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# Educating Spanish speaking immigrant children: a case study to investigate the experience of Spanish multilingual learners enrolled in one urban school in Boston

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
WHEELLOCK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Dissertation

**EDUCATING SPANISH SPEAKING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN:  
A CASE STUDY TO INVESTIGATE THE EXPERIENCE OF  
SPANISH MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ENROLLED  
IN ONE URBAN SCHOOL IN BOSTON**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

2023

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*Because everything starts with an “if” statement, what if I leave my country and travel to a place full of opportunities.*

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, my spouse Eric, my students, and my best friend Mateo. You all inspired me to work hard and to go beyond what I believed I could ever be.

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IN ONE URBAN SCHOOL IN BOSTON**

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**ABSTRACT**

This single case study explores education of multilingual learners (MLs) from Hispanic backgrounds in an urban inner city school. Using a single case study to answer the research questions was ideal because it allowed the researcher to investigate the school through an objective lens (Gomm, Hammersley, Martyn, & Foster, 2000). The main purpose of the study is to investigate the systems in place in a public school that prevent those students to reach their potential. Several factors have influenced this enlarging academic and achievement gap. Even though, Hispanic community making-up to 16.7% of the entire U.S. population and being the largest and fastest-growing minority group, reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011). Educating Hispanic children continues being a challenge. (Liu, C.-Y. A., & Liu, W.-H, 2012). However, with a growing number of Hispanic students in the US schools, it is imperative to improve their education and minimize those barriers. Using a single case study, this qualitative research focused on a single school in Boston where students Hispanic MLs students represents more than 50% of the schools' population. The researcher visited classrooms

and interviewed teachers to collect qualitative data. This information was later coded in themes to find trends and patterns affecting education of MLs. The researcher found that despite existence of several positive systems in place in the classrooms, such as knowledgeable teachers delivering sound lessons, and strong systems to address family engagement, other factors are preventing students' success. In effect, the results concluded existence of several opportunities to improve MLs education including changing language programs models and adding resources to be intentional in addressing MLs linguistic and academic needs.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**ACCESS** Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State

**BPS** Boston Public Schools

**CPT** Common Planning Time

**DBE** Developmental Bilingual Education

**DESE** Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**DOK** Deep of Knowledge

**ELA** English Language Arts

**ELD** English Language Development

**ELP** English Language Proficiency

**ELs** English Learners

**ESL** English as Second Language

**ESSER** Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief

**GenEd** General Education

**IC** Instructional Coach

**IEP** Individualized Education Plan

**ILT** Instructional Leadership Team

**K0** Pre-Kindergarten

**K1** Pre-Kindergarten

**K2** Kindergarten

**KWL** Chart Know Want to Know Learned Chart

**LOTE** Language Other Than English

**MCAS** Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

**MD** Multi Disabilities

**MLs** Multilingual Learners

**NAEP** National Assessment of Educational Progress

**ODA** Office of Data and Accountability

**PA** Phonemic Awareness

**PBIS** Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support

**PD** Professional Development

**PK** Pre-Kindergarten

**SEI** Sheltered English Immersion

**SIOP** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

**SLIFE** Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

**SPC** School Parent Council

**SpedEd** Special Education

**SSC** School Site Council

**SY** School Year

**T** Teacher Participant

**TBE** Transitional Bilingual Education

**TESOL** Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language

**TWBE** Two Way Bilingual Education

**WIDA** Wisconsin Delaware and Arkansas – Consortium Model to Measure of  
Developing English Language

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *Background*

Hundreds of thousands of new immigrants come to America from every corner of each continent to pursue their dreams. Immigrants made diversity one of the U.S.'s major assets, helping to shape the nation into the world's richest, most powerful country. However, one major issue resulting from the continuing need for immigration to a country with its own identity is the challenge of educating Multilingual Learners (MLs), also referred to as English Learners (ELs). Several programs have been implemented to address the task of educating MLs in the past hundred years. Unfortunately, for generations, educating MLs has been decided by policies focused on political and racial biases and prejudices instead of research-based programs addressing our ML's actual needs (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018).

Our country demands a steady stream of well-prepared professionals to enter the workforce to sustain our economy's growth. By unintentionally (or intentionally) weakening the education of those immigrants, we are doing self-inflicted damage against our own interests, not only because it is an anti-American value (as a nation built by immigrants), but also because we need those children to be successful in fulfilling the demands of a global competitive workforce in the near future. In fact, the United States is confronting a decreasing population trend right now, creating a gap in the workforce

(Marx, 2014). In addition, since our economy is tied to the production of human and intellectual capital, it is imperative to focus on the success of educating Hispanic immigrants for the greater good.

Although many politicians will claim that immigration is a threat, it is not. On the contrary, we have a great opportunity right now to educate our younger generation in order to remain competitive worldwide. According to statistical data among other ethnic groups, Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States (Patten, 2013). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that male and female Hispanics over the age of 20 contribute to the workforce at higher rates than other ethnic groups. Most recent data shows that the Hispanic community in the United States has contributed significantly to American economic prosperity in recent decades and will continue to do so over the next 10 to 20 years.

Many factors have contributed to slowing the progress of educating immigrant communities. For example, in the late 90s and early 2000s, a series of English-Only proposals, including Proposition 227 in California, Proposition 203 in Arizona, and Question 2 in Massachusetts, changed the direction of ML education in the United States (Guo & Koretz, 2013). In addition, in recent years, the political climate has amplified fear of immigrants (especially from Hispanic countries), resulting in racist practices affecting American schools (Viesca, 2013). Boston is not an exception: after passing Question 2 in 2003, English-only policies changed thirty years of Transitional Bilingual programs

(TBE) into Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs. The impact of this change is still a dilemma (Rodriguez Zelaya, 2014). While advocates of SEI describe it as the best way to educate our MLs, for others, it is just a “sink or swim” model that continues enlarging the educational gap between native English speakers and MLs in Boston Public Schools (BPS) (Uriarte, 2010). SEI programs were introduced as a response to the education reform movement in the late 90’s. The program integrates language development with techniques to make curriculum comprehensible (Short, Fidelma, & Louguit, 2012). In addition, according to the language of instruction being only in the target language (English), the instructor is a language specialist who delivers content to MLs integrating both content and language.

After passing Question 2, Boston Public Schools (BPS) implemented SEI as the main program to educate MLs. SEI advocates argue that the brain is already predisposed to acquire several languages; therefore, ML students adjust quickly to the immersion model and accelerate their English language development (ELD) (Chey & Gittelsohn, 1999). In contrast, other research studies for second language acquisition find SEI models less effective than dual-language or bilingual education programs (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Yet the academic outcomes and the school experience from these programs could be very different for Hispanic MLs depending on the school and program they are assigned to (Uriarte, 2011). This research study aims to explore the SEI program and other factors in the education of MLs for one school in Boston with a predominantly Hispanic population.

This research is necessary because Hispanic students continue to underperform academically in BPS. Despite the fact that Hispanic students made up about 42% of the BPS student population for the school year 2019–20, there have been few studies to investigate why they are underperforming. In fact, according to data from the state’s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, 2019), Hispanic ML students have performed historically at lower rates compared with their White and Asian peers on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The data also shows that Hispanic MLs are less likely to finish high school and have graduation rates lower than any other ethnic group (BPS’s DESE Report Card, 2018). Based on those facts, my research study will explore how MLs from Hispanic backgrounds are being educated. Exploring the experiences of Hispanic MLs as early as elementary school is important in order to highlight possible factors that influence outcomes at early stages that could be addressed before they move to middle or high school.

### **Problem of Practice/Research Question(s)**

This research study will focus on one problem from the list of issues mentioned previously, which is exploring the success and/or deficits of language programs used in educating Hispanic MLs in one school where they represent more than 50% of the school population. In order to investigate the outcome of the education of MLs in this school, the research will focus on answering the following questions:

1. What existing supports addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs are evident in the school, in order to successfully support academic content and language development of MLs in the school?
2. Why do participants think that existing supports are not addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs, and what other supports or systems do they think are necessary in order to close the achievement and opportunity gap?

To answer those questions, my dissertation research will explore current structures available at the school to address the needs of ELs. I will conduct a single case study using a qualitative research method. This case study will include a collection of multiple sources including SEI and ESL teacher interviews, lesson observations, and post observation meetings with each teacher observed. Data collected directly from instruction will provide information about classroom level instruction for MLs. Additionally, the researcher is collecting data from a parent focus group conducted in their native language (Spanish). Finally, additional data will be collected from Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) agendas, professional development (PD) presentation slides, the school's strategic plan, and from the DESE 2022 webpage.

First, I will include current DESE and BPS school data; in this initial phase I am collecting available school data including students' and teachers' demographics and student enrollment. The next phase will include qualitative research using anecdotal data

collection and a series of interviews of SEI and ESL teachers responsible for educating Hispanic MLs. Additionally, I will collect data by performing observations of teachers' instruction in SEI and ESL classrooms. Phase three of the case study will analyze data to answer the research questions. Additionally, I will review available literature reviews regarding best teaching practices for educating Hispanic MLs. This final stage is important in the case study because it will identify current structures in place at the school, highlighting the school's strengths and opportunities to examine the existing education of Hispanic MLs. This phase will explore opportunities to identify the current educational systems in the school for MLs and consider how available research about educating ELs could be implemented that may enhance school effectiveness in MLs education. One important element of this case study is the information collected and analyzed from educators who have implemented SEI programs and ESL teachers who serve MLs.

### **Statement of Positionality**

While conducting this case study I am aware of the existence of social identity dimensions, as well as the multiple intersectionalities where I belong. Those social identities may influence my views and my implicit bias in the research study. I am a middle-aged married Latino who emigrated from Colombia twenty years ago. I was raised catholic in a monolingual Spanish speaking country, where Spaniards brought a brutal colonization, killed, and labeled indigenous people as savages, ignorant, and less

than humans. I am a mixed-race male, bilingual, bi-literate, and working to become multicultural and antiracist. Growing up, I was a poor kid in a family of five siblings with uneducated parents.

As part of the Hispanic immigrant community, this research is very close to me. Not only because I have been teaching Hispanic MLs for almost twenty years, but also because as an immigrant myself, I feel that I understand immigrant families and their fight to provide a better future for their children. I also see the world through the lens of bilingual students who struggle to learn a new language and to compete in a world of standardized tests and systems of inequalities telling them that they are not smart enough to be successful. Being part of a minority community in this country is a constant struggle, however it is also an opportunity to practice resilience, determination, and collectivism. My experience working with Hispanic MLs students in this research study will add to my own experiences and expertise, and I am aware that at times it may also limit my objectivity in collecting and analyzing data.

Finally, I am conducting this research study in the school where I have worked for the past ten years. During those years, I have worked in different roles. I started as a second-grade teacher in a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classroom, then as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for first and second grade, and as a Special Education teacher supporting second and third grade. For the past four years, I have worked as the Assistant Principal of the school. I have been a member and participated in

the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), Data team, Behavioral Team, and Leadership Team. In my current role, I also supervise seven of the eleven teachers participating in the research study. This position of power and my knowledge of the school may impact the responses during the interviews and field observations since staff and students may be influenced by my role of authority in the school and could change their behavior in my presence.

### **Research Design**

In order to explore the possible causes of the academic and achievement gaps in the education of Hispanic MLs in this urban elementary school, I am proposing to conduct a single instrumental case study. A single case study will explore “why” the current systems in the school to support the education of MLs are not addressing their needs. In addition, the case study may also answer how the school could improve its current support for MLs to close achievement and opportunity gaps between Hispanic MLs and the wider population. The site selected to conduct this research is an elementary school in Boston where about 65% of its students are Hispanics, and more than 44% of them are MLs. In order to objectively collect, present, and analyze research data, this case study has three phases using a qualitative research approach. The research study aims to have a pragmatic focus; therefore, using a single case study methodology is the best approach to accomplish this purpose (Creswell, 2017). This case study approach will present an opportunity to observe and analyze the impact of educating Hispanic MLs

in SEI programs in this specific school. After twenty years of implementing SEI, it is important to analyze the effects of the SEI program in the education of our MLs students, including exploring the experiences of SEI, ESL, and regular education teachers in implementing the SEI program since they are directly responsible to educate our Hispanic MLs. This information will be coded and analyzed in themes to explore teaching practices that may be closing or enlarging educational gaps for ELs.

This research study consists of three phases. The initial phase includes collecting, analyzing, and presenting school data available on the Boston Public Schools and DESE websites for school year (SY) 2021–2022. This information will be used to create an overview of the school and will include the following data points: student enrollment and demographics, teacher/student ratio, and teacher demographics.

Stage two will focus on qualitative data collection. To answer the research questions, this single case study uses a qualitative research approach from a single elementary school. During this stage, the researcher will collect qualitative data from educators, parents, and the school community to explore school systems in place affecting Hispanic MLs education. This in-depth description and analysis explore information and aims to provide understanding of students' language acquisition, as well as their academic progress. Data collected by the researcher is coded using NVivo and organized in themes using the Blueprint for English Learners Success (DESE, 2019). The Blueprint for English Learners Success covers four pillars, with each pillar addressing

education of MLs at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. For this research case study, the researcher focused on the first two levels, classroom, and school. The four pillars are:

- School Culture, which encompasses shared responsibilities to educate MLs, effective family engagement, and asset-based teaching and learning.
- Access to Educators, this pillar covers effective, well prepared, and culturally responsive educators, educators with high standards for MLs, and educators with the resources they need.
- Opportunity and Support, this pillar includes meaningful and rigorous learning, academic and linguistic support, and social emotional support.
- A Plan for Success, this last pillar pertains to high schools only, therefore, will not be used in the research study.

The information collected targets deeper knowledge of the school's systems in place to answer the research questions; "how" are we educating our MLs, and "why" there is an academic and achievement gap between Hispanic MLs and the general population. The researcher considers that conducting a single instrumental case study for the school would provide in-depth information to answer the research questions.

### **Research Site**

In fall 2009, the leadership of the district was working to identify its lowest-performing schools as part of the creation of the district’s five-year strategic plan, (Chu, 2011). During the same timeframe, related developments were unfolding at the state level. First, Governor Deval Patrick signed a significant piece of education reform legislation into law in January 2010. This legislation, called “An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap,” gave school districts authority to put reforms in place for schools that are identified as “Level 4,” or chronically underperforming (AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP., 2010). The school District and DESE collaborated on the final list of Level 4 schools—based on MCAS performance, student growth, percent of students in warning, and high school graduation rates—and in March 2010, 12 schools were designated Level four. The school site was one of those schools. As part of the strategic plan, the federal and state government allocated additional resources to accomplish short- and long-term goals to turn the schools around. In Fall 2010, the district launched full implementation of its turnaround strategy at the school.

Implementation included the following elements: increased instruction time, additional time for professional development and teacher planning, new relationships with community partners to provide social and emotional support, and measurable annual goals. School leaders were replaced; teaching staff were asked to reapply for their jobs, and more than 50 percent of the staff were replaced. Federal funding, distributed at the

state level, was granted to the turnaround schools as part of a competitive application process, covering turnaround costs, particularly the extended day.

For School Year (SY) 2013–14 the school was officially out of its turnaround status and the \$2.4M allocated in the previous three years were reduced from its budget. The principal also left the school, and the new principal used all the resources to maintain the structure that had led the school to improve. Three years later in SY 2017–18, the whole administration team left the school. The new principal received the school with a \$500K reduced budget, which led to elimination of three administrative positions from six to only three. After leading the school for two years, the principal’s contract was not renewed. The staff, families, and community were experiencing distrust in the school and there was a very low morale among the staff. A new team was brought to the school. The new team was charged with rebuilding trust, improving the morale of the staff and improving students’ academic performance.

The site selected to conduct this research study is an elementary school located in Boston. The school hosted about 455 students for the SY 2021–22 (DESE, 2022). School enrollment declined after the COVID-19 pandemic, dropping from 552 students in SY 2020–21 losing about 100 students. Despite a decline in enrollment, the school maintained all teaching staff. Currently the school has five different distinct programs as follows.

1. SEI Spanish Program with one classroom per grade level from K1 to 5th grade.

2. SLIFE (Students with limited and interrupted formal education) one class hosting 3rd and 4th grades.
3. Inclusion Program with two classes per grade level from K1 to 5th grade.
4. General Education program, with one classroom per grade level from K1 to 5th grade.
5. Multi-disabilities Program with one classroom per grade level from K1 to 5th grade.

MLs receive instruction mostly in the SEI Spanish classrooms if their ELD level is 1, 2, or 3 (Beginning English proficiency). For students with ELD levels 4 and 5 (intermediate to advanced English proficiency), are placed in either inclusion, or general education classrooms, and receive their ESL services following pullout models by a certified ESL teacher. Then again, MLs placed in SEI classrooms receive their ESL services embedded in their literacy block by the SEI teacher, who is ESL licensed with SEI endorsement.

This case study explores education of Hispanic MLs in this PK–5 elementary school in BPS. There are several reasons to select this specific school to conduct this case study. First, the school has a high incidence of Hispanic, 60% of the total student population, and about half of the total student body is identified as MLs. The case study focuses on exploring structures and current systems in place to educate Hispanic MLs including the SEI program, curriculum materials, vertical and horizontal collaboration

opportunities for staff, family and community involvement, school culture, and teacher lesson delivery in classrooms where MLs receive their core instruction. Currently, based on the school performance during the school year 2018–19 DESE Accountability System has identified the school as requiring assistance or intervention from the state. The school represents the district’s demographics and language proficiency; there are more than eleven different languages spoken at the school, with Spanish being the second more prominent after English. African American students represent about 25% of the student population, right after Hispanic, which are 62%. Students come from fourteen different Boston neighborhoods. With a total of 552 students enrolled in SY20–21, about 45% were MLs, and Spanish is spoken at home for more than 40% of the students.

### **Significance of the Study**

Historically, and for a variety of reasons, labeling of MLs has been focused on students’ language limitation around English proficiency, framing multilingual learners in terms of their English weakness. This is a problem that urgently needs to be solved (Safford & Drury, 2012). Many efforts to change this deficit lens model have been presented, aiming to create a more positive label for speakers of other languages such as the term emergent bilinguals. Ofelia Garcia (2011) defines MLs as Emergent Bilinguals calling attention to the potential to develop bilingualism, and bi-literacy in students for whom English is a second language. As a result, this perspective views bilingualism as more of a cognitive and social resource, rather than deficit. Emergent bilinguals are

considered as having an edge over monolingual English speakers who will find it more difficult to become bilingual (Garcia, 2011).

The way teachers see our MLs is very important because teachers' attitudes toward MLs students have a direct impact on their teaching methods (Dobbs & Laider, 2021). This research is necessary because Hispanic students have always been presented as students who come with a deficit, so exploring the experiences of Hispanic MLs as early as elementary school is critical in order to identify early-stage factors that influence results that may be addressed before MLs progress to middle or high school. This research study will explore those factors to highlight potential gaps in the education of MLs. Research about the SEI programs in Boston Public Schools is scarce, so this case study might help to find possible changes that may improve the education of MLs by highlighting students' positive attributes instead of their deficits, and focusing on where the educational system can maximize their potential.

## **CHAPTER TWO LIT REVIEW**

### **Hispanics in the United States**

This literature review is intended to display important information about education of multilingual learners (MLs) from Hispanic backgrounds. Hispanic students acquiring subject content knowledge and language skills at the same time in American schools have been growing in number steadily, in fact, the number of Hispanic students in the nation's public schools nearly doubled from 1990 to 2006, accounting for 60% of the total growth in public school enrollments over that period (Zehr, 2008). Data that is more recent brings those numbers to a higher rate, making the education of Hispanic students a crucial issue to the future of the American workforce. By 2016, the number of Hispanic students doubled compared with 1996, from 8.8 million to 17.6 million. According to the US Census, Hispanic students now make up 22.7 percent of all people enrolled in school (Bauman, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the percentage of public-school students in the United States who were Multilingual Learners (MLs) was higher in fall 2018 (10.2 percent, or 5 million students) than in fall 2010 (9.2 percent, or 4.5 million students). Spanish was the home language of 3.8 million MLs public school students in fall 2018, representing 75.2 percent of all ML students and 7.7 percent of all public K–12 students.

## **Academic Gap**

Because of these population trends, simply ignoring lower graduation rates and poor results by Hispanic MLs students in standardized tests is not an option. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses student performance in reading at grades 4, 8, and 12 in both public and private schools across the nation. NAEP reading scale scores range from 0 to 500 for all grade levels. From 1992 through 2019, the average reading scores for White 4th-graders were higher than those of their Black and Hispanic peers. The White-Hispanic achievement gap in 2019 was 21 points. At the state level in Massachusetts, Hispanic students perform similarly. An accelerated change in students' demographics across school districts in Massachusetts is an unstoppable trend. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, 2021) portal, the total enrollment for the school year 2020–21 was 911,465, a 44,098 decrease in the total number of students from 2010. However, when we break down this number by race, the state has increased its African American students by about 7,000 students and the Hispanic population by more than 14,000 students. In contrast, the number of White students decreased by more than 140,000. Hispanic students now represent 22% of the total student body in the state, and non-White students make up just under 46%. The current educational system is failing our diverse student population, and it's clear that change needs to happen in holding teachers accountable for students' outcomes.

