, said three multilingual teachers. Teacher B takes advantage of passing time between classrooms to speak to grade-level teachers. "Instead of having my students come to me, [teachers] can catch me at the door as I'm picking [students] up to give me some input on where they're struggling or what's happening." Teacher C uses communication within the classroom as feedback, both with peers and the teacher. "When I give the students report cards, I put those...learning targets in there. So the kids know they can evaluate themselves and then compare what I give them. It helps keep them focused."

### ***Writing Instruction***

An intentional focus on writing instruction and practice was another recurring theme. All of the multilingual leaders spend dedicated instruction time on the writing process with explanations, visuals, examples, gradual release and modeling, use of rubrics, and peer reviews. Teacher C explained, “Journaling [does] not teach kids the structure of a paragraph. And you don’t get a lot of feedback from peers. So integrating the four language skills together, I really see the students’ growth, because they’re not only benefitting from reading something, they use what they learn to write and do speaking.” Teacher A followed the district’s five-day language arts curriculum by extending the writing practice into a sixth day. The teacher utilizes writing prompts, graphic organizers, and clearly-defined and communicated expectations of writing a paragraph to scaffold the writing process for the students, also sharing resources and graphic organizers with other teachers so that the students get extra support in writing from other teachers as well. The students enjoyed additional practice time with the resources, sharing that “We just did this in her class” and “Yay, we’re experts!” when seeing the same resources being used across classrooms. Teacher B uses collaboration with colleagues to focus on individual skills, sharing lesson ideas of successes, and trials of student learning.

### ***Pull-out Instruction***

In focusing on writing, Teacher B spoke of pull-out instruction of skills. All four language programs in these identified schools used the pull-out method of language instruction. Rather than co-teaching or push-in instruction in grade-level classrooms, all the teachers used pull-out and also found it effective in student growth. Teacher A spoke of how the pull-out instruction created a “comfortable landing space” for students to come to be more relaxed and

comfortable. Teacher B agreed, stating that “it creates a safe space that allows them to really open up and play around with the language and feel comfortable making the mistakes and asking those questions, where they don’t feel comfortable in the classroom.” This teacher used pull-out for specific needs and skills focused only in language arts, though the teacher expressed desire to team or co-teach with grade-level teachers if there were more staffing.

### ***Asset-based Inclusion***

One additional common thread throughout the responses was the use of asset-based and inclusive language. Coordinator D emphasized that seeing the students as everyone’s students is very important. Teacher A stated the value of all students, that every student that comes to the room has value and brings something unique. In addition to the classroom, Teacher A cited the school’s sense of community. “It’s an inclusive environment, where everybody is a part of the class. Everybody works together for what’s best for our kids . . . In the building, they’re not seen as a deficit to be an EL kid. There isn’t a perception that you can’t do this because you speak another language; it’s just yet or when will you.” Teacher C used their multilingualism to connect to the students. “I truly understand what it’s like to learn a second language or third language. I can emphasize with them that hey, when I was young it was hard for me too. I share a lot of experience with the kids; they show you respect that you take the time extra to learn.” Principal C cited that the work in the building focused on what is best for all kids and placed students’ voice at the forefront of their learning. The staff in the building work to build student confidence by inviting them to evaluate and communicate their thoughts—to be a full part of conversations, including in parent conferences.

### *Administrator Support & Knowledge of Multilingual Programs*

The final commonality is the administrator support and knowledge of multilingual programs. All of the principals communicated strong support of the multilingual learners and EL programs. Principal A was also the ACCESS test coordinator, which also gave insight into the needs of the students and the program. Principal B worked to build strong relationships with the multilingual students and families, to work collaboratively and support social-emotional needs. Teacher C reported that Principal C took the time to learn about the EL program and second language acquisition, stating there is “100 percent support” from the principal. Principal D kept EL programming at the forefront of district staffing conversations. These administrators, though supportive of the programs, have varying degrees of knowledge of multilingual programs and instruction. Training in EL was reported, though discussion around WIDA philosophy, language levels and scores, or specific language strategies were not mentioned in the interviews.

To summarize, there were six main commonalities that emerged from the interviews: building relationships, communication, focus on writing, pull-out instruction, asset-based inclusion, and administrator support and knowledge of multilingual programs. Responses reflected that in these districts: relationships build trust with students and families; communication with all stakeholders includes the use of interpreter; the intentional focus on writing goes beyond simple journaling and into explicit guidance and instruction; the pull-out model of instruction allows for multilingual students a space with less anxiety to practice the language; and asset-based language reframes the way educators speak of the multilingual learners, including the student strengths and of all staff maintaining ownership of the

multilingual student support. Finally, administrators support the program though they may not have extensive training or knowledge around multilingual instruction.

