Concern and Difficulties in a Rural District with a Low ELL Population

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Concern and Difficulties in a Rural District with a Low ELL Population

by

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the effectiveness of the ESL service provided to ELLs in a particular rural school with a small ELL population. The focus is to gather information from teachers, parents, and administrators, in order to figure out the gaps, weaknesses and difficulties when considering six important points to a fair and balanced introduction to curriculum: positive and welcoming learning environment, appropriate curriculum, full delivery of service, equitable assessment of ELLs, ELL parental involvement and professional development that best fits ELLs, their parents and their teachers. The data collected reveals a school district that doesn’t meet any of these standards. The outcome shows that in this particular small, rural and remote districts with a small ELL population, federal guidelines are not being followed, ELL parents are not being considered and that ELLs needs are not being met in order for them to become successful academically and socially.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of Study

The case in this study is a school district located in a rural and remote area, north of the state. Contrary to urban areas in the state, this rural area has been decreasing in population. Since the change of the millennium to date, population has decreased in approximately 25%. The main reason to the decrease in population is economical depression, the lack of job opportunities. In the last 10 years, one of the main sources of labor work shut down an area of production.

The school district had to down size, from four sites for K-2, 3-6, 7-12 and alternative school to only two. The impact of these economical and population changes is felt most acutely in the classroom where funding is limited for staff and teaching materials in spite of federal grants. Despite of the change in economy and growth population, ELL families have continued to transit or relocate in the area for various reasons. The ELL enrollment is has been less than one percent of its total student population since the need of ESL support was addressed thirteen years.

The first two ELL families to the district enrolled children in Kindergarten in 2002-2003. It took about six months for the district to realize that the need for an ESL teacher was imminent. These two families, Colombian and Ukrainian, came from very different cultural backgrounds. The children’s literacy skills and academic needs were different too, for this reason the pullout program - 1:1- was implemented in order to provide ESL instruction.

Throughout the years, some ELL families stayed and grew, making the area their home, while other families stayed temporarily, varying from a couple of weeks, to one month or to four years. ELL enrolled families also varied in language and culture, Vietnamese, Chinese, Swahili,
Armenian, German, Hispanic and Ukrainian. Most families enrolled newcomers or Emergent ELLs from K-4th grade for the first time and very few students with ELL needs enrolled in the high school grades.

In the elementary grades most Entering level ELLs are enrolled in Kindergarten. ELL students’ progress in learning English goes hand in hand with their cognitive and maturity growth with the help of ELL services. The main difference among the elementary age ELLs is their family life, whether they have their family support or not to grow academically and culturally. The biggest challenge for the district has been recognizing and working with middle and high school Emergent ELLs or newcomers.

In the middle of the school year 2006 a Mexican family enrolled two boys, one in 9th grade and one in 12th grade. Both boys were emergent ELLs. The students were provided no ELL service for about two months. Mainstream teachers were not informed that the students had ESL needs. Teachers first thought the students were shy and where adjusting to a new community. After attempting to reach the phone numbers listed in the system but being unable to contact a parent or guardian, teachers requested the guidance office to help find a contact. It took about two months for administration to realize that the home language form and other important data was not provided. Both students were called to the office to try getting a contact number from them. It wasn’t until that point that administrators realized that the boys couldn’t communicate much. A few days later, it was decided that the students would be pulled out of their last period to receive ESL instruction. There was no conversation about the students’ grades or quarterly assessment. These students moved away a month later without notice.
At the beginning of the school year 2007-2008, the elementary school had 10 ELL students enrolled. The ELL students were very diverse in their ESL and academic content needs. The district had two Spanish speaker students; one was a newcomer in Kindergarten and an Emerging ESL student in the third grade. There were six Ukrainian speaker students; one was an Entering ESL student in Kindergarten, two Emerging ESL students in the 1st and 3rd grade, one Developing ELL student in the 5th grade and two Expanding ELL students in the 6th grade. There was an Armenian Entering ELL student in 3rd grade and one Vietnamese Expanding ELL student in the 5th grade. The ELL teacher needed to serve students on daily basis during the first period of the school day.

It became a challenge to address the needs of all students and work along with each one of their classroom teachers. The elementary principal, at the time advised to only serve ELL students with lower L2 proficiency levels. During that year 6th graders were sent to work with the ESL teacher only when their classroom teacher requested that they get extra language support for certain assignments. The ELL population varies from year to year; sometimes within the school year students arrive and leave the district. There have been ELLs enrolled and gone in a matter of a couple of weeks. We also have ELLs that stayed in the district for a year or two. Very few are the families that continued in the district and settled in the area, mostly Ukrainian/Russian, Hispanic and Asian.

Another Hispanic family arrived the winter of 2010-2011, the parents were Mexican and spoke very little English the children were Mexican American bilingual ELLs at the Expanding Level. The students were in 10th, 8th and 6th grade, according to their personalities they interacted socially with out problems. The three students had extraordinary musical talents, which helped
them find a niche. The mainstream students involved in band and choir soon welcomed them and invited them to participate in activities after school. Since this students didn’t represent a flag socially to teachers, they didn’t suspect that they may need ELL support until their transcripts and other documentation arrived from their previous school in a different state, where it stated that these students were in fact ELL students at the Expanding level. Upon receiving the documentation the administrators decided these students would be pulled out of their first period to receive ESL/homeroom instruction.

In 2012-2013, a Swahili family arrived at the beginning of the school year; the students were enrolled in the 5th and 7th grade. In this particular case, the district could not use the ESL instructor as an interpreter; fortunately the parent had a relative fluent in English that helped as an interpreter when enrolling the students. These students were newcomers from Kenya; no entrance evaluation was performed in the district. The 7th grade student did not receive ELL services until a month after she was enrolled when high school teachers once again, contacted the administrators for English and academic support to administration. On the other hand, her sibling received ELL services since the first week of school in the pullout modality like all the other ELL elementary age students. For both 5th grade and 7th grade teachers, working with Emerging ELLs was a challenging experience. They were inexperienced with making the necessary content language accommodation to instruct these ELLs effectually.

The most recent challenge to the district was during the 2015 – 2016 school year, at the beginning of this school year two Honduran families enrolled in the district. One family had a non-English speaker Kindergarten student and an Emerging ELL student in 2nd grade. The other
family had three Emerging ELL students in 1st grade, 2nd grade and in 3rd grade. The parents of both families have a barely moderate L1 proficiency and they are illiterate in their L1.

**Background of Researcher**

Thirteen years ago, I was hired as the district’s ESL teacher. I was given the name of two kindergarten teachers that had students from “foreign” families. One teacher had two Ukrainian speaking students, they were brother and sister, not newcomers but from a home where English was not spoken. The other teacher had a Spanish-speaking girl from Colombia, a newcomer. All three students had been enrolled at the beginning of the year but students didn’t receive services until the second semester of their kindergarten year; since then I have been providing English instruction in the district for ELLs. Over the years, the ELL enrollment was low but steady, in thirteen years it has stayed under 1% of the district’s student population. The ELL population has been mainly Ukrainian and Spanish, our Ukrainian community is large in comparison to other minorities. Most Ukrainian families that have enrolled into the district have at least one bilingual parent or a close relative that has been helpful to teachers and other staff. The Ukrainian communities from the area and nearby areas are close and welcoming to each other. They have very little interaction with people outside their circle. This group of families has needed very little support from the district regarding enrollment, paperwork or connections with community services.

However most of the Spanish families in the district didn’t relocate because they knew someone or they had family here. It was mainly work that brought those families to the area. The majority of the Hispanic families didn’t have bilingual parents. Since my L1 is Spanish I have collaborated with district interpreting documents to enroll students, interviews with
administration and connecting the families with the different community organizations to help families adjust to a new area, weather and culture. I have also helped our various families from other L1 as a liaison to community organizations and community activities. It is always exciting to me when I find out that we have a new ELL family enroll in the district. I understand their needs and I also understand that many of them don’t come prepared to live in the area. I myself was welcomed in this same area twenty – five winters ago as ELL foreign exchange student from Peru, my alpaca coat, scarf and sweaters wouldn’t have kept me warm enough. My peers, their parents and people in the community gave me what I needed even without me asking. After welcoming so many families from other parts of the world, I think back many years ago when I, like them didn’t know what would be my new needs living in the area, needs that were not common sense to me at the time.

I empathize and identify with my students struggles to fit in, to become self-sufficient, to be considered and valued as an asset to society, to be respected and not be labeled as “less than” because of a non English speaker accent or looks. I feel a special connection to my ELL students because we share experiences, from when I was a student working hard to be validated by peers and teachers. I relate with their parents as a parent to ELLs and as a teacher wanting to see them develop academically as well as in a personal and social aspect.

**Research Question**

In this study, the focus is to gather information from teachers, parents, and administrators, in order to figure out a the gaps, weaknesses and difficulties that a particular rural school with a small ELL population; considering six important points to a fair and balanced introduction to curriculum: positive and welcoming learning environment, appropriate
curriculum, full delivery of service, equitable assessment of ELLs, ELL parental involvement and professional development that best fits ELLs, their parents and their teachers. The data collected will help figure out what small, rural and remote districts with a small ELL population can do to follow federal guidelines and provide the service that ELLs need and deserve in order to become successful academically and socially.
Research Background

In the United States English language learners (ELL) are defined similarly but not the same in state policy. The U. S. Federal Law defines a “limited English proficient” student as a student from 3 to 21 years old who is enrolled in an elementary or secondary school. The student may have been born abroad or in the U. S. but has a native language other than English. This law also includes those students whose environment has a dominant language other than English, which causes a significant impact on the students’ proficiency in English. Students with difficulties in speaking, writing, reading or understanding English hence affecting the students’ ability to meet the state’s proficiency level on standardized tests; achievement in the English language classroom and the opportunity to participate fully in society (Education Commission of the States [ECS], 2014).

According to the U.S. Department of Education as of 2012-2013 about 4.4 million students in our public schools are ESL students, therefore nearly one out of ten students is an ESL student in the nation (Kena, et al., 2015). ESL students are identified as the culturally and linguistically diverse fastest growing group of the U.S. student population (Sullivan, 2011). By the beginning of 2014-2015 school year approximately one in four American students speaks a language other than English at home, and that proportion has grown exponentially and will continue to rise. The U. S. Department of U. S. Department of Education predicting that the majority of students enrolled that year would be non-white (Williams, 2014).

The increasing diversity in today’s classroom demands that teachers are highly prepared in order to provide quality education to all students. The most important requirement prior to
preparing curriculum that is responsive to students’ needs is to get to know the students, to understand the differences in students’ styles, beliefs, and abilities. With this prior information a teacher will be able to better connect with students and to plan incorporating examples of multicultural materials, visual aids, and topics that encourage students to explore different racial and cultural perspectives showing sensitivity toward each student’s cultural values (Johnson, Musital, Hall, Gollnick, and Dupuis, 2005).

Considering the large number of English language learners that are or will come into the U. S. educational system, it is important to know which is their native language and if they are literate in their first language or not. Figure 1 shows the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2013 American Community Survey (ACS), reporting that there are at least three hundred and fifty languages spoken in U. S. homes. Spanish is still the top spoken language in about 71% ELL students’ homes. Chinese is the second top representing a 4% followed by Vietnamese which is the third top representing a 3%.

Figure 1. Top Ten Spoken Languages in ELL Students’ Homes 2013

Note: English Language Learners (ELL) students were identified as individuals ages 5 to 18 enrolled in school who reported speaking English less than “very well.” Chinese includes Cantonese and Mandarin. French/Haitian Creole includes French, as well as French or Haitian Creole.
Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis based on 2013 American Community Survey (ACS).
“From 1995 to 2011, the population of students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) grew approximately 105% nationwide” (Kindler, 2002). “In 2005, the US had about 11 million school-aged children of immigrants, making them about one-fifth of the school aged population” (Reeves, 2006). The higher concentrations of Ells are in California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois and Arizona. However, according to Kindler in the last decade the states with the greatest growth of Ells are South Carolina and Minnesota (Kindler, 2002). The figure below from the U. S. Department of Education accessed February 23, 2015, shows the density of K-12 Ells in public schools, by state. Ells seem to be concentrated in the metropolitan areas in the country since approximately 91% of Ells live in metropolitan areas (Fix & Passel, 2003). Nearly 70% of all Ells are enrolled in 10% of the metropolitan area public schools (Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, and Clewell, 2005) In 2012 – 2013, urban city schools had an average of 14% LEP students, while suburban areas had an average of 8.5%, town areas had an average of 6%, and rural areas only had an average of 3.5% (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2015; United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2015).

Figure 2. Density of K – 12 Ells by State: School Year 2012-2013
In Minnesota, the ESL main L1 is Spanish but differently than other states, MN is the only state with an ever growing Hmong and Somali refugee student population, especially beyond the Twin Cities metro area. The groups that came to MN as refugees shared similar experiences and trauma in the process of fleeing their country of origin. Most of these families struggle with coping, adjusting and psychological trauma. It is a challenge for educators to help refugee students and their families since many of them did not have a chance to attend school due to the turmoil in their home countries; educators need to first build a culture of literacy. Academically, it’s difficult for teachers and administrators to come up with a plan to help students succeed in the U. S. educational system in situations where refuge teenagers are illiterate and can’t be placed in an early elementary class and will most likely drop out from a high school class. The disparities among these large groups of ELLs are strenuous (Minnesota Minority Education Partnership [MMEP], 2012).

Figure 3. Languages Other Than English in Minnesota
In Minnesota, there are 664,356 families, with 1,257,227 children. Among these children, 33 percent live in families that are low-income, defined as income below twice the federal poverty level. The lack of higher education and low wages contribute to families having insufficient incomes. Most immigrant parents do not have high school degrees; many have less than a 9th grade education. Making it difficult to satisfy the NCLB required piece of parental involvement and parental notification. Parents with low education don’t have the ability to help their children with the target language, homework and avoid school involvement. Surprisingly, maybe due to lack of proper documentation or low English proficiency, well over one-third of low-income and nearly 30 percent of poor infants and toddlers have a US. born or foreign-born parent with at least some college. Children of immigrants represent a share of one in four low-income free and reduced lunch according to the National School Lunch Program. Children of foreign-born parents are also more likely to be low income than children of native-born parents as shown in the figures below from the Minnesota Family Economic Security Profile (National Center for Children in Poverty [NCCP], 2011).

According to the U. S. Current Population Survey in 2004, the total foreign – born population passed 34 million; this is 3 million more than in 2000. Despite these figures, ELLs are not all foreign- born. In fact, U. S. born ELLs range from 50% to nearly 66% and even higher for younger age students. According to Zehler et al. (2003) 47% of ELLs were born in the United States; including children of immigrants, refugee parents, and Native American and Alaskan children and U. S. Latinos. The continuous high levels of immigration have been in direct relation with the growing number of children with immigrant parents. By 2000, for every nine adult U.S. residents one was an immigrant; and for every five children under age 18 one. Capps
et al. (2005) report a higher proportion of native-born ELLs and a breakdown by age group: 76% of ELLs in elementary grades (pre-K to 5) and 56% of ELLs at the secondary level (grades 6 to 12). Another way to look the proportions by Fix and Passell (2003) is that two-thirds of all ELLs are U.S. born. It is important to take in consideration that the education of ELLs is now a days an educational issue for a great number of U.S. citizens; it’s not about accommodating for newcomers, immigrant and refugees.

The changing demographics and rapid surplus of LEP and multilingual students is an issue that the US public educational system simply can’t avoid but the US has tried to figure out a plan to assimilate and educate ELLs since the 1880s. In fact, the keystone element of the boarding schools’ assimilation mission was to induce mastery of the English language. The use of native languages and the practice of non-Christian spiritual practices were prohibited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1887 J.D.C. Atkins, Commissioner of Indian Affairs declared the prevalence of English language and national culture to people of all races in America. In 1928, the publication of the report “The Problem of the Indian Administration” also known as the “Meriam Report” initiated a movement to replace boarding schools with day schools closer to where the natives lived. Some students returned to their homes and tribal ways and others became in a sense “bicultural”. By the mid 1930’s, boarding schools were significantly reduced and non-residential parochial schools were the dominant school institution for American Indian children by the 1950s (Gonzalez, 2008).

It is essential to review the government approach concerning language policy to understand how current language educational strategies have developed. In 1954, the US Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that segregated schools were
unconstitutional, leading in a new period in the struggle for civil rights in America. In 1964, the Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, requiring that there be equal opportunity and no discrimination, exclusion or denied benefits for linguistically diverse students. According to Title VI of this Act, “No person, in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Civil Rights Act, 1964, sec. 601). Consequently, Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act has become an essential piece in defending the educational rights of language minority students in the United States.

In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act, also known as the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Act was the first federal recognition that limited English speaking ability students have special educational needs and that bilingual programs would address those needs but the Act didn’t require bilingual education. The Bilingual Act established a federal goal of assisting limited English speaking students in the quick acquisition of English. Congress allocated money for school district enrolling large numbers of language minority students that opted to establish bilingual education programs or design and distribution of instructional materials. Parental involvement was included in the planning and evaluation process of the projects (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

According to the revised publication of the US Dept. of Education from August 2010, in 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act was enacted to prevent discrimination against individuals in federally funded programs. Section 504 legally states that all students have a right to “Free and Appropriate Public Education” (US Dept. of Education, 2010).
In 1974, the Bilingual Education Act expanded its services to include students of any socioeconomic status with limited English speaking abilities. In addition, in 1974, a case was brought under the Equal protection Clause if the 14th Amendment of Constitution and Title VI Civil Rights Act by a group of Chinese American parents. The case is known as Lau v. Nichols, stated that offering the same facilities, textbook and curriculum to all students is not equality treatment when the students are not proficient enough in English to have a meaningful and comprehensible classroom experience – a “meaningful education”. The Lau remedies helped set the minimum standards for evaluation and instruction of the English learner students (Crawford, 1987).

In 1981, the Castañeda v. Pickard Supreme Court Decision outlined standards for schools to make sure they were following Civil Rights Act of 1964 requirements. The court’s criteria had three main requirements for schools: First, a pedagogically sound plan for LEP students. Second, to implement the plan, sufficient qualified staff and resources are needed. Third, a system established to evaluate the program (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981).

In the 1990s, the use of child’s native language to support learning and bilingual education came under political restriction. In 1998, an plan was proposed in California, to exclude the use of native language instruction in working with ELLs and requires the use of sheltered English immersion programs for about a year before ELLs are put into mainstream classrooms, 61% of Californians voted in favor of the proposition. Similar propositions were brought forth and passed in Massachusetts, Arizona and Colorado. (Teachers College Columbia University, 2007). Curiously enough in California, two – way bilingual education programs
continue to grow and over half a million of ELLs who participated in these bilingual programs have been “mainstreamed” although they continue to be classified ad ELLs (Crawford, 2003).

The final stage to do away from bilingual education and toward “English –only” education came ambitiously with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed and signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. The NCLB mandated that by the 2013-2014 school year all students must have achieved the level of “proficient” in standardized state assessment systems in reading, math and science. School districts must also show that all subgroups of students, students of different races, ethnicities, income groups and gender. The NCLB requires schools to track ELLs yearly progress academically and of English proficiency. The pressure to bring all students to proficiency by 2014 has led districts in many states to minimize the number of ELLs per grade in order to avoid having to report data on these students and sustain penalties if they haven’t made sufficient average yearly progress (Capps et al., 2005).

NCLB language proficiency assessment screening is used to place LEP students in an appropriate English language instructional program based on the test results. NCLB requires assessments for English language learners under Title I of the Act Under Title I, which is the federal compensatory education program for low-income students and Title III, funding for ELLs. States must hold Title III recipients of funds accountable for meeting three measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) ELLs: make annual progress, reach English proficiency and meet AYP measured by standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The ties between testing results, achievement, proficiency and funding have affected the focus from trying to provide ELLs and their families with greater access to educational resources and more equal opportunities to become truly bilingual to that of closing the achievement gap through
testing and English immersion, thus silencing bilingualism and bilingual education (Crawford, 2004).

In order to follow the NCLB Title I and Title III requirements, MN also implemented LEP testing. Until the spring of 2011, the Minnesota Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (MN-SOLOM) was used as a rubric for teachers and ESL teachers to get an idea of the speaking and listening proficiency of K – 2nd grade ELLs. It was also until the spring of 2011 that the Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE) was used to assess the reading and writing proficiency of 3rd – 12th ELLs. In the spring of 2012, the WIDA ACCESS assessment was adopted in MN in order to comply with the NCLB Act of 2001. Today WIDA is used throughout 38 states in the U. S., Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands. WIDA is used to assess proficiency of K-12 ELLs in the speaking, listening, reading and writing areas. WIDA also has the W-APT, which is a placement test to accurately identify ELLs and levels of proficiency, in order to provide appropriate services and eventually be eligible for exit from ESL services. (See Appendix B and C for WIDA Rubrics) A student must score higher than a 5.0 in all four components in the academic year’s WIDA ACCESS assessment in addition to the ESL teacher’s recommendation. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011; Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2016)

There has been a predisposition by policymakers and the public to support English- only programs, to diverge from programs that use the ELLs home languages in spite of the research evidence that L1 literacy skills transfer to L2 (Roberts, 1994). While bilingual education researchers were attempting to discover the best ways to educate children who didn’t speak English, others were determined to show that bilingual approaches were ineffective. In the 1980’s many approaches to teach English were developed:
• Submersion – also known as “sink or swim”, where instruction is delivered in English only. The goal is linguistic assimilation. No special help with English is provided throughout K – 12. The ELL student either makes it or sinks.

• ESL Pullout – submersion plus ESL. The goal is linguistic assimilation and remedial English. ELL students are pulled out the mainstream classes for 20-45 minutes a few times a week or daily, as needed to receive ESL instruction, often focused on grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills, not academic content. The ESL certified teacher may include home language support or not.

• ESL Push In – The goal is fluency. The ESL teacher or an instructional aide provides clarification, instruction in English with some native language support and translation if needed within the mainstream classroom. Ideally, the ESL teacher and the classroom teacher will work together to plan to make the most of the time, however, it is often very difficult to do this because not all teachers will provide lesson plans in advance.

• Structured English Immersion – (SEI). The goal is linguistic assimilation, a quick exit to the mainstream education. ESL certified teachers teach content, subject matter instruction at students’ level; of English, home language support may or may not be included.

• Sheltered English Instruction or Content- Based ESL. The goal is proficiency in English while learning content in an all-English setting. Students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds can be in the same class. Instruction is adapted to students’ proficiency in English, and is supported by visual aids and L1 support as
available. Fully developed prototypes of this program include Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP), and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)

- **Transitional Bilingual Education (Early Exit).** The goal is linguistic assimilation, English acquisition without falling behind academically. Initial literacy is usually in the home language and some subject instruction is in the home language. Certified teachers in bilingual education deliver instruction 10-50% in the home language and 50-90% at the students’ English proficiency level. ELLs exit as they become proficient within 1 to 3 years.

- **Developmental Bilingual Education (Late Exit).** The goal is bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement in English. It’s a program with strong heritage language usage, and children from English speaking backgrounds are also enrolled. These programs are proven to be most effective. Bilingual education certified teachers initially deliver instruction 90% in the home language gradually decreasing to 50% by fourth grade. Another instruction delivery style for developmental education is 50/50 from the beginning. The duration of the program is 5-6 yrs.

- **Two-Way Bilingual Education (Two-way Dual Language, two-Way Immersion, Dual Immersion)** The goal is bilingualism and biliteracy, academic achievement in English. Teachers certified in bilingual education deliver instruction in a 90/10 – 90% in the home language and 10% in English in the early grades. Then 50/50 model of parity of both languages. ELLs and native – English speakers are taught literacy and subjects in both languages. The duration of the program is 5-6 yrs. (Caldera &
In all the programs mentioned above, policymakers gave a duration limit, being the six years the longest duration in the bilingual models. According to Eaton (2011), for a second language learner to reach proficiency, native-like fluency in speaking a language, the learner would need to invest at least 10,000 hours in language studies. In another study Hakuta (2000) concludes that from data from the most successful districts in teaching ESL, students achieved oral proficiency after 3 to 5 years and that academic English proficiency comes after and can take up to 4 to 7 years.