### **Economic Implications**

Apart from our moral obligation to offer the best possible education to our children, there is also a benefit for the American economy if our schools can provide generations of talented workers. In recent decades, the Hispanic community in the United States has made a considerable contribution to US economic growth, and it will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Hispanics today have much greater rates of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship than the rest of the population in the United States. The Hispanic community is poised to contribute more to the US economy in future decades, which will have a considerable beneficial impact on the total rate of economic growth. Hispanics are the country's youngest and largest minority population, and they are on their way to becoming a larger share of the workforce. This trend will be bolstered by rising fertility rates, net immigration, and rising labor force participation rates (Kirkegaard & Huertas, G. 2019).

### **Federal Policies Regarding Multilingual Learners Education**

Because of the complexity of the education system in the US, each state is responsible for interpreting and executing policies regarding education, so it is important to take a closer look at those policies at the federal, state, and school district level. Federal policies have had different interpretations, leading to discrepancies in education outcomes for Hispanic MLs. There are regularly inconsistencies between the intention of

the law and its application in the school districts. Those different interpretations have created a system of inequalities perpetuating the achievement and opportunity gap between Hispanic and White students (Calderón, Slavin, & Marta Sánchez, 2011). In order to understand the policies surrounding MLs education, we could go back as far as the colonial era, however, we are going to start with the U.S. Supreme Court rule on *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 desegregating schools. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. "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, sec. 601, 1964). The policy of desegregating schools, ruling that separate but equal was unconstitutional, changed the educational system not only for Black and White students, but also for Hispanics. As a result, thousands of Black teachers and administrators lost their jobs; Black students did also lose their role models and dedicated educators who worked to improve education for Black students. Sixty years later, African American and Hispanic students are still receiving their education in segregated underfunded schools (Richard & Howard, 2004). States have intentionally failed to integrate schools, since majority White school boards (Tilghman, 2011) lead most school districts. The next attempt to provide adequate education for MLs came after the ruling of *Lau vs Nichols*, 62 Calif. L. Rev. 157 (1974). The ruling established "equal protection for non-English speaking school children". The case was presented on behalf of 1,800 Chinese American students attending San

Francisco Public Schools. Their complaint was that they were denied educational opportunities because they did not speak English. A favorable result for the plaintiffs changed the way school districts educate their English learners. In a unanimous decision, the judges ruled that MLs could not be placed in mainstream English-only classrooms without additional instructional adaptations. While the Lau decision has been very influential, the federal system influenced all different interpretations within the fifty states, and therefore U.S. state departments of education and school districts are the arbiters of how Lau is interpreted and appropriated. In most cases, again, the influence of White led school boards created segregated classrooms and inequitable practices affecting Hispanic MLs (C Johnson, Stephens, Nelson & E Johnson 2018).

From its creation in 1968 to its most recent reauthorization in 1994, the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) has been the major federal legislative endeavor to offer equal educational opportunity to non-English speaking students (Wise & Garcia, 2013). The next court case helped to clarify how programs used to educate non-English speakers should be implemented. After the 93rd Congress passed the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974 (EEOA), it obliged states to take steps to remove linguistic obstacles that prevented its resident students from participating in equal education opportunities (Sutton, Cornelius, and McDonald-Gordon, 2012). After several litigations in different states, especially Texas and California, The Fifth Circuit Court established a three-pronged, science-based test in *Castaneda v. Pickard* in 1981, which required English language assistance programs for MLs to: (1) be based on sound educational theory; (2)

have adequate resources for program implementation; and (3) provide continuous assessment to determine if students' English language deficits are being addressed. 3

Castañeda v. Pickard, 648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir. 1981). The following educational programs were accepted and adopted by school districts to educate ELs (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018).

The following table 2.1 summarizes Language programs for MLs:

**Language Programs**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>LANGUAGE of INSTRUCTION</b>	<b>COMPONENTS</b>	<b>DURATION</b>	<b>GOALS</b>
English as a Second Language (ESL)				
English as a second language ESL pull-out	90 – 100 % in English, may include some native language support	Mainstream education: students pull out for ESL instruction, teacher certified TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages)	As needed	Linguistic Assimilation, remedial English
English as a second language ESL push-in	90 – 100 % in English, may include some native language support	Mainstream education: ESL teacher, teacher works alongside with the content teacher, teacher certified TESOL	As needed	Linguistic Assimilation, remedial education within mainstream classroom
Sheltered English Immersion SEI	90 – 100 % in English, may include some native language support	Content instruction in English, students grouped by language proficiency (ELP) teacher is certified in TESOL and SEI	1–3 years	Linguistic assimilation, exit to mainstream education

Bilingual				
Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Early exit bilingual education	Initially 90 – 50% native language and 10 – 50% English; native language gradually reduced to 10% and English increased to 90%	Initial literacy usually in native language; some content in native language, ESL and content instruction at ELP level Teacher certified in bilingual education	1–3 years, students exit as they become proficient in English	Linguistic assimilation, English acquisition without falling behind academically
Developmental bilingual education (DBE) Late exit/one way bilingual education	Initially 90% native language, gradually decreasing to 50% or thereabouts, native language is always available. OR, 50/50 from beginning	Initial literacy focus is in native language, English is simultaneously introduced, content in both languages, teacher certify in bilingual education	At least 5–6 years	Bilingualism and bi-literacy, academic achievement in English
Two-way bilingual education (dual language programs)	90/10 model: 90% native language, 10% English in early grades, 50/50 Parity of both languages	English speakers and speakers of languages other than English (LOTE) receive literacy instruction in both languages, teacher certify in bilingual education	At least 5–6 years	Bilingualism and bi-literacy, academic achievement in English

**Table 2.1 Types of Educational Programs for English Learners, According To Ofelia Garcia & Jo Anne Kleifgen, Educating Emergent Bilinguals (2018)**

### CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This single case study focused on an urban school in Boston where Hispanic MLs represent about 60% of the student population. The research is looking into schools' systems to educate Hispanic MLs at the classroom and school levels. This research study is necessary because currently Hispanic MLs are underperforming in state standardized test scores, according to the DESE accountability system.

In order to answer research questions, I collected data for this case study from different sources at a single site, including teacher interviews, observation of direct classroom instruction, Professional Development (PD) documents, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) agendas, and Common Planning Team (CPT) agendas. Qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and field observations is coded by themes and triangulated using NVivo to find trends and patterns in MLs education. The following table summarizes the data collection by category.

#### Data Sources

Interviews	Focus Groups (zoom)	Observations And Document Reviews
(7) PreK to 5th grade SEI teachers	(1) Parents Focus Group with five parents	(11) Classroom Observations of Teachers in the Research Study (45 minutes each)
(4) 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 5th ESL Teachers		(2) Common Planning Team Agenda Meeting Documents
(11) Post Observation Meetings – Study participants		Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) Agenda Documents Meetings SY 2021–22

**Table 3.1 Data Sources Summary**

The qualitative data includes information gathered from interviews with seven SEI teachers and four ESL teachers responsible for delivering core content and language instruction to Hispanic MLs in the school. The interview questions focused on teachers' approach to incorporating best teaching practices to address the needs of their Hispanic MLs and their expertise in delivering intentional language acquisition instruction. Data gathered from interviews also provided information about other instructional systems in place in the classrooms, such as teachers valuing cultural and linguistic diversity in their lesson, and attempts to create inclusive learning environments, opportunities for engagement in rigorous activities designed to improve MLs learning, and best practices to create meaningful teachers' relationships with students and their families.

The researcher used the Blueprint for English Learners Success from DESE (2019) to group information collected into three themes, School Culture, Access to Educators, and Opportunity and Support. Pillar four of the Blueprint (A plan for Future Success) was not included because it is addressing MLs who are enrolled in high school. All questions asked to participants were intentionally designed to explore the elements referenced in those pillars. The researcher considered teachers and parents having valuable information to share about their own experiences around educating MLs in the school. Therefore, collecting firsthand data from direct instruction and teachers who deliver it added important facts to address the educational gaps in the education of Hispanic MLs.

At the target school there is one SEI classroom in each grade level, starting in pre-school (K1) all the way to 5th grade, for a total of seven SEI classroom teachers. Those classrooms host Hispanic MLs with ELD levels one, two, and three (students in early stages of acquiring English language). This practice is part of the SEI program used to educate MLs in the district. When students advance to ELD levels four and five, they receive their content in a general education classroom and are pulled out for ESL services. In order to understand how ELD level four and five students receive their education, the researcher interviewed four ESL teachers in charge of students' language development. There is also one classroom for SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) students who did not participate in the researcher study. The number of SLIFE students at the time of this research study was only five students.

To minimize possible researcher's influence in teachers' responses, interviews were facilitated by two teachers who are not part of the research study. Each facilitator set three Zoom sessions; each session grouped pairs or trios of teachers in virtual breakout rooms and provided the interviewee with the questions. Participants were grouped randomly in pairs or trios depending on their availability, and each group interviewed each other, alternating answering each question, with no interaction with the researcher. Finally, to maintain confidentiality, participants are coded using letters. Names were not displayed, which also adds anonymity. Zoom interviews were recorded and coded using NVivo, and data was stored following the Boston University DropBox security database.

## Interviews

The interview process for teachers aimed to collect data to explore education of MLLs in the classroom and at the school level. In These semi-structured interviews, teachers met with one or two fellow teachers in breakout rooms. One teacher read and answered a set of twelve questions, and then the other teacher(s) answered in turn. All seven SEI, two SLIFE, and five ESL teachers were invited. However, not all of them were available to participate.

### Interview Sessions and Teacher Program

Teacher Program	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4
ESL	2		1	1
SEI	1	3	1	1
Total	3	3	2	2

**Table 3.2 Interviews**

In order to minimize possible researcher's influence in the answers provided by the participants, (SEI and ESL teachers) the interviews were conducted using Zoom and facilitated by two teachers who were not part of the research. The first facilitator was a kindergarten teacher who has been part of the school for ten years. She read the script to teachers in breakout groups. The first group was composed of two ESL teachers and an SEI teacher. The facilitator started by reading a script prepared by the researcher. The first part of the meeting was an introduction to the purpose of the research. The facilitator

also clarified to the participants the confidentiality of the data, including nonidentity disclosure or use of the data collected outside the research.

Group 1: This group was initially intended to be only two participants, however due to teachers' scheduling conflicts and availability the interview had three participants. Each participant answered a questionnaire provided by the researcher. The questionnaire was designed to collect data around teacher practices when educating multilingual learners (ML). Each participant heard and answered the same questions. Something particular about this group was the years of experience of the two ESL teachers; they have both been educating MLs for more than twenty years. In contrast, the third teacher was a less experienced teacher with just under five years of experience and has only taught one grade level in the SEI program. In order to capture qualitative in-depth data, teachers were discussing the question with no intervention from the researchers, who prepared open-ended questions which asked about their experiences and also to find out their overall perception of the education of multilingual learners in the school.

Group 2: This group was also composed of three participants: a K1 SEI teacher, a K2 SEI teacher, and a 4th-grade SEI teacher. The group was randomly assigned based on their availability. Again, as it was mentioned earlier with the previous group, a facilitator was not the researcher but a third-party MD teacher who read a script prepared by the researcher. (See appendix to access the interview script used for these interviews). During the Zoom interviews, participants took turns answering the same questions. Each

participant shared their expertise, including their knowledge of child development.

Group3 included two participants: a 5th-grade SEI teacher and a 3rd grade ESL teacher. Both teachers were matched based on their availability to participate in the interviews. Usually those two teachers do not interact in their day-to-day school routines. In fact, they are on the opposite sides of the school. However, they do have wide experience working with multilingual learners, and see language development in partnership with content knowledge through the same lens. The moderator for the interview was the same Multi Disabilities teacher who facilitated the Zoom meetings and was checking the interviews in the breakout rooms for groups 2 and 3.

### **Lesson Observations & Post Observation Meetings**

In addition to the teacher-to-teacher interview format, the researcher also met with each of the teachers participating in the case study after a forty-five-minute lesson observation. Prior to each lesson observation, the teachers shared their lesson plans. After each observation, the researcher met with the teacher to discuss the lesson and their teaching practices to address MLs in their classroom. In addition to adding another source of information, data from observation helped to understand how the school functions and applies policies to educate Hispanic MLs. This information was used to triangulate the data collected from the previous teachers' interviews and from the lesson observations data. The researchers validated what teachers reported, their actions during lesson

delivery, and the facts collected during the post-observations meetings.

Parents were invited using a printed flyer to participate in a focus group, the purpose of which was to collect information about their experience in the overall education of their Hispanic MLs, including parents' participation at the classroom and school levels. After connecting with parents who wanted to be part of the research, the researcher conducted a focus group with five participants. The focus group had representation from MLs parents of students enrolled in grades one through five and was conducted and facilitated by one of the parents in Spanish, which was the parents' choice. Having a parent facilitating the focus group aimed to minimize the researcher's influence on parents' answers. During the focus group, parents discussed their experience and perspective of the effectiveness regarding education of Hispanic MLs. Including families in the case study research informed us about parents' expectations about their children's education. Parents discussed effective family engagement opportunities provided by the school for them to participate in students' education. Parents shared their opinion about English language development and academic achievements experiences. This data contributed to the exploration of parents' access to school and effective parental involvement in the school that may affect students' learning outcomes. The focus group is important because it included the families voices, their perception of the education received in the school, and helped to validate the data collected from other sources, such as teacher interviews and documents. The Zoom recording was coded using NVivo, and data was stored following the Boston University DropBox security database.

### **Additional Qualitative Data**

In order to find additional information regarding school systems in place to educate MLs, this qualitative research also includes Data Collected from Observations In addition, Documents including classroom instruction, Common Planning Time agendas, Instructional Leadership Team meeting agendas, and Professional Development presentations. This information was analyzed to determine if the school uses resources to address MLs' needs. Data collected from documents includes the school's strategy plan, which provides information about the instructional focus of the school, its goals, and actionable steps to accomplish the plan. Other documents include lesson plans and meeting agendas for SEI, ESL, and grade level meetings. After collecting this data (information from each SEI, and ESL teacher, including data collected from meetings) the information was coded using NVivo school.

The school district has specific guidelines for researchers who are conducting research study work in the district. The process starts by submitting a written proposal to conduct research with the Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) in BPS. As a doctoral candidate and a BPS employee, the researcher has ensured to comply with all requirements requested. Since the research is conducted at the school site where he works as assistant principal, the researcher has access to school resources such as teachers, student information, student work, parents, and all human subjects involved in the interviews. In addition, the researcher has access to school data, including documents and

records regarding meetings, and school strategic plans. The data collected during the school year 2021– 2022 includes purposeful sampling to analyze and present the case study (Yin, 2012).

In order to minimize the risk and eliminate possible obstacles of collecting data during the research study, the researcher respected participants' privacy and complied with all ethical consent procedures. The researcher will also act to minimize potential harm by eliminating names from the data and by focusing on objective data. Human subject participants will be informed and disclosed about implications of the study to ensure equity and transparency. All participants will also be informed about the purpose of each classroom observation and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. To maintain the privacy of all information, names or identifiable information will not be disclosed. Conducting the research at the researcher's workplace has several advantages including a respectful professional relationship with the staff, access to MLs Hispanic classrooms where they received their instruction, and lesson plans.

### **Qualitative Data Themes**

After all qualitative data was collected, information was organized into themes using the Blueprint English Learners Success. This tool allows school districts in Massachusetts to have a guide to ensure that all districts are providing PK–12 MLs with the support needed to excel in their education (DESE, 2019). The guide includes four

pillars addressing expectations at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. This research study used the framework for the classroom and school levels only.

The analytical process is presented in the Results Chapter. The researcher used a coding method to find trends and patterns in educating MLs. These themes are identified in the following chart:

### Qualitative Data Themes

<b>Pillar 1. School Culture</b>	<b>Pillar 2. Access to Educators</b>	<b>Pillar 3. Opportunity and Support</b>	<b>Pillar 4. A Plan for Future Success</b>
Shared responsibility for English learner success	Effective, well-prepared, and culturally responsive educators	Meaningful and rigorous learning opportunities that build on English learners' assets	Thriving in high school
Effective family engagement	Educators with high standards for English learners	Academic and linguistic supports	College and/or career ready
Asset-based teaching and learning	Educators with the resources they need	Social and emotional supports	Graduation ready to contribute to civic life in a global community

**Table 3.3 Qualitative Data Themes**

Next identifying the themes, the researcher included qualitative data displaying his interpretation and findings using tables, charts, diagrams, and visuals to illustrate the case study. All data was collected during the SY 2021–22 coded using NVivo and stored following the Boston University DropBox security database.

Afterward coding was finalized, the next step was to compare school practices with theory of best teaching practices for MLs addressed in the Literature Review chapter. The case study interpretation hopes to describe the systems the school established to ensure success in the education of its Hispanic MLs students, to answer the research questions regarding “how” is the school educating its MLs, and why there is an academic and achievement gap in their education. This interpretation may also allow school stakeholders to explore possible barriers within the school that are preventing Hispanic MLs to close that achievement and opportunity gap in Hispanic MLs education.

### **Transferability**

This case study is designed to look deeper into the education of Hispanic MLs. With a relatively new state law, HBill H.4032 190th (2017 – 2018) new opportunities for school districts across the state are opening new programs to address the needs of their LLs. With a raising number of MLs across the state, this new law does not intent to erase SEI programs but add programs to educate MLs and monolingual students in dual-language models more suitable to maintain native language; the outcome for this program is to promote bilingualism and bi-literacy in both languages. Opening these opportunities to districts also adds a need for more research targeting current SEI programs to improve education of MLs across the state. School districts looking for research-based approaches to explore alternatives to SEI programs need this research study. School based administrators and district personnel who are decision-makers need more research base

studies to improve education of all students but especially for ELs. There is a huge opportunity to act now, not because we want to lead the country in changing MLs education but because we want to better serve our students. We are also behind several other states like Florida, California, Utah, Minnesota, Oregon, Texas, and North Carolina, where a variety of dual-language programs are leading the education of MLs and monolingual English speakers to create bilingual students. This case study could be used as a model to explore the education of MLs in other schools, not only in BPS, but also in other school districts looking to had better address the needs of their MLs. By exploring the school at a deeper level and investigating school systems that directly affect education of Hispanic MLs, these results may be important to provoke changes in schools that could be essential to close the achievement and opportunity gap.

### **Limitations**

This case study is limited to one specific school. BPS has about 46,000 students and about 30% of them are MLs. Limiting the study to just one school with about 465 students, where 51% are labeled as MLs does not have a sizable sample to generalize to apply to the entire district. Although each school and school community is different and has different needs, for the size of BPS multiple case studies addressing the same research question may be more suitable to improve teaching and learning of Hispanic MLs in the district. However, because of limitations in resources and time this case study may be a strong start to address the research questions.

Ideally, the role of the researcher should be more independent to ensure an objective view of the data collection and analysis. In this specific case, the researcher is also an administrator in the school site where the study is being investigated and has been working there for ten years. This close relationship with the human subjects and the community may influence the results of the research study. To minimize subjectivity in the results, the researcher is committed to conduct this research study in an independent manner and maintain high levels of confidentiality to protect human subjects and other negative implications for the staff participating in research. Other limitations about researcher biases may influence the results of the case study. The researcher is a second language learner, an immigrant, who has deep connections not only with the school where the research is being held, but also with the subject and students being studied. To limit the influence of these biases, the research is using portals and forms that are objective and capture factual information in classrooms, interviews, focus groups, and agendas from leadership meetings at the school level. There are also limitations in the sampling selected, including the capacity of just one person collecting data. The size of the research has been designed for only one person collecting the data, ideally more than one-person collecting data and analyzing it would make the research study more effective, however, the planning stage of this case study allows the researcher to accomplish answering the research question.

## CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Introduction

The following two chapters in this research study present findings of the case study focused on the education of multilingual learners (MLs) in a single elementary school in Boston where Hispanic students represent more than 60% of its student population. The first part of the finding describes what the researcher “saw” during the classroom observations, interviews, and post observations meetings. There are three sections to describe researcher’s findings. The first session presents MLs’ education received in SEI and ESL classrooms, the second part includes observable teachers’ practices of the SIOP model in action, and the last session includes family engagement. In the next chapter, the researcher presents other findings to explain “*why*” those systems in place may have created barriers and tensions to address the MLs needs. Both sections will help to explore how Hispanic MLs are being educated at this school, and answer the research questions:

1. What existing supports addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs are evident in the school, in order to successfully support academic content and language development of MLs in the school?

2. Why do participants think that existing supports are not addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs, and what other supports or systems do they think are necessary in order to close the achievement and opportunity gap?