### **Research Question Three**

What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework? Each school demonstrated unique differences from the other three identified schools, including: common curriculums, focused core instruction, multilingual teachers being multilingual learners, and personalized learning.

School A had a set of unique responses around the programming. The district of School A was a large school district with multiple sites at all levels. One consideration from the building principal was the size of the district: because of the size, multiple resources were available and used for building staff. The amount of resources allowed the district to also employ a teaching and learning specialist specific to elementary level multilingual programs. This large district also purchased aligned grade-level and multilingual curriculum from the same publisher, in which the weekly lessons in both curriculums were focused on the same content and language functions. Teacher A shared that it has been beneficial to be on the same unit and same week of content because the content is not fragmented. Principal A shared that due to the common and shared curriculum there is fidelity to the curriculum across the school district. One additional distinct difference in School A was the movie-night club among the staff. Teacher A shared that the movies showed reflected the lives of some of the students. “[One movie] showed why his backpack was always full, why he was tired. We had those conversations when they were hard to have. It became our mindset, and people embrace that we have the students that come to us. We

can't control what happens outside of here but we can do our best while they're here, work as hard as we can to help them achieve.”

School B had four unique differences to their programming: focused core instruction, modeling high-quality practices, differentiating professional development, and building autonomy. Principal B noted how EL services comprised thirty minutes of instructional time and six hours in the regular classroom. The principal further explained that, “We have to target that classroom instruction first; we are constantly talking about our core instruction. We are very clear in, ‘What is our goal, and how are we going to get there, doing the fewest things possible?’ Focus on doing them well.” The principal was also an instructional leader in the building, often modeling the high-quality practices expected during professional development time. The high-quality practices modeled gradual release of modeling and practice as well as getting learners thinking, writing, and talking. Based on principal walkthroughs and observations of classrooms, the principal and leadership team of the building also implemented a teacher feedback survey to determine thematic needs of professional development. The survey was helpful in assessing how practices are going for teachers, what differentiated professional development is needed, and it identified where more professional development and instructional coach supports are needed for specific teachers. The final difference of this school was in the autonomy granted to the building. When the principal was asked about what has been most beneficial for administrators in the success of the language growth of the students, the principal replied, “For me, autonomy. I’m able to create a school action plan that is representative of what my teachers are feeling they need, but also what I’m seeing from the data I have. Now it’s more, what is our building PD need first, and how does the district support that?”

School C, though sharing multiple best practices with the other schools, reported three unique differences in their programming: the use of the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model, a multilingual teacher who is also multilingual, and leadership focused on Courageous Leadership. When discussing Elfers and Stritikus' best practices list and the focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners, Teacher C listed SIOP as one strategy in which teachers school-wide have received training. The teacher gave presentations to the building staff after being trained as a SIOP trainer and shared and emphasized practical ideas of how to reach multilingual learners better. This teacher is also a multilingual learner, sharing, "I truly understand what it's like to learn a second language or a third language. Maybe that does give me a little bit of an advantage because if you have the experience of learning another language, you know what it's like to learn a foreign language, what makes you learn faster, what makes it exciting." Principal C shared uniqueness, in what had been most beneficial for administrators in the high language growth: participation in a Courageous Leadership Institute, for administrators to learn and explore courageous conversation around race. The principal emphasized, "Just knowing one's self and my life story, and all that impacts my decisions or the sheltered life I grew up in. I spent so much time around people with that same story. [The Institute] helped me to understand so much more the need for constantly talking about getting multiple perspectives, the dangers of single stories."

School D demonstrated four differences in multilingual programming: multiage groupings of students, participation in the English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project, personalized learning, and being part of a technology-rich district. Multi-age groupings occurred in the school across all demographic groups, including multilingual learners. One focus of the



multi-age groupings is the focus on a language-rich environment with vertical alignment of standards. Another difference is the district and multilingual teacher participation in the ELM Project through Hamline University. This program is a training of multilingual teachers to be instructional coaches for classroom and content area teachers in meeting the language needs of multilingual learners in mainstream classrooms. The district also maintained a focus on personalized learning, grouping students by ability and/or interests. The personalized learning also appeared in descriptions of What I Need (WIN) time. Principal D noted, “We have really elaborate, and our teachers worked really hard on, personalized learning plans. Kids were going off and doing so many things.” The technology in the district also connected to the personalized learning. All students in grades 2-12 were issued a laptop computer, with class sets of laptops available for kindergarten and first grade. The technology was also reported to be used with parents, in working with families to understand how to use the laptop computers and how to use the computer with internet access to translate notes to and from teachers.