There are many factors that affect the acquisition of a second language. Second language acquisition (SLA) is the process of understanding output in a language other than the native tongue. In order to develop competence in a second language is by learning, the conscious knowledge of a second language and it’s rules (Krashen, 1982).

The acquisition and learning hypothesis states that children acquire a second language in a spontaneous manner with seemingly much less effort than older beginners who are more concerned and aware of making sense of the language and its rules. The older beginners learns a second language transferring knowledge form their L1 hence interpreting, applying rules and through memorization. The younger children acquire language from the second language environment with out concern for grammatical rules or word order in a sentence. The children acquire the second language whereas the adults learn it (Krashen, 1981).
Scholars have been interested in the variable of age, regarding second language acquisition since the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) by Lenneburg in 1967. According to Lenneburg “normal” language learning occurs form infancy to puberty when a decline in performance first appears; suggesting that by the end of puberty, the neurological mechanisms for language acquisition undergo qualitative changes making the process of language acquisition significantly different for adults than for children (Klein, 1986). It has been concluded by scholars like Quingxin (2012) that there are several critical periods of second language acquisition rather than a single one, because language is not a unitary phenomenon. Instead, second language acquisition depends on neurological mechanisms of the brain, the learners’ motivation and the “windows of opportunity” which are unique to for each learner (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979; Johnson & Newport, 1989).

Younger second language learners use the same brain tissue to acquire L1 as they do to acquire L2 hence it seems as it comes easier for preschool to elementary age ELLs. As the brain hits maturity stages, then it finds other parts of the brain to help with second language acquisition, more conscious cognitive work is involved. Researcher Carl H. S. Kim used MRI imagery to reveal that those who learned a second language later in life activated separate portions of the brain region known as Broca’s area. However, those who were exposed to both languages at birth and toddler years showed a substantial overlap in activated areas (Winslow, 1997). At any age, the mental engagement of second language acquisition can occur. There are neurological studies that suggest that bilingualism postpones dementia and Alzheimer symptoms (Craik, Bialystok, and Freedman, 2010; Kovelman, Baker and Petitto, 2008; Marder, Carew, and Van Essen, 2008).
Creating opportunity for students to acquire language also is related to time, having more time to learn a language is a distinct advantage. The younger students are when they begin their second language education, the more years they have devoted to learning a language or languages, and the more opportunities available to use it in everyday situations the greater the proficiency achieved” (Curtain, 1997).

Collier (1987) upheld his premise by stating, “more years spent acquiring a second language provides more experiences and practice in the new language, which leads to greater fluency. Even though adolescent can acquire second language skills at a fast pace, they have less time to make up lost years of academic instruction easily.” (p.5)

In further support of an early start for learning a second language, Smythe, Stennet & Gardner (1975) contend that “the more time spent studying a second language, the greater probability that the individual will achieve a high level of sophistication in the language (p. 19), which is the base to ease the acquisition of content vocabulary.

Immersion studies, that investigated child-adult differences in eventual attainment in second language acquisition, suggest that the age at the time of arrival in the country where the target language was spoken was the best predictor of ultimate attainment. Krashen, Long & Scarcella (1979) maintain that “acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning later on in life.” (p.573)

Therefore, the richer the environment, the greater the number of brain interconnections that are made, and learning can take place faster and with greater meaning. Thus at an early age,
experiences are shaping the brain and designing the neutral architecture that will influence how it handles future experiences in school, work and other places (Sousa, 1995).

Dr. Chugani states, “Not only does the child’s brain overdevelop during early years, but during these years it also has a remarkable ability to adapt and reorganize” (Brandt & Wolfe, 1998, p.12). These early years have been called “critical periods,” “sensitive periods,” or as seen before “windows of opportunity”.

These “windows of opportunity” represent critical periods when the brain demands certain types of input to create or consolidate neutral networks, especially for acquiring language, emotional control and learning to play music. What the child learned during that “critical period” will strongly influence what is learned after the window closes (Sousa, 1995, p.5).

Krashen’s “Comprehension Hypothesis states that we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand messages, that is, when we understand what we hear and what we read, when we receive comprehensible input” (Krashen, 2003). Although this is a subconscious process, some students learn a new language more quickly and easily than others. Every language learner is unique and there are external and internal factors that influence the success of SLA. The internal factors are those that the individual language learner brings with to the learning situation, such as: age, personality, anxiety (low anxiety is correlated with more success in language acquisition), self-esteem (more self-esteem is related to success in language acquisition), intrinsic motivation, integrative motivation,” (a desire to belong to a certain group until membership is achieved), “instrumental motivation” (to accomplish a task) related to shorter term success, past experiences (schemata), cognition and native language. The internal
factors are those that the language situation sets forth for the student, such as: curriculum, instruction, culture and perceived culture status, extrinsic motivation, access to interaction with native speakers (Lightbown and Nina, 2013).

There are several language instruction educational program models, which have shown ELLs’ academic success through integration with the mainstream students, in this way, honoring the cultural and linguistic differences among them in a positive educational way. Peer to peer collaboration helps students feel empathy and when but in order to receive comprehensible input with an open mind and be competent language learners, they need to have a low affective filter. Two-way immersion is a true example of comprehensible input in practice, where true collaborative learning among students is represented throughout the day, through students’ interaction. In a low affective filter environment students are more likely to interact with others, unembarrassed by making mistakes for example, and thus increase the amount of that input.

Krashen’s Input hypothesis of second language acquisition states that we acquire language by understanding oral or written messages; comprehensible input (CI) is the essential for language acquisition. If the input is not comprehensible, it’s impossible for any language acquisition. The ELL acquirer must have an open mind to input, without a predisposed anxiety, but having a low affective filter. Krashen suggests that the amount of language a acquired by the learner is the amount of language that the learner can completely understand, plus a small amount more that the learner is ready to acquire: i+1 (Krashen, 2009). This addresses the fact that learners must be continually challenged but not frustrated (Curtain & Pesola, 1994).

Often ELLs are assumed to be poor second language learners, that teachers are not providing the instruction needed for the students to succeed in standardized tests and meeting
AYP. Unfortunately policymakers are too often not familiar with what actually happens in the classroom, they set up their expectations at i +10 or at i + 50 without knowing the students and their true language and academic ability (Curtain & Pesola, 1994, p. 53). The pressures on teachers and students are enormous, newcomer English learners are no longer exempt from taking standardized tests under the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), and ELLs are expected to learn as much English as possible as soon as possible. Teachers and schools are required to raise the test scores of their English learners and are increasingly focusing their instruction on the content covered by the tests (Crawford, 2004; Meier & Wood, 2004).

Teachers nowadays find themselves trying to keep up with the changes. ELL teachers are expected to be familiar with the laws of policies impacting ELLs, language program types, service delivery types, planning, testing, coaching peers, co-planning and very often facing the challenge of a new student, many times a newcomer, or a returning migrant student. The needs of our student population is in constant change, our student population is certainly not the same as ten years ago. Teachers are expected to follow through with the common core and meet AYP scores. Elementary and high school teachers, that are not ELL teachers, and ELL teachers are expected to differentiate and scaffold instruction for ELLs as they move through the stages of English language acquisition. They are expected to tier academic vocabulary instruction and to provide culturally diverse and compatible instruction in order to activate or build background information. In many school districts, teachers are expected to provide bilingual instruction when needed to help ELLs during literacy instruction, to confirm main ideas of a lecture, to re-teach and to communicate with parents (Deussen, Autio, Miller, Turnbaugh, and Stewart, 2008).
In Minnesota, the Board of Teaching enacted a change in the requirements for teaching license renewal to include evidence of growth in best teaching practices for meeting the needs of English learners as of August 2015. Minnesota has long enjoyed a reputation of having an overall excellent educational and among the highest for the ACT college entrance exam (ACT, INC., 2014) but the exponential growth of ELLs also demands for changes in the education system in MN, in order to better serve students.

Recently the U. S. Department of Education in attempts to find an answer to close the gap among the diverse students populations, ELLs and non ELL students; including those that need help to achieve academically funded a research project by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE) called Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was developed. Research shows that when teachers implement the SIOP Model fully, the academic achievement of English learners improves. Teachers report that SIOP-based teaching benefits all students, not only those ELLs. The SIOP Model consists of eight interrelated components: Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice and/or Application, Lesson Delivery and Review & Assessment. The SIOP Model provides a framework for guiding teachers to improve their instruction and use the kinds of practices that will assist these students in learning both content and academic language (Echevarria, Vogt and Short, 2013).

SIOP is by no means the only model of instruction to help ELLs meet academic goals and expectations. There are many other models of instruction that have been used like: Content-based Instruction Model, Connections Model, Language –Content – Task Model and the Architectural Approach Model (Dutro & Moran, 2003). These methods of instruction all have
one common goal, to enhance and improve the practice of teaching English across the curriculum in every subject area. Although these methods present objectives differently, they all focus on academic vocabulary, building schemata, scaffolding, and a variety of resources. It is through these specific language objectives that students can learn academic English and age-appropriate content knowledge in order to succeed in school (de Jong & Harper, 2005). The SIOP model suggests a variety of output activities that are not necessarily voluntary or spontaneous, they belong more to a controlled situation – it is important to consider the silent period and level of fluency for the ELL to deliver comprehensible output. By Krashen’s definition, “sheltered classes are for intermediate language learners, not beginners.” because “it is extremely difficult to teach subject matter to those who have acquired none or little of the language. Beginners should be in regular ESL, where they are assured of comprehensible input.” (Krashen, 2001) Definitely having unrealistic expectations creates unnecessary stress and incomprehensible input pushing students to give up due to the overload.

All of these methods come down to making input comprehensible for students using any tool available for teachers to use, from gestures to visual aids and technology support without “dumbing down” the input. In order to acquire language it is fundamental that students are exposed to comprehensible input. First students need to understand the language. Understanding the subject matter in the target language will happen as the student builds background information and vocabulary. Another key piece in the learning process is low affective filter; students are ready to receive comprehensible input and open to try delivering output when they are in a welcoming atmosphere. Unfortunately, many ELLs and mainstream students come into the school system with low self-esteem and lack of motivation. It is a challenge for teachers to
spark students’ attention and interest. According to Krashen, “it is easier for the teacher to make the input comprehensible” it is much harder to provide grade level appropriate content that is challenging (i+1) but not overwhelming (Krashen, 1991).

Effective English language development teaching practices are a necessary and crucial part of the classroom atmosphere. These practices go beyond the curriculum, the assessment and the annual yearly progress. It starts with the relationship among all the people in the classroom is an invaluable piece to lower the affective filter. “Educators must understand that the cultural backgrounds and experiences of their students must be respected and reflected in all aspects of the education process” (Johnson, Musial et al., 2005). Teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students can be challenging. Unfortunately, the focus on meeting testing goals has left less time to focus on incorporating other useful forms of literacy like music, drama, art and foreign language – which often could be the ELLs first language.

Midobuche, Benavides, and Kostina-Ritchey list eight dispositions or “catalysts” that teachers of ELLs must have. “These catalysts are the 4 R’s and 4 C’s in teaching. The 4 R’s stand for Recognition, Respect, Retention and Responsiveness.

The U.S. needs to recognize that there is an exponentially growing population that starts their education having a language different than English. Recognition - recognizing, acknowledging, and validating a child’s language and culture. Respect - respecting a person’s language, culture, and economic status. Retention - helping students retain and maintain their heritage language. Responsiveness - the actions of school personnel to ensure the success of all students.
The 4 C’s stand are a very important to motivate schools. **Caring** - a teacher’s sincere effort on behalf of the student demonstrating an action that encompasses involvement and participation. **Courage** - advocating for the linguistic, cultural, and educational needs of ELLs. **Conocimiento** - in Spanish this refers to more than “knowing” cultural, linguistic, and content knowledge; and **Commitment** - an honest effort to place well-prepared teachers in every classroom and for these teachers to commit to the students and the program.” (Midobuche, Benavides, and Kostina-Ritchey, 2011)

There is so much involved to determine what makes an ELL student successful. It is not only important that ELLs have access to English Language education, valuable content and a respectful and welcoming environment but also personal factors such as motivation, persistence, various skills, culture and family support.

Ultimately the goal is not to be exited from the ESL program. The main goal is that ELLs graduate from high school and leave high school with the ability to speak and understand social and academic English, read complex texts for understanding, and write expository texts proficiently; in order to transition into adult life in society. Independence, confidence and self-assurance are tool, to become independent and self-assured to continue with higher education or find a job.

**Introduction to Research**

Education in rural Minnesota faces many challenges and opportunities. Among the challenges, including spread-out populations, limited access to special programs for students and staff, like teacher access to professional development and collegial support, and administrator access to financial resources. Rural schools also face financial tribulations due to shallow tax
base, isolation from job-growth centers, declining enrollments, inability to attract teachers and a heavy concentration of households living in or near poverty. (Southern Governors’ Association, 2004, p.2)

There are many ways to define “rural”, according to the NCLB Act of 2001, if the district population density is fewer than 10 students per square mile. The National Center for Education Statistics considers a school rural if its population is less than 2,500 people, whether it is located inside or outside a metropolitan area. Many of these rural districts are becoming linguistically diverse, even in school districts where the enrollment is declining, where less than 1% of students speak another language other than English at home (McMurry & Ronningen, 2006). Considering all the definitions and descriptions above the district in the study is a rural district.

As mentioned in the Research Background, Titles I and III of the NCLB Act of 2001 entrust school districts for the academic progress of their ELLs. Under Title I, ELLS are to be considered a subgroup in states setting standards, assessment, AYP and other accountability requirements. Title III funds allocations to districts are calculated on the basis of EL counts in the district and the size of the Title III award to Minnesota, which varies from year to year. Title III funds mainly ELL programs’ curricula based on scientific research but staff training, professional development, remedial tutoring, technology acquisition, promote parent and community involvement (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2002). The districts that receive funding need to report ELL progress, demonstrate increase in English proficiency and core academic content, and be accountable to parents, the state and the federal government.
Title III requires a local plan that describes the program, activities to be developed, implemented and administered. The ELL district plan needs to describe how the funds will be used, how parental and community participation will be promoted and explain how ELLs will be assessed in the four language domains of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The state of MN is a member of World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), a consortium of states devoted to the design and implementation of high standards and impartial educational opportunities for ELLs. In order to meet federal accountability requirements MN currently uses the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State (ACCESS) as the annual state assessment of ELs (Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2016). As mentioned in page 12 of the research background, in MN ELLs are considered proficient and no longer requiring ESL services when they obtain a certain composite score of all four-language domains. For K-2nd a composite score of 6.0; for 3rd – 5th a composite score of 5.0; for the 6th - 12th a composite score of 5.0 is required in the reading and writing language domains. The state of MN also requires its teachers of English language learners to have an ESL teaching license (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2015).

Educating ELLs used to be considered an urban issue. However, rural and suburban school districts across the United States today are likely to see native-born, immigrant and refugee ELL students entering at all grades with varying levels of English language proficiency, prior education and literacy. Although data indicates that about 44% of the nation's ELL population lives in rural communities, several of these rural districts have a small number of ELLs (The Education Alliance at Brown University, n.d.). The number of ELLs in districts that are considered as low ELL population (low-LEP) are those with less than 25% of its total
population (Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, & Clewell, 2005). More than 50% of ELLs in public schools nation-wide are in schools with less than 1% of their students designated ELL (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2004).

In comparing schools with a High-LEP population and schools with Low-LEP population, the characteristics of the schools, the principals and their teachers vary. Most Low-LEP schools have less at-risk students and therefore are not eligible for Title I funding, remedial programs: after school programs, Pre-K or summer school programs. Language immersion, bilingual or first language instruction programs are most likely not available in Low-LEP districts. There is an absence of standardized test for ELL identification or a defined plan to serve ELLs in Low-LEP schools. Teachers and administrators are less likely to be racially and ethnically diverse in Low-LEP schools. Teachers and principals are most likely not bilingual, it’s not rare to have teachers or principals working under a provisional or temporary certification and there are less opportunities for professional development in Low-LEP schools. The lack of interpreters or bilingual staff in Low-LEP schools also stunts the probabilities of parent outreach activities, creating a bigger gap between school, home and community (Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, & Clewell, 2005).

This comparison of High-LEP and Low-LEP schools, made me reflect about the similar challenges that these Low-LEP schools in the study and the rural, Low-LEP I’ve been serving as an ESL teacher for the last thirteen years have. Entering the district as an ESL teacher I didn’t have training or was given direction on my responsibilities. Since I started working as the ESL teacher, the district has had seven different superintendents, four different principals at the elementary level and three different principals in the high school level. I understood that the
district had a learning curve with each new administrator and I had to figure out on my own how to serve my students. I relied on my personal experience as an EFL learner and as a K – undergraduate EFL teacher in my home country. I learned to keep in close contact with the classroom teachers to help students become stronger in certain areas by pre-teaching vocabulary and building schemata prior to the classroom teacher’s lesson in class. This language and academic support was my way to cope with the lack of ESL curriculum, I needed to find my own resources and create my own materials.

After reading Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding and Clewell’s study I realized it wasn’t just my district that struggled in the areas of:

- Recognition and identification of ELLs
- Recognizing the need of an ESL program plan and a structures curriculum for language and academic support.
- Recognizing that the yearly state mandated standardized test for ELLs, WIDA, is not the only responsibility of the district.
- Recognizing the responsibility of administrators and teachers to understand who an ESL student is and her/his social and academic needs.
- Recognizing and taking responsibility for providing professional development opportunities to all staff to become aware and learn about ELLs and their diverse ethnicity and cultures.
- Recognizing and taking responsibility to initiate parental and community involvement becoming a respectful liaison between ELL families, the school and the community.
The lack of information and action in the essential components of the Lau Plan also
called and Equal Access Plan, show that there is a need for direction and a plan that includes the
legal foundation, student assessments, an instructional plan, parental involvement, qualified
personnel, a coordination plan, a budget, adjunct services, and other possible considerations.
These policies may add to a more comprehensive plan that protects the rights of all students. The
important point is that school administrators recognize the need to develop policy, and practice
must reflect that policy.

Educational policies created at the national level and then negotiated at the state and local
school district levels with the intention to provide support to schools, teachers, and their students
but one-size designs don’t fit all districts. Federal policies affect classroom practice in the micro-
interactions that occur between teachers and students leaving districts with the task of providing
consistent and quality instruction within the current socio-cultural climate, content area and
English-as-a-Second-Language. Unfortunately, teachers and building administrators are often
left to deal with policy complexities and contradictions with no added support. Their tasks are
overwhelming, given the complexity and interaction of the varied social, political, legal, and
economic contexts needed to support the nation's exponentially growing English language
learners, approximately 5 million, 40% of whom are enrolled in rural schools (Cummins, 2001).

In order to really know the diagnosis of the district in study, it’s important to ask
questions for each one of the areas of attention in order to develop a framework that ensures
effective programming for ELLs. It is important to know what is the real state of the district,
following the Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act Implementation Guide, published by the
National Association of Bilingual Education in 2002.
• **Legal requirements:** School leaders, administrators, and educators recognize that educating ELLs is the responsibility of the entire school staff. Administrators play a crucial role in creating an environment in which ELLs can succeed; by hiring qualified ESL staff, by advocating for ESL teachers and ELL families; by offering research-based professional development opportunities to staff and fostering professional learning communities within the district.

• **Identification of English language learners:** The U. S. Department of Education provides guidance on how to identify, assess, and recommend appropriate instructional services for students whose primary or home language is other than English. After completing the Home Language Survey at the time of registration, staff must follow the ELL district plan on entrance testing and placement.

• **Participant needs assessment:** Educators need to recognize the diversity of the ELL population and determine through assessment in order to provide differentiated instruction. This is especially challenging where the ELL population is low teachers and administrators have very little awareness of the differences among minorities and ESL students. These differences exist but remain ignored: first language, school readiness, social skills within the culture and aptitudes. Sometimes, students need to be assessed in his or her primary language to help decide on the most accurate placement, ranging from part-time placement in the ELL program to full-time placement in a mainstream classroom, may be made based on a student’s performance on this assessment.
**Program of services:** An educationally appropriate instructional plan is developed for each student based on his/her individual language proficiencies, cognitive levels and cultural needs. Teaching and modeling academic goals and different strategies to strengthen language and literacy skills. Teachers focus on providing comprehensible input in order to engage in meaningful context. ELLs should have access to all school resources, support services, enrichment programs, school-based activities and extracurricular programs.

**Parental and family involvement:** Offering an open door and welcoming school climate and provide strategies to support parents in making well-informed decisions about their child’s academic progress and language proficiency. Communication between staff and parents is central to this goal, knowing that an interpreter and/or documents in other languages may be needed. Trying to integrate the students’ first language, literacy and culture to help students make connections between their prior and new knowledge.

**Staffing, training and resources:** The district offers research based training to administrators and teachers. Teachers are properly prepared and willing to get to know and learn about their ELLs to help create a beneficial learning environment. Teachers focus on delivering comprehensible input, integrating content to the language instruction, incorporating L1 and ELL culture, understanding the academic and background of the ELLs (Flynn & Hill, 2005).

**Assessment of progress and transition from ELL service:** Placement assessment should be authentic, valid and it should take into account L1 and L2 development and
cognitive development. Throughout the academic year formative assessment helps refine and tailor teaching strategies for each ELLs needs. A yearly standardized language proficiency test in four language areas, WIDA to see the language proficiency growth of the students.

The topics addressed in this guide confirms that complying with state and federal requirements, the challenge and the success of the meeting the needs of the varied ELLs population requires collaborative effort by administrators, teachers, families, community and the learners. Referring to the district in the study the incognita remains prevalent of the instructional concerns that need to be considered in order to provide equitable appropriate curriculum to ELLs in a rural, remote and Low-LEP population district. What are the gaps and weaknesses in this particular district’s situation that have to change or improve in order to successfully offer students a quality inclusive program that would prepare ELLs to function independently and successfully in today’s society?
Chapter 3: Methods of Research

Research Goal

My goal is that the insights gained from this qualitative case study would directly influence policy, practice, instructional concerns and future research and application of findings in this rural district with a low ELL population as well as other districts in a similar geographical, economical and socio-cultural situation.

Research Participants

I was a participant in this research were myself as well as selected administration, staff and parents of ELLs and parents of former ELLs. As the only ESL teacher in the district, I am aware of the academic, economic and social challenges that the district faces to provide fair access to inclusive and up to date education. As the researcher –participant I am intuitive, sensitive to identify ethical issues, I am committed to act in a responsible manner regarding issues that I may encounter and a the responsibility to practice scientific investigation with integrity.

I personally spoke with three administrators, superintendent, high school principal and elementary principal, explaining the case study and requesting their participation, all three listened and said they were willing to participate. I followed the conversation sending each administrator an email with a letter of privacy (Appendix E), the questionnaire for administrators (Appendix F) and asking them to send me an email letting me know of a good time to meet for an interview. The superintendent within a week emailed me his answers and came to my classroom at the end of the school day to re-read his answers and elaborate a little. The high school principal sent me his answers on an email also about a week after I sent the email with the
questions but we never had an interview in person since he was gone for medical leave for a few months. The elementary principal never replied to my email or phone calls. I decided it was best not to persist in getting feedback from her.

Although administrators in school districts are seldom involved in knowing and understanding what is involved in the teaching and learning of ELLs, they play a critical part in communicating the school’s vision and the strategies of execution of this vision to teachers, staff and ELL families. School administrators play a pivotal part in maintaining a high-quality ESL program. The principal especially has the responsibility of being both a partaker and collaborator in directing an ESL program that pursues students’ success and teachers’ performance (Berube, 2000).