In order to structure themes for organizing, coding and analyzing the research study data. The researcher used The Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success to answer the research questions. The Blueprint for English Success is a research-based tool presented by DESE in 2019 to ensure that school districts are addressing MLs' needs. This single case study used qualitative data targeting three of the four pillars from The Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success. The Blueprint's four thematic areas are: School Culture, Access to Educators, Opportunity and Support, and A Plan for Future Success. The fourth pillar (A Plan for Future Success) only refers to high schools and has no application to elementary schools, therefore it is not contemplated in this research case study. The researcher collected data from the following sources:

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Focus Groups (Zoom)</b>	<b>Observations And Document Reviews</b>
<b>(7) PreK to 5th grade Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) teachers</b>	<b>(1) Parents Focus Group with five parents</b>	<b>(11) Classroom Observations of Teachers in the Research Study (45 minutes each)</b>
<b>(4) 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5th grade English as Second Language (ESL) Teachers</b>		<b>(2) Common Planning Team Agenda Meeting Documents</b>
<b>(11) Post Observation Meetings – with each study participant</b>		<b>Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) Agenda Documents for Meetings held during SY 2021–22</b>

**Table 4.1 – Data Collection Sources**

The data collected were categorized using NVivo and organized to display trends and patterns to identify school wide teaching practices and systems to address MLs' needs. Results of those data collection efforts are presented in this chapter organized by themes.

Additional data were collected from agenda documents including the school's professional development (PD) presentations, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) agendas, and Common Planning Time (CPT) agenda meeting for the school year (SY) 2021–2022. The information gathered was also categorized in themes that related to school level supports that were in place for MLs.

### **Analysis Approach**

Themes were established based on the four Pillars of the Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success. This Blueprint serves as an important and comprehensive guide for ensuring that English learners are supported in a way that values their strengths and helps them reach their full potential. (The term English Learner — ELs — and the term multilingual learners — MLs — are equivalent in this study and used interchangeably). The English Learner Education Vision in Massachusetts based on the four Pillars states the following:

### Pillar I – School Culture

English language learners attend schools where all teachers share responsibility for their success, interact with families in a productive manner, and recognize and respect their linguistic and cultural assets. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.)

### Pillar II – Access to Educators

Teachers of English language learners hold their students to high standards, are effective, well-prepared, and sensitive to cultural differences, and have the tools and professional development required to concurrently progress students' academic and linguistic development. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.)

### Pillar III – Opportunity and Support

English language learners have equal access to challenging learning opportunities that build on their cultural and linguistic strengths as well as the academic, linguistic, social, and emotional support they require to succeed. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.)

#### Pillar IV – A Plan for Future Success

English language learners do well in high school and graduate with the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to succeed in college and/or a chosen profession.

(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.)

The researcher used three of those four pillars as the research themes to analyze the data collected. At the same time, those three pillars open into four categories: classroom level, school level, district level, and state level. The researcher, however, only focused on the classroom and school levels. In addition, Pillar IV pertains only to high schools and was not included in this research study as this case study was conducted in an elementary school setting. The following table summarizes the Blueprint for English Learner Success, which frames the themes the researcher used to code the data.

## Blueprint for English Learner Success

Pillar 1: School Culture	
Building Block 1: Shared Responsibility for English Learners Success	
Classroom Level	Inclusive Learning Environments
	Collaboration
	Responsibility for Language Development
School Level	MLs Integration
	Opportunities for Collaboration
	Observation and Feedback to Improve Teachers Skills
Building Block 2: Effective Family Engagement	
Classroom Level	Teacher - Family Engagement
	Value Family Diversity
	Family - Teachers Collaboration for MLs Success
School Level	School - Family Partnerships
	Provide Resources for Family - Teacher Collaboration
	Accountability System to Improve Family Engagement
Building Block 3: Asset-Based Teaching and Learning	
Classroom Level	Cultural and Linguistic Representation
	Value Bilingualism
	Academic and Linguistic Risk
School Level	Culturally Responsive Teaching Support
	Promote Bilingualism and Biliteracy
	Safe Learning Environments
Pillar 2: Access to Educators	
Building Block 1: Effective, Well-Prepared, and Culturally Responsive Educators	
Classroom Level	Differentiated Instruction
	Research Based Best Teaching Practices

	Culturally Responsive Learning Environments
School Level	Equitable Access to Educators
	Well Prepared Educators - Hiring and Retention
	Access to Curriculum, PDs, and Teaching Materials
<b>Building Block 2: Educators with High Standards for English Learners</b>	
Classroom Level	High Expectations
	Linguistic and Academic Skills
School Level	High Expectations
	Accountability to Provide Language Development
<b>Building Block 3: Educators with the Resources they Need</b>	
Classroom Level	Curriculum
	Professional Development
School Level	Curriculum
	Professional Development Focusing on Language Acquisition
<b>Pillar 3: Opportunity and Support</b>	
<b>Building Block 1: Meaningful and Rigorous Learning Opportunities that Build on English Learners' Assets</b>	
Classroom Level	Academic Rigor
	Appropriate Scheduling
	Formative and Summative Assessments
School Level	Access to School Staff
	Appropriate Scheduling
	Formative and Summative Assessments
<b>Building Block 2: Academic and Linguistic Supports</b>	
Classroom Level	Supports for MLs
	Students Needs
	Language and Academic Goals
School Level	Schedules With Supports

	Resources for Academic and Linguistic Supports
	Appropriate Progress Monitor Supports
<b>Building Block 3: Social and Emotional Supports</b>	
Classroom Level	Safe and Collaborative Learning Environments
	Social Emotional Supports
	Additional Resources for Linguistic and Cultural Support
School Level	Safe and Collaborative Learning Environments
	Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) for MLs
	Additional Resources for Linguistic and Cultural Support
<b>Pillar 4: A Plan for Future Success</b>	
Not Applicable for Elementary Schools	

**Table 4.2 – Based on the Blueprint for English Learner Success (DESE, 2019)**

## **Findings**

This section synthesizes researcher's findings at the classroom level to illustrate education of MLs in SEI and ESL classrooms. Even though both classrooms are designed to address academic and linguistic MLs' needs, the researcher found visible systems in place that make each approach very different. The themes helped the researcher to analyze the data and respond to the research questions. Following are the findings from the data collected, coded, and analyzed using best teaching practices for MLs according to the Blueprint for English Learners Success as themes.

### *Differences in ESL and SEI Classrooms*

#### **Theme: Responsibility for Language Development**

For this specific theme, the researcher collected data from all SEI classroom teachers who delivered core content instruction and are responsible for language development of MLs levels one, two, and three, and four of the six ESL teachers participated in the research. Data from interviews, lesson observations, and post observation meetings, are presented under two sub themes related to the more general theme of "Responsibility for Language Development."

- Opportunities for Language Development (Reading, Speaking/Listening, Writing)
- Scaffolds and Accommodations for MLs

### **Opportunities for Language Development**

Opportunities for language development covers activities during the lesson addressing the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Across all SEI and ESL classrooms observed, reading skills were observed more often (27 times, high), followed by listening and speaking (17 times each, moderate), and finally writing (14 times, low).

There are two teaching approaches observed during the instruction that marked a pattern in the way SEI teachers are constricted by a rigid curriculum that prevent them to spend more time engaging students in more meaningful tasks. By contrast, ESL teachers seen to have more freedom and flexibility in their lessons. Consequentially, ESL lessons allowed students to not only engage in deeper understanding, but also to participate in different activities to enhance their language skills. In the next session, the researcher is presenting evidence of both approaches.

## Reading

In 10 of the 11 lesson observations students were learning reading fluency and foundations of reading, including phonological awareness, which was highlighted more in lower grades and in third grade SEI classrooms. For example, during a PK reading, the teacher used a non-fiction book about the life cycle of the butterfly. The teacher had provided real life experience and background knowledge by having students observe a real larva turning into a butterfly. The teacher facilitated students making connections during the read aloud with students' previous experience by having a poster with pictures and making sure students access the reading through visuals. As students worked independently, they were able to use the vocabulary to learn letter-sounds correspondence and phonemic awareness using the letter /B/ (butterfly) as well as content.

Similarly, the lesson observed in K2 followed the same context. The teacher used a read aloud strategy, and supported MLs comprehensible input, by explicitly teaching new tier three vocabulary words and by practicing tier one words. In this lesson however, the K2 teacher went further, by comparing a fiction to a non-fiction book about giraffes. The teacher used several techniques to teach vocabulary. For example, the teacher projected pictures of a bunny to explain the word "hop"; she also asked one student to "hop" and asked what other animals can hop, "rabbits" they answered. Those two techniques using visual and total physical response were intentionally targeting a variety of students' learning styles according to the K2 teacher.

The first-grade teacher who was observed used similar approaches and strategies. This time, the read-aloud used a realistic fiction book about communities and goods and services. All students sat on the rug and the teacher used a PowerPoint presentation to introduce and explain tier three vocabulary words. In order to address multicultural students' needs, the book had several cultural elements relevant to MLs such as the characters presented: *mom, grandma, and a grandchild*. In addition, the setting presented in the book was a Mexican market, and the characters were shopping to celebrate the little girl's birthday. Those cultural elements facilitated text-to-self connections; an intentional move referenced by the teacher during the post observation meeting. Meanwhile, the teacher also used several techniques to activate students' reading skills. For example, she said "*good readers stop and make predictions,*" then she continued to prompt them to make predictions by asking, "*What do you think is going to happen next?*" Another teacher's move to build MLs reading skills was evident when the teacher stopped several times to check students' understanding using open-ended questions such as "*What do you think she is going to do?*" later she also added, "*What makes you think...*" One question about this activity is if there was a missing opportunity during the read-aloud to make it more students' center. Since the teacher who read the book and showed pictures to students mostly guided this activity, students seem to have played a passive role and were expected to pay attention and participate by answering the open-ended questions without opportunities to engage in student-to-student discourse.

By contrast, a different approach was observed in the first-grade ESL lesson. Teaching reading skills was also the focus of this lesson; however, in this lesson students had a more active role. The teacher facilitated a task where students had to present a “cycle”. During the teacher’s post observation meeting, the teacher explained that her students have been working on this project for the past four weeks. Each of the six students in the class had a different life cycle to present, but the process included some reading, writing, and speaking activities about life cycles. At the end of the project, students presented and explained different stages in the life cycle of a frog, a chicken, a plant, and a butterfly. All students used a series of supports, such as vocabulary charts with sequence words, pictures with definitions, books, and native language supports when needed. In order to address fluency and phonemic awareness, the teacher also intervened to clarify and support readers who could not decode multisyllabic words. For example, the teacher modeled, “*Put your hand under your chin, now say the word tadpole, how many pulses do you feel?*” Then she continued, “*let’s clap tad, pole. Two claps put them together /tadpole/.*” Finally, to continue building students’ understanding of the science concept, and to add language use about sequencing of events, this teacher used multiple representations of the life cycle and focused on modeling and repetition.

The SEI second-grade teacher also had a non-fiction book. The unit focused on the role of a citizen and included several tier three vocabulary words. Students were also at the rug and the teacher had a realistic fiction book, and a PowerPoint with vocabulary

words projected on the whiteboard. Using a think-pair-share strategy, students turned and talked to discuss the open-ended question, “*What does a good citizen do?*”

The Think-pair-share strategy was also evident in the ESL second grade classroom; the teacher posted an open-ended question asking students “*What are the challenges of a tribal girl to become a drum player in the village?*” In the story, playing the drums in a village was only allowed for boys. Eight out of the nine students in the classroom were girls (which presented an opportunity for students to make self-to-text connections). To practice reading skills, the teacher used two strategies. First, she modeled echo reading, and the second time, students read popcorn style (students were called randomly to read). The read-aloud exercise also included a graphic organizer, and the teacher stopped several times to check for students’ comprehension. Those check-in times involved a turn and talk routine strategy. The teacher said, “*Now you are the teacher, one, two, three, teach.*” The teacher also motivated students by praising their reading, “*You are such lovely readers.*” According to the teacher, she wanted to send a positive message to her students to build their confidence and set their right mindset.

In contrast, upper grades strategies focused more on fluency and comprehension skills. One ESL classroom teacher-built students’ agency by facilitating peer-to-peer feedback. The teacher started the lesson modeling fluency and the importance of reading with accuracy. Following, students participated in a peer-to-peer feedback exercise where each student had the opportunity to read and using a sentence starter provided feedback to their partner. Then the students were able to incorporate the feedback and switch to repeat the process. Both ESL and SEI teachers observed used culturally and linguistically

appropriate books targeting reading comprehension in all classrooms, from the researcher point of view, this practice is seen to increase students' engagement and help students to make text-to-self connections.

Finally, students in fifth grade ESL class during the lesson observation selected to read a biography from a list of famous Hispanic characters. The project included researching the biography they selected, creating a timeline of the person's life, and re-writing the biography as a narrative. At the end, each student had to present their character and used their project as a model to write their own biography.

### **Listening and Speaking**

For listening and speaking skills, teachers were observed in three classrooms using "*Turn and Talk*" strategies allowing students to interact with each other. It was evident how teachers had created clear routines and expectations for "*students' discourse*" including planning open-ended questions and specific roles for both the listener and the speaker. In contrast, the other eight classrooms observed, students responded to open ended questions to the teacher and the interaction was teacher to student only, instead of student-to-student. In the fourth grade for example, the students questioned the reading by asking, "*Wait, so only white people could be part of the army?*" The teacher's engagement was limited to answering the question. This missed opportunity to create student-centered instruction was more evident in all seven SEI

classrooms, and more visible in ESL classrooms. Most of the discourse was initiated when students stopped the teacher to clarify the meaning of a word, they may have heard for the first time; however, there was no student-to-student interaction. For example, a student asked, “*What being bold means?*” Again, the teacher answered directly, given an example of the meaning of the word in two different contexts.

### **Writing**

Writing skills were observed only 14 times (low), which is almost half of the times students were exposed to reading and having less or no opportunities to write. In lower grades, the writing exercise was as simple as writing a word or a sentence. Teachers targeted new vocabulary learned in the unit to assess students’ understanding of the meaning and the correct spelling of the new words. This practice evidence repetition instead of a deeper understanding of what the word really means.

In the upper grades, only in one ESL class was the teacher observed teaching writing skills to students; the tasks consisted of students working on writing a narrative piece using several pre-writing strategies including a graphic organizer and a timeline. In the other four classrooms observed there was no time allocated for students to engage in practicing their writing skills.

**Theme: Curriculum**

Teachers were asked during the teacher interviews and during post observation meetings to describe the SEI program and the curriculum used to address the needs of their MLs. All 11 teachers responded to the question accurately about structural elements of SEI. Curriculum resources were referenced 65 times during the teacher interviews and 37 times during the post observation meetings in terms of teacher knowledge about SEI and ESL curriculum.

Answers to the question about curriculum materials addressing MLs linguistic and academic needs varied depending on the grade-level taught. For example, Kindergarten through second grade used an in-house curriculum developed for the district. Teachers have district support to implement different parts of the curriculum. All teachers in the lower grades agreed to use the materials, however, they also agreed on having different ways to “*modify*” the curriculum based on their own idea of what their students need. For example, when the second-grade teacher was asked “*Is this lesson part of your curriculum?*” her answer was “*No, I added and modified the lesson.*” What about the book you used about the Hispanic activist? She responded, “*the book was not part of the curriculum, however, I found it appropriate to teach the role of a citizen.*” When asked if there are any resources the teacher could use to teach her MLs, her answer was, “*I think a well skilled bilingual Spanish paraprofessional will be ideal.*” This teacher is a native English speaker with limited Spanish. This interaction was important because it

creates an opportunity to think about educator's native language capacity to address MLs needs.

Furthermore, a preschool teacher used the same curriculum used by general education teachers. When asked what else she needed to support her MLs' learning, she responded, "*In terms of resources, I wish I could provide more real-life experiences to my students. For example, we have some plants outside. Every day we observe bees and other pollinators around the flower. That is what my kids need, more exposure to the world to make connections with their learning.*" This practice is very valid, and a potential opportunity to improve vocabulary development for MLs by creating intentional hands-on real-life experiences. Oftentimes MLs lack exposure to experiences to gain tier three vocabulary compared with their non-MLs peers.

All ESL teachers followed the same English Language Arts curriculum followed by the classroom teacher. In terms of what other resources may be needed to address MLs' needs, they all stated additional lesson planning time with the homeroom teachers, and to plan with them according to students' academic and linguistic needs. In addition, when an ESL fifth grade teacher was asked what other resources are needed to address academic and linguistic needs of her MLs, she stated, "*I think in terms of ELA curriculum, the school has done a good job of implementing the curriculum, however, we need a strong writing curriculum with differentiated instruction for our MLs.*" Finally, all teachers asked for adding more multicultural and linguistically appropriate books for

their students in the classroom's libraries. In fact, educators noted that oftentimes teachers needed to supplement reading materials and the lack of books in Spanish that are aligned with the ELA curriculum was a common problem.

These barriers regarding curriculum and lack of other teaching tools are important to identify in this research since they may be elements to improve in the education of MLs to close their academic and linguistic gap. Another important point discovered in this research regarding the ESL pullout-teaching model, was highlighted by the ELS comment regarding “*more planning time with content teachers*” which implies desire for a co-teaching model instead of pull-out models. Again, there is a visible difference between SEI and ESL programs and linguistic and academic outcomes in both curriculums. Since SEI teachers plan their lessons with general education teachers, they deliver those lessons using the same pacing model. This practice affects MLs since those students needs additional teaching practices to address MLs needs. If the SEI classroom is rushing to cover the general education curriculum at the same pace than their Gen Ed teachers, they may leave students expose to the concept in a superficial way compared with Gen Ed students’ experiences. This practice is visible and is affecting MLs learning in a negative way.

**Theme: Formative and Summative Assessments**

The researcher asked during teachers interviews and collated data from classroom observations and post observation meetings about assessment used to monitor MLs language acquisition and content. All ESL Teachers mentioned using the WIDA standards to monitor students' language skills. The first-grade ESL teacher, for example, referred to multiple ways to differentiate formative assessments to monitor students' progress depending on their ELD level. *“Our students learn so fast, I used anything from a picture, to filling the blanks in a sentence starter, to a paragraph, or to pair sentences with pictures to constantly monitor their progress.”* She continued, *“My goal is for them (students) to master grade-level standards, and I use the WIDA model to monitor their linguistic progress.”* Five teachers out of the 11 teachers who participated in the research agreed on the effectiveness of using students' self-monitoring rubrics. All four ESL teachers provided evidence to have a closer monitoring tool to check where their students were in terms of language skills. The fifth grade ESL teacher said, *“I gathered language samples at the beginning of the unit, and created a KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart so students can monitor evidence of their progress.”*

On the other hand, teachers from lower grades stated that they use the end of the unit assessment, especially phonic Foundations units, to assess students' phonological awareness. Those assessments are more informational and happen, once a week, teachers agreed. Upper grades used a more standardized test style. For example, three teachers

mentioned using rubrics to show students what proficiency levels looks like. A third and a fifth-grade teacher agreed, *“Our students want to do their best. At the end of the week, I send a progress report home with pictures of their work and the rubric. This motivates them to work really hard.”* In addition to having those systems, teachers also have bi-weekly CPTs to focus on just students’ work. *“I bring students’ work and share with other educators in my grade level to develop interventions for students who are struggling.”*

All ESL teachers create linguistic goals for their MLs. They also mentioned using WIDA standards in the four language skills to understand language progression according to MLs ELD levels. This practice is less evident in SEI classrooms. None of the teachers addressed creating language goals for their students, however, as referenced previously, all teachers are providing language support to address MLs’ linguistic needs. On the other hand, one teacher highlighted lack of appropriate pacing for newcomers and unrealistic expectations in terms of the time provided to be successful in standardized tests. The teacher argued, *“I got several students in first grade in January. The expectation is that this student will master grade level standards in five months; the idea is that he/she needs to catch-up. This is physically impossible, as we add that sometimes those same students have not attended school at all in their native countries.”* This is a valid observation from the teacher, since there is not a visible plan to address students who just arrive to the country, and here there is an important opportunity to be more intentional in identifying this group of students to target linguistic foundational skills.

**Theme: Social Emotional Supports**

The researcher directly asked all educators who participated in the research study how MLs' social emotional needs were addressed in the classrooms. Teachers referenced social emotional support 34 times. Teachers are essential to help newcomers and immigrant students adapt to their new educational system, this includes facilitating this process by supporting students' social-emotional needs as they interact in the school setting (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016). Social emotional learning practices were also visible during lesson observations where SEL practices were observed 19 times.

Although all teachers categorized SEL practices as very important, there were only two teachers who directly quoted the SEL standards as part of their practices. A third-grade teacher intentionally created a morning routine to address SEL needs for her MLs, she validated their feelings and created a safe environment to express them. *"It is important for me to make them feel included; they belong to our learning community. I acknowledge their culture and recognize their transition."* The teacher continued, "I address my students' SEL needs since the beginning of the school year, creating a growth and setting by showing positive videos about perseverance. I also tell them to kiss their brain, even if the answer is not hundred percent correct, I validate that they are trying." A first-grade teacher also highlighted her SEL practices, *"One routine that I include in my classroom is to start our day with just a check-in. That way I can get a read of where students are at and how they are feeling. To make it more comfortable, they can also share it in Spanish."* Teachers and students across all 11 classrooms observed have built

important relationships based on morning meetings, however, the research wonders about possible ways to create a structure in MLs instruction where SEL standards are part of the lesson planning.