In summary, each school demonstrated unique differences from the other three identified schools, including common curriculums, focused core instruction, multilingual teachers being multilingual learners, and personalized learning. Each difference contributed to a unique program that was designed to meet the needs of the learners.

#### **Research Question Four**

What barriers have schools with high progress toward English language proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers? The main concerns from participants were around

time, in addition to funding/staffing and bias. Strategies to overcome the barriers centered on intentionality and advocacy.

### ***Time***

Six out of the eight respondents listed concerns around time. Teachers A and C mentioned school schedules and sharing time with Title I and Special Education as barriers. Both shared that multilingual learners may qualify for the other services, and it is difficult to schedule time for everyone around core instruction. Teacher C emphasized that “every scoop (of Title, EL and Special Education) is important” but “because of scheduling, I have kids spread out all over in all classrooms.” Teacher A wondered, “How do we make sure that their education isn’t fragmented?”—because this building doesn’t not allow for multilingual instruction during core instructional time in reading and math. Teacher C reported that there is a large quantity of content to teach during short pull-out times. Principals B and C wished for year-round schooling, in that there would be less learning lost and more time for teacher collaboration and professional development. The lack of time for collaboration with colleagues, both mainstream and multilingual colleagues, was also a concern for Teacher C and Coordinator D. In reference to non-school time, Principal A shared that when students’ families are gone for “chunks of time” it’s difficult because they may not attend school during that time or attend a poor quality school.

### ***Funding and Staffing***

In addition to time as a large concern, others also perceived funding and staffing to be barriers. Teachers B and D were in systems of low-incidence, low numbers of students identified for EL services. Because of the low-incidence, the federal and state funding for the instruction of multilingual learners is very low. Principal A had a budget set for the building by district leaders,

leaving little control over how the budget is allocated. Coordinator D shared that due to low funding and small budgets, classroom and multilingual teachers are not able to co-plan and co-teach lessons. Principal D was concerned with the staffing budget that his building was given for multilingual teachers, stating that with the multilingual teacher split between buildings in the district, it leaves less support for his students and staff. With the limited staffing given to School D, there have been multiple teachers rotating in and out of the school.

Another barrier consistent throughout responses was staff bias. Teacher B cited that when professional development strategies are posed as “EL” strategies, teachers will “check out,” stating they do not “have your kids,” but teachers do not understand the learning benefits for all students. Coordinator D shared similar responses, concluding that the district missed an opportunity for work around equity; the opportunity being district-wide expectations around the use of global perspectives and the use of these practices with multilingual learners. “We’ve had opportunities to make some of those decisions to say, ‘What is our expectation for all kids of color or diverse populations, language minority students?’ We have not capitalized on that and that’s been disappointing.”

Though there were numerous concerns, multiple intentional strategies and advocacy were offered to overcome these barriers. Teacher A stated that the assistant superintendent that oversees the building influences the challenges; the assistant superintendent trusting the staff to do their job would be a way to overcome barriers. Principal A also mentioned the district-level administration, as well as the school board, in overcoming barriers and invited district-level administration and school board members to the building to see “what’s actually going on.” Teacher B advocated for the multilingual learners by cooperating with Title I and Special

Education teachers in creating schedules best for the students. Teacher B also maintained relationships with the teachers around the use of EL time and the teachers supported the multilingual teacher in what was needed for the multilingual program to be successful. Principal B looked to influence legislators and to talk about the benefits of programming locally to build support. Teacher C also advocated for students by maintaining awareness of multilingual students and advocating for professional development for staff around building background knowledge and teaching vocabulary. Principal C looked to influence the district calendar by speaking to the district calendar committee, legislators around state calendar statute, and addressing teacher contract language. Another way Principal C overcome barriers was being intentional with proactive rather than reactive social-emotional instruction for students. Coordinator D worked to overcome barriers by sharing data differently around multilingual student growth in both language and content learning to demonstrate the actual learning that took place and intersect the growth with exiting the EL program and standardized test scores. Coordinator D sought to also engage administrators in more long-term planning around multilingual learners. Principal D focused on keeping multilingual learners at the forefront of conversations and to advocate for what is best for students. “I stay positive about it myself in my approach and leadership.”