The teachers I invited to participate are classroom teachers, content teachers and one paraprofessional that have worked or are currently working with ELLs in the elementary school or in the high school. I also emailed them the letter of privacy (Appendix E) and the questionnaire for teachers (Appendix G). In order to make sure they all received the letter and questionnaire I left a copy in their inbox. Out of ten invited, six participated. Of the six staff members, three are elementary school teachers, two are high school teachers and one is a paraprofessional. The participating elementary and high school teachers have been in the district from five years to over twenty-five years and the paraprofessional has worked in the high school library for about ten years. Before our first ELLs thirteen years ago, the participant teachers didn’t have any previous experience instructing ELLs or communicating with parents with limited English proficiency.
I invited nine families to participate; I made a phone call reconnecting and approaching the families in a friendly way. I emailed and personally dropped off a copy of the letter of privacy (Appendix E) and the questionnaire for parents (Appendix H) to each one of the nice families I invited to participate. It was surprising to me that knowing how busy they are they agreed to meet with me. It was also surprising that when I said we could meet as a group with other ELL parents/families they were hesitant and not very enthusiastic about the idea of meeting up and sharing in front of others even though some families share the same language. It’s unsure if it was a matter of time and busy schedules but only mothers from the same cultural background agreed to meet as a group at different times and places. One meeting was with two Honduran mothers with six ESL children ranging from 4 to 9 years old. These two families unfortunately left the area during the first quarter of the academic year due to work. Another meeting was with three Colombian mothers with four ESL students ranging from 7 to 12 years old and two former ESL students ages 13 and 15 years old. The last meeting was with two Vietnamese mothers, after hours of the family business of one of them. These two mothers have children five former ESL students ranging from 14 to 18 years old, with the two oldest being high school graduates. The last two families asked to participate are related, Ukrainian/Russian, one family decline to participate over the phone due to family responsibilities and lack of time. The other family did not respond to the request of participation. It is disappointing that this case study will not have the direct feedback from these two families. One family has three ESL students ages 7 to 11 years old and seven former ESL students ages 13 to 19 years old, with the two oldest being high school graduates. The other Ukrainian/Russian family has two students who were served during their first year in the district with the reference that they were enrolled
by their grandmother who could hardly speak English. The students didn’t receive ESL services the following years because their mother refuses to fill out the home language form, which is a requirement for service.

**Research Site**

The case focus is a small rural school district with a low ELL population located in the north central region of the United States. The district serves a small town of about 6,171 people; it’s located over 100 miles from a larger city in the state. The district’s high school and elementary schools are located in two different buildings. In the last ten years has down sized to two buildings from five buildings that used to hold: alternative school, K-2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, now only two buildings house Pre-K – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. The decrease in students’ population has a direct relation to the decrease in the economy of the area.

The elementary school has consistently served ELLs from K- 6<sup>th</sup> grade, where the highest number of ELLs in the district’s concentrate. The elementary school building housing grades PreK-5<sup>th</sup> receives Title I service. In the high school building 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who didn’t pass either the Math or the English MCA test receive English and Math remedial classes, without a grade, during the school day.

The ELL population in this district is Ukrainian for the most part, followed by Spanish-speaking students. There are also other students speakers of other languages but in lesser numbers. The district’s ELL students come from families with one or both parents have limited English skills. The Ukrainian and Spanish speaking were the first language minority and had no prior formal schooling at the time of enrollment into kindergarten.
The Ukrainian families are mostly second or third generation Ukrainian Americans, with very strong traditions and customs and frown on assimilation or speaking English at home. On the other hand, other language minority families come from households where both their native language and English are spoken and assimilation is very intentional and desirable. The ELLs from families open to integrate to the English-speaking community have improved in their English social and academic skills in a fairly short time, in comparison with their Ukrainian peers. The language and academic gap is especially noticeable returning to school after the summer, when Ukrainian families had very little interaction with English speaking people.

In the middle school and high school enrolled ELLs are mainstreamed into content classes, receiving support as needed during the remedial English and Math hours hoping scheduling works out, considering there is only one ELL teacher with only half academic hour of the day assigned to ESL. This group of ELLs has represented a new challenge for teachers of content areas who are not used to teaching students who have emerging, entering or developing English social and academic skills.

**Research Design**

Considering the background information of rural districts with very low ELL population this study attempts to answer: What are the gaps and weaknesses in this particular district’s situation that have to change or improve in order to successfully offer students a quality inclusive program that would prepare ELLs to function independently and successfully in today’s society?

For the purpose of the case study a research strategy, an evaluation mode and a reporting mode. A case typically refers to a person, either a learner or a teacher, or an entity, such as a school, a university, a classroom, or a program (Nunan, 1992). A case may be simple or
complex; it may feature single cases or multiple cases. Acknowledging multiple realities in qualitative case studies, as is now commonly done, involves discerning the various perspectives of the researcher, the case/participant, and others, which may or may not converge (Yin, 2003). The goal of case study research is to understand the complexity of a case in the most complete way possible, collecting data from multiple sources, qualitative or quantitative data. A qualitative method is the design for this case study. Since the focus is one particular school district, this is considered an intrinsic case study designed to gain thorough interpretation of a situation and meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998). It also can be considered instrumental since there are other rural districts with an ELL population of less than 1% that are or may be struggling in the same areas. The perceptions can directly influence policy, practice and future research (Stake, 1994). This case study is of a small-scale investigation that can provide specific and comprehensive information about the ELLs in the particular district in study.

The setting is a natural environment for all participants. In order to attempt to answer the question for this qualitative research includes:

**Participant Observation:** The qualitative researcher is also a participant but not the only participant. The researcher-participant is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher-participant needs to be intuitive in order to find patterns and differences from observations. The knowledge and descriptions of aspects of the subjects’ reality and environment are expressed in normal language. The qualitative researcher has a special interest in learning, seeing and observing the participants’ perspective of the situation, in order to empathize; therefore the researcher needs to be physically present as an observer in the fieldwork.
**Interviewing:** The researcher learned about the people that are part of the case study by speaking with these people through informal, semi-structured or structured interviews. The interviewer seeks to interpret meaning of what is said and how is said. The topic is part of everyday life experiences for those interviewed.

Collection of Artifacts and Texts: Researchers may also learn from written protocols, chart, flow sheets, educational handouts and other materials used by the participants. (Cohen & Manion, 1994)

In my case study, as the researcher-participant, I requested the participation of the administrators, teachers, parents of ELLs and former ELLs. It is important to keep in mind that the process of the may prompt to changes as the case study brings forth new insights and awareness of topics. In order to carry out an effective qualitative interviewing process the interviewer needs to be prepared and competent requires advance preparation and interviewer competence (Kvale, 1996).

**Research Data**

**Thematizing:** The purpose of the study was to investigate a rural district with a low ELL population. The study was geared to investigate how aware is the district of the ELL students as part of the student body, their academic, language, social and cultural needs and how is the district responding to these needs. The data collected in the study would provide insight on the quality and inclusiveness of the curriculum.

I sent invitations to participate to the superintendent, the districts principals and classroom teachers who were currently or previously working with the ELLs in the district, parents of ELLs and exited ELLs. I started to collect data and interviewing participants in the autumn semester
and I continued into the spring semester, I especially waited to interview teachers until the second part of the school year to allow more real-life classroom experiences.

**Designing**: Developing a plan for the design of the investigation included choosing possible participants, staff that currently works with ELLs or that did at some point in the last two years and families of ELLs that I thought would be willing to participate, the resources needed, tentative times and dates, and of course the ethical aspect of the study. After making a list of the possible participants I personally spoke with the superintendent explaining the study and requesting permission to contact staff to elicit participation. I personally contacted the principals, classroom teachers and families. During my initial contact I assured possible participants that their names, the name of the district or the name of the city would be kept confidential. I also emphasized that they didn’t need to feel obliged to participate or to answer all questions asked but only what they felt comfortable answering. Out of the thirteen staff participants invited, nobody officially declined, four didn’t respond, one was willing to participate but due to scheduling conflict we never were able to connect and another participant that was willing to participate ended up on long term leave. The staff participation included the district superintendent, one principal, five teachers and one paraprofessional. All participants invited were sent a letter of invitation, a privacy pledge and the questions through email and in their inbox. The interviews were held in their classrooms or private office before or after school but also some sent their reflections and answers through email.

Out of the nine families invited to participate seven agreed to participate and one didn’t respond and one declined over the phone, from the seven participating families two are families of exited ELL students. I attempted to establish a focus group of discussion but neither was
interested on that approach due to scheduling and not being familiar or comfortable with other ELL families from different backgrounds. I didn’t expect the large group option to be turned down but hindsight I can clearly see now that there is a certain dissent among the minority families, as if they don’t want to be clustered and considered one group.

**Interviewing:** The plan was to have semi-structured interviews, since they allow informants freedom to express their views in their own terms. Having an interview guide helped stay organized, on task and follow a clear set of instructions for interviewers in order to collect reliable, comparable qualitative data. The semi-structured interviews were a good fit to interview staff. Before interviewing the families I emailed and/or delivered the questionnaire myself. When we met although I had an interview guide, it was essential to interact, develop social rapport and participate in dialogue in order to set up a relaxed and friendly mood where participants would feel understood, appreciated and validated for sharing their culture and experience; which could be considered un-structured interviews. In interviewing families of ELLs I needed to interpret from English to Spanish or from Spanish to English.

Researchers of effective schools believe there is a body of knowledge developed from research that gives educators direction in developing schools that are more effective for all students. It was found that effective schools had a set of characteristics known as the Correlates of the Effective Schools Movement by Edmonds. The successful school characteristics are:

- Strong instructional leadership;
- An orderly and positive climate that supports learning;
- A carefully developed instructional focus;
- High expectation of achievement for all students to learn and
• Regular measurement of student learning. (Edmonds, 1979)

These five characteristics are congruent with the Title III requirements and with the national standards developed by TESOL to assist schools evaluate the degree of help that students are receiving to meet their needs. These standards help guide the instruction of students with limited English proficiency as well as how to educate language minority students, in other words to assess the effectiveness of the ESL programs.

• Access to a positive learning environment: the school is safe and free of prejudice; a school environment where administrative and instructional policies and practices create a climate of high expectations as well as linguistically and culturally appropriate learning experiences; a school where teachers, administrators and staff are prepared to adapt and differentiate instruction and service to meet the needs of ELLs, families are welcomed as partners in the education of students, keeping them informed and participant of decisions that will eventually affect students.

• Access to appropriate research-based curriculum: there are instructional programs to support the development of the second language so that students can participate in a variety of instructional services offered to all students; the curriculum promotes sharing, valuing and development of L1, L2 and cultures among all students; the curriculum promotes the higher order thinking skills to learn content across the curriculum; there is access for students of minority languages so instructional programs and related services that identify, conduct and support programs for special populations.
• Access to full delivery of services: teaching strategies and instructional practices are developmentally appropriate, in concurrence to language proficiencies and cognitive levels, and culturally supportive and relevant; students have opportunities to build up their L1 to promote academic and social development; non-classroom services and support services are offered to language minority students; there is equal access to technology for language minority students; the institutional policies and measures of the school are linguistically and culturally sensitive; there are regular, relevant opportunities for student to share and value one another’s language and culture.

• Access to equitable assessment: there is access to standardized, commonly based, impartial and relevant methods of assessing language and academic achievement in content areas that are fitting to students’ developmental level, age, and level of oral and written language proficiency in both first and second languages; there is similar access to across the board methods of assessing special needs; the results of all such testing are explained to the community from which the student comes in the language that the community uses. (TESOL, 1997; TESOL, 2002)

The Title III requirements and guidelines, the TESOL standards and the characteristics of a successful school are reflected into four strands of focus that help organize the questions. The questionnaires are available in the Appendix section. The questions for administrators (see Appendix F), teachers and paraprofessionals (see Appendix G) and families (see Appendix H) are not exactly the same but they are grouped by the following topics:

• Positive Learning Environment: Professional leadership, Demographics and School climate
There is a significant overlap in the TESOL standards and the Resource Guide supporting the MN Department of Education (MDE’s) English Learner (EL) Program Review and Tittle III Monitoring Protocol from 2012 – 2013, in its Self-Assessment Report checklist of evidence and documentation for seven critical elements, (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2012).

- Critical Element 1: Identification, Placement and Program Exit overlapping mostly with TESOL Equitable Access and Positive Learning Environment
- Critical Element 2: Appropriate Programs overlapping mostly with TESOL Full Delivery of Service
- Critical Element 3: Appropriate Staff and Professional Development overlapping mostly with TESOL Full Delivery of Service but not obviously, Professional Development for teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff is implied in differentiating instruction and scaffolding strategies to help ESL students acquire language and content.
- Critical Element 4: Parent Involvement overlapping slightly with TESOL Positive Learning Environment when it refers to communicating to parents about the ESL program
- Critical Element 5: Accountability Requirements overlapping mostly with TESOL Equitable Assessment and Full Delivery
- Critical Element 6: Fiscal Requirements overlapping mostly with TESOL Full Delivery of Service

- Critical Element 7: Nonpublic School Participation in Language Instruction Education Program doesn’t overlap since the schools in the case study are public. (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 2013)

In an effort to have as much feedback as possible from interviewed participants I added one more standard combining the requirements from the MDE EL Protocol critical element 3: Appropriate Staff and Professional Development and the critical element 6: Fiscal Requirement. The purpose of the new combined standard that I will call Professional Development is to get an idea of the level of recognition, responsibility and respect that administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and parents have in regards to the ESL program in the district.

Although Parental involvement is part of the TESOL’s standard of Positive Learning Environment I wanted to get feedback form that particular area since the MDE EL Protocol considers it a critical element to actively involve parents and community in the education of their children.

The questions for administrators had a special emphasis on their role as school leaders, giving direction and complying with the policies and services responsibly. When emailing the questions to teachers and paraprofessionals, I exhorted them to recall and recall on their past experiences working with ELLs and their families. After gathering all the answered questionnaires from teachers and paraprofessionals interviewed I stopped by their classrooms and personally thanked each one for giving their time and for their support and participation.
When delivering questionnaires to ELLs and parents of former ELLs, some through email and some delivered in person to their home, I encouraged them to ponder on the pros and cons of their sons and/or daughters’ experiences and their own as parents of ELLs. In meeting with the interviewed parents, I had a chance to visit and thank them for their participation in person. The next step was transcribing.

**Transcribing:** I jot down as much as I could during interviews. The participants acted uncomfortable and uneasy when I mentioned I would be recording the audio of the interview. In transcribing some families’ interviews, I needed to interpret from Spanish to English. Some participants sent me an email with their answers. I tried to meet up with them before or after school to see if there was anything else to add. In the transcripts, I included the location, month of conversation, questions and responses. I didn’t include names in the transcript. I assigned each a participant a letter. I gave a biographical description of all participants and professional description of the participants of those that applied. I included my impressions and assumptions that I thought affected the data collected. I analyzed my notes within 24 hours after it was conducted; I added my thoughts and perceptions along with events I recalled from other years as an ELL teacher and parent. All the transcribed answered questionnaires and biographical information of the participants are in (Appendix I).

**Analyzing:** After reading my notes and reflecting on them, coding and condensing. I also compared and analyzed patterns, similarities and differences among participants.

**Verifying:** I left two copies of the transcriptions of the interview and asked each participant to confirm that they agreed with what I had transcribed. The participants initialed one copy and returned it to me. I left the other copy to them.
Reporting: The methods applied, the investigations and the findings are communicated in this case study.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction to Results

In this section it is important to recall the research question “What are the gaps and weaknesses in this particular district’s situation that have to change or improve in order to successfully offer students a quality inclusive program that would prepare ELLs to function independently and successfully in today’s society?”

First, I will recapitulate the responses to the questionnaires and interviews considering the six standards used in the questionnaires. The four TESOL standards and two critical elements from the MDE English Learner Program Protocol. The six new standards that in one way or another complement to provide feedback to better answer the research question:

1. Positive Learning Environment,
2. Appropriate Curriculum,
3. Full Delivery Service,
4. Equitable Assessment,
5. Parental Involvement, and
6. Professional Development.

The questions for each standard will vary some from participant to participant depending on their relation to ELLs:

- administrators mostly responsible for the district’s ESL program,
- classroom/subject teachers of ELLs or former ELLs, and
- parents of ELLs and former ELLs.
Positive-learning environment.

A positive learning environment is fundamental for helping students succeed in school. When students feel valued, they are more likely to be motivated to learn. A welcoming environment is especially important for ELLs who most likely come from a culture with traditions and family values that differ from mainstream culture. In school, ELLs are adjusting to a new set of rules, routines, social and academic expectations in school on daily basis. ELLs would benefit from a friendly environment where they can feel safe and trust stepping out of what to them is their comfort zone.

Administrators, teachers and parents were asked questions focused on the district’s schools providing a welcoming and safe learning environment for ELLs and their families. Administrators and teachers agreed in their answers and opinions that the schools in our district provide a safe and welcoming learning environment. The superintendent emphasized that positive behavior is promoted across the board. We really do not have any special attention being placed on ELL students. We promote positive behavior for all students. The high school principal mentioned the district’s implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) program. Our school has been working on PBIS for the last two years and we have seen an improvement in students’ attitudes and sense of belonging to the FHS culture. Other teachers, agreed with this perspective: Since the 6th grade became part of the high school we take part on the PBIS program here in the high school, BRONCO POWER: P- pride O- optimism W-welcoming E- engaged R- respect are reinforced daily as part of creating a positive behavior climate in the school.
Most parents answered that the teachers are very nice and welcoming but some of the students are not. Still their children are happy going to school and making friends, in spite of those who are unpleasant… *there are some children in the bus that call them “Mexicans” in a mean way and have mean comments… You know, I’ve heard from my older children, that students make comments about “Trump and Mexicans”… I’ve told H and Y, they’re just ignorant, don’t pay attention, we’re not even Mexican, we’re Colombian but my children know those other students are just instigators, trying to start trouble.*

Answers to the question of communication between the school, teachers and the parents of ELLs show that the district has plenty of ways to communicate to students’ families but there is not one particular means of communication that is unanimously preferred by staff and parents. A 6th grade Language and Literacy teacher said, *We use SchoolWay, Skyward, Google mail are what our district encourages us to use but I really don’t know how many parents or 6th grade students are familiar with these platforms. I also use emails and notes home when we have important activities coming up, especially if we need volunteer parents. For discipline issues I usually call the parents.* Most teachers mentioned that they rely on phone calls but due to the language barrier this channel is not used with some ELL families. *When a phone call has been necessary communication has at times become impossible.*

Elementary and middle school grades teachers added that they send notes home. Some teachers look for the Spanish version of the home-connection links that come with the Math and Language curriculum in the elementary. *I try to communicate with our Spanish speaking families sending “home-link” and “home-connection” newsletters that come with out Math and Language Curriculum. Unfortunately, I don’t have printable newsletters in other languages for*
other ESL families; in those cases, I can only trust that students will be the channels of communication with parents. One 1st grade teacher explained she uses online translator when she needs to deliver an important message home. I have used “Google translate” to send notes home but I have never received a response. In this particular case, although the teacher has good intentions and attempts to communicate but it is very possible that her message is not clearly understood by the ELL parents since Google translate is not a reliable source or interpretation.

Most teachers shared that they most likely meet the parents and families of ELLs before the school year starts but that most likely they don’t see those parents again throughout the year and that very few ELL parents are involved in school activities or attend parent-teacher conferences. I have seen parents of ELLs at the “Meet the Teacher Night” when students bring their school supplies or come to get a school supply list but not for conferences or special events. Actually I have seen very few ELL parents in the school in general or even in community events. Teachers commented that they need help communicating with ELLs parents…the ESL teacher and I collaborate as much as we can to help ELLs and their families, and so I usually rely on her to help me contact the parents when there is a language barrier.

In the standard of positive and welcoming learning environment, teachers and administrators don’t realize that even though there is PBIS in school and that there are several platforms of communication to deliver messages to parents, communication in not one-sided. ELL parents haven’t received information in their L1 about PBIS, school events, or other information. The district has an open door policy, welcoming parents to talk about their children’s education but this door is not available for parents who speak a language other than English.
A good number of the participating teachers agreed that the barrier they mostly run into wasn’t the language but rather cultural when communicating with some ELL parents in the district. A teacher shared, *The cultural part is a very controversial topic, I don’t think administrators or teachers would go there, a suggestion could get misinterpreted as “politically incorrect” or discriminatory.*

Some teachers shared some of their experiences of situations when they felt they did not know how to handle the situation or whether they should have some kind of reaction or not. *... a few years back I had a very unpleasant meeting with the parents of two of my ELL students over the daily pledge of allegiance, to the parents I was making their children pray to a flag, an idol. I tried to convince the parents that out of respect to the nation I ask that my students stand up like the rest, that their children could remain in silence. The parents left the meeting offended. I was frustrated and upset myself knowing that the parents felt I offended their beliefs and also because I believe teaching the students appropriate etiquette and displaying respect is part of learning to be a good citizen... from that day on, the two siblings had to step out in the hallway during the pledge of allegiance as suggested by the elementary principal at the time... he recommended (me), it was best to stay away from controversies and to avoid conflict.*

This particular situation reminded me of my personal experience with this particular family. I received a call from the mother asking me if in fact I was expecting or not because at their home they don’t talk about “*babies in the tummy and to just tell them [her children] that I was getting fatter everyday*”. I let the mother know that I would direct her children’s curiosity and questions to be answered at home. The mother also informed me that they don’t talk about fairy tales at home either and that she was very disappointed that I had read to her children about
the tooth fairy when one of them lost a tooth. She manifested that the sticker and little gift were fine but not the fictional characters, to what I responded with an apology. After more thought I realized I could have handled the situation better if I had more information about the family’s beliefs and expectations. I approached the students’ classroom teacher and asked if she had any information for me. She told me that the students told her that they are not allowed to sit on the floor or the rug. They also told her that their mom wants her to warm their lunch milk. The teacher didn’t make a comment back to the children. The classroom teacher received a phone call from the mother with the same request days later and the teacher responded that she’s on her lunch break when the students are at lunch and recommended the mother to speak to the principal. I approached the elementary principal at the time and asked if he knew the family’s expectations and if we could hold a meeting with the family to understand what they consider appropriate and inappropriate. The principal, in this case, also wanted to silence the situation, indicating that shedding light to this matter could lead the family to believe that they could decide how the school runs.

The formal and informal ways schools control who can speak, what can and cannot be spoken, and whose discourse must be controlled (Cummins, 1986).

In my personal opinion, and looking hindsight at the years passed, I think a meeting early on with these parents would have been beneficial for teachers, students and parents. The parents and teachers could have shared their thoughts and the principal could have set boundaries and help find an acceptable option for all. Instead, we had teachers “called on” their poor choices by parents or administrators, when a main piece of information is missing due to silence.
Similarly to the experiences shared above, other teachers brought up circumstances when culture differences created an awkward situation for them. When they didn’t feel they could adequately and professionally cooperate and assist ELL parents without fear of being insensitive or disrespectful to what seems normal to some ELL families. These feelings of insecurity by the teachers need to be addressed, providing them tools of communication through professional development. Definitely, there is a fear of making the classroom and the district an “impolite” or “not nice” environment; what is worse, is the silencing approach about the cultural differences of the language minorities. The idea of sweeping them under the rug is not making the conflicts and misunderstandings go away.

On the area of the schools in the district providing a positive and welcoming learning environment, parents’ perceptions varied. Most commented that teachers and staff were nice and welcoming when they enrolled their children in school. A parent new to the district commented, …one of the secretaries actually walked us to hallway where we’d find the children’s teachers. Most parents manifested that their children feel welcomed and like going to school. A few parents agreed that the school’s environment is welcoming but that there is lack of information when a new family comes into the district. I wish that they would go out of their way to welcome those families that are new to the community and provide some sort of guidance. When a parent goes to enroll a child in school, it’s like they assume that you know how everything works. When I enrolled X, I didn’t even know Kindergarten was an everyday program. It is a fact that the district needs to pay attention to ELL parents just as much as the ELLs if not more. In this particular situation ELL parents’ and district’s expectations are not in accordance due to lack of communication therefore not providing a welcoming environment. ELL parents need to be
informed in their L1 about school considering that they may have no experience with the U.S. education system. The details that may seem obvious to some people are not obvious to some ELL families: in school breakfast and lunch, school hours, holidays and their celebrations in school, subjects taught, supplies provided by the school, in-school support programs available, extra-curricular programs available, etc.