### *SIOP Practices*

The following section is presenting SIOP practices observed during data collection. Even though both ESL and SEI teachers are trained in delivering the SIOP practices, as it was stated before, SEI lessons were less flexible in their pacing and in other teaching practices. As it is addressed in the next themes, as a result, some of their teaching practices assumed less rigor in the lesson, and less opportunities for student-to-student interaction by engaging them in academic discourse. In contrast, those teaching elements were more visible in ESL classrooms, where teachers had more flexibility. One more time the SEI model is presenting a big challenge for SEI teachers who seem to be trapped in a system with less MLs academic and linguistic success.

### **Theme: Inclusive Learning Environments and Multicultural Classrooms**

This section addresses teacher practices to promote inclusive learning environments for MLs. Inclusive learning environments include deep knowledge about their MLs' languages and cultures, focusing positively on the linguistic and cultural

wealth that MLs bring into classrooms (Kim & Hinchey, 2018). The researcher collected data from teachers' interviews, lesson observations, and teachers' post observation meetings, this information was triangulated to validate information collected from those three different sources were cohesive.

The data reflected that all 11 teachers are creating inclusive learning environments and value students' backgrounds. For example, during the interviews all teachers shared the importance of creating inclusive learning environments especially at the beginning of the school year. According to all 11 teachers, *"inclusive teacher practices not only include the physical environment in the classroom, but also through daily routines and expectations nurtured throughout the school year."* One teacher stated the importance of *"setting the physical environment as well as the lessons with MLs in mind."* The teacher added *"in order to create a multicultural classroom for my MLs, I have to think on their EDL levels and have activities and support so they can access grade-level content."* As shown on the frequency table 4.3 below, all teachers agreed knowing the elements of an inclusive learning environment, in fact, most data were collected during the teacher interviews, where inclusive classroom environments were mentioned more than 50 times (references above 50 times are considered very high in this research study).

SEI teachers in lower grades (PK – 2nd grades) tend to have greater awareness of creating and maintaining inclusive environments for their MLs. A second-grade teacher, for example, used an activity at the beginning of the year with her students to get to know

their cultural backgrounds. The teacher highlighted this practice as effective, and then added “*Students created an autobiography, describing their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, music, likes, including a self-portrait of how they perceive themselves.*” The teacher then uses this information to plan activities with students' cultural and linguistic diversity in mind. Similarly, the four ESL teachers stated during the post observation meetings that creating an inclusive classroom included “*having text in MLs' native language to value their heritage language*”. They also mentioned that another way to create learning environments for MLs is “*making sure to plan with different ELD [English Language Development] levels in mind.*” Teachers added that well planned lessons with those components in mind are needed because it is important to ensure that all students access grade level content.

Homeroom SEI classroom teachers also identified “*the need-to-know students and their families at a deeper level,*” to integrate this information in their lessons. They continued, “*Gaining deeper knowledge about the students adds information to value everyone's opinions, and to make sure that all students are represented in the classroom environment with literature and artifacts from their cultural backgrounds.*” These practices were also mentioned as a vehicle to highlight MLs cultural values in the classroom.

In contrast, responses from upper grade study participants focused more on giving students a voice and ensuring MLs have opportunities to use their native language to

celebrate their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. During the triangulation process the researcher found that despite hearing those affirmations in the interviews referenced more than 50 times, in contrast, during lesson observations those practices were only observed 14 times (references less than 15 times are considered low in this research study) with more frequency in only two of the 11 classrooms observed. Therefore, despite teachers being proven knowledgeable of necessary elements to create inclusive learning environments, one question emerged about the lower number of times inclusive learning environments were observed during the lesson observations.

The following chart presents the number of times that inclusive learning environments were referenced during the research and the sources. Low references (1–15), Moderate reference (16 – 30), High reference (more than 30 times)

**Theme Frequency**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Inclusive Learning Environments (Number of times referenced)</b>
T6 Observation	1
T2 Observations	1
T9 Observations	1
T3 Observations	1
T4 Observations	2
T11 Observations	2
T8 Observations	2
T10 Observations	2
T1 Observations	5
T5 Observations	6
T7 & T10 Interview	8
T4, T8, & T11 Interview	9
T5 & T9 Interview	13
T1, T2, & T6 Interview	21
T3 Interview	8

**Table 4.3 Inclusive Learning Environments**

Table 4.3 shows the frequency with which teachers addressed inclusive learning environments during interviews, lesson observations, and post observations meetings.

***Scaffolds, Accommodations and Differentiated Instruction for MLs***

All teachers in SEI and ESL classrooms provided scaffolds, differentiation, and support access to content by using a variety of sheltered instruction for their MLs. In order to identify teachers' strategies during the lesson observations, the researcher used best teaching practices highlighted in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The SIOP model is an empirical validated approach for implementing sheltered instruction for MLs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

The following table 4.4 provides a summary of the SIOP strategies implemented and the number of times it was observed during lessons observations.

**SIOP Implementation Table**

Strategy	Times Observed	Teacher's Move Observed
Academic Discourse - Students Turn and Talk (Interaction)	5	Observed in three classrooms, teachers had created clear routines and expectations for students to engage in academic dialog. Teachers also planned and presented appropriate open-ended questions.
Clear Routines and Expectations (Lesson Delivery)	39	Clear routines and expectations were evident in all classrooms observed, transitions were clear, students responded to non-verbal cues and had clear expectations during the lessons observed.
Graphic Organizers (Strategies)	4	Only three lessons observed used graphic organizers as supporting students' understanding of the topic.
Modeling and Repetition (Comprehensible Input)	26	Modeling and repetition were also a strategy observed in all classrooms. Teachers in lower grades used the "I do, you do" strategy.

Multiple Representations (Comprehensible Input)	19	Multiple representations were evident in lower grades, PK, K, and 1st grade. Upper grades used PowerPoint presentations to add pictures and translate tier three vocabulary.
Native Language Support (Spanish – Building Background)	19	Six teachers used native language support. It was evident in lower and upper grades. Native Spanish speaker teachers used to clarify vocabulary and make connections. Native English speakers used with students' support to introduce new vocabulary.
Realia - Real Life (Application)	8	Realia was evident in lower grades. Students in PK, K and 1st grade used live animals to demonstrate the life cycle of insects and plants. The fifth grade ESL teacher used to teach how to write a narrative story.
Total Physical Response TPR (Comprehensible Input)	4	Three teachers only used this teaching strategy.
Use of Technology (Lesson Preparation)	23	Nine teachers used technology, all of them had PowerPoint presentations, and students in upper grades used Chromebooks. Teachers used projectors and document cameras to make the lesson more interactive. For example, a teacher used a document camera to show students' graphic organizers.
Visuals Vocabulary Support (Comprehensible Input)	30	All teachers had visuals to support students' understanding of new vocabulary and to support students' access to content.
Vocabulary Banks (Comprehensible Input)	21	This practice was evident in lower grades, especially in the first grade ESL classroom where the teacher created a vocabulary bank used to support students' understanding of the lifecycle and other use of language to explain sequence. Another teacher used a vocabulary bank that students could refer to during their narrative writing exercise. The ESL teachers used vocabulary banks and referred students during their lessons.
Total Scaffolds and Accommodations for MLs Observed	198	

**Table 4.4 Scaffold and Accommodations Strategies**

Although all teachers have been trained with the SIOP model, not all elements of the SIOP protocol were observed. For example, as shown previously all 11 teachers provided lessons with a high level of engagement (lesson delivery) observed 39 times. Which also evidenced emphasis in lesson preparation to address MLs comprehensible input (observed 23 times). The most common SIOP practice referenced was the use of visuals to introduce tier three vocabulary, for reading comprehension, and to build background knowledge. All teachers used visuals with vocabulary words and pictures in both native language Spanish and English to introduce new vocabulary. In fact, all teachers regardless of their Spanish proficiency were aware of the need to provide native language support (referenced 19 times). Finally, strategies used during instruction to promote high-order thinking were less evident and only observed in two ESL classrooms. The first grade SEI teacher for example asked, *“Think about what she wants to buy. Based on what we have read so far. What do you think she should do? I am actually going to have us just think. Just put your hands down and think.”* Another opportunity for students to engage in high-order thinking was presented several times during the second-grade ESL reading lesson, the teacher asked, *“Right we're still thinking about the challenge right, the problem in the story, we're still thinking about that so we're reading but thinking about the challenge in the story.”* Those opportunities should be present during the lesson and planned to address metacognition and internalize learning (Mozer, 2014).

As part of their teaching practices, teachers set clear routines and expectations for their MLs, which created a predictable learning environment, minimizing transitions and maximizing teaching – learning time (researcher observation). This practice was noted 39 times, followed by modeling and repetition, which was referenced 26 times. During the post observation interview for example, a preschool teacher mentioned her partnership with the science teacher to reinforce repetition of the letter identification learned in the classroom, *“I work with him so he can support me, like I am teaching one concept and he will do something very similar; in that way students receive the same message twice.”*

Another common practice among all teachers was the use of technology to address multiple intelligences. All 11 teachers who participated in the study have prepared PowerPoint presentations to make their lesson more engaging. This practice was referenced 23 times. Other practices included multiple representations, native language support (Spanish), and realia, where evidence of these practices was found more than 30 times. Another way in which it was visible that teachers were helping to elevate students’ understanding was through their use of supplemental materials to contextualize context in MLs lives.

On the other hand, there are effective practices in the SIOP model that were used fewer times by all teachers, such as the use of total physical response (observed only 12 times, low), use of graphic organizers (only two of the 11 lessons observed used them), and interactions, practice and application were observed only five and eight times,

respectively. Although lessons were clearly well planned to include some level of differentiation for MLs, some good practices such as hands-on activities, academic discourse, and a student-centered approach were also less evident or not observed at all during the lessons visited. In fact, as it was cited before, in all classrooms, teacher-centered instruction dominated the instruction and students had a passive role in their learning. Therefore, it could be an opportunity to be more intentional to improve implementation of SIOP practices using high order thinking strategies more often, and providing time for activities where students can apply content and language knowledge more intentionally. This information is useful to answer the research questions regarding other systems or practices needed to improve MLs academic and linguistic outcomes.

### **Theme: Native Language**

One common practice used by monolingual English teachers was to have an emergent bilingual student translate for the teacher and for ELD ones MLs. All teachers valued and respected students' native language, this practice was observed in monolingual English teachers and bilingual Spanish teachers. During classroom observations, a monolingual speaking teacher used some Spanish to communicate with MLs who were newcomers. All SEI English monolingual teachers used Spanish to clarify tasks, and to translate new tier three vocabulary. This practice of inclusion and teacher awareness about MLs language barriers sent a positive message to her students. In addition to evidence of linguistic support, teachers also incorporated culturally relevant

literature during their lessons. Five of the 11 lessons observed used culturally relevant literature for Hispanic students during their reading lesson. In the second-grade lesson observed, for example, the teacher explained the meaning of the word “*citizen*” to the students, and after presenting the word and its meaning in both languages, the teacher continued the lesson with open ended questions asking students “*what a good citizen is, and what a good citizen does.*” All students use a partner to complete the sentence; the teacher encourages monolingual Spanish students to answer the question in Spanish. Once students understood the new vocabulary, they proceeded to read a book about an activist called Silvia Mendez, and her role in changing segregation in schools. This meaningful lesson not only reflected students’ cultural background, but also leveraged their cultural and linguistic diversity by presenting an important female Hispanic leader. Culturally responsive teaching practices were evident by allowing students to make connections with their heritage. This asset-based teaching and learning is important because it allows students to relay with the content learned and provide them with opportunities to make meaningful connections with the text, which is essential in MLs education.

Another lesson observed in fifth grade also highlighted the importance of incorporating Hispanic and African American leaders as the main literature resource. Students researched the biography of Jackie Robinson, including influential people in his life. The teacher explained, “*I wanted to give my students the opportunity to do research on people who might have influenced Jackie Robinson and how he impacted lives of*

*minorities in the United States.*” In addition to delivering instruction with students' culture in mind, this teaching practice also emphasizes the importance of using students' background to support academics and risk.

Although all educators indicated that they valued students' multilingual capacity, there was no evidence that their instruction led to proficiency in languages other than English. In fact, all teachers mentioned that using SEI programs have contributed to slow students' progress in acquiring English because the current model segregates students with lower ELD levels (1,2, and 3), in addition to eliminating literacy in MLs' first language. Those students are not exposed to native English speaker peers, and just receive English language modeling from their teacher. This missed opportunity to build on students' first language highlights possible opportunities to improve education of MLs.

### **Theme: Academic and Linguistic Risk**

On the other hand, the importance of creating a safe learning environment for students to take linguistic and academic risk was mentioned 74 times (Very high). In fact, eight teachers mentioned during their post observation meetings that “*students needed to have opportunities to express their thoughts in their native language in order to take academic and linguistic risk.*” Creating safe learning environments for MLs was more visible in lower grades, where preschool classroom teachers mentioned modeling and repetition during instruction as a common practice that benefits their MLs. In contrast,

teachers in upper grades (specifically English monolingual speaking teachers) from SEI classrooms in fourth and fifth grades use their own struggles in Spanish to model for students how to take linguistic risk.

**Theme: Academic Rigor**

Finally, evidence of academic rigor was observed in four lessons out of the 11 classrooms visited. In order to measure Academic Rigor, the researcher used Webb's depth-of-knowledge (DOK) levels (Webb 1997, 1999), this tool helps the lesson observer to identify teachers moves that focused on high-order thinking. Although all teachers agreed on the importance of having students exposed to grade level content regardless of their ELD level, during lesson observations, students from SEI classrooms engaged in lower-level tasks according to the Depth of Knowledge Wheel, (repetition and memorization). In fact, six of them stayed on the Level Two (Skill/Concept), and the other lesson was only at DOK Level One (Recall). On the other hand, all four lessons observed in the ESL classrooms were at DOK Level Three (Strategic Thinking).

**Themes Frequency Table**

	<b>Culturally Responsive Teaching (Frequency referenced)</b>	<b>Safe Learning Environments (Frequency referenced)</b>	<b>Native Language Support (Spanish) (Frequency referenced)</b>
T4, T8, & T11 Interview	23	9	0
T5 & T9 Interview	0	13	0
T1, T2, & T6 Interview	0	21	0
T7 & T10 Interview	1	8	0
T4 Lesson Observation	1	2	0
T1 Lesson Observation	2	5	2
T11 Lesson Observation	2	2	0
T6 Lesson Observation	5	1	7
T8 Lesson Observation	1	2	2
T2 Lesson Observation	4	1	3
T9 Lesson Observation	2	1	0
T7 Lesson Observation	2	0	3
T5 Lesson Observation	11	6	2
T10 Lesson Observation	2	2	0
T3 Interview	4	1	0
	60	74	19

**Table 4.5 Asset Based Teaching and Learning at the Classroom Level**

Table 4.5 shows the frequency with which teachers referenced the importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching, Safe Learning Environments, and Native Language Support. This data contributes to answer the research question regarding opportunities to

improve MLs learning. As shown in the table, there is a discrepancy on what teachers are saying and doing, maybe this is an opportunity for teachers' self-reflection to address MLs teaching practices to find what rigorous lessons and/or a rigorous task looks like, and what are preventing them to expose students to a more rigorous task. There are four levels in the DoK wheel, high order thinking and application of knowledge are in levels three and four. The researcher has mentioned school's systems in place that may have contributed to have less rigorous lessons in SEI classrooms, the first one may be implicit bias still present when educating MLs. The second one is the SEI program itself having a series of time-consuming structures that required teachers to focus in providing high levels of scaffolds and vocabulary development. Finally, a rigid curriculum where teachers have to rush to accomplish covering the standards with low depth of knowledge due to time constrictions.

### **Theme: High Expectations for MLs**

High expectation and rigor might have a close relationship, for instance, all teachers expressed the need to expose all students regarding their ELD level to grade-level content. The fifth-grade teacher stated, *"I made a conscious effort and intentionality to plan with my students ELD levels in mind. I often paraphrase and summarize some of the content to make it easier for my level ones to understand."* In addition, teachers highlighted the lack of high expectations presented by the SEI program. One teacher in particular voiced her concern by saying, *"SEI as it is implemented focuses on student's*

*deficit, like hey, you do not speak English and in order to do that, you need to forget your native language because we are not using it here.*” In this example, even though this teacher herself has high expectations for all her students, she notes that this deficit lens creates a mark on her students who are being seen as less than non-MLs by the program itself established to educate MLs. The researcher highlighted opportunities like this in the school to explore possible changes to improve education of MLs.

Other opportunities to explore MLs education were presented in ESL classrooms, a second grade ESL teacher highlighted the importance of creating the right mindset to her MLs, constantly sending positive messages like, *“Love and accept yourself, but also challenge yourself because you are capable of being successful. You got this, do your best.”* The data reflected no difference in lower or upper grades. Both levels emphasized the importance of having appropriate differentiation to engage students in all ELD levels. A preschool teacher stated, *“I have similar goals for all students — ELD 1s, 2s, and 3s — I want them to gain as much language as they possibly can.”* Finally, teachers also mentioned the importance of encouraging students to do their best and to remind them how smart they are to establish a positive mindset to promote self-esteem. During the lessons, a first-grade teacher encourages her students to apply their knowledge by saying, *“Oh my goodness friends, we have learned so many things, and guess what? It is your turn to teach us!”* Those practices are evidence of teachers’ high expectations for their students.

One more example was observed in the third-grade ESL class, students focused on fluency and used several techniques to incorporate students' discourse. Besides the teacher being very intentional in preparing activities to target all four-language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) the teacher also prepared scaffolds such as sentence starters for students to give each other feedback about their fluency. Other routines included students working in pairs and taking turns reading; after a partner finished reading, one student used the sentence to provide feedback. The student incorporated feedback and changed roles. One student's feedback was *"You need to use your punctuation; it was hard to understand because you read too fast."*

Believing that MLs are able to learn and succeed regarding their language barriers provides a useful explanatory framework for understanding struggling readers' engagement and reading comprehension (Cho, Toste, J. R., Lee, M., & Ju, U, 2019). One teacher stated, "I want my students to start thinking about career paths as early as possible. If they told me I want to work in a restaurant, I would encourage them to think about owning a restaurant instead." Students and teachers' growth mindset was referenced 39 times during teacher interviews; however, it was only observed 15 times during lesson observations. Again, a discrepancy between what teachers do and what teachers believe is noticed in the researcher study.

Even though teachers are exposing students to grade-level content, and are providing scaffolds and supporting access to content, there is a discrepancy when the

researcher triangulated data regarding high expectations for MLs. If teachers do not believe in MLs capacity to engage in high-order thinking and complex text, there is a limitation in the current system that may prevent MLs success, the researches wonders if this is one of the obstacles preventing MLs closing of the achievement and opportunity gap. It is also evident that that teachers are doing their best to elaborate in comprehensible input strategies for their students, however, since the SIOP protocol is extensive, and the time is limited, other important elements are close to impossible to include. Therefore, MLs are having lessons with a lot of supports and scaffolds, and less rigor and interaction. Those results are a consequence of the SEI model rather than teachers will.

### ***Parent Engagement***

According to the data collected during the research study, families are participating and involved in the school in different capacities. However, there is a lack on involvement in their academic and linguistic knowledge of the students' skills. Parents have limited information about academic and linguistic goals for MLs learners and have “faith” that what their students are learning is fulfilling their needs.

**Theme: Family Engagement**

In order to explore if current supports are addressing or not Hispanic MLs academic and linguistic needs from the families' perspective, the researcher has collected data from teachers and parents. Family engagement was explored through three different lenses: culturally responsive practices to establish two-way communication with families, inviting families to participate in classroom activities, and engaging in ongoing conversations about MLs' academic and language progress.

**Culturally Responsive Practices to Establish Two-way Communication with Families**

In order to collect data to explore if teachers at the classroom level were engaging families effectively, the researcher invited parents to participate in a focus group. Among other questions, parents were asked to describe their experiences while visiting the school. Three out of the five participants described access to school as “*easy*”. They also added that they were part of “*The Parent Mentor program*”. The Parent Mentor program is a systematic way to involve parents in the classrooms developed in Chicago and adopted in Boston initially at the school where this study took place. Parents are recruited to be part of the Parent Mentor program by a non-profit organization that prepares them to function as classroom aids. These three parents reported during the focus group to have gained access to the school system through the program. All three parents were Spanish speaking with limited English. As part of the Parent Mentor program, parents paired with

a classroom teacher and volunteer in the classroom four times a week, Monday through Thursday for three hours each day. On Fridays, all parent mentors across the school meet to participate in professional development opportunities. This formal structure has prepared several parents since SY2015 when they started the program with five parents. In SY 2021–2022, the program included 10 parents. One of the parents mentioned, *“I have never had any barriers accessing any of the activities at the school, I think that is because of my role as a parent mentor.”* This statement affirms the importance of creating structured channels for parents to access classrooms to support instruction in partnership with teachers.

In contrast, one parent who was not part of the parent mentor program mentioned that due to conflicts *with their job schedule and the school schedule, it was hard to be part of classroom activities. “I work, and I cannot participate in any activities during the school day, I try to come for afterschool celebrations.”* This example invites us to explore whom our parents are and what we can do to involve them into the school system when work schedule is a barrier, and other obstacles prevent parental involvement in MLs learning. It may be another opportunity to explore school’s systems to be improved in order to better educate MLs.