To summarize, educators identified barriers in multilingual programming around time in scheduling, time in collaboration, staffing, budget, bias. All of the educators also gave examples of how the barriers can be overcome, including advocacy and being intentional in targeting support for programming by focusing on conversations with those in power to make change.

## Summary

Data from four Minnesota elementary schools identified as the schools with consistently highest growth in the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency using the five components identified by Elfers and Stritikus (2014) were analyzed to examine the common practices between the high-growth schools based on best practices in research. The data described and contrasted the components of multilingual programs of high English language proficiency growth schools in Minnesota and barriers encountered by teachers, administrators, schools, and districts when implementing multilingual programming.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the study, related findings to the current review of literature, and conclusions about common practices and differences in multilingual programming of these identified schools, as well as the barriers of multilingual programming and ways to overcome the barriers.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, And Recommendations**

This chapter presents a summary of the study and conclusions formulated from the data presented in Chapter 4. The researcher will discuss an examination of the findings and present an analysis of the data related to the research questions. Finally, recommendations for professional practice and future research will be presented.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to examine the five elementary Minnesota schools identified in 2018 and 2019 within the highest five percent of the state overall for progress toward English language proficiency using the five multilingual programming components identified by Elfers and Stritikus (2014). In their work, the authors identified five components that are essential to establish an effective multilingual learner program:

1. Resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction
2. Blend district-level and school-level initiatives
3. Communicate a compelling rationale
4. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels
5. Use data for instructional improvement

This study sought to determine if there are commonalities of practice between the high-growth schools based on best practices in research by: describing and contrasting the components of multilingual programs of high-English language proficiency growth schools in Minnesota and barriers encountered by teachers, administrators, schools, districts, and charters when implementing multilingual programming.

The purpose of this study was accomplished by surveying and interviewing the building principals and multilingual coordinators/lead teachers of the identified schools regarding their implementation of the Elfers and Stritikus 2014 framework, as well as the practices outside of the framework and the barriers of the implementation and programming.

### **Research Questions**

The study addressed the following four research questions:

1. To what extent do schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014)?
2. What are commonalities of these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
3. What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus framework?
4. What barriers have schools with high progress toward English language proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers?

### **Research Design**

In order to determine which methodology to employ in this study, the researcher ascertained how many principals of the five identified schools were willing to participate in the process. Upon verbal or email approval from all five leaders, the researcher used a convergent mixed methods approach in the forms of a survey and follow-up interview.

The researcher used a mixed methods research design for this study. Mixed methods research allows the researcher to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in response to research questions and integrates the two forms of data and their results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

The researcher employed two instruments used for this study, a Qualtrics online survey tool and follow-up interview questions. Both were administered to gather data from the building principals and multilingual coordinators/lead teachers of the identified buildings regarding the building's implementation of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework, as well as the practices outside of the framework and the barriers of the implementation and programming. The survey instrument consisted of three sections. Section one collected information on participant role, school demographics, and district demographics. Section two focused on research question one and collected information on the degree to which the multilingual program aligned with the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework. Section three consisted of a short-answer question of, "To which of these components do you perceive led to your school's high growth on the ACCESS test?" For the interview portion of the research, the participants were provided with a printed copy of the seven open-ended questions, seeking the programming components present in schools outside of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework, which factors were perceived as most beneficial for students, teachers, support staff, and administrators in improving language growth, and what were perceived barriers to implementation and programming and how the barriers were addressed.



## **Study Method**

The participants were identified through examining a list of the 2018 and 2019 schools with the highest language development growth in the state of Minnesota. Five schools were identified with consistently high growth and appeared on both identification lists. The researcher gained consent from four districts and participants, sent the electronic survey link to participants, set up an interview date and location, conducted the interview, and followed up with interviewee transcript reviews. One district chose not to participate in the research, leaving four principals and four multilingual coordinators/lead teachers as the respondent pool. All eight (n=8) respondents completed the survey.

The survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data for each question were described using frequency distributions based on a five-point Likert scale for the responses to the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework. The interview data were analyzed with a coding protocol and analysis of emergent recurring themes. These data were analyzed by research question and presented in Chapter 4. The summary and analysis are presented in this chapter.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) define limitations as “particular features of your study that you know may negatively affect the results or your ability to generalize” (p. 154). Limitations in this research include:

1. One district chose not to participate in the research, limiting the already small pool of respondents to four schools.