Parents of ELLs that understand and can communicate in English find that the district’s automated phone calls and emails to announce events, to alert of a truancy, to alert of low academic progress, missing assignments, and messages from teachers, are very useful and keep them informed but too many phone messages can get confusing... I rather read a message than listen to it... because it’s not fast and I can Google translate what I don’t understand... Parents that don’t understand English and that are illiterate in their first language as well, rely on their own children for interpreting notes. Sometimes the children say they have a party or something. Sometimes they tell us after it happened at school. Parents hear about homework, grades and special events from their children and can only trust that the message delivered is mostly accurate. In Honduras we use numbers for grading, not letters. I don’t understand how they score with letters. This last small group of parents struggle to convey messages to teachers and secretarial staff; quite often when these parents call the school, secretarial staff transfers them to the ESL teacher (me). I called the school a few times and when they don’t understand me, speaking Spanish or trying to speak English, they transfer me to the ESL teacher but she’s not always available. Once again, it becomes evident that the district needs to provide some sort of a multilingual telephone line for ELL parents to be able to communicate to the schools when
they need to. As seen before, teachers may assume that parents’ lack of communication is lack of interest when it may just be that the parents don’t know how to establish dialogue.

After examining this data I can conclude that the district does not meet this standard.

**Appropriate curriculum.**

ELLs must simultaneously acquire English language proficiency (ELP) and achieve academically across content areas. This standard examines the curriculum that accommodates the academic and language needs of the ELLs. Administrators, the superintendent and the high school principal, manifested that they have very little to no participation in ensuring that the core curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of ELLs. They also explained that they understand that the delivery of content depends on the level of language proficiency. The high school principal brought up a situation where, not only language affected the comprehension of content. *I remember of an ESL student, originally from Kenya, for whom the ESL teacher requested a “no count” on one of her first science project assignments. As part of the project students needed to collect a certain list of bugs and leaves. When the ESL teacher asked the student about the outstanding missing assignment in science, the student became quite upset and explained that she felt “dumb” for not knowing or expecting the trees to go completely bare. She said she was too embarrassed to talk to the science teacher about why she never turned in her project. This was quite a revelation to me, I never before considered that weather changes would be unexpected to a 7th grader. The situation made me reflect on the many new challenges ESL students face daily, aside from the language.*

When elementary teachers participated giving their particular thoughts and opinion about the current curriculum and across the content areas and best practices for ELLs needs, the
elementary teachers mentioned the benefits of the newly adopted Language curriculum, and how it includes areas of practice that the previous curriculum didn’t have, like grammar and phonics but in particular the leveled readers and the ESL support materials. The teachers felt that they need time to explore all the additional materials. *This school year we started with Journey’s, it has supplemental materials, which is great but I haven’t been able to explore everything or use everything, I need more time!* The ESL teacher let me know about the online resources and suggested my ESL kindergarteners use some of these resources as part of their centers options. *It has bilingual audio-visual flashcards and the leveled readers with audio. The students were excited to work on the ipads, as many of them don’t even have a computer at home.*

In fact, the elementary language and math curriculums have an ELL section with tips in the teacher’s manuals. The language curriculum has a set of tiered readings per unit. In these weekly readers, there is a reader for ELLs that is very similar to the struggling reader. The new Language curriculum “Journeys” has ELL extra support materials developed for the pullout ELL instruction that goes with the Journeys Language Curriculum. After receiving sample materials from HMH, I requested a meeting with the elementary principal (who is not an interviewed participant in the study) to discuss the possibility of getting these materials. The meeting never happened, on passing the principal in the hallway one day, I briefly explained my reasons for requesting a meeting, to what the principal answered “the few ELL students we have speak English already, I don’t think we need that, we don’t need to meet”. After that encounter, that shows very little to no recognition, responsibility or respect toward ELLs and their needs, I continued with my routine as the ESL teacher. I borrow everyday some of these materials from the classroom teachers, if available, for my ESL lessons and then return them. The classroom
teachers and I collaborate briefly, they are supportive and receptive of my feedback. I also create my own extra support materials around the weekly units done in class in each grade focusing in the target vocabulary.

In the middle school grades, the teachers lack the materials necessary to help students but they are highly motivated teachers and continue to incorporate cross-curricular literacy lessons. As a grade level, we decided to continue with RTI and Daily 5 for the Literacy piece. We also have a 6th grade cross curriculum year – round project called the MN booklet that includes history and literature related to MN American Indians, geography, poetry, ancestry, elder interview, etc. This particular project is hard for most students but it is specially challenging for ELLs for many reasons: home academic support, knowledge of MN history, Internet resources, Google docs access. At the 6th grade level my main focus is to guide and provide supplemental resources to ELLs as they go through their MN Booklet curriculum.

The elementary teachers didn’t have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum. The middle school teachers agreed that the level of demand and concentration in the higher grades was greater and students needed even more time and dedication to be successful academically... as the content becomes more demanding I can see that those with academic support at home are growing but the gap is more noticeable with those who don’t...as the content requires more background information, analysis and integration of knowledge and ideas students will need to spend more time reading and looking for comprehensible resources than the average student.

Parents of ELLs on the topic of appropriate curriculum said that as parents they are expected to guide, support, encourage, help and love their children. They said that their children
were expected to be responsible, respectful, obedient and hardworking students in school. Their expectations from teachers are to teach, help learn, guide, respect students and allow them the opportunity to grow. *This is a country of opportunities, there are nice schools, they give the kids lunch, and they give the children the textbooks they need... It has to be a 100% better than in Honduras. In Honduras you are fortunate if you get to 6\textsuperscript{th} grade and only those that can afford it get to finish high school.*

The parents of ELLs and former ELLs answered that they don’t know what the ESL service or program really involves but they expected the ESL teacher to teach English, to help with assignments that the ELLs didn’t understand in class. *I know math has been a struggle for K, even in the high school.* Very few parents said that they are familiar with their children’s schoolwork and that they actually help their children with homework. *This is my second year, last year with JJ and this year with CC working on that MN booklet. I have a better idea of what it is about this year and they are doing some more work at school. The ESL teacher helps too but the whole project is quite overwhelming, I don’t know how kids with less support do it!* Those that are not actively helping with schoolwork at home shared their reasons: lack of time, knowledge of content, difficulty with the language and to allow their children to face their own challenges.

The parents had no apparent concerns regarding their children’s learning, language and subject content even though they have never seen the ESL Program plan or received any kind of information about the program. *I don’t know what the curriculum was like but I know the ESL teacher was very helpful for both my girls, with their reading and math, it gave them confidence... The kids felt comfortable and safe there with the ESL teacher. They knew they*
could ask questions, ask for help and talk about their culture and tradition without fear of being judged… The teacher got to know them well and the kids trusted her. The parents expressed their content with the ESL service provided and some who were newcomers in the high school themselves years ago, wished they could have received the service back then. That service wasn’t offered when I went to school here and I think it would have helped me so much. My siblings and I struggled a lot, with school and also to fit in. I’m the oldest, my parents didn’t speak English and they still are very strict in their beliefs and traditions. It was hard to make friends, I didn’t have a social life. I wasn’t the adult in my family but I felt responsible for my siblings at school, for myself, for my parents business, interpreting and helping them understand what they just get…it was too much.

In the area of appropriate curriculum, it is important to mention the lack of understanding of administration and some teachers in regards of language proficiency, which stunt the possibility of meeting this standard. The fact that ELLs employ Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) when they are in the playground, lunchroom, the bus, and other social situations doesn’t mean that ELLs have reached the necessary language skills to perform academically to the cognitive demands for their age group. The Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) includes listening, speaking, reading and writing age appropriate content material. This level of language learning is essential for students to succeed in school. According to Hakuta, with the appropriate support, it takes students from four to seven years to develop academic English proficiency (Hakuta, 2000).

As the ELLs get older, the academic demands for their grade level are greater. Academic language acquisition is not just understanding of content area vocabulary but also skills such as
comparing, synthesizing, classifying, evaluating and inferring read information from a textbook or presented by a teacher.

**Full-delivery service.**

In this standard, the focus is to provide the opportunity of full delivery services in the school, supporting the ELLs academically, culturally and promoting social growth. Administrators and teachers agreed that the ELLs, their families and school staff including teachers were not very aware of the district’s language program. *I don’t know that there is an English Learner Program description in place in the district. I assume we are following protocols.*

Teachers said that the little information they knew came from the ESL teacher. *I am aware that there is ESL service provided to the students that speak another language at home.* *The ESL teacher sends an email at the beginning of the year to those of us that have ELLs in our roster.* Parents said that they didn’t know much about the program. Some didn’t find out their children were being served for quite a while. *I never received a notice from the school or anything about my kids being in ESL…of course this was maybe 10 yrs. ago, things may have changed since.* Other parents said that the ESL teacher personally spoke to them about the benefits of the program. *The ESL teacher called me at home and talked to me about the kids working with her on their English and how I needed to fill out some forms.*

When asked about programs or services available to help ELLs and their families with their language and cultural needs, administrators answered that they provided translation services as needed. *We’re very fortunate to have an ELL teacher that is fluent in more than one language. She’s very sensitive to people and their cultures. We have used her as needed.* Teachers and
parents are aware of the absence of language support like translation services in the school and there was a consensus about the fact that there is a need for it. *I know that our ESL teacher has interpreted for us here at school, but I don’t know of any services of that sort.* Some parents shared that the ESL teacher put them in contact with community services. Neither teachers nor parents had suggestions on how the district could help make communication better when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents and ELLs. A teacher commented that requesting the help from community members would be ideal if it didn’t conflict with any confidentiality.

Teachers and parents said that there aren’t any heritage community groups or clubs in the area where ELLs and their families could share and value languages and cultures. *We are not a heritage club but we became family.* A few parents expressed that there is a need of belonging, to find others that share the culture and the language. The mother of four former ELLs shared…*New people in town from China, Thailand, Philippine and Vietnam stop by the family business and introduce themselves, many have become good friends, and some asked for jobs and are still working with us. It’s almost as if coming the family business was an embassy a safe place [for them].* In the same way that children need a sense of belonging, a place and people that accept them and embrace them, adults also need the support and appreciation of a community where they don’t need to justify the diversity of their culture and traditions, that social piece is an integral part of people of all ages and cultures.

When asked about the special instructional programs available to ELLs that support the second language development necessary to participate in the mainstream classroom, the administrators informed that there are programs in place. *Qualifying students are granted ELL*
service in addition to other services that they would qualify for such as Sped, Title I, Math/Reading course, and additional help before and after school with teachers. Some teachers became aware of the possibility of ELLs receiving other existing services and they welcome any help available for their students. Some parents know that their ELLs can also receive other services like Title I because their own children were being pulled out of the classroom to receive these services. This year during an in-service I learned that my ESL students can also receive Title I services, Special Ed. can have IEPs, 504s like any other student, if they qualify. I'll take all the help I can get for my students.

In the area of access to full delivery, the district also falls short to meet the standard. It is only in kindergarten and partially in 1st and 2nd grade, depending who the classroom teacher to my ESL students are, that we work together and collaborate; assessing, sharing ideas teaching strategies and instructional practices that are developmentally appropriate and attuned to the ELLs language proficiency in order to promote their cognitive and social growth. The lack of an ELL district plan leaves teachers and other staff ignorant of the valuable help they can get to better serve their students, several teachers didn't know that ELLs can receive Title I services and ESL services if the ELLs are in need of extra support. Not having an ESL district plan also shows that the district is not linguistically and culturally sensitive to ELLs and their families.

The opportunities for the ELLs or their parents to share their language and culture are very limited, few are the teachers that look forward to having classroom guests or volunteers that may bring forth questions about race or culture, making the environment uncomfortable for the teacher to handle.
Equitable access.

Equitable access refers to the access to various methods of assessment for language and academic achievement appropriate for the ELLs age, and developmental level. The superintendent answered that the entrance and exit procedures for ELLs comply with the state and federal guidelines. When possible ELL students are identified required testing takes place and services are then started or not based on qualifications. Follow state guidelines for amount of service and number of years.

Most teachers were not aware of the district’s entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs. A kindergarten teacher shared that ESL teacher and her collaborate often to differentiate instruction for the ELLs. The ESL teacher does an entrance exam and sends me a copy of the results; she does an assessment every quarter and we collaborate and talk about goals met and extra support needed. Parents answered that they didn’t know what assessments were in place. Parents said that they didn’t recall receiving results from ESL assessment.

Teachers didn’t know details of the recognition and exit procedures or any documentation related to the ESL Program or testing. A teacher shared that she was told that ESL students receive the service only for a set number of years within the district and she assumes that this is the exit procedure. A few years ago I insisted requesting ESL service for a couple of my students that were falling through the cracks, they needed extra support that they were not receiving at home. They weren’t eligible for any service but I knew they spoke Ukrainian/Russian at home…I was told that students could only receive ELL services for 5? or 6? years, therefore those who had received ELL service in the elementary are not eligible to continue receiving service in the high school…The teacher shared that she was informed these particular students could be served
in Remedial English and Math class since they didn’t pass their MCAs. When administrators were asked about the impact of ELLs scores on the statewide report, both the superintendent and the high school principal, answered that the number of ELLs is too low to be considered a cell or to make an impact on the district scores. Although the state funding for ELL students was cut down to 5 years in 2003, nothing says the a student should be exited from the ESL program before reaching the proficiency level set by the district.

All teachers commented that the activities and assessments that they found the most helpful when working with ELLs is small group or 1:1 because they open up and participate. *I’d say that the Friday’s conference I have with each student allows me to assess the students’ fluency and production.*

In the standard of equitable assessment, the district does follow the state mandate yearly assessment, having ACCESS WIDA as the testing resource but the district fails to inform ELL parents that their children will be tested on their English proficiency. The district doesn’t share the results from the English proficiency tests with classroom teachers, parents or the ESL teacher, the results arrive to the district’s office and the results are filed in the students MARSS folders. This inconclusive cycle defeats the purpose of testing the ELLs language proficiency. The teachers need to know the strengths and needs of the students in order to better serve them and help them in their weak areas. The ELLs and their parents would also gain confidence from their language proficiency growth and possibly ask the teachers for help in the areas where they need more support.
Parental involvement.

Parental involvement is an element that involves parents and community in the planning, development and implementation of the language instruction education program. Administrators were asked about an outreach program or plan in place to keep ELLs and their families informed and involved of the ELLs education. Administrators mentioned the PBIS program as an outreach program for all students and their families. Part of PBIS is to include parents and community but we don’t have one particular program for ELLs. In the high school, there isn’t much parental involvement, unless there are complaints, IEP meetings, disciplinary meetings or parents of young middle schoolers needing information. I think maybe we should start a welcoming letter mailed to all parents of 6th and 7th graders.

Teachers and parents were asked regarding ELLs parental involvement in their children’s academic success. The high school principal mentioned there is a particular cultural group of parents that have concerns about certain academic topics. I’ve mostly had the parents of the Ukrainian/Russian families; visit my office when they have a 6th or 7th grader in the high school. The visits are regarding topics that they don’t consider their children should be exposed to like sexual education in Health class, swimming in Physical Ed., the topic of evolution in Science and to discuss the cost of materials for certain classes, the cost of the school agenda we require 6th – 8th grade students to have and use in each class and fees for shop classes in a public school.

Teachers commented that some parents are more involved than others in their academic success. Parents shared that they would like to be more involved; some can’t due to work, family responsibilities, lack of transportation to school events, lack of academic knowledge or understanding of the language. A parent said, I wish they had the directions for the Math new
Another parent said, I’m not involved. I can’t read or understand what the children do at school…I only did school until the 2nd grade. Those parent that are involved and can participate, actively volunteer. The parents shared that they know that most teachers are very appreciative of their volunteer participation. A teacher said, I have a bilingual family, mom and grandma, that even though they haven’t had kindergarteners for a few years now. They come as reading guests to my class for Dr. Seuss week. The grandma reads Green Eggs and Ham in Spanish and the mom reads the English version. It’s very neat to see and listen. They do a very nice job together.

The district doesn’t meet the parental involvement standard; the main barrier for the district’s ELL parental involvement is lack of communication with the ELL parents in their L1. Since parents don’t have a clear understanding of teachers’ messages or school’s expectations, parents can’t effectively help their children’s with homework in the target language or express their concerns to teachers. Unless at least one ELL parent in the household is proficient in English, they can’t express their desire or availability to volunteer to participate in school or learn about school events.

ELL parent perception and expectations regarding the roles of teachers, parents and extended family often differ from those of the schools. Several ELL families in the district rely on extended family support, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, older siblings, for daycare, transportation, interpretation, homework help, and to represent them at school events when the parents can’t be present or don’t feel adequate enough to be an asset to their children’s school experience. The district is often rigid, due to safety regulations, on who can pick up the children, who can deliver messages regarding the children and who can be invited to participate in school
events or parent-teacher conferences. If the ELL parent doesn’t have certain adult family members listed in the school system as guardians or emergency contacts then the relatives won’t be allowed to participate. Since communication in the ELL parents’ L1 doesn’t exist, parents of ELLs don’t know that they need to fulfill this requirement in order to open up their chances for ELLs to have family participation in school activities and events.

**Professional development.**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, all teachers had to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, some rural schools had until 2006-2007. A highly qualified teacher is one with full state certification, a bachelor’s degree, and demonstrated competence in all subjects they taught.

In order to continue being in compliance with the NCLB, school districts must have appropriate staff, teachers need to continue learning up to date scientifically based strategies to help students efficiently in order to be considered “highly qualified” through professional development to renew their licenses. Administrators were asked how the district is defined under the criteria of “highly qualified”. The administrators answered that they follow the state guidelines, requesting qualifying licenses from teachers and paraprofessionals...across the board we have great teachers and paraprofessionals always willing to give their best for our students, holding the required licenses. Considering our remote location, the difficulty to find teachers with certain licenses and our constant budget reductions, I’d say we are very fortunate. Teachers answered that they also considered the district “highly qualified” since the state requires that teachers hold licenses for the subjects they teach. They also mentioned that the district has a Teacher Evaluation Plan in place for about two years, all teachers are in a rotation schedule to
get evaluated. Teachers mentioned that the district receives professional development money, for teachers to continue to get instruction and are able to renew their teaching licenses. The administrators shared that administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals have the chance to apply for professional development opportunities. Teachers were asked if there was a certain professional development available for teachers of ELLs, most elementary teachers said that they would like to have time to collaborate with the ESL teacher to review and learn the new language curriculum and to discuss how their ELLs are progressing. *I’d really like to see that we use “Early Out” days to collaborate and touch base with our grade level and the ESL teacher to review our new curriculum and see where our students are at regarding language, literacy and content.*

Most teachers in the district if not all have manifested to me through the years that they feel unprepared to work with ELLs and their families. Several feel they lack the skills to address the learning needs of ELLs. They also have manifested that they don’t know where or how to obtain the appropriate assessment to determine students linguistic and academic and language needs. The district has not provided professional development opportunities to general education teachers in all the years I work in the district until last August 2015, when administration requested that I give all teachers in the district a one hour workshop on ESL in order to fulfill the state mandated requirement of one clock hour for licensing renewal. The district administrators don’t realize that our ELL population has true academic and language needs that our teachers see and feel short of addressing properly.

General education teachers need practical and research-based information, resources and strategies to teach evaluate and nurture ELLs. The kindergarten teachers and I have good
collaboration and together we establish high standards for the English language acquisition, development and academic content in lesson planning, we show each other instructional and pedagogic strategies that work for certain ELLs and to which ELL parents respond positively too and participate by helping at home. In other grades, teachers have requested time to collaborate with me, the ESL, teacher to share and provide each other with ideas and come up with a "strategies toolkit" with ways to enhance and improve instruction for struggling ELLs based on assessment results from WIDA or from assessment that the content teacher and I could come up with together.

Cultural awareness is also an important component of the professional development that the teachers in the district need. Teachers need to learn practical strategies to better communicate with ELL parents to maximize achievement opportunities for ELLs. Educators and administrators must understand and appreciate students’ different cultural backgrounds.

**Data Analysis**

Reflecting on the answers and comments provided by the participants, I was able to find areas of agreement of the participants and a few areas of differing perspectives.

In the data analysis, I will explain why from the information provided by the participants and my own perspectives as the district’s ESL teacher, the district’s status recognizing and considering ELLs as part of the student body has been in idle for years. The district had eight different superintendents in the last fourteen years, the high school principal has been in the position for ten years and the elementary principal has been in the position for four years. Every change in administration had its learning curve and necessary period of adjustment. Administrators adopted a reactive ideology rather than proactive when facing the needs of the
district. The ESL low population and their needs didn’t stand out among the many other needs. Therefore, although the district has been serving ELLs since 2002-2003, the district is still at an emergent level when it comes to address Berube’s three Rs: recognition of the existence of ELLs in policymaking and services, responsibility on the part of all staff to meet ELLs learning needs, and respect for ELLs and the ESL professional reflected in a program held to high standards (Berube, 2000).

**Recognition of ELLs.**

In rural school districts the administrators are responsible for hiring ESL staff, creating a school environment welcoming to diverse ethnicities, and integrating, monitoring and evaluating ESL programs. These responsibilities are a challenge for rural principals who have no ESL training and struggle fulfilling the leadership duties of a rural school (Cortez-Jiminez, 2012).

The majority of the opinion of the participating administrators, teachers and parents in the case study, is that the district provides a safe and welcoming environment. This perspective doesn’t reflect everything that involves, a safe and welcoming environment. There are a couple of parents that shared that their children have been exposed to prejudicial comments in the bus and at school, although this can’t label the district as a prejudiced environment. It leaves the question of how often it happens. The principle of recognition also has to do with administrative and instructional policies and practices. When asked about the core curriculum being adapted to meet the needs of the ELLs, the superintendent answered that ELL instruction is set up and that the ESL instructor is the person who runs the show. With this answer, the superintendent doesn’t recognize that the ESL teacher doesn’t adapt the core curriculum and doesn’t run the show in the classroom setting since the district implemented the ESL pullout model from its beginnings. The
classroom teacher would be the instructor encharged of adapting the core curriculum. The ESL teacher spends about 25 minutes a week with each ELL student, for extra support. The high school principal answered that ELLs are a very small minority and in teacher observation, from planning to delivery, adapting curriculum to meet ELL needs is not an area of focus.

Recognizing the ELL population and their needs means creating a climate of high expectations, linguistically and culturally, this can only be accomplished by following policies. There was consensus among the high school principal, teachers and parents that they were not very aware of the English Language Program or its description. During the ESL in-service that I lead in August 2015, several teachers didn’t know that the Home Language piece of the Personal Information Form for all registered students had anything to do with ESL services and many teachers thought it was a demographic detail the state wanted to have. Most teachers didn’t know there is an entrance ESL exam for those students who are new to our district and could potentially be ESL students. Administrators responded to the equitable access and testing questions very vaguely _When possible ELL students are identified required testing takes place and services are then started or not based on qualifications. Follow state guidelines for amount of service and number of years_. The main part of recognizing ELLs in order to provide the appropriate service is testing, the mind set of the district’s administrators should not be “when possible”. Trying to assess how much the student understands English and in his or her first language to get an overall idea of the students language and academic needs are the stepping stone for the ESL teacher to tailor lessons that will best help the student. It may be necessary to wait a few days to assess to the student, depending on the students’ personality and how
comfortable she or he feels is also detrimental for the student to open up and warm up to the assessing teacher. It is important for the examiner to be patient and well trained (Jesness, 2014).