In addition to asking parents about their visits to the school, during the focus group parents were asked about channels of communication to connect with classroom teachers. All teachers interviewed expressed their desire to use their smartphones with an

application called ClassDojo. The application was useful to send and receive messages in Spanish, since it has a real time translator. One of the parents who participated in the focus group works in the cafeteria, which makes it possible for her to have access to teachers in person, she stated. Those alternative ways to communicate are important, however, technology could not be enough to create authentic involvement and to build relationships between parents and teachers.

The school has three structures to integrate parents' voices in the decision-making process: the School Site Council (SSC), the School Parents Council (SPC), and the equity round table meetings. The researcher collected data from the SSC rolling agendas for SY 2021–2022, as well as from the agenda meetings and flyers sent to families about the School Parent Council, notes from the equity round table, and Parent Mentor Program meetings.

The SSC body is a legal oversight entity that serves as the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared decision-making model. The SSC bylaws determine that the composition of the SSC shall be consistent for an equal number of parents and professional educators, including the principal. The school has a bilingual Spanish family liaison who oversees contacting parents to encourage their participation in the SSC, and to follow regulations regarding mandatory meetings and ethnic representation for ML families. The main focus during SY 2021–2022 was to present to the community the proposed school expansion to add sixth grade to the school.

The SSC also has a voice to oversee the school budget presented by the principal, including ESSER funds available for the school in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are four parents in the SSC, two are parents of ML students and two are White parents. On the educator side, there are three White teachers and one African American/Black teacher, as well as the family liaison, who is Hispanic. All parents are invited to participate in the election of SSC members as parent candidates and/or voters, and to attend meetings. Flyers and communications outreach via ClassDojo and TalkingPoints, are sent out regularly to communicate dates and purpose of SSC meetings. Parent participation is still an area to improve during SSC meetings. The school enrollment for SY2021–2022 was 515 students and only eight parents participated in the meetings. The school provides interpreters for MLs families in five languages including Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Chinese, and Arabic. The meetings are held via Zoom to accommodate members who are unable to attend in person.

To facilitate participation in equity round table meetings, those meetings are scheduled the same day of SSC, parents are invited to attend, and the principal usually presents data to help inform parents' opinions regarding initiatives on which to allocate additional funding support from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Interpretation is also available during those meetings and parents usually work in breakout rooms with MLs families who speak the same language.

The Parent Mentor Program is another body designed to support the school with 100% parental autonomy. Members of the program are selected from the families of

current students. The group consists of eight parents who are trained by a non-profit organization that operates next to the school. This community-based organization also has an after-school program to serve students from the school and a volunteer program to run the school library. Parents selected are mostly from ML families of Hispanic background. The program starts in August and participants are matched with teachers in different grade levels who request them to be “helpers” in the day-to-day work with students. The program is very successful for both parents, students, and school since all benefit from additional hands and minds working with students with consistency.

In addition to the Parent Mentor Program, the School Parent Council is another school body that operates as a partner without school oversight. The SPC meets monthly and contributes with ideas and initiatives to help the school community. For example, the SPC has advocated for increments in the school budget in front of the District School Committee. The school provides interpretation to facilitate SPC meetings and helps support the committee’s decisions and recommendations. During a meeting, for example, the SPC recommended the use of school uniforms as optional; they presented the idea to the SSC and passed the initiative. All parents involved in those committees are actively involved and volunteer at many of the school activities such as Welcome events before the school opens in September, toy drives, winter jacket drives for students, Health and Wellness Night. Although they are three different bodies — SSC, SPC, and Parents Mentors — several members participate in all three of them. Despite the commitment of parents involved on these committees, parent participation is still low compared to the number of students enrolled in the school.

Even though none of the above school entities focused explicitly or intentionally on MLs, absence of intentionally focusing on MLs families does not mean that MLs parents are not involved in the school. In fact, all SSC and SPC agenda meetings showed that about 50% of participant parents are from Hispanic backgrounds. There are nine languages spoken by families at the school, with Haitian Creole being the third most spoken, after Spanish and English, and Cape Verdean Creole being number four, all those families receive interpretation services during each meeting. Those systems evidence that the school has strong systems for parental involvement in the school; however, there is stillroom for improvement to provide access to families of MLs in the classrooms, to build a partnership in educating MLs.

### **Inviting Families to Participate in Classroom Activities**

Teachers were also asked during the teacher interviews about providing access and opportunities for parents to get involved in the classroom. Their responses varied. Lower grades, especially grades PK – 1, tend to have closer communication with parents not only via ClassDojo, but also face-to-face meetings during dismissal for informal check-ins. All teachers in grades PK – 5 and ESL teachers expressed that finding information about the student from the families using surveys at the beginning of the year and getting more information about students' backgrounds help them to build a sense of community in the classroom. A teacher mentioned, *“Connecting with families, understanding their family background, being able to know where our students come*

*from, and their family dynamics helps me to create an environment where students feel comfortable and welcome.” Another teacher added, “At the beginning of the school year I called or met with all my parents, I introduced myself via newsletter, in both English and Spanish.”*

All 11 teachers also mentioned the importance of meeting parents in person, posting activities in ClassDojo and Talking Points applications. Families and teachers expressed the importance of valuing home language to communicate. Even though only three SEI classroom teachers are Spanish native language speakers, the other four teachers mentioned working hard on improving their Spanish skills to have basic communication in Spanish to reach parents in their native language. Three of the four ESL teachers are Spanish native speakers. They reported that they often joined parent - teacher conferences with SEI teachers to have a more welcoming environment for non-English speaking parents.

Overall, there is evidence of some level of parental involvement from Hispanic MLs parents. The small group of parents involved in the Parents Mentor program, who has high level of involvement at the school maybe a good starting point to invite other parents to participate in the school with the objective to find their support in the academic and linguistic development of their MLs learners. In contrast, parents who are busy at work during school hours are the majority. Those parents will benefit from activities offered before or after school. Currently those opportunities are limited to three major

events during the year including a welcoming event at the beginning of the school year, an open house for curriculum, and a wellness event at the end of the year. Therefore, it is important to explore other ways to create those opportunities and possible resources to promote both parents and teachers' participation.

### **Engaging in Ongoing Conversations about MLs Academic and Language Progress**

Teachers and parents expressed that for the most part, parents do not understand the different programs to educate their children. In fact, parents do not have opportunities to learn about language assessments given to their children and do not understand its purpose. One teacher explained, *"Parents trust the school to educate their children. Because they do not understand the implications of language tests like Access, they cannot help their children to take the test seriously. I do not understand why we cannot educate the parents about this."* The school does not have a system to educate parents of ML students in ongoing conversations about their student's academic and language progress. ESL teachers met with the parents once at the end of the year to present student's growth in language acquisition; however, those meetings are optional and have low attendance by parents, according to ESL meeting records. Therefore, the researcher did not have enough evidence to present support systems to promote ongoing conversations about MLs academic and language development between parents and teachers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS PART II**

### **Tension And Barriers**

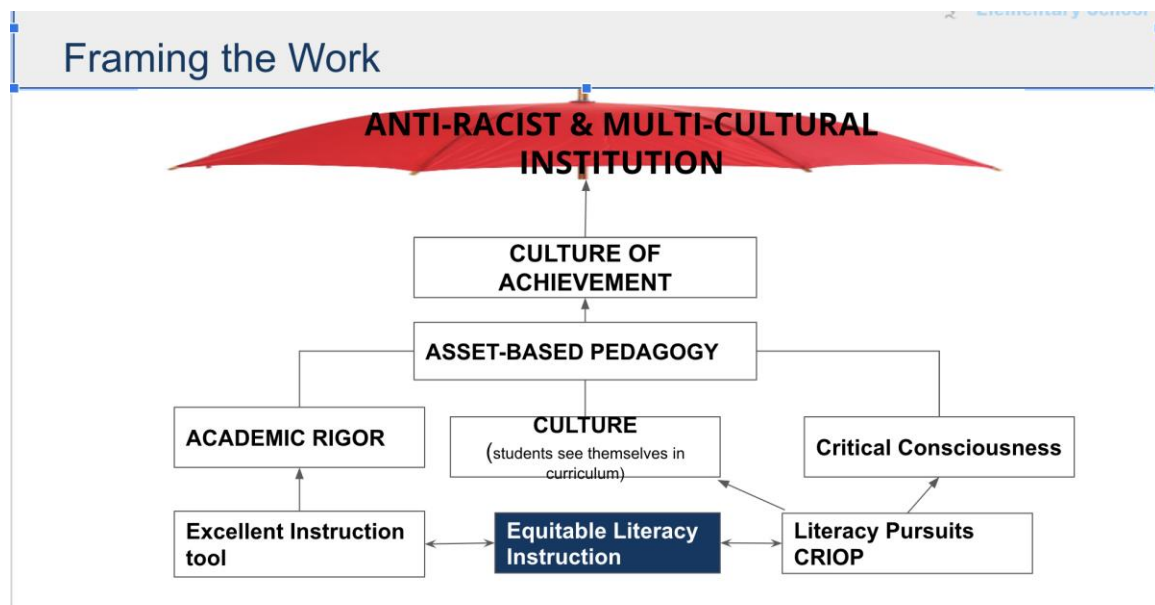
The following chapter aims to explore systems in place that may have contributed to create barriers to education of MLs at the school level. This section also explores school's systems established at the school level to address MLs academic and linguistic needs, including systems created unintentionally to slow MLs success.

### *Leadership Transitions*

In this section, the researcher explores school's systems in place to design and implement schools' strategic plan. Unfortunately, the school has experienced several shifts in its leadership. In the SY 2010-11 the school was identified as chronically underperforming, most of the school teaching and leadership staff was replaced, even though the leadership has changed four more times after that, about 50% of the staff is still the same since 2010. This change in leadership, however, may have been another cause for MLs education to be negatively impacted. Leadership changes happened in SY 2010-11, 2013-14, 2017-18, and 2019-2020. Every time new administration comes, a new strategic plan is created and implemented. The researcher presents the current strategic plan and systems in place at the school to address education of ALL students.

## Theme: Opportunities for Collaboration

An important school-wide initiative since the 2019 – 2020 school year has been to create an anti-racist and multi-cultural institution. This school vision serves as the main focus to create a school culture of achievement for all students by shifting the school culture toward an asset-based pedagogy that values the strengths of its diverse student body. Since the school is considered in a transformation status (Level 4 according to the DESE accountability ranking), it was necessary to address tier one instruction and to change the deficit lens with which teachers often looked at MLs and students with IEPs. The following figure illustrates the school framework created to guide the transformation of the school and out of its current level 4 status.



**Figure 5.1 Framework for an Anti-Racist & Multicultural Institution**

Under this umbrella, the school administration created several leadership teams to drive the work to address each of the areas presented in the framework. The researcher collected data from ILT and CPT agendas to explore school systems in place to close the achievement and opportunity gap for MLs.

**Instructional Leadership Team (ILT):**

The Instructional Leadership Team is responsible for creating and implementing the school's Quality School Plan. The team meets twice a month and generates a series of initiatives to address academic rigor, instruction excellence, instructional focus, and collaborative implementation of the equitable literacy instruction. The researcher collected data from ILT agendas and observed a meeting. During the ILT meeting, teachers created a plan to bring to their grade level teams to ensure protocols for looking into students' data and student work were followed. There was no participation from the ESL team. The team also followed a protocol to unpack curriculum units. CPT meetings are designated for teachers in all teams to create scaffolds for MLs and students with IEPs to ensure teaching and learning for *ALL* students.

### School's ILT Structure

Purpose	Team Members
<p>The team is designated to support excellent teaching. The team uses school data and classroom observations to guide instructional improvement by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Monitoring Massachusetts standards implementation</li> <li>· Define effective instruction.</li> <li>· Observing instruction</li> <li>· Designing professional learning</li> </ul>	<p>K0 teacher – Moderate Disabilities (MD) teacher            K1 teacher – SEI teacher            K2 teacher – Inclusion teacher            1st grade teacher – Inclusion teacher            2nd grade teacher – SEI teacher            3rd grade teacher – Inclusion teacher            4th grade teacher – Inclusion teacher            5th grade teacher – SEI teacher            Specialist teacher – Theater teacher            PK–2 Instructional Coach            3–5 Instructional Coach            Assistant Principal            Principal</p>

**Table 5.1 School Instructional Leadership Team**

During the observation, there were three objectives to accomplish for the meeting.

(1) Review data from ILT rounds. (2) Discuss what instructional moves are surfacing as a focus across the school. (3) Review steps to deliver a strong instructional focus for the 2021–2022 school year.

The ILT team had conducted a walkthrough of different classrooms to collect data focusing on observing how teachers and students were using: Enabling Texts, Complex Text, Explicit and Systematic Instruction in the Function of Language

All members reviewed the data and registered their findings in a chart with the following headings:

Focus Area	Here is What? Identify specific trends, observations, outcomes. Write non-judgmental statements that describe what you see in the data.	So What? Interpret what led to those results and why.	Wondering What? What do you wonder or have questions about?
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**Table 5.2 Classroom Observation Chart**

Six teams completed data analysis and shared their findings. Based on the data analysis, four teams discussed in small groups what the next possible steps are to address gaps in teaching and learning. At the same time ILT members identified who is responsible and which leadership team will address those possible steps. Finally, teachers determined four priorities and the action steps to accomplish them.

Some of the priorities described in the agenda included the following:

1. Teachers would develop language or questions that they use throughout the year to encourage perspectives.
2. How do we help teachers use the opportunities to put more of the lift on students and create tasks that help develop criticality?
3. Support teachers to ensure that students are engaging with each other rather than teacher-student conversations.

The data that teachers collected through their walkthroughs was used to plan possible instructional focus for SY 2022–23. This practice evidenced a strong school system in place to ensure grade-level teams are working to improve their teaching practices from MLs and non-MLs. However, when observing CPT meetings, data

evidenced that there is a disconnect between those practices discussed in ILT to ensure improvement of teachers skills for MLs, and for all students, one thing to highlight is the discrepancy in unpacking units protocol listed in the following CPT agendas. Those protocols aimed to help teachers anticipate possible barriers for MLs and to identify support to minimize them. By not implementing the protocol with fidelity, the school system in place may not accomplish the school's leadership goal mentioned in the plan. These discrepancies are also identified during ILT's strategic plan meetings where ILT members have identified what is being implemented with fidelity and what has not.

### *Inflexible Curriculum*

Grade level teachers voiced CPT times as one of the opportunities for horizontal (teacher within the same grade level) to collaborate. In fact, they all mentioned how during those meetings a Gen Ed, Inclusion, ESL, and SEI teachers work together to unpack units prepare lessons, exploring materials and resources to address students' needs. On the other hand, this system has created an undesired result, SEI teachers try to cover the curriculum at the same pace as Gen Ed classrooms. The accountability assessment calendar is designed to evaluate students' curriculum content and standards taught by each teacher at the same time. This rigid system makes SEI teachers have less time to get into deeper teaching and learning, teachers often choose to provide high level of scaffolding strategies to ensure comprehensible input, but left rigor and hands-on activities out of the lesson to

cover the curriculum. In addition, some SEI teachers feel that materials and strategies in Gen Ed and ESL classrooms are different than the ones they use, therefore they end having to prepare their lesson alone, adding more time to their planning.

**Common Planning Time (CPT) Team:**

The Common Planning Time (CPT) team meets every week using the school ILT-CPT- PD Cycle calendar. This document maps out CPT agendas and ensures alignment with ILT and with the school instructional focus. The main purpose of the CPT team is to provide teachers opportunities to collaborate to implement the following:

### CPT Structure

Purpose	Team Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Teachers must work together to provide access and support for all students to reach high standards.</li> <li>· Teachers must work together to consistently analyze student work, understand student strengths, identify unfinished teaching and learning, and make a plan to respond.</li> <li>· Set a strong foundation for collaborative adult learning with protocols. Set meeting norms, build shared understanding of work style preferences; unpack a school's mission statement to understand a team's purpose, and more!</li> <li>· Unpack core content subject curricula.</li> <li>· Align curriculum and assessments.</li> <li>· Weekly Data Meeting - Unpack assessment data from standardized testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One ESL teacher</li> <li>One General Education Teacher</li> <li>One SEI teacher</li> <li>Two Inclusion teachers</li> <li>PK–2 or 3–5 Instructional Coach</li> <li>Principal or Assistant Principal</li> </ul>

**Table 5.3 Common Planning Time Team**

During my observation, the meeting agenda started with the instructional coach (IC) for grades PK–2 facilitating the meeting. The IC used a recording of the teachers who facilitated a “warm-up phonemic awareness (PA) *Foundations* activity” with the students. “The warm-up would provide daily access points to *Foundations* content that will also accelerate students toward mastery”. The recording was used to generate a discussion about students' phonemic awareness in isolating, manipulating, blending, and segmenting sounds. The IC followed-up by presenting the elements of the *Foundations* warm-up.

After watching the video, each teacher shared major takeaways, including PA warm-up structure, and benefits of this short phonics activity. The IC asked the teachers to commit to practicing the warm-up activity including all five phonic skills presented in

the video.

Teachers analyzed the following common observations: Kids are learning phonics routines, and the short routine is very interactive, and students enjoyed their phonics warm-up.

Teachers continued during the CPT meeting planning a phonics routine addressing students' needs and gaps identified during the unit Foundations assessments. Based on the analysis, teachers also identified possible students who will benefit from additional phonics instruction and created an intervention plan.

The second document used to collect data was an upper grade CPT rolling agenda. The first agenda was dated April 6, 2022, the listed Objectives were:

- 1- Critical Connections Boot Camp, and
- 2- Plan a Red Sox Game Field Trip

The first objective included two links — the first was to a PowerPoint presentation with the information about Critical Connections, and the second link was a document to guide teachers with “Look Fors” and examples of the elements present in a reading lesson addressing Critical Connections. In contrast to the lower grade agenda, there are no annotations or next steps in the agenda. There is no evidence of following any protocol to unpack content area units or to have actionable steps to improve instruction. In fact, the meeting time was used primarily for planning the Red Sox field trip. Even though field trips are essential to build students' experiences, especially for

MLs, lacking on unpacking those the unit may affect the lesson planning and adequate support for MLs, including analyzing students' task to evaluate its rigor. Once again, the school system to ensure appropriate differentiation strategies for MLs may be compromised. In fact, there is a misunderstanding about this system, which was created to improve teachers' lesson delivery skills, in order to be consistent with the school's strategic plan to improve literacy skills in all students, teachers need to prioritize their time to unpack the lessons to anticipate possible students' barriers to access the lessons and to analyze the task given to students to increase its rigor. Although some grades are following those protocols, this practice is not the norm across all grade levels. The researcher wonders how the school can promote change in teachers' mindset regarding seeing these protocols as tools to improve their teaching practices and not just a compliance task or "*just another thing to do.*" Is the curriculum planning a system that needs to be revised in order to improve MLs education?

**Theme: Observation and Feedback to Improve Teacher Skills**

In order to collect data to explore school level structures in place to provide observations and feedback to improve teaching practices, the researcher examined the Coaching/Evaluation team agenda. The school created and implemented this leadership team during the school year 2019–2020. Members of this team are evaluators who completed the appropriate training to conduct teachers' evaluations, and the school's two instructional coaches. The team meets regularly and is tasked with observing teachers and providing feedback regularly, as well as to evaluate teachers. The team aims to improve educators' teaching practices by having coaching sessions after observing teachers bi-weekly. The team also calibrates observation and feedback skills. Here is the list of topics covered since the beginning of the school year 2021–2022.

### Observation and Feedback Objectives per Agendas

Meeting #	Objectives
1 - Sep 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Align school priorities, our Vision, and the <a href="#">Focus Components of the Culture of Achievement</a> with <a href="#">team goals</a></li> <li>· Revise observation and feedback tools for coaching cycles</li> <li>· Reflect on the current culture of observation and feedback at this school and envision success for this year’s work</li> <li>· Determine stakeholder engagement in observation and feedback</li> </ul>
2- Sep 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Align school priorities, our Vision, and the <a href="#">Focus Components of the Culture of Achievement</a> with <a href="#">team goals</a></li> <li>· Revise observation and feedback tools for coaching cycles</li> <li>· K–2 coaching presentation</li> </ul>
3- Oct 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Discuss observation protocols and “purpose”</li> <li>· Calibrate our observation and feedback tools and skills</li> <li>· Build “muscle” around Observation and feedback</li> </ul>
4 - Oct 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Discuss observation protocols and “purpose.”</li> <li>· Calibrate our observation and feedback tools and skills.</li> <li>· Build “muscle” around Observation and feedback</li> </ul>
5 - Oct 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review the observation tool data and plan a debrief using the Lynch template.</li> <li>· Provide feedback to a pair based on Lynch template</li> </ul>
6 - Oct 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Calibrating and rating on a teacher</li> <li>· Participate in a coaching conversation consultancy</li> </ul>
7 - Nov 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Establish a common coaching framework.</li> <li>· Develop a culture of trust among our leadership team</li> <li>· Review SY21–SY22 Observation Note taker data</li> </ul>
9 -February 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review Evaluations timeline and coaching cycles</li> <li>· Establish a common coaching framework.</li> <li>· Develop a culture of trust among our leadership team</li> <li>· Plan logistics for team-observations</li> </ul>
10 - March 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review Observations and calibration from last week exercise</li> <li>· Establish a common coaching framework.</li> <li>· Plan Next steps to support teaching and learning.</li> </ul>
11 - April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Review Observations and calibration from last week exercise</li> <li>· Establish a common coaching framework.</li> <li>· Review end of the year Summative Evaluations</li> </ul>

**Table 5.4 Coaching/Evaluation Team Objectives**

The researcher used this document to examine whether the school was providing regular, actionable feedback to educators to improve MLs instruction. The data gathered from this document showed the progressive and intentional work done to improve evaluators and coaches' skills to align their job with the school priorities. The evaluation team also explored tools to collect, analyze, and compare trends in teaching practices in the school. This data is compared with other leadership teams' work such as ILT walkthroughs, and District observations. This is particularly evident in the October 7 and 14th agendas.