2. With research showing how there is a higher rate of growth in younger learners, the schools identified in 2018 and 2019 in the top five percent of Minnesota schools were all elementary schools.
3. The study assumed respondents' honesty in answering survey questions.
4. The subjective nature of the respondent's perceptions, including the invisible biases and assumptions about multilingual learners, may distort the reality of the program implementation.
5. Only two respondents were selected from each building rather than a larger cross-section of educators, students, and families.

## **Conclusions**

### **Research Question One**

Research Question One is focused on the extent that principals and multilingual coordinators/lead teachers in schools with high progress toward English language proficiency follow the five components of multilingual programs as outlined by Elfers and Stritikus (2014). In their work, the authors identified five components that are essential to establish an effective multilingual learner program:

1. Resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction—differentiation of grade-level standards in partnership with Title I, Special Education, and general education classrooms.
2. Blend district-level and school-level initiatives—creating an environment in which the community and families feel valued and welcomed and staff collaborate to support classroom instruction.

3. Communicate a compelling rationale—seeing multilingual learners as part of the regular school population and all take ownership for their learning.
4. Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels—bilingual learning in the general education setting in elementary schools and an intentional focus on language and content learning in secondary schools.
5. Use data for instructional improvement—identifying areas for improvement and shaping professional development and training.

The respondents were asked to rate their school's level of implementation of specific practices as defined by Elfers and Stritikus using a five-point Likert scale. Based on those responses, all of the respondents' schools were using all of the components of the selected framework to varying degrees.

The respondents reported three areas of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework as the most utilized with the highest average implementation: Professional development targets classroom teachers, Support data-based discussions of individual student progress, and Use data to identify areas for improvement. The three areas of the framework with the lowest implementation were Blend district-level and school-level initiatives, Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students, and Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students. The range of the mean scores from all respondents was 3.14 to 4.50, indicating that all components of the framework are used Somewhat to At full use and fidelity. The range of mean responses from the four principals was from 3.33 to 5.00, while the range of mean responses from the multilingual coordinators/lead teachers was 2.50 to 4.25.

When examining the beneficial practices, themes of responses emerged during the qualitative data analysis. Seven of the respondents referenced Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in various manners: collaboration, working together, connected, adults are working on the same goal, wraparound with stakeholders, vertical alignment, and supports my instruction. In regards to Resolving fragmentation by focusing on high-quality instruction, six respondents referenced the alignment of grade level and multilingual instructional time and activities. When referencing Use of data, six respondents included the use of academic performance data as the data utilized. It was notable to see these practices emerge across the different school systems, to determine which of the best practices emerged as most beneficial. The researcher believed that the focus on multilingual learners and strategies would have been a more intentional focus with a greater sense of urgency.

When the respondents were questioned regarding which of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework components were perceived to be most beneficial to their programming, there were varying responses. Three respondents cited a focus on high-quality instruction at both grade-level and multilingual settings. Two respondents cited the use of data for instructional improvement. Each of the following were selected once, by three respondents: Making instruction of EL students a priority, Focus on instructional practices of diverse learners, and Value students' language and culture in instruction.

### **Research Question Two**

What are commonalities of these programs with high English language growth, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework? There were recurring themes throughout the responses, which included building relationships, communication, focus on writing, pull-out

instruction, asset-based inclusion, and administrator support and knowledge of multilingual programs. Relationships built trust with students and families. Communication with all stakeholders included the use of interpreters. The intentional focus on writing went beyond simple journaling and into explicit guidance and instruction. The pull-out model of instruction allowed for multilingual students a space with less anxiety to practice the language. Asset-based language reframed the way educators spoke of the multilingual learners, including the student strengths and of all staff maintaining ownership of the multilingual student support. Administrators supported the program though may not have extensive training or knowledge around multilingual instruction.

### **Research Question Three**

What are the differences between these programs, outside of the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework? Each school demonstrated unique differences from the other three identified schools, including common curriculums, focused core instruction, multilingual teachers being multilingual learners, and personalized learning.

School A was located in a large school district with multiple sites. Because of the size, multiple resources were available and used for building staff. This large district also purchased aligned grade-level and multilingual curriculum from the same publisher, in which the weekly lessons in both curriculums were focused on the same content and language functions. One additional distinct difference in School A was the movie-night club among the staff.