The high school principal, teachers and parents do not clearly recognize that there is not an English Language Program written plan in place. It is possible that the high school principal is truly not aware that the district doesn’t have an ELP plan in place since he’s only had a handful of ELLs enrolled in the high school in his years as a principal. The majority of the ELLs are served in the elementary from K-6th. The superintendent and the elementary principal are aware of this. The elementary principal approached me in 2012 about developing an ESL plan but the principal didn’t contact me again. The elementary principal didn’t participate in the interviews. Although the superintendent didn’t verbalize this information in the interview, we have in a few occasions talked about the need of coming up with an English Language Program plan but a time to collaborate hasn’t been discussed or planned. School administrators must recognize their responsibility as the professionals that provide direction in the district, the necessary leadership to help students progress in their educational experience providing intervention and general education support (Garrett & Holcomb, 2005).

Recognizing that a school- community connection is the most important step in establishing a “sense of place”. It is important that rural schools interact with local government organizations, local businesses, social organizations and families, using the community as a curricular resource as well as establishing active and productive school-business relations (Khattri, Riley, and Kane, 1997). Parental involvement may take many forms, volunteering at school, contacting the school about the child’s progress, monitoring homework, talking to the child about what he or she does at school, talking about future plans can be a valuable asset to a
school district bringing in language and culture into the curriculum (Lippman, Burns, and McArthur, 1996). ELL parents should be recognized as a desired asset curricular resource that can bring language and culture contributing to the education of students and teachers while establishing relationships and connections.

Recognizing the ELL population also implicates providing appropriate intervention, not only academically differentiating instruction but also keeping the families informed and allowing the parents to have a say and an opinion on their children’s education. Both participating administrators answered that PBIS is a behavioral intervention program that also looks to get parental involvement. In the elementary and in the high school teachers have different tools of communication with parents, emails, notes, phone calls, automated messages to inform parents of the school wide events, parent – teacher conferences, attendance irregularities, lunch payment irregularities, missing assignments, etc. There are so many options of communication that parents feel there is an overflow of messages coming their way but they don’t know exactly how to respond. Some ELL parents are not technologically perceptive and some ELL parents would rather get a written note, making the communication simpler and more personalized. Some ELL parents don’t speak English and they don’t know what the phone messages are saying, between technology and language barriers, the attempt of connection the district has implemented is not addressing the needs of ELLs and their families.

**Responsibility of all staff to meet the learning needs of ELLs.**

Responsibility of the administrators to offer the ELL service provided by highly qualified teachers. In fact, a licensed ESL teacher provides the ELL service. The economic struggle of the district also affect the ESL program. State funding formulas leave rural schools as an economic
burden to tax payers, contributing to the option of consolidating schools in the rural school districts in the attempt to lower costs (Share & Tompkins, 1977). Although the school district in the case has not consolidated with other school districts yet, it has down sized buildings and continues to look at reducing any unnecessary expenses.

Superintendents in the past have brought to the school board’s table the ESL program as one of the items for budget reduction in more than one occasion, as an unnecessary expense. In 2013, I, the ESL teacher in the district, presented in front of the school board, explaining the need of service for the eight students we had at the time. The superintendent at the time and the current elementary principal, who didn’t participate in this case study, spoke in front of the school board as well claiming that the ESL students spoke English and that 1hr of teaching allocated for one teacher to serve eight students was an unnecessary expenditure. In my presentation, I mentioned that under federal law and the MN Statutes 124D.61 the district is obliged to provide ELL service even if there was one ELL student. I also showed the school board members that the school district EL revenue at the time was of $14,000 a year. I brought in front of the school board the letters of grants that provided the ESL program of materials and also the expense of the part of my yearly salary that represents my ESL service time (0.2 - $8,600) with the intentions to show the school board that instead the district spend less than what it receives annually. There is an irresponsible perception that because the ESL students speak English then the ESL service is not a need without considering that social language skills are very different than academic language skills. An ELL is successful academically when she or he can understand language and content, and use the academic language to communicate opinions and thoughts using the content language appropriately.
This coming school year 2016-2017, again, ESL is on the table for discussion, to reduce the ESL allocated time since according to the superintendent, the number of ESL students in the district doesn’t justify an hour of teaching everyday. He instead suggested offering the service for one hour two days a week. With this new suggestion by administrators I see again that there is lack of recognition and responsibility to the ESL minority. The actual allocated time is 25 minutes a day every week to serve all ELLs in the district; I can’t responsibly say that reducing this time is of any benefit to the ESL students.

**Respect for each ELL.**

Respect for ELLs means to hold the district to higher standards: the district would include administrators, teachers, staff and students. Respect for ELLs is giving administrators, teachers and staff the chance to learn how to better serve the ELLs by offering quality professional development opportunities. It is important to have a clear target, the district needs to have a clear set of guidelines, a framework to follow and be accountable to. The state has a set of guidelines but the school district doesn’t have a written plan or a set of guidelines to follow. Teachers have a minimal understanding and awareness of the ESL procedures of entrance, placement and exit of the program.

Due to the new changes to the continuing education requirements by the MDE, requiring evidence of growth in best teaching practices for meeting the needs of ELLs were in effect as of August 2015, administrators and the professional development team contacted me, the ESL teacher in the district, to give a 1-hour workshop during an in-service day. This was the first time many of the district teachers had attended a workshop related to the teaching of ELLs. My
workshop was mainly informational about the growth of ELLs in the state and I created a flow chart for teachers to follow if they recognize a student with language needs in their class.

During the workshop I wanted to target the topic of diversity, I talked about the differences in language, culture, and the influence of family and culture on students’ behaviors. I exhorted the teachers to get to know their students and show them that they value what they bring with them: their experiences, language and culture. I briefly explained the SIOP components to the teachers, I encouraged them to continue to focus on differentiating instruction without watering down the content and support opportunities of including some multicultural themes in their lessons. There was too much to be shared in my attempt of planting a seed of recognition, respect and responsibility towards ELLs in the district. At the end of the workshop teachers were given a sticky note where they could leave a comment or ask a question. I received praising comments and a recurrent question: *Is there a certain form like a 504 that would label the accommodations needed for ELLs? How can I integrate ELL students whose parents are against assimilation to the American culture? How can I convince parents to allow their ELL children to participate in extracurricular activities?* The questions indicate that although there are doubts on how to assess and instruct ELLs holding grade level academic standards, the teachers have the initiative and interest to make a difference in the lives and education of ELLs in our district, in spite of the lack of direction by the administration and the absence of an English Language Program written plan.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Major Findings

In this section it is important to recall the central question that steered my research “What are the gaps and weaknesses in this particular district’s situation that have to change or improve in order to successfully offer students a quality inclusive program that would prepare ELLs to function independently and successfully in today’s society?”

Throughout the research the issues of a rural school have emerged also in ELL service area, issues like funding inequities, limited curriculum, parental involvement and the highly qualified provision.

What are the gaps and weaknesses?

The results of this study reveal a school district that has not yet considered the gaps and weaknesses of the ELL service that is being offered to students. When participant shared their views about six integral and critical elements of what makes a quality and inclusive English Learner Program there are few positive findings that came to light.

The perception that the district provides a safe and welcoming environment doesn’t agree with the fact that the district doesn’t have an English Learner Program written plan. What is even more concerning is that the district has been offering ESL service for thirteen year without one.

Administrators and teachers perceive that they are doing their part in communicating with parents, the communication is one sided, parents receive information through the different platforms the district has available but not in the parents’ L1. The ELL parents don’t respond or participate due to lack of information that is comprehensible to them. Teachers often misinterpret the lack of participation with ELL parents’ lacking interest in their children’s education.
In several parts of the interviews to administrators, teachers and parents the topic of cultural differences and the admission of all three parts, administrators, teachers and parents of a sense of awkwardness and insecurity in this area is also a very important gap that needs to be addressed providing teachers techniques for establishing communication with people from other cultures through professional development opportunities.

It is also important for the district, especially administrators to learn to build on ELLs’ culture, language and background, instead of disregarding and silencing them. Teachers and administrators have not yet realized that assimilation is not the goal of all ELLs or their parents. Since teachers and administrators have their minds set on helping all students succeed, the fact that some ELLs and their families don’t fit into the same framework of the middle class, mainstream majority, creates this ideology in the teachers and administrators in the district that minority cultures and languages are a barrier to the ELLs academic success.

Instead administrators should find a home-school coordinator or liaison for ELL parents and teachers to establish communication and share their expectations and needs regarding the ELLs’ education and well-being.

Unfortunately, to administrators the number of ELL students is a precedent of the validity that ELL needs have. Administrators in more than one occasion have diminished the needs of ELLs under the poor judgment that “these students speak English” therefore they don’t really need ESL support. ELL Program has been placed in the unnecessary expenses list in review for budget reduction in front of the school board. ELLs’ instructional needs are not a focal point in curriculum planning and delivery. ELL materials are not considered a need and the time allocated for service is notoriously less now than it was in 2002.
What can change or improve to successfully offer students a quality inclusive program?

It’s fundamental for ELLs academic and social success that the district has an English Language Program plan in place, a quality inclusive program, a framework with a set of goals, guidelines and procedures to help administrators, teachers, students and parents to know what to expect and to be accountable to. Clearly established goals, rights and responsibilities are the threshold to a Positive Learning Environment. Therefore, the goals for success for ELL students should relate to the goals set for mainstream students throughout the district.

The goals indicate the level of performance that is expected, by when it should be achieved and how the success will be measured. The school district already uses the WIDA ACCESS standardized ELL assessment and standards that are aligned with the state requirements. WIDA also has Can Do Descriptors, K-12 practical goals for ELL students and teachers to focus on to participate meaningfully in teaching and learning content. Effective goals for ELL students address both English language development and subject matter instruction the district may also choose to have goals in such areas as staff development, curriculum development, and parental participation to provide equitable access to curriculum.

An ESL Program plan should recognize the ELL student population is multicultural and diverse group. A positive learning environment is one that respects and embraces the diversity of the language minority students. The district is responsible to notify parents of national origin minority groups about school activities in their native language. To encourage parental involvement, communication is important. Keeping parents informed in their native language in
a written form or through a phone message. Providing report cards translated into languages ELL parents can understand. Offering and providing a free translating system or interpreter upon request of the parents, even if the parent has a relative or friend to help communicate. Parent outreach ideas like: Providing parents with welcoming packets with notes in their native language and a school calendar and offering a parent orientation night for ELL parents enrolling their children have been suggested by interview participants.

Administrators need to lead compliance by providing ELLs with a consistent ELL program that is structured in terms of the amount of time and type of instruction they receive. Administrators need to show commitment to the education of ELLs.

Teachers are also responsible for continuing to learn and put in practice scientifically based strategies to help ELLs achieve the goals set for them. The district has the responsibility to make learning opportunities available for teachers to continue to grow and be considered “highly qualified”. WIDA offers webinars for teachers, testing administrators and administrators. NEA offers summer workshops with sessions on ESL. TESOL offers a variety of workshops online and conventions also.

The district’s teachers are very open and eager to learn, since the district first offered ESL services in 2002 last August 2015 was the first time mainstream teachers has a training session addressing the ESL students characteristics, needs and helping tips. The teachers were very receptive and left the session with good comments and the desire to work together. Collaboration between classroom teachers and ES teachers should be in collaboration as often as possible, giving each other feedback of the progress and difficulties of the ELLs. All the teachers in the district agreed that collaboration with the ESL teacher was the professional development that
they felt they needed the most to accommodate content, to share useful strategies and coordinate following lessons.

Conclusion

While it is true that gathering information from teachers, parents, and administrators for this study has brought forth quite a few gaps and weaknesses common in rural schools, it has become clear that the struggles especially affect the language minority students and the development of the English Language Program.

As seen in the study, policies and funding leave many responsibilities on the hands of administrators, making it difficult for teachers or parents to be aware of the changes that must occur to provide to the needs of ELLs.

It is necessary to highlight the unconditional support that several teachers in the district show toward the academic progress of students, working hard and making a difference in education and the life of the minority of ESL. When it comes to the education of our youth, we are all collaborators. As educators, parents and community members we have the responsibility to facilitate a quality and inclusive educational program to all students. Especially those students that face limitations and challenges that make their goals seem even more distant.
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Appendix A

Glossary

CLD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

ELL – English Language Learner. Students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English.

ELP - English Language Proficiency

EO – English Only

ESL – English as a Second Language. Term mostly used to describe programs. A method of instruction for students who are learning English as a new language; courses, classes and/or programs designed for students learning English as an additional language. This is not the same as bilingual education.

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages. Learners who are identified as still in the process of acquiring English as an additional language and/or who may not speak English at all or, at least, do not speak, understand, and write English with the same facility as their classmates because they did not grow up speaking English; rather they primarily spoke another language at home.

HLS – Home Language Survey. A form that every student or parent of the student must complete at the time of initial enrollment; it is a federal requirement. It gives information about a student’s language background. Must be on file for every student
LEA - Local Education Agency

LEP – Limited English Proficient. Term used by Federal Government. The term identifies those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms. A LEP student is a student whose first or primary language is a language other than English, and whose English language ability is below that of a native English-speaker. Three levels of Proficiency:

NES = Non-English Speaker

LES = Limited English Speaker

FES = Fluent English Speaker

LESA – Limited- English- speaking ability

L2 – Second language

SAE – Students Acquiring English
Appendix B

WIDA Performance Definitions

Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Language Proficiency in Grades K-12

At the given level of English language proficiency, English language learners will process, understand, produce, or use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6 Reaching | * specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level  
  * a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level  
  * oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers |
| 5 Bridging | * specialized or technical language of the content areas  
  * a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports  
  * oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material |
| 4 Expanding | * specific and some technical language of the content areas  
  * a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple related sentences or paragraphs  
  * oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| 3 Developing | * general and some specific language of the content areas  
  * expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs  
  * oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| 2 Beginning | * general language related to the content areas  
  * oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
| 1 Entering | * pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas  
  * words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-1, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support  
  * oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support |
## WIDA Speaking Rubric

### Speaking Rubric of the WIDA™ Consortium
**Grades 1-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Level</th>
<th>Sentence Level</th>
<th>Word/Phrase Level</th>
<th>Language Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Complexity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language Forms</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Usage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full range of oral phrase and sentence patterns and grammatical structures matched to content area topics</td>
<td>A broad range of oral phrase and sentence patterns and grammatical structures matched to the content area topic</td>
<td>A range of oral phrase and sentence patterns and grammatical structures characteristic of the content area</td>
<td>Oral language that shows the development of connected language in the expression of an extended idea or multiple related ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent usage of just the right word or expression to make the right content-related point</td>
<td>Controlled, fluid use of oral language to convey meaning, including for effect</td>
<td>Controlled and fluid use of oral language to convey meaning</td>
<td>Developing range of oral phrase and sentence patterns and grammatical structures common to content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility with precise vocabulary usage in a general, specific, or technical language</td>
<td>Consistency in conveying an appropriate perspective and register</td>
<td>Use of specific and some technical content area words and expressions as appropriate</td>
<td>Use of words and expressions with precise meaning related to content areas is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# WIDA Writing Rubric

## Revised Writing Rubric of the WIDA™ Consortium

**Grades 1-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Level</th>
<th>Sentence Level</th>
<th>Word-Phrase Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Complexity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language Forms and Conventions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Usage</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 6: Reaching
- Text is fully comprehensible and appropriate to purpose, situation, and audience; comparable to the writing of English proficient students meeting college- and career-readiness standards and includes:
  - extended constructed text (single or multiple paragraphs) that is organized and shows tight cohesion in the precise expression of ideas
  - clear evidence of consistency in conveying an appropriate perspective, register, and genre
  - a full range of sentence patterns and grammatical structures matched to content area topics
  - consistent use of appropriate conventions to convey meaning, including for effect
  - consistent usage of just the right word or expression in just the right context related to content area topics
  - facility with precise vocabulary usage in general, specific, or technical language

### Level 5: Bridging
- Text is comprehensible and related to purpose; generally comparable to the writing of English proficient poets and includes:
  - extended constructed text (single or multiple paragraphs) that is organized and shows a cohesive and coherent expression of ideas
  - clear evidence of conveying an appropriate perspective, register, and genre
  - a broad range of sentence patterns and grammatical structures matched to the content area topic
  - nearly consistent use of appropriate conventions to convey meaning, including for effect
  - usage of technical and abstract content area words and expressions as appropriate
  - usage of words and expressions with precise meaning related to content area topics as appropriate
  - vocabulary usage that fulfills the writing purpose

### Level 4: Expanding
- Text is generally comprehensible at all times; approaches comparability to the writing of English proficient poets and includes:
  - connected text (sentences or paragraphs) that shows an organized expression of ideas with emerging cohesion
  - some evidence of conveying an appropriate perspective, register, and genre
  - a range of sentence patterns and grammatical structures characteristic of the content area
  - generally consistent use of appropriate conventions to convey meaning
  - usage of specific and some technical content area words and expressions as appropriate
  - usage of words and expressions with multiple meanings or common collocations and idioms across content areas as appropriate
  - vocabulary usage that generally fulfills the writing purpose

### Level 3: Developing
- Original text is generally comprehensible (though comprehensibility may from time to time be compromised in more complex original text) and includes:
  - text that shows developing organization in the expression of an expanded idea or multiple related ideas
  - evidence of a developing sense of perspective, register, and genre
  - a developing range of sentence patterns and grammatical structures common to content areas
  - developing use of conventions to convey meaning
  - usage of some specific content words and expressions as appropriate
  - usage of content cognates, words, or expressions related to content areas as appropriate
  - vocabulary usage that attempts to fulfill the writing purpose

### Level 2: Emerging
- Some original text and text adapted from model or source text is generally comprehensible (though comprehensibility may often be compromised in attempts at more complex original text) and includes:
  - text that shows emerging expression of an idea or idea and may demonstrate some attempt at organization
  - some amount of text that may be copied or adapted
  - repetitive sentence and phrase patterns and formulaic grammatical structures used in social and instructional situations or across content areas
  - variable use of conventions
  - usage of general content words and expressions
  - usage of social and instructional words and expressions across content areas
  - possible usage of general vocabulary where more specific language is needed

### Level 1: Entering
- Text that is copied or adapted from model or source text is generally comprehensible (though comprehensibility may be significantly compromised in original text) and includes:
  - language that represents an idea or ideas
  - wording and arrangement of text that may be copied
  - adapted text that may contain some original language
  - words, chunks of language, or simple phrase patterns associated with common social and instructional situations
  - possible use of some conventions
  - usage of highest frequency general content-related words
  - usage of everyday social and instructional words and expressions
Appendix D

Bibliography: Additional Sources Utilized


Appendix E

Letter to Parents - Privacy Commitment

Dear participants,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this questionnaire. This information will be used to help me complete my thesis. The overall study is about ELLs in low incident schools. Please don’t feel obligated to answer all questions, only answer what you can. I am very appreciative of your participation and your time.

I want to assure you that neither the district’s name nor your names will be used in any part of the thesis.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,
Appendix F

Interview Questions for Administrators

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see our schools displaying a safe and welcoming learning environment for English language learners?
2. What is your view on how familiar our teachers and staffs are with teaching content and implementing instructional practices that are effective for ELLs?

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. What role do you have in ensuring that the core curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of ELLs?
2. How do you understand the correlation between content and language instruction?
3. Does the district have a plan in place to assist ESL students to meet graduation requirements?

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What are the policies and procedures in place that address the language and cultural needs of our ELLS and their families (translation services, etc.)? Is there an EL Program written plan in place?
2. Would you comment on the special instructional programs available to ELLs that support the second language development necessary to participate in the mainstream classroom (i.e. ESL, Sped, Title I, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.)?
3. Where in the district annual report is ELL enrollment recognized as a student subgroup?

Equitable Assessment:
1. What is your view on how familiar the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff are with the district’s English Language Program? Is there an English Language Program written plan?
2. How do the district’s entrance and exit procedures for ELLs comply with the state and federal guidelines?
3. How does the performance of ELLs on statewide assessment influencing our district’s overall scores?

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success?
2. Is there outreach program or plan in place to keep ELLs and their families informed and involved of the ELLs education?
Professional Development:

1. How does our district define “highly qualified under the NCLB”? (Annual report)
2. What resources are currently in place to provide teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs in the classroom?
3. What resources are currently in place to provide ELL teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs?
Appendix G

Interview Questions for Teachers

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How do you in your role promotes welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families?
2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?

Full Delivery of Services:

1. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture?
2. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description? How familiar are you with the EL Program Plan?
3. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
4. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program?

Equitable Assessment:

1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?
2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?
2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated?

Professional Development:
1. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
Appendix H

Interview Questions for Families

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How does the school include you as a parent to promote a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs?
2. How does the school and teachers communicate with you about your child’s progress in school?
3. How does the school/teacher keep you informed about special events, parental tips?
4. Have you ever been unable to communicate to administrators, teachers and staff due to a language barrier? What challenges have you faced in connecting with teachers?

Parental Involvement:

1. How has the school assisted you and given your guidance to help your son/daughter set academic and personal goals? Do you know how your child is doing academically?
2. How involved are you in your children’s academic success? Are you supportive of their growth?
3. What would you like to improve in as a parent?
4. Have you been invited to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
5. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when you collaborated?
6. What would encourage you to participate and be involved with your child’s school and learning?

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. Do you know what is expected of you as a parent?
2. Do you know what is expected of your child in the classroom?
3. Do you know what to expect from your child’s teacher?
4. Do you know if your child receives ESL services? Do you have any comments on the ESL service provided to your ESL and the grade level’s curriculum?
5. What do you think is expected from the ESL teacher?
6. Are you familiar with your child’s schoolwork, what they are learning in each subject, Language, Math, Social Studies and Science?
7. Do you think the curriculum; the assignments are appropriate for your child? Does your child struggle and needs a lot of help or can your child work alone?
8. Do you have concerns regarding your child’s learning, language and subject content? What are some ways the school can help to improve your child’s academic success?

Full Delivery of Services:
1. Does your child participate in special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that help learn English and other subjects?
2. Are you familiar with the district’s English Language Program? Have you received any information about the program? (letter, school website, email, etc.)
3. Do you know of any programs, organizations or services that help you, your family and children with your language and cultural needs (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.)? Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
4. Do you have any suggestions on how the school district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the teachers?
5. Does your family participate in a heritage pride club or program?

Equitable Assessment:
1. Do you know if your child took an entrance or recognition test to receive ELL services?
2. Do you know of any other ELL testing and do you know the results of the evaluation?
3. Is your child currently receiving ESL service and do you know what are the ELL exit procedures?

Community, School District and Teacher Support and Development:
1. What do you think the teachers need to know, learn or have to help your child be successful in school?
2. What do you think the school district could do for you that would help you be active and supportive of your child’s learning?
3. What do you think the community could offer you to be a better parent and an active community member?
Appendix I

Interview Responses – Administrators

Interview Questions for Administrators

The superintendent has been in the district for about 18 years, during those years he worked as a high school math teacher for 12 years, as an interim superintendent for 2 years and as a Dean of Students for 2 years.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see our schools displaying a safe and welcoming learning environment for English language learners?
   We really do not have any special attention being placed on ELL students. We promote positive behavior for all students.
2. What is your view on how familiar our teachers and staff are with teaching content and implementing instructional practices that are effective for ELLs?
   I would say not overly familiar unless they have a specific student that is having major language difficulties and they are working with our ELL instructor.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. What role do you have in ensuring that the core curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of ELLs?
   Little role, ELL instruction is set up and instructor runs the show.
2. How do you understand the correlation between content and language instruction?
   Not an area of my expertise, I do feel that learning the language is somewhat a precursor to being able to understand the content. This is not to say the ELL student couldn’t understand the content if it were explained in their primary language, but from our stance it would be a precursor.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program?
   I would say very little.
2. What are the policies and procedures in place that address the language and cultural needs of our ELLS and their families (translation services, etc.)?
   Practice has been to provide translation services for students and families on an as needed basis.
3. Would you comment on the special instructional programs available to ELLs that support the second language development necessary to participate in the mainstream classroom (i.e. ESL, Sped, Title I, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.)?
Qualifying students are granted ELL service in addition to other services that they would qualify for such as Sped, Title I, Math/Reading course, and additional help before and after school with teachers. After school help is available for 6-12 students in the library.