In addition, data collected from February 3 and March 3 reflects the work done by the team focused on improving observation and feedback to elevate teaching and learning skills. However, there is no evidence of those practices to target specific teaching of MLs. This practice supported the school system in place to improve teaching practices; however, there is no evidence of having MLs as the target of those teaching practices. Therefore, there is an opportunity to investigate the different programs and students needs at the school level to clarify what works for each program and what can be improved. Another opportunity created by analyzing this system questions if the observation and feedback structure should be done between teachers who are in the same program with support from their coaches, instead of a top-down system.

### *Program Structures*

One final system observed during data collection that may be affecting education of MLs negatively is the school program configuration. The current school configuration given by the district concentrates students with high needs in the school making this practice inequitable. In fact, this specific school has a higher probability to receive students who are new to the country, students with IEPs, students who have experienced trauma, food, and housing insecurities. This number of high needs students concentrated in one school need allocation of resources matching school's needs. Therefore, the researcher questions if the strategic plan alone is enough to improve education of MLs.

#### **Theme: Culturally Responsive Teaching**

As previously presented and depicted in Figure 5.1, the school framework has been developed under an anti-racist and multicultural umbrella. The school administration has created several leadership teams to drive the work to address each of the areas presented in the framework. The data to analyze culturally responsive teaching at the school level was collected from school professional development (PD) slides, school 90-Day Strategic Plan, and from the ILT notes for SY 2021–2022. ILT Agendas referenced creating a plan to address inequitable literacy instruction at the school, and created a series of PD throughout the SY 2021–2022 focusing on the following topics:

September PD – Culture of Achievement and Excellent Instruction

October PD – Equitable Literacy

November PD – Excellent instruction with focus on literacy

December PD – Equitable Literacy Components

January PD – Data Inquiry Cycles

February PD – Layering Text

March PD – Science of Reading Instruction

ILT meetings were designed to plan and execute a 90-Day Strategic Plan for the school focused on two major priorities. The first priority aimed to close academic gaps and accelerate learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. The second priority was to create a Culture of Achievement.

The last evidence to address culturally and responsive teaching included actions taken during CPTs. The data reflected that teachers unpacked lesson plans from curriculum and planned for adjustments based on their students' needs and teachers' own increased understanding from professional learning. However, as was referenced earlier, this practice was inconsistent and varied depending on the grade level. Three out of the seven grade-level CPT agendas reflected evidence of following this practice. The other four grade levels have little or no evidence to follow school-wide initiatives regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching. This professional development plan is addressing school instructional focus in a general manner; it is also an important part of the school support

system for MLs in general. The researcher wonders however if resources should be added to focus even further on the school subgroups to include a focus on specific MLs needs. How can the school add a more focused PD design building on these PDs to close the academic and linguistic gaps for MLs.

### **Theme: Teachers' Race, Ethnicity, and Years of Experience Educating MLs**

Table 5.5 below summarizes MLs' teachers' information.

<b>Teacher Code</b>	<b>Year Of Experience</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
T1	5 – 10	Female	Hispanic
T2	10 – 15	Female	Hispanic
T3	10 – 15	Female	White
T4	<5	Female	White
T5	<5	Female	Hispanic
T6	15 – 20	Female	White
T7	10 – 15	Female	White
T8	>20	Female	Hispanic
T9	5 – 10	Female	African
T10	10 – 15	Female	Hispanic
T11	15 – 20	Female	Hispanic

**Table 5.5 Study Teacher Participants Information**

The data in Table 5.5 focused on the 11 teachers who participated in the research. Six of the teachers identified as Hispanic, the other four teachers were White, and one was African. In terms of years of experience, MLs at the study site have access to six teachers with more than 10 years of experience. Only two teachers have less than five

years of experience, and the other two have more than five years and less than 10 years of experience. All of the teachers who participated in the study have their credentials to teach MLs, such as SEI endorsement and ESL licenses required in the state of Massachusetts. The data did not present any evidence of cultivation and/or retention practices for teachers of ML students, especially targeting teachers from diverse backgrounds. In addition to having experience working with ML students, all 11 teachers mentioned the importance of creating relationships with the students in their native language. One possible opportunity to explore at the school level to improve its systems to educate MLs may be teachers' effective practices and high expectations. Data showed that diverse teachers used more rigorous tasks, in addition, their language capacity helped Spanish speaking teachers to support MLs in their heritage language. The researcher found a possible connection between lack of academic rigor in the lessons and potential bias by non-diverse teachers who may still see MLs through a deficit lens. This negative mindset may affect lesson delivery and exposure to more rigorous tasks, in fact, this data has shown emphasis in scaffolding, leaving students' tasks in the lower margins of rigor and lack of engaging students in high order thinking.

**Theme: Professional Learning**

Professional learning opportunities and collaboration data was collected during teacher interviews and post observation meetings. All teachers referenced having weekly opportunities to work with their grade level during their Common Planning Time (CPTs).

This practice was referenced 65 times. In fact, all teachers noted the use of their CPT time effectively to unpack curriculum units and share best practices to teach grade level standards. They also use CPTs to look at student work and analyze students' progress using a data protocol. For example, one teacher mentioned, *"I plan and collaborate with my general education teachers. We work together to set the scope and sequence of the units to hit all the standards and to plan the lessons."* ESL teachers also mentioned professional learning opportunities as a way to share their expertise with SEI teachers and general education teachers in collectively identifying differentiation and support needed during the lessons to meet MLs needs.

On the other hand, all teachers agreed that they do not have opportunities to collaborate with teachers in vertical integration (one grade below, and one grade above level). Teachers stated, *"There is no structure to provide time to plan or collaborate with vertical integration, so all we do is very informal. Basically, I talk to my colleagues very informally and usually just with the ones who are closest to my classroom."*

Finally, when it comes to having opportunities for professional collaboration with Special Education teachers and specialists, those meetings are set just to talk specifically about particular student(s). There was no evidence of intentional collaboration targeting language development. This opportunity to improve systems in the school to promote collaboration among SEI, ESL, and content teachers may be necessary to improve MLS academic and linguistic outcomes because it promotes sharing best teaching practices.

**Theme: Formative and Summative Assessments**

The school uses district summative assessments to monitor all students’ progress, all standardized tests, including ACCESS are used for compliance purposes. Here is a summary of assessments given to MLs in the school.

Formative Assessments	Summative Assessments
Teachers’ Observations Teacher developed rubrics. Letter identification Teacher Made Assessment	MCAS ACCESS End of Unit ELA Curriculum and <i>Foundations</i> Assessments Illuminate - Summative standardized content assessment. MAP Growth

**Table 5.6 Formative and Summative Assessments Used**

*Grouping*

**Theme: Multilingual Learners Integration**

The researcher collected data to investigate school level opportunities for MLs integration from professional development (PD) documents and PowerPoint presentations, Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) agendas, observations during arrival, dismissal, lunch, and recess times, CPTs, and school-wide assemblies. The data did reveal evidence of intentional strategies and opportunities to integrate MLs with non-MLs in the school as part of the students’ learning experience. For example, students during lunch and recess sit with their classroom and have minimal interaction with non-

MLs. The term integration in this context refers to meaningful opportunities where MLs and non-MLs students share opportunities to learn together or to participate in social interactions. Some examples are peer-reading buddies, mix teams during structured games, and mixing students during plays and musicals. Providing MLs opportunities to real interaction with non MLs will benefit their social language skills, in fact, native and non-native English speakers' integration and it is considered essential in language development programs to achieve successful academic, linguistic, and cross-cultural outcome for all students (De Jong & Howard, 2009)

### **Informal Interaction**

The researcher observed students' interactions during the following settings: school-wide assemblies, grade level community meetings (4th and 5th grades), Winter and Spring Musicals, arrival and dismissal, and lunch and recess times.

All students participated in the school activities mentioned above as observed during these activities. Monthly school assemblies and weekly grade level community meetings are similar because they both aim to address improving school culture. Data gathered from the School Strategic Plan showed those initiatives as part of the whole school approach to promote school wide expectations. All students and staff participated in those assemblies as tier one practice to promote improvement of students' behavior and to implement a school wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)

plan. During those meetings, there is some level of integration, but none of those opportunities is academic in nature. Monthly school assemblies are held in the auditorium for 15 minutes to discuss school-wide targeted skills and values such as expectations in the classrooms, in the hallways, and during lunch and recess. It is also an opportunity to celebrate school values and recognize students who display those values by demonstrating the school's values of respect, unity, and excellence. During the monthly school assemblies, for example, students go to the auditorium and sit by grade level with minimal interaction between MLs and non-MLs. They usually come with their classroom teacher and sit in their own designated space.

Similar to the monthly assemblies, students in 4th and 5th grades participate in weekly community meetings, which create opportunities to celebrate students' character and values. It also builds a sense of community and aims to improve school culture. However, there is no real integration, and in fact, students are just sharing the same space.

Finally, the school musicals are held twice a year, which creates an opportunity to mix students who play different roles and are directed by both the Music and the Theater teachers. Students have the opportunity to integrate with other students during weekly practices and rehearsals. This close collaboration among students is limited, however, by the number of participants, with only one or two students per classroom.

Non-formal opportunities for integration happen three times during the school day. In the morning at arrival time, students from the same grade level gather in a common space outside their designated entrance. However, during the observations there was not integration between MLs and non-MLs. A second group of students rides the bus together with other students who live in the same area, creating an opportunity for unstructured integration between MLs and non-MLs. However, what was observed is that both opportunities are usually a transition time where students interact just with their classroom peers. During the observation MLs, students seemed more comfortable speaking in Spanish with their classmates and did not have any interaction with students in other classrooms. There appeared to be no real integration between MLs and non-MLs. The second opportunity students have to integrate with students from other classrooms is during lunch and recess, but again students are sitting and interacting just with their classmates. Lunch and recess are each 20 minutes long, but during those 40 minutes the researcher observed only social interactions among students in the same classroom. Therefore, improving those school systems to intentionally create spaces for real integration between MLs and non-MLs may help to improve linguistic and academic goals for MLs.

The absence of intentional integration between MLs and non-MLs presents an opportunity to improve current school support for MLs. In fact, mixing all students intentionally may help the school close MLs achievement and opportunity gap by increasing MLs exposure to native English speakers in a social context which may help

them to increase their social language. In addition, SEI program and ESL pull out grouping models teach students in isolation. Lower MLs ELD proficiency levels are not integrated with the rest of the school and have minimal opportunities to learn from each other. This model may contribute to creating a culture of Hispanic MLs seen as less capable, increasing negative connotation about multicultural and multilingual students coming to school as with a deficit.

### **Theme: Academic and linguistic supports**

#### **Student Needs**

The research explored addressing the needs of MLs by asking teachers during the teacher interviews and lesson observations questions regarding their collaboration with Special Education teachers and with their grade level colleagues. The data collected under the collaboration code referenced working with Special Education teachers and other educators to address student needs during CPTs. Teachers from the same grade level meet once a week to analyze students' progress based on students' academic work or standardized test results. This practice helps teachers to identify students' needs and address gaps. Teachers analyze all students, not only MLs, however, ESL teachers partner with classroom teachers to identify strategies pertinent to MLs specifically. If the student has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), one Special Education teacher collaborates with the team to create appropriate interventions. Three teachers mentioned during their interviews this practice. *"We have weekly CPTs, where we look at data*

*across the grade. So, it is a chance for me to talk to general education, ESL, and Special Education teachers.”*

### **Opportunities for Integration or a System of Segregation**

This section covers school's systems in place to integrate MLs with non-MLs in order to promote English's language models and share diverse cultural backgrounds. All teachers expressed lack of opportunities for integrating native English speakers and MLs at all levels in the school. They explained that the way the Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) model has been implemented in school; students are grouped according to their ELD levels (ones, twos, and threes) in the same classroom. Two teachers expressed that this practice amplifies lack of opportunities for MLs on the lower ELD proficiency levels to have English speakers who can serve as language models for them (peer to peer) and limiting to receive language modeling only from the teacher. This school practice could impact MLs in the long term, in fact, early segregation practices for MLs in elementary school may have contributed to the lower enrollment of ML learners in advanced courses in high school and access to four-year college programs (Schlaman, 2019).

English as Second Language (ESL) teachers agreed on having even fewer opportunities to integrate students. Usually, they provide instruction in pullout models, which only allows them to have students within the same ELD level. All teachers highlighted lack of integration as an opportunity for the school to improve. In fact, one

teacher mentioned that there are no extracurricular activities focusing on integrating MLs and monolingual English students. “*One way to solve this issue was by encouraging students to participate in activities outside the school, like going to public libraries or being part of before or after school programs,*” she added. Finally, teachers called for integration where students can use their native linguistic skills as an asset. They proposed a multicultural setting where students share their experiences and feel “*affirmed and acknowledged.*” Teachers from all grade levels expressed that the SEI model segregates their students, and that the perception from non-ML students is that MLs are less skilled and look at them through a deficit lens.

Some opportunities for the integration of MLs and monolingual students were mentioned in upper grades, including students participating in community meetings within their same grade level. In addition, teachers encourage students to participate in school assemblies such as the Winter and Spring Musicals, Black History Month performance, and to participate in a robotics club after-school program if possible (only for students in grades 4 & 5).

The lack of intentional integration affects students’ opportunities to socialize with native English speakers and improve social language skills in English. All teachers noted that the sense of isolation stays with students and is visible during lunch and recess where students usually stay with their SEI class. Lower grades teachers mentioned some opportunities for integration during field trips. Some students also go to afterschool

programs together and may have interactions there, however, there is no intentionality to group them together to improve their language skills.

Again, this practice of segregation is referenced as a system in place due to the programs present in the school, creating a conflict with what teachers agreed on what they considered best practices to improve MLs linguistic and academic development.

### *Language Teachers' Lack of Opportunities to Communicate*

#### **Theme: Collaboration**

In order to increase opportunities and outcomes for MLs students, successful schools place a high priority on cultivating a culture of teacher collaboration. (Arkoudis, 2006; Creese, 2002; Pawan & Ortloff, 2011). There were two major sources of information to collect data about teachers' collaboration opportunities. During teacher interviews, all 11 teachers who participated mentioned Common Planning Time (CPT) where grade-level horizontal collaboration takes place. During those CPTs teachers have opportunities to calibrate lesson plans by unpacking curricular units. During the unpacking protocol, they also explore resources and materials available to address students' needs. One teacher mentioned that for her collaboration process with her peers she started by using "*Plan books*", a digital tool, to share lesson plan information in a

more detailed form with her colleagues. In addition, teachers met to identify students' academic and linguistic needs, as well as MLs' strengths. The first-grade ESL teacher explained during the post observation interview, *“This information is then used by the ESL teacher to create support for tiered groups of students during their literacy instruction. ML students work in a small group instruction setting focusing on the same skills as all non MLs using additional linguistic supports such as manipulatives, visuals, and native language clarification.”*

According to the ILT agenda notes reviewed, CPTs are also designed to deep-dive into students' work. Grade level teachers used the unit assessments to determine additional interventions needed to provide support in small group settings. The school also has two instructional coaches, one for the lower grades supporting PK to second grades, and a second instructional coach for grades three to five. This system was positively mentioned by teachers, *“it is important to have a thought partner who helps me improve my teaching skills.”* One teacher also mentioned that having common literacy professionals and students' goals for the team helps them to set a collaborative environment focusing on the needs of their students. For example, teachers used a cohort style approach to look at student data and identify common goals like *“improving fluency using the science of reading.”* According to the data collected from the K1 teacher post observation meeting, this practice facilitated creating a cohesive plan for that grade level. In the lower grade levels (PK – 2) the teachers mentioned having a spreadsheet to monitor students on a weekly basis so they could intervene if students were not meeting their goals. Teachers also share other digital collaboration tools like PowerPoint

presentations. Those digital tools are created as a baseline to support calibration, but teachers add information to the slides according to classroom individual needs.

All teachers in the study noted a lack of collaboration with specialists (Physical Education, Music, Theater, Technology, Health, and Science teachers). In fact, only one teacher in PK mentioned collaboration with a science teacher. All participant teachers from the lower grades also noted that it was easier to discuss expected skills for reading to focus during the school year. Lower grade teachers (PK – 2) also expressed being comfortable aligning their teaching practices with General Education classrooms and Inclusion classrooms. During the interviews the PK teacher stated, *“We all focus on sounds and letter correspondence, making sure students leave our classroom writing their names and building some literacy skills.”*

One SEI teacher during the interviews highlighted the importance of having constructive discussions during their grade level meetings. The teacher expressed that since they work with the same students, it just makes sense to talk about teaching practices and strategies that have worked to address the needs of MLs. *“Just sharing what an ESL teacher sees in language development (ELD) is very helpful.”* Another SEI teacher mentioned during her interview *“collaboration with my grade level team helps me to see what is happening in non-ML classrooms, so I can push my students to their level.”* In contrast, all teachers also mentioned that working with teachers of non-MLs also presented some challenges. For example, a first grade SEI teacher addressed a valid point during her interview. *“ELD level threes may have the capacity to access the same*

*lessons taught in General education classrooms. However, students new to the country (Newcomers) often come to first grade without being in kindergarten. This scenario is common and presents a more challenging differentiation in planning for the homeroom teacher to provide access to grade level content while addressing language acquisition. Therefore, planning with grade level teachers who do not have MLs sometimes seems unproductive,”* according to the classroom teacher.

All 11 teachers also mentioned the lack of opportunities for collaboration in vertical teams. In fact, they expressed a desire to have more time to discuss common teaching practices suitable to improve language development and to participate in meetings to see what other grade levels are doing and what needs to be done to improve MLs' instruction. Vertical collaboration among teachers was a common desire expressed by all teachers involved in this study. A fifth-grade ESL teacher shared during her interview, *“I think that having differentiated PD where SEI teachers and ESL teachers can meet together and making sure that our planning with the General Ed and Inclusion teachers is aligned with the language needs of our students and supportive of that would be helpful.”* One teacher highlighted that vertical alignment was not happening because of scheduling issues. All teachers, however, brought up the existence of informal meetings in copy rooms, hallways, lunch or during arrival times. Those unstructured meetings with a teacher one-grade level above or below usually happened between teachers who felt comfortable with one another or whose classrooms happen to be next to each other. Those informal conversations included discussing specific former students, and materials used to target reading skills. All teachers also mentioned Panorama (a

database software) as a valuable tool to check on students' progress, not only academically but also for behavior concerns. Teachers used Panorama to enter anecdotic notes about students, parent contacts, behavior, and attendance interventions used.

On the contrary, two teachers of color mentioned having difficult times “*integrating*” within their grade level. Coincidentally, both teachers have been in the school for about three years and joined a cohort of teachers who have been working together for more than five years. The teachers mentioned not feeling included or valued during their CPT meetings, and questioned if their race may be a barrier for having their voices heard. In addition to mentioning “*a hostile working environment,*” they also addressed the lack of having a more cohesive schedule to participate in vertical collaboration with other teachers. One SEI teacher mentioned that SEI teachers at the school are working in relative isolation. This teacher's experience in other schools has been much different; in fact, the opposite. This teacher expressed hope about the opportunity to better collaborate with all teachers, stating that best practices for MLs are also best practices for all students, especially students with disabilities, and an eagerness to share best practices. The teacher suggested how sharing teaching strategies that worked with students with similar profiles could be an effective way to improve learning experiences and outcomes for MLs and non-MLs in the school.