School B had four unique differences to their programming: focused core instruction, modeling high-quality practices, differentiating professional development, and building autonomy. Principal B explained that classroom instruction was targeted and did the fewest

initiatives possible to maintain focus. The principal also modeled the high-quality practices expected during professional development time. The principal and leadership team of the building also implemented a teacher feedback survey to determine themes of professional development needs to determine how practices are going for teachers and what differentiated professional development is needed. The final difference of this school was in the autonomy granted to the building to make instructional decisions that were the best fit for the students and staff.

School C reported three unique differences in their programming: the use of the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model, a multilingual teacher who is also multilingual, and leadership focused on Courageous Leadership. SIOP was listed as one strategy in which teachers school-wide have received training. This teacher is also a multilingual learner, which may have created a shared understanding and empathy with students. Principal C participated in a Courageous Leadership Institute, for administrators to learn and explore courageous conversation around race.

School D demonstrated four differences in multilingual programming: multi-age groupings of students, participation in the English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project, personalized learning, and being part of a technology-rich district. Multi-age groupings occurred in the school across all demographic groups, including multilingual learners. Participation in the ELM Project through Hamline University assisted the multilingual teachers to be instructional coaches for classroom and content area teachers in meeting the language needs of multilingual learners in mainstream classrooms. The district also maintained a focus on personalized learning,

grouping students by ability and/or interests. The technology in the district also connected to the personalized learning.

#### **Research Question Four**

What barriers have schools with high progress toward English language proficiency encountered in their attempts to implement multilingual learner programs, and what strategies were implemented to overcome the barriers? The main concerns from participants were around time, funding/staffing, and bias. Strategies to overcome the barriers centered on intentionality and advocacy.

There were concerns with time, funding/staffing, and bias. Six out of the eight respondents all listed concerns around time, which included school schedules and sharing time with Title I and Special Education. Participants were concerned with fragmenting instruction. Time missed due to family travel, a lack of time to teach content, and a lack of time to collaborate with colleagues were additional factors. Around funding and staffing, two schools were low-incidence schools, which generates less federal and state funding for the instruction of multilingual learners. One building budget was controlled by district leaders. Another school reported a lack of staffing to co-teach and co-plan between multilingual and grade-level teachers. Staff bias also led to lower engagement with staff in multilingual strategies and programming, not understanding the learning benefits for all students. One district missed an opportunity with work around equity to get district-wide expectations around the use of global perspectives and the use of these practices with multilingual learners

To overcome these barriers, intentional strategies and advocacy were offered to overcome these barriers. Increasing the time that district and community stakeholders are in the district

allows for an increased awareness of the realities in the schools. Advocacy for the multilingual learners appeared also in cooperating with Title I and Special Education teachers by creating schedules best for the students. Relationships with grade-level teachers were also important as well as the influence of legislators and talking about the benefits of programming locally to build support. Increasing professional development around multilingual learners and strategies, assisting in the creation of a district calendar around professional development needs, and being proactive with social-emotional student needs decreased the barriers found by educators.

## **Recommendations**

### **Professional Practice**

Based on the study findings and the conclusions from the literature review and the research data, the findings are consistent with current research of best practices in high language growth schools, though not all of the components of the best practices were reflected at the level needed or expected to show the most growth. Due to the small  $n$  size of the respondents, generalizations cannot be made to all schools in Minnesota, though the data reflects a comparison of the perceptions from the schools identified and studied. The following recommendations are offered regarding barriers, strategies, and professional development to address the needs of multilingual learners in Minnesota.

1. It is recommended that an intentional focus on beliefs around equity, race, and language be undertaken by all district staff. A greater personal awareness may lead to an increased awareness and empathy for multilingual learners and an increased ownership of the multilingual program success (Gorski, 2011; Dormer, 2016; Capper & Frattura, 2017).



2. It is recommended that building principals and district office leaders who have a direct impact on instructional programming take a more active leadership role in the planning and management of multilingual programs. Only when building and district leaders take an active role in the importance of, and creating a sense of, urgency in initiatives and programs is greater success realized (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Elfers et al., 2013). The building principals interviewed all shared a sense of urgency and support of the multilingual programs, which aligns with research and best practices of school building administrators.
3. It is suggested that all teachers in districts are trained and coached in best practices in language instruction, which includes increased collaboration time with multilingual teachers and instructional coaches familiar with best practices in multilingual programming (Elfers et al., 2013; López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). Language practices reported in the interviews included SIOP, co-teaching with content/grade-level teachers, and specific work in writing instruction and practice.
4. It is recommended that teacher preparation/university programs take a more proactive role in preparing future teachers and administrators to understand and differentiate instruction/program supports based on the academic language demands of grade-level and content courses (López, Scanlan & Gundrum, 2013; Russel, 2018). In order for teachers to demonstrate an ability to plan and develop instruction around best practices (referenced in recommendation three above), university instructors should implement college-preparation around the implementation of multilingual programs and instruction.