4. Where in the district annual report is ELL enrollment recognized as a student subgroup?
   Typically our ELL population does not register for a cell size on state reporting with regards to testing.

Equitable Assessment:
1. What is your view on how familiar the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff are with the district’s English Language Program? Is there an English Language Program written plan?
   Very unfamiliar with program.

3. How do the district’s entrance and exit procedures for ELLs comply with the state and federal guidelines?
   When possible ELL students are identified required testing takes place and services are then started or not based on qualifications. Follow state guidelines for amount of service and number of years.

4. How do you see the performance of ELLs on statewide assessment influencing our district’s overall scores?
   I do not have an overall pulse on this group of students on how they affect our scores.

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success?
   In my current position I can’t really say I accurate information. I rarely have interaction with parents.

2. Is there an outreach program or plan in place to keep ELLs and their families informed and involved of the ELLs education?
   There is not an outreach program particular to ELLs and their families but our district is very involved with the Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) program. Family involvement is important to school success. Parent leaders willing to volunteer and work closely with our schools to advocate for other families. No, but I think maybe we should start.

Professional Development:
1. How does our district define “highly qualified under the NCLB”? (Annual report)
   Follow state guidelines for teachers meaning they need to have a qualifying license based on MN Department of Education – Licensing. Paraprofessionals need to have completed an AA degree or equivalent or pass the ParaPro test.

2. What resources are currently in place to provide teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs in the classroom?
   Little training, no specific district wide training

3. What resources are currently in place to provide ELL teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs?
Same as any discipline, teachers are able to attend trainings through application process through our professional development committee.
Interview Questions for Administrators

The high school principal in the district has been in the position for about 10 years. The principal worked as the high school guidance counselor for about 5 years after working as a high school math and computers teacher for over 15 years in the district.

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How do you see our schools displaying a safe and welcoming learning environment for English language learners?
   Our school has been working on PBIS for the last two years and we have seen an improvement in students’ attitudes and sense of belonging to the FHS culture.

2. What is your view on how familiar our teachers and staff are with teaching content and implementing instructional practices that are effective for ELLs?
   As a principal, from teacher observations, our teachers provide a variety of learning activities that support instructional outcomes. Some teachers are more effective than others differentiating structure but the teaching represents a moderate cognitive challenge for all students not only ELLs. I believe our teachers do a great job at collaborating with each other, contacting the ESL teacher if necessary. In my previous position as a guidance counselor I contacted the ESL teacher myself in a couple occasions to welcome new ESL students into our district and introduce the new students to the content teachers.

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. What role do you have in ensuring that the core curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of ELLs?
   Very little to none, our ESL high school population is so low that in doing teacher observations that is not an area of focus.

2. How do you understand the correlation between content and language instruction?
   It’s definitely an added challenge for ELLs to have to adjust to a new school and especially the community’s culture. I think that content area and learning the language can only become somehow clear if the student understands the language of delivery. In working with the ELL teacher to come up with a schedule for new comers I thought Math and Science would be universal, where students would be able to follow to a certain extent. I remember of an ESL student, originally from Kenya, for whom the ESL teacher requested a “no count” on one of her first science project assignments. As part of the project, students needed to collect a certain list of bugs and leaves. When the ESL teacher asked the student about the outstanding missing assignment in science, the student became quite upset and explained that she felt “dumb” for not knowing or expecting the trees to go completely bare. She said she was too embarrassed to talk to the science teacher about why she never turned in her project. This was quite a revelation to me; I never before considered that weather changes would be unexpected to a 7th grader. The situation made me reflect on the many new challenges ESL students face daily, aside from the language.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program?
   I don’t know, probably none. I don’t know that there is an English Learner Program description in place in the district. I assume we are following protocols; really, most of the ESL students are in the elementary. We get very few here and there in the high school.

2. What are the policies and procedures in place that address the language and cultural needs of our ELLS and their families (translation services, etc.)?
   We’re very fortunate to have an ELL teacher that is fluent in more than one language. She’s very sensitive to people and their cultures. We have used her as needed.

3. Would you comment on the special instructional programs available to ELLs that support the second language development necessary to participate in the mainstream classroom (i.e. ESL, Sped, Title I, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.)?
   In the high school we have placed those ELL students proficient enough to read, write and communicate in Remedial English and Math as an extra academic support. We have students and teachers that do tutoring during their open hours and after school.

4. Where in the district annual report is ELL enrollment recognized as a student subgroup?
   The student’s information in the system tells if a student speaks a different language at home or not but we don’t even get to 20 ELL students in the high school in order to recognize a cell.

Equitable Assessment:
1. What is your view on how familiar the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff are with the district’s English Language Program? Is there an English Language Program written plan?
   Very unfamiliar with program but I heard great comments and positive reports this year after our ELL teacher gave district’s teachers an ESL workshop that is now a relicensure requirement in the state. I don’t know if we have one in place or not.

2. How do the district’s entrance and exit procedures for ELLs comply with the state and federal guidelines?
   ELL testing is scheduled by our testing coordinator, when needed our ELL teacher has used an entrance test.

3. How do you see the performance of ELLs on statewide assessment influencing our district’s overall scores?
   I believe our ELL numbers are too low to make an impact.

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success?
   I’ve mostly had the parents of the Ukrainian/Russian families; visit my office when they have a 6th or 7th grader in the high school. The visits are regarding topics that they don’t consider their children should be exposed to like sexual education in Health class, swimming in Physical Ed., the topic of evolution in Science and to discuss the cost of
materials for certain classes, the cost of the school agenda we require 6th – 8th grade students to have and use in each class and fees for shop classes in a public school.

2. Is there outreach program or plan in place to keep ELLs and their families informed and involved of the ELLs education?
   Part of PBIS is to include parents and community but we don’t have one particular program for ELLs. In the high school, there isn’t much parental involvement, unless there are complaints, IEP meetings, disciplinary meetings or parents of young middle schoolers needing information. I think maybe we should start a welcoming letter mailed to all parents of 6th and 7th graders regarding the topics mentioned before. Maybe if we send this note along with the school supply list for 6th and 7th graders we wouldn’t have the same families coming in at the beginning of the year upset and requesting to waive the fee since their son/daughter is on a free and reduced lunch program and because public education is a right. In the welcoming letter we could also mention that there are community members that donate supplies, give scholarships to our low-income students, and include the Supply and Scholarship Form.

Professional Development:
1. How does our district define “highly qualified under the NCLB”? (Annual report)
   I believe we are highly qualified, across the board we have great teachers and paraprofessionals always willing to give their best for our students, holding the required licenses. Considering our remote location, the difficulty to find teachers with certain licenses and our constant budget reductions, I’d say we are very fortunate.

2. What resources are currently in place to provide teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs in the classroom?
   We don’t have any in place. We’ll have to learn as challenges come our way. We have an experienced ESL instructor fluent in foreign languages, holding the required licensures.

3. What resources are currently in place to provide ELL teachers with adequate training to support their instruction of ELLs?
   PDT is open to request from teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals, very seldom PDT has turned down any training for our staff.
Interview Responses – Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Interview Questions for Teachers

Kindergarten teacher working in the district over 25 years.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families? I have a Reading Project; everyday a student gets a manila envelope with a book and an activity to do with parents at home and then bring back to school to share with the class. ELLs with older bilingual siblings or with bilingual parents participate. I’ve had some envelopes return to school just as I sent them home, not only from ELL students’ homes though.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   When parents attend parent-teacher conference unless I have concerns of cognitive development or behavior, then I make a phone call home to set up a special meeting. This is not always an option with some ELL families, the ESL teacher and I collaborate as much as we can to help ELLs and their families, and so I usually rely on her to help me contact the parents when there is a language barrier.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   Occasionally when I have first met the families of ELLs. Mostly parents of ELLs rely on an older sibling or friend to interpret if they are not bilingual. I have mostly met parents that know some English or are bilingual. I’ve spent more time on the phone clarifying expectations, trying to understand cultural differences and explaining how something is OK or not OK to some parents that speak English well enough. I remember one mom calling expecting me to warm up her son’s milk for lunch. Another time, a mom showed up at my door to tell me her daughter is not allowed to sit on the floor, she needs to sit on a chair during circle time. And, I’ll never forget the time a mom told me English was not allowed at her home so I was wasting my time expecting her to check the homework folder. I haven’t had dads call or visit yet. Communication is difficult at times and it’s not always the language.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
   In the last fifteen years our district has adopted three different language curriculum series. My first ESL students started with Harcourt Trophies and at the kindergarten level, it didn’t have support materials for the classroom at the kindergarten level. Then for about
three years we had the Mondo Literacy Program. The district didn’t see the need to buy the intervention kit. This school year we started with Journey’s, it has supplemental materials, which is great but I haven’t been able to explore everything or use everything. I need more time! The ESL teacher let me know about the online resources and suggested my ESL kindergarteners use some of these resources as part of their centers options. It has bilingual audio-visual flashcards and the leveled readers with audio. The students were excited to work on the ipads, as many of them don’t even have a computer at home.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
   This new Language curriculum has many resources that are helpful and varied, we just need more time to explore and use them. I’ve seen the Differentiated Instruction and ELL tips in the Math Manual, they remind you to do repetitions and comprehension checks, which we normally do anyway.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
   No.

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
   I like that the curriculum for language in kindergarten doesn’t only focus on phonics like Mondo did. It includes family, community, traditions, and lots of science; its focus is on non-fiction but it includes a few nursery rhymes and folk-tales.

Full Delivery of Services:

1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
   I don’t think they know. I don’t know much about any special program, description.

2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
   Speech, SBI (School Based Interventionist), and ESL

3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
   None, yes it would be nice to have someone to speak the language and shares the culture when talking to parents.

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture?
   Advanced Spanish students come to my class one hour a week and they teach Spanish to my kindergarteners. My Spanish speaking ELLs glow, they understand everything, they actively participate, and their peers see a different side of them – self-confidence. My other students learn a lot in one year, tolerance to what doesn’t sound familiar, nursery rhymes and basic vocabulary.
5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program?

No, I suppose trying to get community members, as interpreters/helpers may be complicated in relation to confidentiality. It would be great if there were heritage clubs.

Equitable Assessment:

1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?

I know the ESL teacher does an entrance exam and sends me a copy of the results; she does an assessment every quarter and we collaborate and talk about goals met and extra support needed. She also does an ESL standardized evaluation later in the year, I have never seen a report from the state or scores regarding that assessment, maybe they’re in their files. I don’t know.

2. What kind of activities and assessments have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs?

Assessment is constant at the kindergarten level we have to observe peer interaction, transitioning, individual working time, and group participation. I think they all help.

Parental Involvement:

1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?

I’ve had very few ELL families be supportive and involved.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?

Those few ELL parents that are supportive often volunteer.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated? I have a bilingual family, mom and grandma, that even though they haven’t had kindergarteners for a few years now. They come as reading guests to my class for Dr. Seuss week. The grandma reads Green Eggs and Ham in Spanish and the mom reads the English version. It’s very neat to see and listen. They do a very nice job together.

Professional Development:

1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?

I really don’t know if our district is “highly qualified” under NCLB. As for the teachers, we are all professionals, we hold the licenses needed, we attend workshops, and we’re always looking for ways to improve and to teach effectively. I teach Kindergarten, my students don’t have to take MCA’s but I also feel the frustration about one standardized test that doesn’t give clear feedback for us to improve, all it gives is a label “needs improvement”, is this like a “D” or an “F”? I think we’d like to know exactly what needs to be improved.
2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
I’d really like to see that we use Early out days to collaborate and touch base with our grade level and the ESL teacher to review our new curriculum and see where our students are at regarding language, literacy and content.
Interview Questions for Teachers

Teacher has taught Title I and 1st grade throughout her five years in the district. She has experience working south of the United States where some of her former students were children of migrant workers.

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families? I try to communicate with our Spanish speaking families sending “home-link” and “home-connection” newsletters that come with our Math and Language Curriculum. Unfortunately, I don’t have printable newsletters in other languages for other ESL families; in those cases, I can only trust that students will be the channel of communication with parents.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
When necessary I contact the ESL teacher. If I need to send a note home I have used “Google translate” to send notes home but I have never received a response. When a phone call has been necessary communication has at times become impossible. During conferences, if parents of ESL students attend, they usually attend with the students and/or relatives who serve as interpreters. For the most part, I have seen parents of ELLs at the “Meet the Teacher Night” when students bring their school supplies or come to get a school supply list but not for conferences or special events. Actually I have seen very few ELL parents in the school in general or even in community events.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier? Yes, at times due to language and at times due to different customs or beliefs, not only with parents of my ESL students though.

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
We only have Language and Math curriculum. Our Language curriculum is just a year old. We’re all learning how to use and all the materials that come with it. It has a leveled readers and Extra Support materials. Our Math curriculum has a Differentiation Handbook with suggestions for ELLs, games and manipulatives but we hardly get a chance to use them.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
The Language and Math curriculum have Extra Support materials but there’s hardly time to use them and incorporate them in class. The ESL teacher checks out and uses some of the materials during her time with the ESL students.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
1. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
   The new Language Curriculum we have is aligned with the Minnesota Academic Standards. It incorporates content across the curriculum, science, social studies, reading skills, grammar skills and phonemic awareness.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
   I’m assuming the families get informed when they enroll but I was never given any literature or reference to it.
2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
   We have assigned time slots for our students to go to Tiers (Title I), Indian Ed. (tutoring and Culture support), Resource Room (IEP and 504 students), Speech and ESL. This year during an in-service I learned that my ESL students can also receive Title I services, Special Ed. can have IEPs, 504s like any other student, if they qualify. I’ll take all the help I can get for my students.
3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
   I have no idea! Do we have any?

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture?
   Actually our new basal is rich in diversity. Sometimes students share their connections when we do small groups but not very often, they are mostly quiet.

5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program?
   We don’t get enough ESL students for our district to require that we know another language but maybe our school could offer ESL evening classes through the Community Ed. to the parents of our ELLs. I don’t know of any heritage clubs.

Equitable Assessment:
1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?
   I don’t know if our district does any entrance assessment but the new Language Curriculum has an entrance evaluation for the grade level that the ESL teacher and I have collaborated and used. I think it was very helpful.
2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs?
   Definitely small group and 1:1 has allowed me to learn more about my students.

Parental Involvement:

1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?
   I’ve noticed that it’s hard for students from large families to get the time and help needed at home. Some families are supportive and interested and some have more immediate concerns as a family than academics.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   I haven’t had parents of ESL students volunteer in my class. Parents receive a note when activities are coming up and are invited to volunteer…the note is in English and I hope the student will share at home.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated? No. I haven’t had that experience yet.

Professional Development:

1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?
   I used to be part of the Title I program before I taught first grade, and I learned that our district gets federal moneys for Professional Development for teachers (not sure about paraprofessionals) to become highly qualified. I think I am considered “highly qualified” since I have the state required license for my position.

2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
   Time to collaborate, with special services like ESL, to get feedback and ideas from everyone.
Interview Questions for Teachers

Second grade teacher in the district for over 20 years.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families? I communicate with the ELLs teacher to let them know what the students’ need help with and what curriculum materials I have available for resources.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   I communicate with parents through phone conversations, emails, meetings, or conferences.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   No

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
   I have leveled readers in all areas of the curriculum that are written at the level of student independence.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
   Both reading and math curriculums have supplemental materials and lessons appropriate for ELLs.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
   No

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
   We have language and phonics skills incorporated with our new Journeys Reading curriculum. Our reading curriculum incorporates the MN state standards.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description? I am aware that there is ESL service provided to the students that speak another language at home. The ESL teacher sends an email at the beginning of the year to those of us that have ELLs in our roster.

2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
I have my identified students working with support people whenever possible. If they are identified as a possible candidate of a program, I make sure that they are in these programs. Students should receive all the help that is available.

3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service? I am not aware of support services outside of the classroom.

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture? Yes, our new Language curriculum Journeys has many culturally rich readings and lessons, mostly Hispanic or Asian, I invited parents of ELLs to participate, some came in for show and tell, some sent souvenirs for the students to see, some didn’t respond.

5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program?

I would seek help from the ELLs teacher if I was having difficulty communicating with the parents. I don’t see that our school board or administration would invest any time or money unless it was a noticeable need and parents were constantly complaining. I don’t know of any multicultural groups.

Equitable Assessment:

1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs? I am not knowledgeable on these procedures.

2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs?

I like working with students in a small group setting. We work on vocabulary, skills, and fluency during this time.

Parental Involvement:

1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth? Some are involved, and some don’t help their children with homework assignments.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation? I send a note home asking if anyone would like to volunteer their times to help with class activities or field trips. My class does a big writing project to throughout the year to learn about other countries and cultures. We receive mail, pictures, emails, etc. about places throughout the world.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated? Parents will send things in about certain areas of study to enrich what we are learning about in the classroom. Examples are books,
handmade items from different countries. Some parents/volunteers to presentations about certain topics.

Professional Development:
1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?
I don’t know exactly where we fall in the criteria as a district. I understand that we are qualified to teach a certain grade or subject if we hold the required license. A few people may be working under variances since we live in a small and rural community. As far as I understand a teacher is allowed a variance under the condition of working towards obtaining the license needed.

2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)? I think communication between the classroom teacher and the ELLs teacher is important. This collaboration helps make an enriching, valuable learning experience for ELLs.
Interview Questions for Teachers

Literacy teacher in the high school building, 6th grade. Teacher has taught Special Ed., 4th grade, 1st grade and 6th grade through out her almost 20 years of teaching experience.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families?
   Since the 6th grade became part of the high school we take part on the PBIS program here in the high school, BRONCO POWER: P-pride O-optimism W-welcoming E-engaged R-respect are reinforced daily as part of creating a positive behavior climate in the school.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   We use SchoolWay, Skyward, Google mail are what our district encourages us to use but I really don’t know how many parents or 6th grade students are familiar with these platforms. I also use emails and notes home when we have important activities coming up, especially if we need volunteer parents. For discipline issues I usually call the parents.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   Most of our ELL families have at least a parent fluent in English. The Asian, Hispanic and African ELL families I’ve worked with have been open and willing to listen and have a dialogue, on the other hand the Ukrainian/Russian ELL families have been a challenge to dialogue with. It’s frustrating because the ELL students want to assimilate and be part of activities. A few years back I taught in the 1st grade so I’ve had some of these students and families already and I can tell now that they’re in the 6th grade that the students don’t want their parents to know if we have a movie, a fun day, field trip, or guest speaker. They have learned to be selective with what they share with their parents, and that’s sometimes created us conflict here at school when the parents find out that their kids chose to take part on certain school activities.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
   Since we are not part of the elementary and we weren’t part of the high school either we were not considered as part of the grades that needed a new Language Curriculum. As a grade level, we decided to continue with RTI and Daily 5 for the Literacy piece. We also have a 6th grade cross curriculum year – round project called the MN booklet that includes history and literature related to MN American Indians, geography, poetry,
ancestry, elder interview, etc. This particular project is hard for most students but it is specially challenging for ELLs for many reasons: home academic support, knowledge of MN history, Internet resources, Google docs access. I’m not trying to sound negative toward the Ukrainian/Russian families but these are the students that struggle the most because they don’t allow English, Internet, computers, TV or movies at home. If it wasn’t for the ELL service these students wouldn’t be able to get much done across the curriculum.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
I am the literacy teacher in the 6th grade. Since we don’t have a Language basal, I decided that we do a class novel quarterly with group discussion and activities. Then the students have a list of leveled readers they can choose from according to their Lexile to have as their individual project. We meet 1:1 every Friday to conference about that novel: Vocabulary, Comprehension and Text-Analysis. The individual project is very useful to me, I am able to see the needs of my ELLs.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
Yes, as the content becomes more demanding I can see that those with academic support at home are growing but the gap is more noticeable with those who don’t.
I also see that my ELLs and non ELLs participating in extra-curricular activities have a motivation to do well in school, I mean, when push comes to shove, the students don’t want to get bad grades because they want to be part of their teams.
Students that don’t have an extra-curricular activity or group they belong eventually become apathetic towards their academic growth.

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
Our MN Booklet is an out cross-curriculum tool that helps us incorporate content and language, even Math, but it is challenging for teachers and students.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
I don’t know much. The district’s ESL teacher did a session on ESL during an in-service. It’s the first time that a workshop has any focus or mention of that particular student population since I am in this district.

2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
Unfortunately the high school doesn’t receive any Title I funds so during the school day we don’t have any support services other than Indian Ed. and ESL, and I wish they could work with other students that need that extra support too. We have Homework Help in the library after school and Targeted Services for Reading and Math.
3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service? I know that our ESL teacher has interpreted for us here at school, but I don’t know of any services of that sort.

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture? The MN booklet is an opportunity for students to share about their heritage and I have invited parents to share on class during the MN Booklet Expo. It’s interesting to hear about how some families set roots in the area.

5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program? For the language piece, it would be great if we could offer classes for parents. The cultural part is a very controversial topic, I don’t think administrators or teachers would go there, a suggestion could get misinterpreted as “politically incorrect” or discriminatory. When I was teaching in the 1st grade a few years back I had very unpleasant meeting with the parents of two of my ELL students over the daily pledge of allegiance, to the parents I was making their children pray to a flag, an idol. I tried to convince the parents that out of respect to the nation I ask that my students stand up like the rest, that their children could remain in silence. In the end, there was no consensus, the parents left the meeting offended. I was frustrated and upset myself knowing that the parents felt I offended their beliefs and also because I believe teaching the students appropriate etiquette and displaying respect is part of learning to be a good citizen. I’m glad I didn’t have to remove the activity from our daily routine as the parents requested but from that day on, instead the two siblings had to step out in the hallway during the pledge of allegiance as suggested by the elementary principal at the time. Privately, the principal recommended, it was best to stay away from controversies, as soon as you hear the parents call you on issues that to them has any relation with “discrimination”, “religion”, “minorities”, or “the first amendment” it’s best to avoid any conflict.

Equitable Assessment:
1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?
   I am only aware of the ESL testing that is scheduled every spring, a few weeks before MCA’s.
2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs
   I’d say that the Friday’s conference I have with each student allows me to assess the students’ fluency and production.
Parental Involvement:

1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?
   Most are supportive. Not too many are involved, like I said before the communication piece often depends on the students’ willingness to share with the parents. This is in general, not only for ELL students.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   In the 6th grade it is harder to get parents to volunteer, and I am think it’s partly due to lack of communication and also because the students are at an awkward age.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated? Yes, with the MN booklet there is a piece – MN Elder Interview – and students normally interview grandparents or great-grandparents, most of our ELLs are first generation Minnesotans so they interview their parents and we have had a chance to hear about the cultural shock for Swahili, Filipino, Peruvian, Colombian, Vietnamese, Russian and Puerto Rican parents and/or relatives.

Professional Development:

1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?
   I’m not familiar with the NCLB reports. According to state statute we have been working to develop a Teacher Evaluation Plan and it was approved before last school year. Some teachers went through the process of teacher evaluation last year, some this year. I don’t know who is informed of the results other than the evaluated teachers. It will be my turn next year.

2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
   I’d like to see that we learn the different communication platforms available the district has and that then we figure out a way to also teach the parents how to use them. Maybe we could collaborate and come up with lessons for parents as a requirement during parent-teacher conference. I definitely think we need more time to collaborate as a grade level and include ESL since it’s the only academic support for many of our ELL students. We are very fortunate to have the ESL teacher we have, she knows the curriculum, the students, is in touch with teachers and parents. I wish my ELLs could be served more than 30 mins. a week.
Interview Questions for Teachers

English teacher in the high school building, 7th and 8th grade. Teacher has taught English and Art at the alternative high school, 4th grade, and 7th and 8th grade English throughout her almost 12 years of teaching.