Data from CPT documents revealed that even though ESL teachers are part of a grade level team, they plan with one SEI teacher, one General Education (Gen Ed) teacher, and two inclusion teachers. ESL teachers also collaborate to ensure all MLs are

receiving the ESL instruction in compliance with the district parameters. All ESL teachers discussed having close relationships with each other and sharing effective teacher practices often in informal meetings or while preparing compliance materials such as ACCESS testing and MLs folders. ESL teachers also identified the importance of exposing their students to grade level content. In order to align their teaching with other grade level classroom teachers, they mentioned having weekly meetings to discuss SEI, ESL, and Gen Ed lesson plans for the week. This alignment helps them to present grade level standards and prepare students' work in a similar way when they meet ML students in pull out groups. In fact, a common expression from all ESL teachers referring to their practices is "*We are making sure that we expose our students to grade level content.*"

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receiving the ESL instruction in compliance with the district parameters. All ESL teachers discussed having close relationships with each other and sharing effective teacher practices often in informal meetings or while preparing compliance materials such as ACCESS testing and MLs folders. ESL teachers also identified the importance of exposing their students to grade level content. In order to align their teaching with other grade level classroom teachers, they mentioned having weekly meetings to discuss SEI, ESL, and Gen Ed lesson plans for the week. This alignment helps them to present grade level standards and prepare students' work in a similar way when they meet ML students in pull out groups. In fact, a common expression from all ESL teachers referring to their practices is *"We are making sure that we expose our students to grade level content."*

**Theme Frequency Table**

	<b>Collaboration With Teachers of Other Grades – Vertical (Number of times referenced)</b>	<b>Collaboration Within Grade Level Teachers – Horizontal (Number of times referenced)</b>
T4, T8 & T11 Interview	4	3
T5 & T9 Interview	10	10
T1, T2, & T6 Interview	8	7
T7 & T10 Interview	6	4
T3 Post Observation Meeting	2	2
T1 Post Observation Meeting	4	2
T11 Post Observation Meeting	6	4
T6 Post Observation Meeting	2	1
T8 Interview	5	5
T2 Post Observation Meeting	5	5
T9 Post Observation Meeting	2	2
T7 Post Observation Meeting	4	4
T5 Post Observation Meeting	4	4
T10 Post Observation Meeting	5	5
T3 Interview	6	5

**Table 5.7 Collaboration**

Table 5.7 above shows how frequently teachers referenced horizontal and vertical collaboration opportunities during interviews, lesson observations, and meetings from post observations. Horizontal collaboration refers to teachers within the same grade level. Vertical collaboration refers to opportunities to work with a teacher above and/or below their own classroom grade level.

Although there are multiple systems in the school to address the needs of its MLs, those systems are relatively new, and it may take time to see positive results. Through the research, there are several opportunities to improve some school practices to address MLs needs in a more intentional way. Those recommendations will be presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

After looking at data collected in the previous chapter, the researcher continues by presenting an analysis of the three themes mentioned in the Blueprint for English Learner Success framework. With this information, the researcher is answering the research questions:

1. What existing supports addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs are evident in the school, in order to successfully support academic content and language development of MLs in the school?
2. Why do participants think that existing supports are not addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs, and what other supports or systems do they think are necessary in order to close the achievement and opportunity gap?

In the following, the researcher will discuss implications at the classroom and school level for the teaching practices and systems highlighted to educate MLs in the school. This case study could be a guide for school administrators and decision-makers at the district level to understand opportunities to improve education of MLs in the school site, and to plan a similar study in other schools with similar student populations. It may

be useful also to allocate resources needed to make adaptive changes to close achievement and opportunity gaps for Hispanic MLs.

Although this single case study is focusing on one school, there are several actions that school leaders could put in place to make significant improvements in the education of Hispanic MLs. Those recommendations will be presented at the end of the chapter. Finally, this research study presented an opportunity to explore schools and districts using The Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success to potentially answer the two research questions regarding how we are educating our Hispanic MLs, and what we can do to close the academic and achievement gap in our schools.

### **Discussion**

Data collected during the teachers' interviews, parent focus groups, lesson observations, and post observation meetings helped the researcher to answer the research questions and to understand education of MLs in the classroom level, and at the school level. Additional data from documents such as ILT agenda meetings, School's strategic plan, professional development presentations, and Common Planning Time agendas, built the frame to answer the question about school's systems in place to educate MLs. There are several important findings in this case study to explore teaching practices in the classroom that contributed to answer the research questions:

*Classroom Level*

- All seven SEI teachers participated in the research study; they are directly responsible to educate MLs in the early stages of acquiring English (ELDs 1,2 &3), therefore their participation was crucial to understand “how” we are educating our Hispanic MLs. Four ESL teachers responsible to ensure English language proficiency for levels 4 & 5, participated in the research, covering educators directly involved in educating Hispanic MLs at the school. All educators who participated in the research demonstrated knowledge of best practices to deliver instruction targeting grade level content, and language acquisition skills. However, SEI teachers were using a more rigid curriculum, and were expected to use the multiset of SIOP strategies in a limited time. The researcher wonders weather this one of the factors to scarify rigor and have less depth of content while delivering their lessons.
- Triangulation between data collected from teachers interviews Lesson observations data, and post observation showed some discrepancies on what teachers “know” about best practices to educate MLs and “what teachers do” in their practice. Data also supports use of appropriate scaffolding practices, and clear routines and expectations evident in all teachers’ practices. Teachers’ used technology and focused on vocabulary development to enhance comprehensible input strategies providing access to content for all MLs.

- At both classroom and school level the researcher found evidence of systems in place to equip foundation elements to support MLs, however, there are also systems in place preventing successful support of the academic content and language development of MLs in the school. As a result the researcher believes, that school need to work around implicit bias regarding MLs and students with disabilities to improve education of MLs. Perhaps we remove other systems like those that have high concentration of high needs students in one school to become more equitable in education of MLs.
- There is an opportunity to improve rigorous lessons and tasks to elevate high order thinking in all students, including MLs. The researcher suggests that we need to rethink language program to address MLs needs.
- Students grouping practices using the SEI model may have contributed to slow language acquisition for Hispanic MLs and enlarging the academic gap because of lack of exposure to more demanding tasks. Grouping students with lower English proficiency levels and keeping them “isolated” prevent them from getting exposure to native English language models, and label them and come with a deficit instead of valuing their multicultural and multi linguistic skills.

- Lack of intentional integration for MLs students has created a culture of silos for each program, having a broken community instead of a more cohesive culture of integration may be affecting MLs academic, linguistic, and social emotional development. Educators could create a plan to ensure that protocols to address best practices for MLs are included in every lesson. This includes a cohesive plan for MLs needs and skills in mind. The school leader needs to work closely with educators of MLs to develop a more cohesive schedule to include vertical and language program planning time.

### *School level*

- School has created several systems to target literacy inequalities in education of all students, however, this broad approach in a school with a concentration of students with high needs require a more detailed and tiered plan to address MLs students' needs, students with disabilities, and students who have experienced high levels of poverty and trauma. Concentrating a large number of high need students in one site, calls for a concentration of more resources, and highly qualified supporting professionals, including bilingual administrators, social workers, bilingual instructional coaches, and bilingual staff to support bi-literacy proficiency in our students.

- Although there are several opportunities for teachers to collaborate within their same grade levels, evidence from research study data calls for opportunities to plan vertically and program collaboration times built in the school schedule to target improving teaching practices for MLs learners. Lack of opportunities to collaborate vertically were mentioned (one teacher below and one teacher about grade level) was referenced as “something we need” for all eleven participants.
- The school has strong structures in place to encourage family and community engagement, however, data from the research study showed more parental involvement in supporting academic progress of Hispanic MLs. Again, there is an opportunity to be more strategic about creating a partnership to address specific academic and linguistic needs of MLs and add actionable steps.

## **Implications**

Following the researcher addressed implications for each opportunity to improve education of Hispanic MLs.

### ***Classroom Level -***

#### **Implication 1. Are Skillful Educators “Enough”?**

At the classroom level, there was plenty of evidence to support that teachers are knowledgeable of teaching strategies to address academic and linguistic needs for their MLs. By contrast, data also supports a lack of a cohesive plan with common goals including promoting language acquisition to clarify “what is expected” in each classroom to address MLs’ needs. This generalization was found in all three pillars discussed on the Blueprint for English Learners Success. For example, every teacher who participated in the research study identified “some” elements of creating an inclusive learning environment during the interviews,

<b>Theme: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments</b>	
Physical Environment	Learning Experiences
<p><b><i>T4, T8, &amp; T11 Interviews</i></b></p> <p>T11 - Using text that reflects culturally and diverse students, including having text in MLS native language,</p> <p>Artifact in the classroom to reflect families' background.</p> <p>T4 - Intentional seating charts according to ELD levels to promote collaborations and social interactions (low- high)</p>	<p>T11- Creating a culture of taking linguistic and academic risk,</p> <p>Recognizing making mistakes is part of the learning process.</p> <p>Linking their personal life to their role in the community</p> <p>Value students' native language by allowing them to answer in their language of preference.</p> <p>T8 - Setting a classroom with ELD levels and differentiation in mind.</p> <p>Intentional planning to provide access points to each student regardless of their language proficiency,</p> <p>Using SIOP model components</p> <p>Include visual support around the classroom, such as anchor charts, and vocabulary banks.</p> <p>T4- Routines to incorporate language use for example turn and talk, repetitions, and scaffolds to support language development by speaking.</p>

<p><b><i>T5 &amp; T9 Interview</i></b></p> <p>T5 - Finding curriculum materials so students can make easier connections with cultural and linguistic backgrounds.</p> <p>T9 - Create students' artifacts to display their cultural and linguistic background including music, language, and food.</p>	<p>T5 - Students need to feel important, capable, take academic and linguistic risks.</p> <p>In order to create this environment, teachers need to get to know their students, build authentic relationships by having lunch with them, creating routines in the classroom to celebrate and provide leadership roles for students.</p> <p>Recognizing differences among Spanish speaking countries and their uniqueness, we all speak Spanish but there are many cultural differences.</p> <p>T9 - Use students' personal traits to make connections with characters in the books we read.</p> <p>Affirming students' cultural identity by celebrating who they are, acknowledging that they are willing to learn, and they are going to do it.</p>
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**Table 6.1 Creating Inclusive Learning Environments Discrepancy Table**

This example is evidence of teachers' individual knowledge regarding addressing MLs academic and linguistic needs. The absence of a clear map to outline those elements calls for teachers' collaboration opportunities to create a more cohesive definition about what Inclusive Learning Environments are and how they should look like in the classroom. In order to create a more cohesive plan to map out MLs successful education, MLs' teachers can explore using the same approach to define other elements highlighted in the Blueprint for English learners Success. This practice would benefit all MLs educators by having clear expectations about MLs successful teaching and learning.

This clear framework to address MLs is imperative since teachers mentioned throughout the case study of the lack opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in the SEI/ESL program to improve teaching practices for MLs learning success. Therefore, MLs teachers' practice could benefit from having clear expectations of what elements should be displayed in a ML classroom in order to be an inclusive classroom for example. In addition to other skills such as increasing planning to deliver lessons with scaffolds and support to access academic content, the academic rigor must be maintained to promote high order thinking. Furthermore, since those teaching practices are closely related to each other, it is important to create protocols conducive to ensure that all the elements of the SIOP model, for example, are implemented during the planning and execution of each lesson. This first implication, helped the researcher to answer the research questions, “Why” are the existing supports not addressing the needs of Hispanic MLs? The answer according to the data analysis and to the researcher’s experience in the school is that the current strategic plan approaches the school with a wide lens that needs to be narrowed due to the complexity of the school. The school has five different programs (Multi-disabilities, Inclusion, General Education, SLIFE, and SEI) each program should have a separate set of action steps guided by the school instructional focus. In addition, this complex structure requires additional resources to support each program.

**Implication 2 - Student collaboration practices in the classroom**

There was strong evidence from the data collected, including teachers' participants in the interviews and lesson observations, that SEI practice of grouping students with lower EDL levels (level 1,2, and 3) in the same classrooms is a segregation practice that slows English language acquisitions. Segregation practices adversely affect not only language acquisition development but also increase lack of exposure to high order thinking and rigorous lessons (Gandara, & Orfield, G, 2012). In fact, despite teachers recognizing the importance of exposing MLs to grade level content and grade level tasks, during lesson observation, academic rigor was observed in all SEI classrooms at the lower level of the Depth of Knowledge wheel. SEI classroom engaged students in tasks that require repetition, memorization, and recall instead of application, analysis, and synthesis. This practice is concerning because students receive most of their instructional time with SEI teachers in segregated classrooms. Teachers focused mostly on providing scaffolds (sentence starters, and repetition) and vocabulary (mostly translation of new words). Those practices are important because MLs need tools to access content, but teachers are leaving out other components of effective instruction to address high order thinking. Teachers would benefit to follow a protocol using backwards planning design to incorporate teaching strategies such as:

1. High order thinking throughout questioning and rigorous tasks with language acquisition in mind, providing interactive classroom activities. In addition to the

supports already discussed above (vocabulary development and native language support).

2. Real world applications - allowing students to apply their knowledge to the real world.
3. Focus on understanding concepts and not just memorization and repetition.
4. Rigorous content and access to high academic standards.
5. Opportunities to practice all four-language skills.
6. More hands-on practices.
7. And reviewing and assessing learning through the lesson.

By implementing a more cohesive grouping in the classroom with not only students in different language development levels but also including native language English speakers, MLs will benefit having multiple language models and not just their classroom teacher. In addition, MLs will be exposed to rigorous lessons elevating their high order thinking process (Estrada, Wang, & Farkas, 2019). This second implication helped the researcher to answer the question of “how” the school can improve current support for MLs.

**Implication 3 - Inclusive learning environments for MLs**

Even though both SEI and ESL teachers addressed elements of inclusive learning environments for MLs, there is an opportunity to be more intentional in creating guidelines to ensure MLs success in the school. MLs success in schools start by changing the paradigm that MLs come with language deficiency and their culturally and linguistically diverse values are limitations for their learning, instead classrooms and schools are called to build from MLs rich values and reflect them in their learning environment (DeMatthews, & Izquierdo, E, 2018).

In order to create those opportunities, the school may need to provide spaces for teacher collaboration to address MLs' needs. Although teachers expressed having weekly CPT meetings and participating in whole school PDs as valued opportunities for collaboration, they also mentioned lack of intentionality to focus on MLs needs by providing spaces to plan vertically or as a language program. In fact, all teachers agreed on minimal opportunities to collaborate with other SEI and ESL, specialists, and special education teachers who serve MLs to plan a more cohesive learning environment to address MLs needs. Even though all eleven teachers who participated in the research valued their CPT to unpack units, look up students' work, and students standardized data; there is a discrepancy in addressing students' academic and linguistic gaps. Therefore, the school could improve its practices by allowing teachers to have a schedule with time to collaborate both horizontally and vertically.

In response to responsibility for language development, all MLs received instruction in English in either ESL pullouts or SEI classrooms. ESL teachers are using mostly small pullout groups to provide ESL services to ELDs 4s, and 5s. Thomas and Collier (2012) rated ESL pullout models for MLs as the least effective ways to close the achievement and opportunity gap for MLs. The other model used in the school is grouping together ELDs ones, twos, and threes, in SEI classrooms, which is rated as the second least effective according to Collier (2012). All eleven participants agreed on SEI and ESL models being segregated models that have negative implications for language and literacy development, which align research studies done previously, SEI students spend a lot of time honing their language and English skills, but academic content and social support are given less importance (Collier & Thomas, 2012). In addition, those two language learning models limit opportunities for integrating MLs with non MLs students. Additionally, both models address native language (Spanish) as a deficit, and its goal is to replace it with English (Bahamonde, & Friend, M, 1999). Therefore, MLs learners would benefit from research-based explorations to implement alternative more effective programs to address MLs needs, welcoming bilingualism and bi-literacy by building from MLs assets including their cultural and linguistic diversity.

This implication addressed the first research question answering “why” the existent supports do no address MLs needs. According to the data collected teachers are trapped in a system where students are isolated in a classroom with lower expectations about their intellectual capacity and also isolated from other students where they could be

sharing and learning from each other.

### *School Level Implications*

#### **Implication 1 - School's Configuration - Does concentrating a high percentage of students with high needs make sense?**

This single case study has focused on an elementary school in the heart of Boston. In order to understand the school dynamics surrounding education of MLs, it is important to consider the following information: the school enrollment for the SY2021–22 was 455 students, with 222 considered MLs, and 139 having IEPs, and 410 considered low income. Understanding the complexity of the school may be the starting point to discuss the findings.

The following table explains the school's configuration including its learning programs to serve a high needs student population.

**School Programs & Configuration for SY 2021-22**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Max Number of students per classroom</b>	<b>Students with high needs for linguistic and/or academic support</b>
K0/K1	2 Inclusion	9 GenEd 6 SpeEd	12 students with IEPs
	2 Center Base	9 SpeEd	18 students with IEPs
	1 Multi Disabilities	8 SpeEd	8 students with IEPs
K1	1 GenEd	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	22 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
K2	2 Inclusion classrooms	8 SpeEd	8 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	22 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
K2 /1st grade	1 Multi Disabilities	8 SpeEd	8 students with IEPs
1st grade	2 Inclusion classrooms	15 GenEd 5 SpeEd	10 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	20 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
2nd grade	2 Inclusion classrooms	15 GenEd 5 SpeEd	10 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	20 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
3rd grade	2 Inclusion classrooms	15 GenEd 5 SpeEd	10 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	20 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
2nd /3rd	1 Multi Disabilities	8 SpeEd	8 students with IEPs
4th grade	2 Inclusion classrooms	15 GenEd 5 SpeEd	10 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	20 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
5th grade	2 Inclusion classrooms	15 GenEd 5 SpeEd	10 students with IEPs
	1 Gen Ed	22 GenEd	
	1 SEI	20 MLs	22 Multilingual Learners
4th/5th	1 Multi Disabilities	8 SpeEd	8 students with IEPs

**Table 6.2 School Program Configuration SY2021-22**

As it is presented on the table 6.2, this configuration increases the probability of having a greater number of students with high needs such as: moderate and severe disabilities, multilingual learners new to the country, students with limited and interrupted formal education, students who have experienced trauma, and/or high levels of poverty in any of the 35 classrooms present in the school. Therefore, the first point to highlight is that this type of school model needs to be reviewed. According to the Center for Collaborative Education, in their report “The Path Forward,” in this specific case, the district has caused enrollment inequity by allocating students in specialized programs to schools based on seats available rather than a school's capacity to meet the requirements of each program. For schools and pupils, it leads to inefficiency and inconsistent practices (French, D., Hawley Miles, K., & Nathan, L, (2014). In other words, it is a case of segregation and inequalities of students with high needs who are placed in a low performing school using tools like busing to move students from all Boston neighborhoods, which was intended to integrate schools as a result of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in the past. This practice needs to be revised and more resources should be added to the school to make sure each student receives what they need. The school district could review the school’s configuration and determine if it is equitable to concentrate high needs students in some schools. If there is not equal allocation of resources, this practice may be making the district less equitable, and students are having less access to the resources they need.

After reviewing the school strategic plan, it is evident that the school leadership

followed all the steps to ensure improvement in literacy skills. However, there is no intentionality in addressing the needs of any of the subgroups, including MLs, and students with disabilities who represent more than fifty percent of the student population. In order to improve results in closing the academic and opportunity gap, this school should create a more targeted plan to address the needs of its subgroups. This requires additional resources including experienced teachers and instructional specialists who can provide feedback through coaching cycles to improve teaching practices for MLs. Currently there is only two administrators to monitor and ensure that all five programs in the school function and follow compliance requirements for all students. This task should be divided, including creating program directors for MLs, Special Education, and students with multi-disabilities. Having a more robust leadership team would help each program to be successful in addressing the needs of each students' subgroup.

### **Implication 2 - Consistency to Define Components for Successfully Educating Multilingual Learners**

Students' success in this school with a high needs' population requires having a strong qualified team of educators, leaders, community, families, and district stakeholders working together in a highly synchronized manner. Evidence from the research study supports that all SEI and ESL teachers provided the education they think is appropriate for their ML population; in fact, during the interviews all eleven teachers who participated in the research study demonstrated knowledge of the SIOP model. These practices were highlighted also during the lesson observations; however, each teacher

mentioned during the post observation meetings their own approach to teach MLs. The researcher found less evidence of the execution of those practices when teachers are delivering instruction during the lesson observations. For example, data from lesson observations showed academic rigor in the lesson was referenced and observed less than five times, even though it was referenced during the teachers' interviews more than twenty-five times. Inconsistencies between best-known teaching practices for MLs, teaching practices and lesson delivery was also evident between SEI and ESL lesson observations. All ESL teachers were intentional in teaching all four-language skills and provided opportunities for students to engage in more rigorous tasks, while SEI teachers were not. This discrepancy could be fixed by changing the teaching model in the classrooms, instead of having ESL pull out groups; ESL teachers could be having a role of literacy co-teachers and partner with the SEI teachers to improve content and language development. In addition to changing the role of the ESL teachers, the SEI program could be changed to a more effective program to minimize segregation and promote bilingualism and bi-literacy in all students, MLs and non MLs. Alternative programs to ESL and SEI are proven to be more effective according to Collins. (2014) "*Children in schools where Spanish and English were used and classrooms with bilingual instruction entered school with higher levels of proficiencies in Spanish and English and made larger gains in both languages across time.*" Therefore, instead of trying to fix a proven program that is not working, resources can be shifted to other language programs to address cultural and linguistic needs of MLs.

This implication is crucial to understand opportunities to improve school systems to address the needs of MLs, the school could use existing resources including teachers to reconfigure its language program and maximize resources focusing on MLs success.