5. It is suggested that multilingual programs are designed with multiple stakeholders—including students, families, and grade-level/content teachers—with the multilingual students’ needs in mind and not around budget constraints (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Scanlan & López, 2012; Khalifa, 2018). In order for programs to be successful for all stakeholders, creating a program focused on students with multiple collaborative viewpoints will benefit and increase program efficacy.
6. It is recommended that administrators and teachers utilize multiple forms of student, program, and fidelity data to review and improve instruction for multilingual learners (Kerr, Marsh, Ikemoto, Darilek, & Barney, 2006; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016; Bernhardt, 2013).
7. It is recommended that multilingual students are a priority of all educators and that this priority is demonstrated through budget, time, and resource allocations (Johnsen, 2013; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). On budgets, former Vice President Joe Biden quotes his father: “Don’t tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I’ll tell you what you value” (“Biden’s Remarks,” 2008).

### **Further Study**

Based on the research, study, and conclusions drawn from the data, the following recommendations are made for further research.

- The study examined best practices of the practices of the Minnesota schools with consistently high English language growth. It is recommended that a broader, follow-up study be conducted to include all high growth schools from both 2018 and 2019, in addition to the five schools that appeared on both lists.

- A follow-up study could be conducted of urban, suburban, and greater Minnesota groupings of high-growth schools, to determine similarities and differences among these three types of schools.
- A follow-up study could include broadening the list of identified schools to seek the middle/junior high schools and high schools with the highest language growth to determine the best practices among schools of a higher grade level.
- A limitation of the study was the limited number of participants. A future study could also include grade level and content area teachers, students, and families.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the study focused on examining the practices of the Minnesota schools with consistently high English language growth: to what extent the schools followed the Elfers and Stritikus (2014) framework, commonalities and differences outside of the framework, barriers to multilingual program implementation, and ways to overcome the barriers. Findings from the study suggest areas for further multilingual program development across the state, including: more administrator support and leadership, collaboration time, strategic use of data, and a shared building-staff ownership of the multilingual program.

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[FILE&dDocName=MDE072858&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary](https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=MDE072858&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary)

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## Appendix A: Survey Protocol

*Note: the term multilingual learners in this research will refer to students identified as English Learners*

Date of Survey:

School:

Respondent:

Respondent role: Principal    Multilingual coordinator/Lead Teacher

### Demographics

How many students are enrolled in your school?

0-100    101-250    251-500    500+

How many multilingual learners are enrolled in your school?

0-25    26-50    51-100    101-150    150+

How many students are enrolled in your district?

0-500    501-1000    1001-3000    3000+

How many multilingual learners are enrolled in your district?

0-500    501-1000    1001-3000    3000+

Does your district have a multilingual coordinator? Yes    No

Is there a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) Plan in place? Yes    No

Please respond to the following framework (Elfers and Stritikus, 2014) questions using this Likert scale:

- 1: Not at all—Not present in any form
- 2: Minimally—We have received training in this area but do not implement the component.
- 3: Somewhat—We have received training in this area and have begun planning and implementation of the component.
- 4: Nearing full use—We have received training in this area, and we have a plan in place to implement this component
- 5: At full use and fidelity—We have a plan in place in this area. We monitor the implementation of the plan using programming data and make adjustments to the plan as needed, based on data.

To what extent do you:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Focus on high-quality instruction?
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Your) Leaders directly engage in teaching and learning initiatives?
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Your) Professional development targets classroom teachers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Your) Instructional decisions take into account the teachers of EL students?
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Your) Leaders align, integrate, and coordinate supports for teachers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Blend district-level and school-level initiatives?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Focus on district workforce development practices?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Create opportunities for staff to work collaboratively?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leverage local expertise in schools and communities to serve EL students?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Engage in strong two-way communication between school and district leaders?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communicate a compelling rationale to all stakeholders?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make instruction of EL students a priority?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encourage staff responsibility to serve EL students?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Focus on instructional practices to serve diverse learners?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Differentiate support systems at elementary and secondary levels?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prioritize supports for those serving the largest number of EL students?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Value students' language and culture in instruction?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Model ways that instructional leaders can serve EL students?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use data for instructional improvement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support data-based discussions of individual student progress?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use data to identify areas for improvement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use data to shape professional development?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use data to support a culture of learning?