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families?
   Whenever I have a student new to our community I make sure I have a moment to visit with the student and to get to know a little bit about his/her family, reason for the move, what s/he likes, etc. before I introduce the student to the class. Visiting with students new to our district has often helped me keep an eye on the social, academic and language needs they may have before I contact the ESL teacher….There isn’t much parental involvement in the high school. If I see any parents, it’s during IEP meetings or parent-teacher conferences, and very often we don’t see the parents of the students that need help. I contact parents if there is a problem with the student otherwise I don’t.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   Grades are posted on Skyward for parents/guardians and students to see. In the high school students with grades less than 70% receive a mid-quarter and a quarterly printout and also parents, guardians and students receive this information through an automated informational email and/or phone call. I give my students a missing assignments printout every two weeks, students that bring the printout signed by a parent/guardian can get a full grade when turning in the missing assignment.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   When I taught 4th grade I had some interesting experiences with the Ukrainian/Russian families, it wasn’t the language, we could communicate well. They are very strict parents and the students learns to filter what they share at home. I don’t know how to explain it, other teachers warned me when I started at the elementary level to be cautious when but firm. I have to say I was kind of scared of maybe not using the correct words or being insensitive, as a new teacher in the elementary I wish I would have benefited from some guidance. I think it would be great if we could find a person in their community, that they trust, that could help the teachers understand their culture better. In the high school, I have seldom seen or communicated with the parents of my ESL students when I had any in class. I have had former ESL students whom I taught in the elementary in the 7th or 8th grade and I have noticed that I rarely had a chance to visit with their parents at conferences.
Appropriate Curriculum:

1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
   I teach 7th and 8th grade English. The few ESL students I had in the high school could speak and write in English but needed more vocabulary and grammatical support than the average although I have students that are not ESL students that have more grammatical errors and lack fluency. I think these students struggle in other subjects too, like science or history where the students need to listen to a lecture and take notes or read to analyze facts and events. Only in one occasion I had an ESL student that didn’t speak the language. He sat in my class for a few days until administration figured out a more suitable schedule for him.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
   We do DOL, Daily Oral Language everyday. We review and practice from mechanisms like capitalization and apostrophes to parts of the speech and parts of a sentence. All students in the district have access to IXL, this year I decided to assign it as homework as we work through the standards for 7th and 8th grade in class with DOL. On Fridays we play games like apples to apples or jeopardy as a fun way to increase vocabulary, students that didn’t do their IXL work for the week can use a chrome book to catch up instead of playing.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
   I think that as the content requires more background information, analysis and integration of knowledge and ideas students will need to spend more time reading and looking for comprehensible resources than the average student.

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
   At the beginning of each year during in service days we get together - the English Department, to decide the reading list for the year from 7th –12th. We choose readings that are grade level appropriate in vocabulary and text complexity. We struggle to incorporate non-fiction, this year we’ve been using the Smithsonian Tween Tribune.

Full Delivery of Services:

1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
   I don’t know much the families know. When I taught in the elementary I was under the understanding that the service was for students that had a different home language. I learned this from an email I received from the ESL teacher. Here in the high school I’m not familiar with the criteria.
2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
When noticing that new students to our district needed extra support, I talked to the ESL teacher and administration for them to start receiving service. A few years ago I insisted requesting ESL service for a couple of my students that were falling through the cracks, they needed extra support that they were not receiving at home. They weren’t eligible for any service but I knew they spoke Ukrainian/Russian at home. After sometime insisting that these students needed extra support, among the excuses given I was told that students could only receive ELL services for 5? or 6? years, therefore those who had received ELL service in the elementary are not eligible to continue receiving service in the high school because the funds only follow each student. I was also informed that some of these students that didn’t meet their MCA scores were already receiving extra support in Remedial English and Math instead of taking an elective.

3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service? None.

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture? In the 7th/8th grade list of novels we focus on American Indian culture following the standards. It’s the first time I was encouraged to have volunteer parents in class and it was a success.

5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program? No suggestions. I don’t know of any multicultural groups. When I was in high school here, we had Spanish club, for students that wanted to learn more of the Spanish language and culture but the participating students were not of Spanish heritage.

Equitable Assessment:
1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs? No, I don’t know about these procedures. I only know that there is a limit on the years of ELL service a student can receive, I suppose this must be the exiting procedure.
2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs

When doing book report activities, students have many options, they need to pick 3 forms for each novel we read. The options vary from “book in a shoe box”, painting, collage, song, poem, alternate ending, etc. I have noticed my ESL students pick more hands-on and artistic choices rather than speaking or writing. I try to have some time to visit with each student to talk to me a little about their artistic choice. I get a chance to learn more from my students when it’s not in front of the group, about their communication skills and their personalities.

Parental Involvement:

1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?

Very few are involved and supportive. In fact, there are some students, ELL or not, whose parents I’ve never met.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?

We only have one field trip for the 7th and 8th grade students to go to UMD Duluth or BSU Bemidji and not too many parents volunteer to be chaperones.

I recall two anecdotes with ESL parents who volunteered to chaperone.

In one occasion, a mom signed up to be a volunteer to go to a play at UMD. The mom showed up at the school parking lot at 5 a.m. in the morning as planned with a baby, a toddler and her 7th grader. The mom spoke English but I couldn’t get her to understand that she couldn’t get on the bus with her other children due to school rules, liability and child safety requirements in a school bus. She ended up going home with all her children.

I felt terrible but I just couldn’t let the other children in the bus.

The other occasion was just as uncomfortable, a mom got on the bus and sat next to her daughter. After a few minutes of waiting, it was time to leave and the mom wasn’t leaving. I approached her and told her it was time to for us to go. She nodded, after a few awkward seconds, I didn’t know exactly what to tell her so I asked her name and checked the list of volunteer parents. I knew her name wasn’t in the list but I checked still. I told her she couldn’t go with us if she had not signed up to be a volunteer about a month ago and attended the meeting. She told me that she wasn’t going to let her daughter watch a show if she didn’t know what it was about and that she understood chaperones were welcomed. I repeated myself and apologized, she left with her daughter.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated?

Not from ELL families but this year I was encouraged by the Indian Ed teacher to invite a couple native American students’ mothers to help make fried bread as part of ending a novel “The Absolute True Diary if a Part-Time Indian”. These two students are normally not engaged or in school but they were beaming that day. After that day, the students actually would approach me and talk to me about their day or weekend. Since this
activity I’ve been searching for novels with Russian, Asian or Hispanic influence at the grade level so that I can invite the parents of the ELL students.

Professional Development:
1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?

I’d like to know how many districts in the country are “highly qualified” under the NCLB since 45 states, including ours, requested a waiver for the NCLB law and then a renewal of the waiver. Forgive my negativity but if 90% of my students were failing, I think parents and administration would be questioning me on my expectations. It’d be obvious that the goals and expectations I have for my students are not real. I’m not good in Math and I’m not involved in the politics behind education but after the meeting we had where the principal told us that MN requested a waiver and was approved I got curious. I wanted to know, how do other districts do it? What are they doing differently? When I found out the numbers, all I felt is we’re never going to make it!

2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?

I don’t know. Collaborating with the ESL teacher and the English department to find novels and readings that would help our ELLs and former ELLs relate to, maybe we could get some parents to be part of an activity like the fried bread activity we had this year.
Interview Questions for Teachers

High school library Para-Professional (ESP) working in the district for about 10 years.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families?
   I don’t have contact with parents. As a library aid, I help ESL students access the resources they need, before, after school or during the school day.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   I don’t do grades. I communicate with the ESL teacher.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   No.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
   I’ve only helped ESL students that don’t know enough English to be actively participating in class.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
   I help the ESL students access IXL, RAZ kids, Quizlet, the on-line Health curriculum in Spanish, the on-line Math curriculum in Spanish, the online activities for the ESL textbook Ventures. CIS Spanish students under the guidance of the ESL teacher volunteer during their open hours to work 1:1 with the ESL students reviewing vocabulary flashcards, math, practicing how to make change, learning how to use a computer. I think they all help the students and work at their own pace.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
   No, I think they have a variety of options to improve their English.

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
   I help the ESL students follow the assignments lists and directions that the ESL teacher assigns. She sends me a copy in English and one in Spanish, so that I can guide and help the students.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
From the little that I’ve dealt with the health and math teachers when setting up or helping the ESL students access the online curriculum in Spanish, I can tell they are not very aware of how limited the students are in English, in the topics of the lessons and very often in technology. Even with the guidance counselor, I wish they had a plan or goals for high school ESL students to be able to graduate, kind of like a GED. A few of the ESL new students are placed at a grade level according to their age but not their true grade. The last ESL student I was helping was a senior but he told me that he last did 6th grade a few years back in his country. I wish this student had a chance to graduate.

2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
I don’t think there is much support for the ESL students that arrive and don’t know any English. The ESL teacher works with the student 30 minutes once a week, sometimes more. She goes out of her way to send assignments for the students while they are not in a class but here in the library under my supervision.

3. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
I don’t know of any.

4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture?
I don’t come up with lessons, I only guide the ESL students if they need help.

5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural pride club or program?
The two occasions that I’ve been taken part in helping the new ESL students that don’t know any English I personally wished I knew at least a little bit of Spanish. I don’t know that there is a multicultural club in town.

Equitable Assessment:
1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?
I’m not familiar with the testing but there have been times that the ESL teacher has reserved the conference room for ESL testing.

2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs
The ESL teacher has a Quizlet account and students need to practice and then take a test when they feel ready. They also are assigned leveled readers from RAZ kids, after listening and reading there is a 5-question quiz the students need to do. I personally like it when I have interaction with the student and we go over flashcards of vocabulary. I mark off in the list the words, phrases and sentences the student already learned and knows.

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?
   From what I gather from conversations with the ESL students, their parents would like for them to get an education but the family’s need to them to also help the family get on their feet.
2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   I don’t know. I am assuming not much since they’re working as much as they can.
3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated?
   No

Professional Development:
1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?
   I really don’t know what “highly qualified” entails. There are great teachers and staff. Teachers that actually teach. There are others that play movies, assign worksheets and frankly, don’t seem to care about the kids. There are paraprofessionals that go above and beyond and there are others that are on their phone instead. In my opinion, a responsible and conscientious employee is an asset to the district.
2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
   I’d like to learn some Spanish. I definitely think the ESL teacher does a great job providing resources to help me and the student during the “study hall”, “online Health”, “online Math” and “open hour” the ESL students spend here in the library with me. I wish the district would give us sometime so she could teach me more ways to help these students learn English. I see that these students are so eager to learn. I wish there was more that I could do for them. They are hardworking, polite and ready to learn.
Interview Responses - ESL Teacher

Interview Questions for ESL Teacher

I’ve been the district’s only ESL teacher for 13 years; during the first 6 years, I was assigned 2hr/day every week to serve ELLs in the district. The following 6 yrs. I was assigned 1hr/day every week to serve ELLs in the district and the last year I was assigned 25 minutes a day every week to serve ELLs in the district. The superintendent is considering the assignment of 25 minutes a day but only 3 days a week for the following school year.

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How do you see your role in promoting a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs and their families?
   I start the year by looking up the schedules of my returning ESL students on Skyward. I send an email to those teachers who have ESL students and give them a little background information of what being an ESL student means and what their commonly nights are. I contact the secretarial staff and ask if there are any new families enrolled that have a language other than English in their home language form. If there are any, I contact the families and inform them of the benefits of the ESL service.
   I am planning to put in a note in each teacher’s inbox, reminding them of the service I provide in case they notice a student who may need the service but I didn’t hear about yet. It’s happened before: either the parents didn’t turn in forms, didn’t know how to complete forms or they left the form incomplete.
   When a new family comes into our district I have a list put together with the county’s services available, sign up dates for extra curricular activities, free and reduced lunch forms, all in Spanish – unfortunately I don’t have any of this documentation in other languages but I think I could get them interpreted if needed.

2. How do you communicate with parents of your ELLs about their child’s progress in school?
   When I get a chance to and if necessary, I send a note home or a contact the parent over the phone or in person.

3. Have you ever been unable to communicate to parents/guardians due to a language barrier?
   I’ve not been unable to communicate but I’ve had to learn quite about our very conservative Ukrainian families. After 13 years working with these families, I have a better idea of what they would consider not appropriate for their children to participate in.

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. How do your Language, Math, Social Studies and Science curriculum address the needs of ELLs?
In the elementary the language and math curriculum have an ELL section with tips in the teacher’s manuals. The language curriculum has a set of tiered readings per unit. In these weekly readers, there is a reader for ELLs that is very similar to the struggling reader. The elementary language and math curriculums have an ELL section with tips in the teacher’s manuals. The language curriculum has a set of tiered readings per unit. In these weekly readers, there is a reader for ELLs that is very similar to the struggling reader. The new Language curriculum “Journeys” has ELL extra support materials developed for the pullout ELL instruction that goes with the Journeys Language Curriculum. After receiving sample materials from HMH, I requested a meeting with the elementary principal - who didn’t respond to the interview questions sent to her for this case study - to discuss the possibility of getting these materials. The meeting never happened, on passing the principal in the hallway I briefly explained the reason for a meeting to what the principal answered “the few ELL students we have speak English already, I don’t think we need that, we don’t need to meet”.

2. How do you think the curriculum you use reflect/not reflect best practice for ELLs?
I do the best I can with what I have. I borrow materials from the teachers. I start ahead of the teachers teaching targeted vocabulary, building background information and prompting students to make connections, as practice, so that they can scaffold when they do the group lesson in class.

3. Do you have concerns regarding the instruction of ELLs as it relates to curriculum?
My only concern is that although teachers have the best intentions, in their teaching they work with ELLs as if they were Tier I/Below Level readers, which is still helpful but administrators don’t give ELLs the attention needed. Teachers don’t accommodate the lessons or the assessment for ELLs. Teachers are not exactly pleased when I suggest alternative assessment for ELLs and I understand that they don’t want one more thing added to their responsibilities. Teachers accommodate assessment, allowing more testing time, if I request it ahead of time but I don’t always have time to make these requests. In the high school teachers don’t accommodate or differentiate lessons for ELLs, new comers that don’t have any English knowledge struggle the most. The district doesn’t know what to do with them. They are scheduled to be in my Spanish class in the high school or in the library working on online Spanish curriculum for Math and Health but there is not a true plan to help those students.

4. How do you incorporate both content and language objectives in your lesson plans?
From K- 5th I work with targeted vocabulary ahead of their group lesson in class. In 6th grade, I focus on tutoring and guiding students to complete their MN Booklet.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. What is your view on how are the ELLs, their families, teachers and staff aware of the district’s English Language Program and its description?
There is not a written plan in the district. There is a brief description in the WBWF from 2014-2015.
2. How have you utilized special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that identify and support language development in your instruction of ELLs?
   When I gave a workshop on ESL last August, I informed teachers that ELLs could receive other services if they qualify.
2. What kind of support are you aware of that addresses the language and cultural needs of our ELLs and their families (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
   I am the interpreter at meetings and I interpret documents like birth certificates or transcripts if they are in Spanish.
   I recently found out that some school districts pay for an AT&T interpreting service.
4. Do you include multicultural topics in your lessons? Does your curriculum offer opportunities for your ELLs to make connections, share their language and culture?
   I have learned to help the students make connections to self, to world, to text, with any lesson topic. It’s inevitable to end up including their L1 and/or culture of heritage.
   My students usually open up after I provide an example of my children or myself as a connection. I’d say we build a trust relationship.
5. Do you have any suggestions on how the district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the parents/guardians? Are you aware of any multicultural or heritage pride club or program?
   Information package in their home language and actually provided by the district.
   Providing phone interpreting services for ELL families to use.
   There are no multicultural or heritage club or program but sports or the arts (extra-curricular activities) are a great way for ELL students to show their talents, to have fun and be part of a group regardless of their language proficiency.

Equitable Assessment:
1. How familiar are you with the district’s ELL entrance, recognition and exit procedures for ELLs?
   I created an entrance test for students entering kindergarten because that’s normally the grade where new ELLs are enrolled.
   Recognition is from the home language piece in the enrollment form and continuation in the program from the WIDA results.
   Exit procedures, we only had one student achieve to level 6 in proficiency in the WIDA language proficiency standards before reaching 6th grade in these 13 years but students are only available for students for 5 years.
2. What kind of activities and assessment have you found helpful/not helpful in working with ELLs?
   In the very little time I have with my ELLs I only do informal assessment to track ongoing progress.

Parental Involvement:
1. How involved are ELL parents/guardians in their children’s academic success? Are they supportive of their growth?
   It depends, most parents of ELLs want their children to do well in school, to graduate, to participate in extra-curricular activities, to assimilate and live the American Dream. There is a particular group of parents of ELLs that is very conservative and traditional in their beliefs. They don’t exactly discourage education but it’s not a priority, particularly for girls.

2. How open are ELL parents/guardians to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   A few are open to it and they volunteer if they can. There are parents that don’t volunteer because they work long hours, other parents have young children at home, other parents think that they don’t have anything interesting to share, for others the language barrier and their level of education makes them feel that they wouldn’t know what to do.

3. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when ELL students and/or parents collaborated?
   No

Professional Development:
1. Under the NCLB criteria, do you believe the district is “highly qualified”? Would you consider yourself “highly qualified under the NCLB”?
   I don’t know. I’ve never signed a HOUSSE Application. Yes, I hold Teaching licensures for the two teaching assignments I have under contract.

2. What kind of professional development would you like to see provided for classroom teachers of ELLs (workshops, mentoring, collaboration, etc.)?
   SIOP
Interview Responses – Parents of ELLs

Interview Questions for Families

A’s family business after closing hours, early part of March.
A: Vietnamese speaking mother
A and her husband are in their late 40’s. A has worked in the family business since she was a teenager and her parents relocated from California soon after arriving from Vietnam. A and her siblings grew up in this community. A is the oldest of five siblings. A and her husband took over the family’s business since they were both very young, even before they got married. Neither A nor her husband even considered continuing their education after high school, they took on several responsibilities related to their family business. A and her husband have four children, in 8th, 12th grade and two currently attending their first year of college.
A’s children from young to old: N, T, K and C

B: Vietnamese speaking mother
B and her husband are in their early 50’s, they met in college in California, where B was an ESL student and her husband was an engineering student. They relocated to the area soon after getting married due to her husband’s new job. B soon heard of A’s family business and introduced herself. A and B soon became friends. B worked for A’s family’s business for a very short time before starting a family. B didn’t work while her children were young. B was an active volunteer at her church and at school. Now B works for the local community center. B and her husband have three children, in 10th, 11th and one currently attending PSEO.
B’s children from young to old: J, H, and E

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How does the school include you as a parent to promote a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs?
   B: I don’t think there is a difference between ESL or non-ESL families. I wish that they would go out of their way to welcome those families that are new to the community and provide some sort of guidance. When a parent goes to enroll a child in school, it’s like they assume that you know how everything works. When I enrolled E, I didn’t even know Kindergarten was an everyday program.
   A: I grew up here and I feel there is so much I don’t know about the school.

2. How does the school and teachers communicate with you about your child’s progress in school?
   A: My kids are older now and they check their grades online. I don’t have time to check. We get an automated phone message, email and text message if the kids are absent.
B: That’s an improvement, that way it gives you a heads up if your kid skipped school. Just in the last year I noticed you get a message or email if your kid has missing assignments.

3. How does the school/teacher keep you informed about special events, parental tips?
   A: They use the automated messages or phone calls to inform of special events.
   B: I received an invitation message to attend the Math night for parents to learn how to help your kids in Math. J told me that was only for 5th to 8th grade. I wish they sent a note with more details.

4. Have you ever been unable to communicate to administrators, teachers and staff due to a language barrier? What challenges have you faced in connecting with teachers?
   B: Not now but years ago when E was in 1st or 2nd grade, she was getting teased for wearing a Kimono for special events. I was very upset and E was too. The principal heard me but I don’t think I was able to express well that this was not about the kids making fun of a t-shirt or mixed match socks. It was about respect to our culture. I think the kids involved got a talking to but they didn’t apologize. E lost that initiative to want to share about our culture. It was sad. I’m still angry about that and it’s been almost 10 years.

Parental Involvement:

1. Do you know how your child is doing academically? How has the school assisted you and given your guidance to help your child set academic and personal goals?
   A: When I attended this high school we didn’t have college fairs, or any kind of guidance to help us figure out what we could do after high school. Now the school has a guidance counselor but the kids still don’t get the guidance they need.
   B: I agree. E was an excellent student and has vision but the boys J and H don’t have a clue yet what they’d like to do after school.
   A: My oldest C, he was a very strong student, very early in high school he knew he wanted to do something related to computers and that’s what he’s still planning to do. My daughter K, had overall good grades but she needed guidance. She’s in college now but she has changed schools three times, this 3rd time around she says she’s going to be an elementary teacher, hopefully this is it because college tuition is not cheap!
   B: I know that at other schools they have college fairs, guest speakers, aptitude tests and such to help students get ideas of what careers are out there.

2. How involved are you in your children’s academic success? How do you help your children achieve academic success?
   B: I don’t check their grades online like some parents do. I expect them to be responsible and talk to us if they are struggling or have a problem.
A: My husband and I are very busy with work and we don’t check grades either. My kids know we’ll support them in their dreams and goals but they have to earn it working hard too.

3. What would you like to improve in as a parent?
   A: I wish I had more time for the kids. My husband and I work a lot. We took our first family vacation last summer and we realized how fast our kids grew up.
   B: (nodded in agreement)

4. Have you been invited to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   B: After that incident with E, I decided I needed to be involved in the school. I asked the teacher if she needed a volunteer. She was very happy to have me. I was in the class almost once a week and I helped with art projects. I was mostly there hoping that E would regain the pride she had about her background.

5. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when you collaborated?
   B: Not always teachers were interested on my offers to become a volunteer in their class. The teachers that did were very grateful and happy to have me help and share. When my kids were in elementary school, I would bring a watermelon to class for Tet Nguyen Dan – the Vietnamese new year- and I’d tell the class the legend of the watermelon. The students enjoyed it. A few times the students would ask, how did the prince disobey his dad. They were intrigued about how terrible was what the son did to deserve being sent away to a deserted island.
   A: I haven’t been able to volunteer, in fact very seldom I attended my kids’ school events. I really regret that, I do now a little bit with D and N. I go to their basketball games when they are in town.

6. What would encourage you to participate and be involved with your child’s school and learning?
   B: Now that the kids are older there is less parental involvement in the school. We participate more for their sports.
   A: They are more independent and they help each other at home, too.

Appropriate Curriculum:

1. Do you know what is expected of you as a parent?
   B: to guide them and support them
   A: to provide them what they need, to encourage them to grow

2. Do you know what is expected of your child in the classroom?
   B: that they pay attention and do their work
   A: yes, to be responsible and respectful
3. Do you know what to expect from your child’s teacher?
   B: to teach, to give kids an opportunity to grow
   A: to help them learn

4. Do you know if your child receives ESL service? Do you have any comments on the ESL service provided to your ESL and the grade level’s curriculum?
   A: They used to, in the elementary.
   B: The kids felt comfortable and safe there with the ESL teacher. They knew they could ask questions, ask for help and talk about their culture and tradition without fear of being judged.
   A: That’s true, they still do. I don’t know what the curriculum was like but I know the ESL teacher was very helpful for both my girls, with their reading and math, it gave them confidence. They were both so quiet, more than my boys. The teacher got to know them well and the kids trusted her.
   B: Even in the high school, they looked for her, for help, and to take Spanish class with her.