Which of these components do you perceive led to your school's high growth on the ACCESS test?

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Setting and location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Introductions: Greetings

- a. Warm up
- b. Establish relationship and build trust

Explain the nature of the research, purpose, and provide consent form for signing. Provide a copy of the research questions to the interviewee. Use the probing questions if needed. Probing questions are listed under each interview question.

1. Looking at the list of programming components from the survey you completed (list from Elfers and Stritikus' 2014 study), are there any components that you perceive as most beneficial to your multilingual programming?
  - a. (if affirmative)
    - i. How do you know this (these) were beneficial?
    - ii. Do you collect data on the implementation and monitoring of these components?
2. What additional factors do you feel attribute to your high growth on the ACCESS test?
  - a. For example, (if struggling to identify any factors) community-informed practices, family involvement, asset-based beliefs of students and student abilities, shared leadership, school climate, standards-based curriculum and instruction, systemic improvement processes and fidelity checks, administrative support, alignment to mission/vision
3. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for students in improving student language growth?
4. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for teachers and support staff in improving student language growth?
5. What do you perceive has been most beneficial for school and district administrators in improving student language growth?
6. What are the challenges or barriers do you face in implementing multilingual programming?
  - a. For example, (if struggling to identify any factors) Some examples may policies, teachers, district leadership, knowledge, resources, students
  - b. Why is that a challenge or barrier?
  - c. Who influences that challenge or barrier?
  - d. How could those barriers be overcome?
7. Do you have any additional comments?



### Appendix C: Superintendent Study Solicitation

Hello (Superintendent),

My name is Gwen Rosha Anderson, a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration at St. Cloud State University. The title of my dissertation is “Schools to Learn From: Lessons from Minnesota Schools with High English Learner Language Growth.” The purpose of the study is to provide research that informs about the practices of English learner/multilingual learner programs that demonstrate consistently high language growth. This study has the potential to highlight common practices of schools with high progress toward English language proficiency, which may afford other school leaders with productive strategies that could have a direct correlation to the academic growth for multilingual learners in Minnesota.

(School) is one of the five schools in the state identified for consistently high English Learner language growth. I would gather data from (building principal) and (EL coordinator) in the forms of an electronic survey and of an interview protocol of six open-ended questions. A copy of the survey and interview protocol are attached. The estimated time for the survey and interview is sixty (60) minutes. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study. The confidentiality of the information gathered during the participation in this study will be maintained and all participation in this study is voluntary.

My ask of you: do I have your consent to conduct my doctoral research as described above in (School) with (building principal) and (EL coordinator)?

If you have any questions, please contact me at 320-xxx-xxxx or

[ganderson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ganderson@stcloudstate.edu) You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. James Johnson, at 320-xxx.xxxx, or [xjohanson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:xjohanson@stcloudstate.edu)

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and contributions to this research,  
Gwen Rosha Anderson

## Appendix D: Respondent Study Solicitation

Hello [Principal] and [Multilingual Teacher/Coordinator],

My name is Gwen Rosha Anderson, a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration at St. Cloud State University. I now have SCSU and [Superintendent] approval to start my research. Your participation will be in the forms of an electronic survey and of an interview protocol of six open-ended questions. The estimated time for the survey and interview is sixty (60) minutes.

The title of my dissertation is “Schools to Learn From: Lessons from Minnesota Schools with High English Learner Language Growth.” The purpose of the study is to provide research that informs about the practices of English learner/multilingual learner programs that demonstrate consistently high language growth. This study has the potential to highlight common practices of schools with high progress toward English language proficiency, which may afford other school leaders with productive strategies that could have a direct correlation to the academic growth for multilingual learners in Minnesota. [School Name] Elementary is one of the five schools in the state identified for consistently high English Learner language growth!

Questions for you both:

One, are you willing/able to participate in the research?

(if yes) Two, is there a day between now and mid/late-February that you would both be able to sit with me for both the survey and interview? I will come to [your school] when it is most convenient for you.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 320-xxx-xxxx or [groscha@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:groscha@stcloudstate.edu). You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. James Johnson, at 320-xxx-xxxx, or [jjohnson@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:jjohnson@stcloudstate.edu).

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and contributions to this research. I am beyond excited to learn more from you and the great work you do for students.

Gwen Rosha Anderson  
Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership and Administration  
St. Cloud State University