5. What do you think is expected from the ESL teacher?
   A: That service wasn’t offered when I went to school here and I think it would have helped me so much. My siblings and I struggled a lot, with school and also to fit in. I’m the oldest, my parents didn’t speak English and they still are very strict in their beliefs and traditions. It was hard to make friends, I didn’t have a social life. I wasn’t the adult in my family but I felt responsible for my siblings at school, for myself, for my parents business, interpreting and helping them understand what they just get…it was too much. I never wanted my own kids to feel that way. The ESL teacher helps the kids be better students and guides them.
   B: I was an ESL student in college, the focus was to pass a test, like the TOEFL. I thought learning English was so hard but the culture is what to me was harder to get used to, the fact that I was expected to have a voice, I didn’t know what to do with that! I think in school the ESL teacher should help the students learn English, help them with what they don’t understand so they feel confident.

6. Are you familiar with your child’s schoolwork, what they are learning in each subject, Language, Math, Social Studies and Science?
   A: No, I really don’t know.
   B: I was involved when they were younger, now, I can’t keep track of what they do.

7. Do you think the curriculum, the assignments are appropriate for your child? Does your child struggle and needs a lot of help or can your child work alone?
   A: I know math has been a struggle for K, even in the high school. K and T did very well in English, in the high school. T is a perfectionist, and always worked hard to get the best grades. C and N worked hard too, but school seemed to be easier for the boys.
8. Do you have concerns regarding your child’s learning, language and subject content? 
   What are some ways the school can help to improve your child’s academic success? 
   A: No 
   B: No

Full Delivery of Services:
1. Does your child participate in special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that help learn English and other subjects? 
   A: Not any more. 
   B: It was helpful to the kids while they had the service. 
2. Are you familiar with the district’s English Language Program? Have you received any information about the program? (letter, school website, email, etc.) 
   A: No 
   B: No. I learned from the kids that they would leave class to go to Mrs. C’s. I didn’t really know it was ESL until I volunteered in the school. I never received a notice from the school or anything about my kids being in ESL…of course this was maybe 10 yrs. ago, things may have changed since. 
3. Do you know of any programs, organizations or services that help you, your family and children with your language and cultural needs (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service? 
   B: No, we help each other. 
4. Do you have any suggestions on how the school district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the teachers? 
   A and B: No
5. Does your family participate in a heritage pride club or program? 
   B: (laughing) We are not a heritage club but we became family. 
   A: New people in town from China, Thailand, Philippine and Vietnam stop by the family business and introduce themselves, some stopped by to see if we could get certain condiments for them, many others have become good friends, some asked for jobs and are still working with us. It’s almost as if coming the family business was an embassy a safe place. Several of these friends have relocated to bigger cities with nicer weather.

Equitable Assessment: 
1. Do you know if your child took an entrance or recognition test to receive ELL services? 
   B: I don’t know. 
2. Do you know of any other ELL testing and do you know the results of the evaluation? 
   A and B: No.
3. Is your child currently receiving ESL service and do you know what are the ELL exit procedures?
   A and B: No

Professional Development: Considering Community, School District, Teachers and Paraprofessionals.
1. What do you think the teachers need to know, learn or have to help your child be successful in school?
   B: I wish the teachers would have been more interested in learning about the kids and their background, their culture but I understand that sometimes teachers are afraid to be pushy.
2. What do you think the school district could do for you that would help you be active and supportive of your child’s learning?
   A: I don’t know. I think the kids in the high school need classes that help them decide what career or job is a good fit for them.
   B: I think so, too. It was hard for them, even to apply for colleges, they didn’t know how or where to start.
3. What do you think the community could offer you to be a better parent and an active community member?
   B: I work at the community center and not too many people are interested in the cultural or artistic activities. There is very little response from the community in becoming involved.
   A: It’s a tough community to be part of. If you don’t drink, hunt, fish, play hockey or gossip, you just can’t seem to be “in”.
   B: I had to be in the school everyday and make myself noticed and ask the teachers and administrators to consider me as a volunteer, that was the only way for me to know and understand what was happening in the school. Now that I work at the community center, we have an international night every winter. People from the community bring dishes from different parts of the world. Not too many people participate but those that do, are proud of their heritage.
Interview Questions for Families

Local coffee shop, early February.
A: Spanish speaking mother of 1 child in 5th grade
A’s child V
A is a single parent in her early 40’s, works at a local business and is also going to school to become a nurse like her sister. A and her daughter V relocated from their home country almost five years ago. She lives with her sister B and her sister’s family.

B: Spanish speaking mother of 2 children in 6th and 7th grade
B’s children from young to old: C.C. and J. J.
B is a nurse in her mid 40’s, she’s married and is very close to her sister A. B’s husband doesn’t have family in the community. B and her husband moved to the area for her husband work almost six years ago. B’s husband is D.

C: Spanish speaking mother of 3 children in 2nd, 6th and 9th grade
C’s children from young to old: P, H and Y
C is in her late 40’s. C has a degree in Nutrition from her home country but has never worked in her field in the US. She works from home, she telecommutes for an insurance company. C and B were introduced to each other soon after B and her husband relocated. A, B and C are originally from the same country. C is married to a local and she says that if it wasn’t for his family’s support and kindness she would have not lasted too long in this remote community.

Positive Learning Environment:

1. How does the school include you as a parent to promote a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs?
   A: The teachers are very nice and welcoming for the most part.
   B: In the school I think my children are happy. They have friends…the only thing, is that my children hate the bus. They want to get dropped off and picked up but they like to go to school.
   A: V has mentioned there are some children in the bus that call them “Mexicans” in a mean way and have mean comments.
   C: You know, I’ve heard from my older children, that students make comments about “Trump and Mexicans” around them at school but not at them on purpose. I’ve told H and Y, they’re just ignorant, don’t pay attention, we’re not even Mexican, we’re Colombian but my children know those other students are just instigators, trying to start trouble.

2. How does the school and teachers communicate with your about your child’s progress in school?
   B: The children bring notes in their homework folder, in the elementary…from the high school, hardly ever we get an automated phone message.
C: Oh, yes, when your child is negative $1.00 on their lunch account. My goodness you get an automated text message, phone message and email! That bothers me. It’s not welcoming at all!
A: Yes, it can get confusing...since we live in the same house, B’s family, my daughter and I, we receive the same or several messages in a week. The messages are brief and sometimes not clear, at least not to me. I rather read a message than listen to it... because it’s not fast and I can Google translate what I don’t understand.

3. How does the school/teacher keep you informed about special events, parental tips?
C: In the elementary the children bring a monthly newsletter with coming up events and parenting tips.
A: The school has a Facebook group where they post pictures of field trips and events.
B: I think they post some coming up events too for the elementary. My boys are in 6th and 7th grade and I don’t get any flyers from them. The school calendar has some dates already planned ahead like the Christmas concerts that we like to go to.
C: In the high school, from my children, in 6th and 9th grade, I’ve heard some teachers use Google to communicate with the students and the parents, but I don’t get those emails. I don’t understand, because I get some emails and alerts on my phone.

4. Have you ever been unable to communicate to administrators, teachers and staff due to a language barrier? What challenges have you faced in connecting with teachers?
C: No
B: No
A: When I was still learning English, B would help me with that.

Parental Involvement:
1. Do you know how your child is doing academically? How has the school assisted you and given your guidance to help your child set academic and personal goals?
A: I don’t help V as much as I used to in school. Even last year, I couldn’t help her with her Math. They have new ways to do Math. We usually ask JJ or CC to help her if she has trouble.
B: Now that the boys are in the high school, I see them doing homework but I don’t sit with them like I used to. D, their dad, helps them some too.
C: Yes, the high school gets harder for them. In the 6th grade the MN Booklet is a lot of work and it’s hard. I am glad the ESL teacher helps them with that at school but they still bring a lot of the work home. They are more involved in sports and they want to go out with friends.

2. How involved are you in your children’s academic success? How do you help your children achieve academic success?
C: My husband and I talk to the children about doing well in school. We work hard to give them the best that we can and we expect that they work hard too.
A: V knows, she knows how hard it’s been for us, for me, to work and take college classes. We love B and her family, but V and I want to have our own place. V and I talk about our goals and dreams.
B: (emotional) It’s been tough for us. It still is, and we don’t want the children to have it as hard as we did. D and I also encourage and push the boys to learn and work hard.

3. What would you like to improve in as a parent?
   A: I’d like to be able to give V everything she needs and wants.
   C: I’d like to have time, more time to spend with my children and the family.
   B: I’d like to be more patient with the boys. I didn’t grow up with brothers. CC and JJ are at an age that, sometimes they drive me crazy.

4. Have you been invited to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   C: Yes, I like to go and participate. If I can’t make it, my husband or his mom do.
   A: When I felt more confident about my English, I decided to participate and volunteer. It actually helped my English when V was in 2nd grade and I volunteered to help as a reading buddy. Do you remember B?
   B: Yes, you were so nervous. You had fun, and V was so proud.

5. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when you collaborated?
   B: Last year, when I went to JJ class to read our interview to his class. It was fun. I was actually surprised that some of his classmates had questions for me too, about the weather, sports and food differences between Colombia and here.

6. What would encourage you to participate and be involved with your child’s school and learning?
   C: When my children were younger it was hard to volunteer having young children at home.
   B: I have noticed a marked difference in communication between the elementary grades and the high school. I know my husband or I would be more involved if we were more informed.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. Do you know what is expected of you as a parent?
   A: To spend time with the children at home, helping them with their homework. This year I attended the after school Math program for parents. I took notes but I still could not help V.
B: In the earlier grades we had more homework – the parents- to work with the children on their reading log, to study for spelling tests, to practice math facts, etc.

2. Do you know what is expected of your child in the classroom?
   C: to listen, learn, show respect
   B: to follow rules and directions
   A: to participate

3. Do you know what to expect from your child’s teacher?
   C: to teach, to treat the children with respect
   B: to help the children with their questions

4. Do you know if your child receives ESL service? Do you have any comments on the ESL service provided to your ESL and the grade level’s curriculum?
   A: Yes
   B: CC does but JJ in the 7th grade doesn’t
   C: Some of my children do, in the elementary. I think the ESL helps my children a lot.

5. What do you think is expected from the ESL teacher?
   C: To help them with their assignments and if they don’t understand something that they didn’t learn or understand in class.

6. Are you familiar with your child’s schoolwork, what they are learning in each subject, Language, Math, Social Studies and Science?
   A and B: Yes
   C: Yes, with P, but not so much with H and Y, they need less guidance.

7. Do you think the curriculum, the assignments are appropriate for your child? Does your child struggle and needs a lot of help or can your child work alone?
   C: This year the English worksheets and the reading activities have been hard for P. The new book is hard for him. We read and practiced at home but those reading comprehension questionnaires were tricky. At conferences the teacher told us that it was hard for most children because they didn’t use these materials last year.
   B: This is my second year, last year with JJ and this year with CC working on that MN booklet. I have a better idea of what it is about this year and they are doing some more work at school. The ESL teacher helps too but the whole project is quite overwhelming, I don’t know how kids with less support do it!
   A: Math is hard, but it’s always been hard for me. I don’t want V to be afraid of Math like I’ve always been. I wanted to help her but these new Everyday Math methods are very complicated to me.

8. Do you have concerns regarding your child’s learning, language and subject content? What are some ways the school can help to improve your child’s academic success?
   B: No
   A: No
C: I have thought many times that they should offer the ESL class for high schoolers after school or once a week. My children loved their ESL teacher and got help from her across the board, assignments, math, research, etc. If they couldn’t complete something with her, they had an idea of what to do when they came home.

Full Delivery of Services:
1. Does your child participate in special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that help learn English and other subjects?
   B: Only the ESL
   C: My two oldest, did Title I and ESL when they were in 1st grade.
   A: Last year V did after school “Targeted Services”. V went Tuesdays and Thursdays only for math tutoring but other students went everyday. She didn’t like it. She said it was boring and that many of the kids were the kids that always get in trouble.

2. Are you familiar with the district’s English Language Program? Have you received any information about the program? (letter, school website, email, etc.)
   B: When I first enrolled my oldest, JJ, after the ESL teacher tested him, she explained some about the service.
   A: No, my sister told me what she knew.
   C: No.

3. Do you know of any programs, organizations or services that help you, your family and children with your language and cultural needs (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
   B: The clinic has interpreters that can be scheduled for patients that are not fluent in English.

4. Do you have any suggestions on how the school district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the teachers?
   A, B and C: No

5. Does your family participate in a heritage pride club or program?
   A, B: No
   C: No, but I wish we could have something like that nearby.

Equitable Assessment:
1. Do you know if your child took an entrance or recognition test to receive ELL services?
   B: I know there is an entrance ESL test, when I first enrolled JJ, he was so shy, I remember sitting with him for his test.

2. Do you know of any other ELL testing and do you know the results of the evaluation?
C: The kids have so much testing in the spring that I can’t keep track. I think it’s for ESL too.

3. Is your child currently receiving ESL service and do you know what are the ELL exit procedures?
   B: I don’t know what the exit procedures are but they don’t get the ESL service when they are in 7th grade.

Community, School District and Teacher Support and Development:

1. What do you think the teachers need to know, learn or have to help your child be successful in school?
   A: I wish they had the directions for the Math new methods in Spanish.
   B: It would be nice to see examples of the MN Booklet to get an idea of what to do and how to even start.

2. What do you think the school district could do for you that would help you be active and support your child’s learning?
   C: I wish the school offered more activities after school and during the summer for the children.
   B: Yes, varied activities, art, music, soccer…

3. What do you think the community could offer you to be a better parent and an active community member?
   C: The community has several activities and people are nice but as an outsider it’s very hard to fit in, to get your foot in the door for anything. If it wasn’t that my husband is a local and his family is here too. I would feel even more isolated.
   B: Yes, I am thankful that my boys have fit in and have friends but I agree with C. After living here almost 8 or 9 years community members still see me as a new foreigner. I guess it’s also my fault, I haven’t adapted to this culture. My husband and I are not outdoors people. We don’t own a shack, we don’t have a cabin on the lake, and we don’t fishing or hunt. We are not hockey or football fans. I have absolutely no interest in making quilts. One has to have money for all these hobbies too, even if we were interested we couldn’t afford them.
   A: I feel the same way, at work and at the college, people are nice and overall pleasant but the conversations don’t go past polite small talk. Of course, I have my sister, my nephews and my daughter and that’s all I need but I don’t know why that happens...maybe it’s just that we have nothing to talk about, some people know I am a single mother and have invited me to go out, I went out once and I didn’t like it. The music was boring, there was a game on TV, and people were talking and drinking. I knew right there it wasn’t worth it being away from my daughter one night for that. There should be family activities, for the whole family to enjoy, Yoga, hiking, biking, crafts, dance…you know.
Interview Questions for Families

A’s house, mid October
A: Spanish speaking mother of 3 children in Pre-K, K and 2nd grade
A’s children from young to old: Y, J and G

B: Spanish speaking mother of 4 children in Pre-K, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade
B’s children from young to old: X, R, A and F
A and B are cousins. A is in her early 40’s and B is in her late 30’s. A and B are quiet, they seem timid but they are friendly. A and B are relatively new to the community. A and B in other occasions have shared personal experiences from their home country Honduras, about the economic and social struggle they lived growing up there. Neither A or B are at an early reader stage in their native language Spanish. They have shared that their spouses didn’t go to school past the 2nd grade in Honduras, either. A, B and their spouses work at a local business, the owners are Spanish speakers also, Celia and Beto, are not their real names.

Positive Learning Environment:
1. How does the school include you as a parent to promote a welcoming and positive learning environment for ELLs?
   A: When we went with Celia – the wife of the owner- to register the children at school everyone was nice and friendly.
   B: Yes, one of the secretaries actually walked us to hallway where we’d find the children’s teachers.

2. How does the school and teachers communicate with you about your child’s progress in school?
   A: The children bring their schoolwork and tests home and show us the papers, with “stars” or “good”.
   B: (laughing) the children say they’re getting all “A”, I suppose, I don’t know what it says on the papers.
   A: (smiling) yes, for a while I thought they meant “eight” but, G, my oldest, explained that it’s the letter “A” and it is the best grade, must be like a 5 in Honduras. Right?
   B: In Honduras we use numbers for grading, not letters. I don’t understand how they score with letters.

3. How does the school/teacher keep you informed about special events, parental tips?
   B: Sometimes the children say they have a party or something. Sometimes they tell us after it happened at school.
   F: Mommy, we bring the notes home!
   B: Yes, but I don’t read English, I hardly can read Spanish. I only did until the 2nd grade.
   F: I’m in third grade this year!
4. Have you ever been unable to communicate to administrators, teachers and staff due to a language barrier? What challenges have you faced in connecting with teachers?
   A: I get messages on the phone but I don’t know what they are about. One time, I asked Celia to interpret for me, she said it was about the kids being absent from school and that I needed to call the school…when the school year started and Y was sick for some days and had to stay home. I sometimes call Celia, she speaks both but then she told me she couldn’t be calling for me all the time.
   B: I called the school a few times and when they don’t understand me, speaking Spanish or trying to speak English, they transfer me to the ESL teacher but she’s not always available. Sometimes I leave a message and then she gives the message to the children’s teachers or whoever.

Parental Involvement:

1. Do you know how your child is doing academically? How has the school assisted you and given your guidance to help your child set academic and personal goals?
   B: I suppose they’re doing well.
   A: I think the teacher or the ESL teacher would try letting us know if there is a problem. I think everything must be fine.

2. How involved are you in your children’s academic success? How do you help your children achieve academic success?
   B: I’m not involved. I can’t read or understand what the children do at school. F does his work, he’s very responsible. J never says he has homework but if he ever needs help, F helps him.
   A: Well, I encourage my children to do well in school. I wish they could get the education I didn’t get. I tell them to study while they can.

3. What would you like to improve in as a parent?
   B: I’d like to be able to know and understand so I could help them.
   A: I’d like to have more to offer them so that they don’t have to worry about anything but school.

4. Have you been invited to participate and volunteer in classroom activities (related to their culture or not), field trips or any volunteer participation?
   B: I don’t know.
   A: I don’t know, I’m guessing not.

5. Do you have any anecdotes to share about cultural enrichment activities when you collaborated?
   A: No
   B: No
6. What would encourage you to participate and be involved with your child’s school and learning?
   A: If I knew Spanish and I could read and write I wouldn’t feel like if I’m not even there. I’d like to at least be able to understand what people are saying.
   B: Yes, me too. I wish I knew what people are saying when they are talking on my behalf and my children. Like A says, I feel invisible or like a child; who’s going to want us participating, we are a burden an inconvenience.

Appropriate Curriculum:
1. Do you know what is expected of you as a parent?
   A: To love the children, make sure they’re clean and well fed, give them a home.
   B: Yes, we work hard because we love them and that’s why we’re in this country too.
2. Do you know what is expected of your child in the classroom?
   B: To listen to the teacher, to be respectful and obedient.
   A: Yes, to learn and do schoolwork.
3. Do you know what to expect from your child’s teacher?
   A: to teach
4. Do you know if your child receives ESL service? Do you have any comments on the ESL service provided to your ESL and the grade level’s curriculum?
   A: Yes, the ESL teacher works with my children.
   B: The ESL teacher is very nice, she helps the children and has helped us a lot.
   A: Yes, she has helped us too, and her family, when we first got here, she’s given us rides and interpreted for us, too.
5. What do you think is expected from the ESL teacher?
   B: Teach the children English.
6. Are you familiar with your child’s schoolwork, what they are learning in each subject, Language, Math, Social Studies and Science?
   B: No; not really.
7. Do you think the curriculum, the assignments are appropriate for your child? Does your child struggle and needs a lot of help or can your child work alone?
   A: I think so. This is a country of opportunities, there are nice schools, they give the kids lunch, and they give the children the textbooks they need.
   B: It has to be a 100% better than in Honduras. In Honduras you are fortunate if you get to 6th grade and only those that can afford it get to finish high school.
   A: …because they send them money from here or if they are rich.
8. Do you have concerns regarding your child’s learning, language and subject content? What are some ways the school can help to improve your child’s academic success?
   B: No
Full Delivery of Services:

1. Does your child participate in special instructional programs (Title I, Gifted, Sped, ESL, Remedial Courses, Tutoring, etc.) and services that help learn English and other subjects?
   A: The ESL, right? That’s all. I don’t know what else there is.

2. Are you familiar with the district’s English Language Program? Have you received any information about the program? (letter, school website, email, etc.)
   A: The ESL teacher called me at home and talked to me about the kids working with her on their English and how I needed to fill out some forms.
   B: Yes, she brought me some forms home in Spanish for the children to get free breakfast and lunch too.

3. Do you know of any programs, organizations or services that help you, your family and children with your language and cultural needs (translation services, translated documents, literacy services for parents, etc.) Have you ever used/needed to use this service?
   B: The ESL teacher put us in contact with the county, she interpreted for me a few times and then once the county figured out how to help us. Now there is a number I can call in Spanish and they connect me with the county. It’s all on the phone. I wish the school had the same phone system.
   A: The ESL teacher helped us talk to the clinic so we could get an interpreter when we go there; if we get there! (laughing) but that’s another long story.
   B: (smiling) She means because we don’t have a car and here everything is so far away. My G was so sick, with a temperature and we had to walk all the way to the clinic and back home because I couldn’t get Celia or her husband Beto to give me a ride.

4. Do you have any suggestions on how the school district could help you better communicate when there is a language and/or cultural barrier with the teachers?
   A: It would be great if the teachers knew some Spanish but it would be even better if I could learn English.
   B: The ESL teacher checks on us, over the phone or sends a note with the children. She sends a note in Spanish if there are special activities at school or in the community, like the free groceries (Ruby’s Pantry), children’s events at the library or at the Community Center; she also offers us a ride. I wish I knew some English or they knew some Spanish.

5. Does your family participate in a heritage pride club or program?
   A and B: No

Equitable Assessment:

1. Do you know if your child took an entrance or recognition test to receive ELL services?
   A: No, I don’t know.
B: Me either.
2. Do you know of any other ELL testing and do you know the results of the evaluation?
   A: The ESL teacher sends a note when the children will have tests coming up.
   B: Yes, but I don’t know about scores unless the children tell me, I don’t know what’s good or bad. I think they’re doing well in school.
3. Is your child currently receiving ESL service and do you know what are the ELL exit procedures?
   A: Yes, they work with the ESL teacher but I don’t know…what do you mean by exit procedures?..like when they graduate?
   B: Her kids and mine work with the ESL teacher but …when they are done?... I don’t know what time they start with her or what time they leave.

Community, School District and Teacher Support and Development:
1. What do you think the teachers need to know, learn or have to help your child be successful in school?
   A: I don’t know. The children are happy, the teachers are very nice. They like to go to school.
2. What do you think the school district could do for you that would help you be active and support your child’s learning?
   B: The children bring so many worksheets and flyers from school I wish they would come in Spanish too. I barely read or write in Spanish but I think it’s better than seeing lumps of letters that I can’t make sense of.
3. What do you think the community could offer you to be a better parent and an active community member?
   B: We both struggle with rides especially now that it’s cold and there is wind, rain or snow. We don’t have a car…
   A: (laughing) even if we did, we don’t know how to drive! The ESL teacher told us about the bus in town but it’s too complicated.
   B: Yes, for us it is. You have to call the night before and tell them when and where to pick you up and drop you off. I understand you get charged according to your route, I would need to know what the bus driver would tell me.
   A: Right, and they don’t have a Spanish option so it’s like nothing. And…that’s just how it is for most of the services in this community, if you don’t have a ride there…it’s just the same as if we didn’t know about the service.
   B: And in this community for everything you need to speak English, even at the grocery store. There are so many products I’d like to ask for and I don’t know how.

These two families left the area before mid November, soon after this interview. Their husbands were working fewer hours a week as the winter months approached in the business where they worked. The women were part-time workers and they lost their jobs. Both mothers at different times explained it was getting more difficult for them to
commute within the area as the weather got colder. They were more dependable of people giving them rides and simple errands like grocery shopping were an inconvenience. The mothers shared that they were sure that the few people they knew were avoiding them because they had become a burden to people.