### **Implication 3 - Effective Family Engagement**

Parental engagement at the school level varies, the school has systems in place targeting family engagement including a dedicated Family and Community liaison, a Parent Mentor Program, and School Site Council, and Parent Council. Those systems have helped to create channels of communication and given decision-making power to families. However, there is no evidence that the school intentionally promotes families in collaboration with educating MLs. In fact, intentional parental involvement to help parents understand grade-level standards, and language development was not mentioned during the parents' focus groups or teachers' interviews. Contrary to that one of the teacher participants during her interview expressed concerns about parents' understanding of the language programs and assessments given to their children to ensure monitoring their academic and learning progress. School will benefit from having targeted initiatives to explore parents' involvement to help in language development as well by creating a more structured system to focus on strategies that can be used at home to support students' academic achievement, and strategies to improve language skills and promote bilingualism and bi-literacy skills in their children. According to studies, parents who are involved in their children's education feel more a part of their community and their

children perform better academically and behaviorally (Chávez-Reyes, 2010)

Therefore, in order for the structural changes mentioned above to be successful, families need to have a more active role in participating in educational meetings about language opportunity programs to better serve MLs. Families also need to know what the academic and linguistic goals for MLs are, and their role to help MLs accomplish those goals. This is important because it can help answer the research question of how we can improve current systems to close academic and linguistic gaps for MLs.

### **Limitation**

Although this research study attempts to collect data to cover all aspects of the Blueprint for English Learners Success, limitations in terms of time and resources were factors that included only assessment of the classroom and school levels, and only includes qualitative data, a mix methodology including also quantitative may add information to future research studies.

In terms of the scope of this research, this case study focused on just one school, and its findings does not have a district wide generalization. The experiences of MLs in this specific school do not reflect all MLs experiences in the district, therefore,

recommendations are limited to this school, and may apply to schools with similar characteristics. In addition, there was a limitation in terms of time of the research study, the amount of data collected to fully explain all elements of the pillars. For example, pillar three requires collecting data about a tracking system to monitor MLs who are not accomplishing linguistic benchmarks, based on formative and summative assessments to measure English language acquisition. This practice requires collecting data from students' progress and inquiring about systems in the school to ensure this is being followed. Due to limitations in terms of time and resources, the researcher was not able to collect this data.

One other limitation may be the number of parents participating in the focus group. In addition, only MLs parents participated in the research study. A higher number of parents' participants with representation of ALL parents including parents of students in other programs could have a better outcome to represent the perspective of the parents in the school community.

Finally, the researcher has been part of the school in different capacities, his close relationship with the school and his present position of power as a school administrator could be considered a limitation. In fact, teachers may have perceived the observations as evaluative instead of research driven and that could have influenced their actions and their answers during the interviews.

### **Future research**

In terms of future research, this case study is important because it has initiated a focus of measuring effectiveness of schools across the district in the education of its MLs. In addition to giving a clear picture of the school with MLs focus and needs, it also provides recommendations to add resources for future research at the district level. More research like this is necessary because schools across Boston are very different in terms of operations, programming, and resources allocated to each school depending on the type of school. Some schools have different levels of autonomy in a variety of models such as innovation schools, pilot schools, and charter schools. Those configurations provided them with more flexibility in their budget and may have different resources and autonomy to manage their support to improve students' outcomes.

At the same time, other schools are different in terms of the programs they offer to educate their MLs. Using this case study, as a model to assess education of MLs in other schools would provide the district data to make better data driven decisions about improving education of MLs. Therefore, there are several opportunities to continue this research study, looking at other schools with different configuration programs, autonomy, and student demographics. Additionally, there is an opportunity to compare each program and their effectiveness in educating MLs to also help families be aware of their school choice. Also, once the district finds the school model where all pillars are being

addressed with consistency, it would be helpful to review this relationship with the school accountability data to see if those systems have any impact in the education of MLs. Finally, a follow-up longitudinal study may be very helpful to examine MLs students' growth in language acquisition, and possible comparisons based on teachers' experience levels with MLs.

This research study did not focus on teachers' ethnicity and its implication in students' outcomes; however, while exploring systems in place to improve MLs performance it was evident that Hispanic teachers and diverse teachers may be more effective to provide native language support and to provide more rigorous lessons to MLs. It would be beneficial to explore how effective those diverse teachers are, comparing students' performance with monolingual and white teachers.

### **Recommendations**

The following set of recommendations also recognized the limitations of the teachers in navigating a system of inequities and rigid language programs that contribute to enlarging the academic and linguistic gap in education of MLs.

- Educators will benefit from having a research-based framework to define non-negotiable elements present in the education of MLs, including rigor in lesson

delivery, rigorous task to teach Hispanic MLs, increase opportunities for student-to-student academic discourse, hands-on activities, and high-order thinking activities.

- Increase opportunities for educators to plan lessons that promote Hispanic MLs engaging in student-centered, instead of heavily teacher-lead instruction.
- School-wide PD differentiated to target best teaching instruction techniques for MLs, including effects of implicit biases in the education of MLs.
- Review and change the current language program model for a more effective one to address academic and linguistic needs of Hispanic MLs.
- Create a cohesive plan to promote a culture of success for teaching ML including creating a framework to address common elements for successfully addressing MLs academic and linguistic needs.
- Review school configuration and make possible changes including allocation of more resources to address MLs, Special Ed, and non-MLs in the school. For example, having a director of MLs, a director of Special Ed, and dean of instruction. All of them should be responsible in partnership with the principal

and teachers to create and monitor school-wide plan with differentiation in mind, instead of one initiative for so many diverse student populations.

- This school could benefit from having targeted initiatives to explore parents' involvement to support MLs language development as well by creating a more structured system to focus on strategies that can be use at home to support students' academic achievement, and strategies to improve language skills and promote bilingualism and bi-literacy skills in their children.

### **Conclusion**

This case study aimed to capture educational strengths and opportunities to improve education of Hispanic MLs. The researcher found several bright spots in the school. For instance, having dedicated and knowledgeable educators at the school in SEI and ESL classrooms to serve their MLs. Educating multicultural students is still a complex job, however, teachers at the school have built a solid foundation of trust with their students and families where caring for the whole child is visible. Data from the research study supports that all SEI and ESL teachers “*know*” how to teach MLs learners. In fact, there is a strong emphasis in making content comprehensible using SIOP and WIDA frame to implement best practices for MLs learners. During the lesson

observation and interviews, teachers named and displayed proficiency in lesson preparation, use of technology, and strong sense of creating learning environments to promote academic and linguistic risk. Teachers did that by valuing the use of native language supports, and using culturally and linguistically relevant materials for MLs. Furthermore, teachers have created routines and expectations in the classroom that are needed to promote high levels of engagement and maximize learning and teaching time. Consequently, if the classroom teachers are using these strong best teaching practices, the researcher questioned what is missing to improve MLs education. To answer this research question, the researcher reviewed the elements of facilitating cognitively demanding tasks and instruction. Despite of systems in place mentioned in the discussion section, there are several steps to follow to improve MLs education.

The first element is that educators facilitate learning experiences so that the student, rather than the educator, does the vast majority of the cognitive work of the task.

The second practice to improve MLs in the classroom is to ensure that educators facilitate student learning by focusing on making the task more rigorous. Teachers could encourage student engagement by supporting student perseverance, posing questions that elicit student thinking, and promoting student efforts to make sense of the tasks (BPS, 2023). This practice goes hand to hand with the previous practice since it included teachers' lesson delivery.

This research study provided valuable data about the school site. Data collected directly from classrooms makes it possible to understand how we are educating our MLs.

We found systems in place promoting inequalities and enlarging the academic achievement gap for MLs. The case study also provided a clear picture of the school strengths and opportunities to create a more inclusive learning space for MLs. The school needs to revise all elements of effective teaching delivery for MLs, and ensure those are incorporated in every lesson, including having students' opportunities to develop all four-language skills. The school in partnership with family's needs to approach the whole child, by educating parents about their possible support in achieving academic and language acquisition goals.

The last practice refers that the school site also has created solid structures in place to address inequalities in education of students of color. Most importantly, we have recognized the existence of systems in place that have contributed to enlarge an academic and opportunity gap for minority students. Despite all the inconsistencies and failures, the school community has remained strong with the objective of helping students thrive. On the other hand, those systems are still a barrier for Hispanic MLs' education. For instance, continuing using a proven inefficient language model to educate Hispanic MLs creates a segregation system for those students. SEI model practice of grouping lower language proficiency students in one classroom needs to be revised and establishing other research based more effective programs such as dual language and two-way bilingual programs needs to be considered. This integration should also be well planned and implemented with appropriate resources including a curriculum that focused on both addressing rigor in content standards and also in language development,

One other system that needs to be revised is the school configuration. The district needs to have a better understanding of the consequences when there is a concentration of high needs students in one school. Those models need to be revised and resources should be added including well-prepared bilingual staff to support MLs, their cultural diversity and linguistic needs. It is not equitable to add a high number of students with IEP's in the inclusion classroom, students who are new to the country, high number of students who have experienced trauma, and economically disadvantaged students without a plan that targets students' individual needs.

Teachers should have spaces to share best practices and to improve their cultural and linguistic practices to be successful in educating MLs. One important observation regarding the level of rigor during instruction showed that multilingual and multicultural diverse teachers were engaging MLs in high order thinking tasks more often compared to monolingual teachers. This evidence shows that the school needs to focus on either increasing diverse staff who are culturally and linguistically competent and to invest in professional development to target personal bias. Educators who provide instruction to MLs need to believe that those students can engage in rigorous tasks, and to provide support for MLs to access grade level content. Creating this mind set is imperative to produce adaptive changes in classrooms.

This case study collected data to find how and why our MLs are still performing at a lower level for monolingual students. One thing is clear; those MLs students are willing and ready to learn, despite the obstacles preventing their academic achievement.

**APPENDIX*****SCHOOL DATA TABLES*****Students Information****Table A1 Students Populations (2021–22)**

<b>Title</b>	<b>% of School</b>	<b>% of District</b>	<b>% of State</b>
First Language not English	54.1	48.1	23.9
English Language Learner	50.8	30.4	11.0
Low-income	89.0	71.2	43.8
Students With Disabilities	27.5	21.9	18.9
High Needs	96.3	81.5	55.6

Note: From Contact Information - School (00350390). (n.d.).

<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00350390&orgtypecode=6>

**Table A2 Enrollment by race/Ethnicity (2021–22)**

<b>Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2021–22)</b>			
<b>Race</b>	<b>% of School</b>	<b>% of District</b>	<b>% of State</b>
African American	25.1	29	9.3
Asian	3.7	8.9	7.2
Hispanic	65.1	43	23.1
Native American	0	0.3	0.2
White	4.4	15.2	55.7
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0.2	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1.8	3.5	4.3

Note: From Contact Information - School (00350390). (n.d.).

<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00350390&orgtypecode=6>

**Teachers Information****Table A3 Teachers Gender, Ethnicity, Years of Experience, 2021–22**

<b>Teacher Code</b>	<b>Year Of Experience</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
T1	5 – 10	Female	Hispanic
T2	10 – 15	Female	Hispanic
T3	10 – 15	Female	White
T4	<5	Female	White
T5	<5	Female	Hispanic
T6	15 – 20	Female	White
T7	10 – 15	Female	White
T0	>20	Female	African American
T8	>20	Female	Hispanic
T9	5 – 10	Female	African American
T10	10 – 15	Female	Hispanic
T00	N/A	Female	Other
T11	15 – 20	Female	Hispanic
T000	N/A	Female	White

Data collected from teachers interviews

**Table A4 Teachers Data 2021–22**

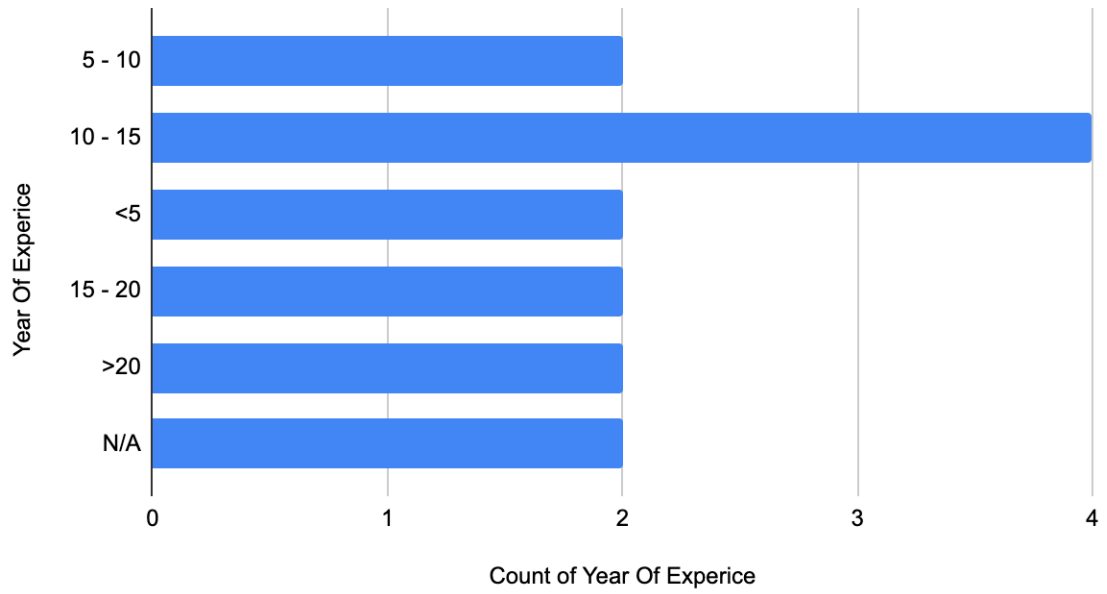
	School	District	State
Total # of Teachers (FTE)	54.9	4,256.00	76,328.80
Student/Teacher Ratio	8.3 to 1	10.8 to 1	11.9 to 1
% of Teachers Licensed	100	97.9	97.8
Percent of teachers licensed in low poverty schools	-	-	99.3
Percent of teachers licensed in high poverty schools	-	97.6	96
Percent of teachers without waiver	100	100	99.8
Percent of teachers without waiver in high poverty schools	-	100	99.7
Percent of teachers without waiver in low poverty schools	-	-	100
Percent of teachers without provisional license	96.4	93.7	93.6
Percent of teachers without provisional license in high poverty schools	-	92.6	90.8
Percent of teachers without provisional license in low poverty schools	-	-	96.3
Percent of teachers without waiver or provisional license	96.4	93.7	93.5
Percent of teachers without waiver or provisional license in high poverty schools	-	92.6	90.7
Percent of teachers without waiver or provisional license in low poverty schools	-	-	96.2
Percent of experienced teachers	95.4	84.4	82.6
Percent of experienced teachers in high poverty schools	-	82	73.6
Percent of experienced teachers in low poverty schools	-	-	88.1
Percent teaching in-field	98.1	90.2	93.4
Percent teaching in-field in high poverty schools	88.2	88.2	88.8
Percent teaching in-field in low poverty schools	-	-	96.8

Note: From Contact Information - School (00350390). (n.d.).

<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=00350390&orgtypecode=6>

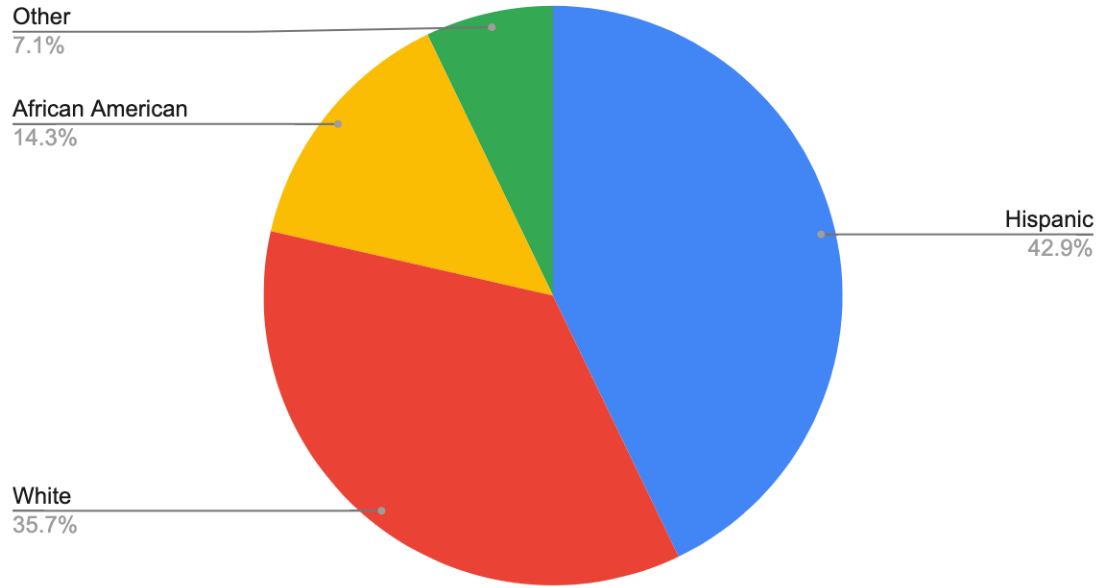
**Figure A1. Teachers Years of Experience 2021–22**

Count of Year Of Experice



**Figure A2. Teachers Ethnicity 2021–22**

Count of Ethnicity



Data collected from teachers interviews

**Table A5. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**

<b>RESULTS FOR STUDENT GROUPS IN 2022</b>				
<b>NAEP READING SCORES by ETHNICITY</b>				
<b>REPORTING GROUPS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>AVG. SCORE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE AT OR ABOVE NAEP BASIC PROFICIENT</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE AT NAEP ADVANCED</b>
Race/Ethnicity				
White	56	235	80	17
Black	10	207	51	5
Hispanic	22	204	48	5
Asian	8	248	84	32
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	#	#	#	#
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	#	#	#	#
Two or More Races	4	243	84	26
National school Lunch Program				
Eligible	45	209	53	5
Not eligible	55	242	85	23

Note: NAEP Reading: Reading Highlights 2022. (n.d.).

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2022/>

***QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS***

**Teacher Interview Questions**

Research Questions

1. Why are the existing supports not addressing the needs of Hispanic ELs and what other supports or systems are necessary in order to successfully support the academic content and language development of ELs in the school?
2. How can we improve current school support for EL students to close their achievement and opportunity gap compared with white students?

Teachers start answering the questions here

Years of experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade level: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of experience in SEI : \_\_\_\_\_

**Sharing responsibility to educate ELs**

1. How well do you know the characteristics of the SEI program? Can you explain the program in your own words
2. When setting your classroom and lessons,
  - a. How do you provide inclusive learning environments for ELs?
  - b. How do you integrate your students with non-ELs in the school?
  - c. In your opinion, what is a welcoming learning environment for culturally diverse students?

3. Explain how you collaborate with ESL, GenEd, Specialist, and other educators in your school to provide effective instruction for ELs?
4. How do you provide opportunities for families of ELs to participate in their children's education? How do you communicate with your students' families, community to engage your students in civic opportunities?
5. Tell me about routines and procedures you establish in your classroom to get to know your students and to incorporate your knowledge of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their learning? What opportunities do you provide during your instruction to increase academic and linguistic risk for your students? Are those practices highlighted by the SEI model?
6. When approaching ELs who are entering the ELD stage(ELD 1's), how do you maintain high expectations and rigor?
  - a. What **supports and strategies** to scaffold their learning do you use?
  - b. Can you guide me through the process of creating **differentiated instruction** for your ELs during your lessons?
  - c. While preparing for your lesson, how do you **adjust/differentiate material**, activities and resources to improve ELs' academic and linguistic development?
  - d. How do you establish academic and linguistic individual **goals** for your students?

7. What **assessment** strategies/tools do you use to ensure academic progress and language acquisition benchmarks are met? Are those assessments aligned with the SEI program?
8. Name some culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching practices that you are currently using in your instruction. Do you think of those practices as SEI practices? Name teaching strategies and routines to ensure that your students build linguistic and academic skills continually
9. How do you address the Social-emotional needs of your students? a. How do you integrate linguistic and cultural elements into your SEL supports?
10. How are you integrating ELs students' participation in extracurricular activities, and/or enrichment activities? Does SEI help you to integrate those activities?
11. How do you prepare your students to become long-life learners and college/career oriented? What systems have you created to motivate your students to believe in their potential? Is the SEI program helping students to accomplish their potential? why / why not?
12. Is there anything else you do to support your ELs? What have you learned from your teacher practice about SEI programs and its effectiveness to educate ELs.

## **Teachers Email Invitation**

Dear Educators, I am conducting interviews as part of a research study to increase our understanding of how SEI programs and other educational systems at the school are addressing the academic and language acquisition needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLDL) from Hispanic backgrounds. As a teacher responsible for delivering both core content and English language development, you are in an ideal position to give us valuable firsthand information from your own perspective.

### *Participation Criteria*

Must be a schoolteacher who teaches culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLSL) from Hispanic background (also called English learners, ELs) in any classroom setting including, but not limited to SEI, ESL, General Education, and/or Inclusion classrooms in grade PK – 5th.

Anticipate timeframe for each participants:

- Interviews 45 – 60 minutes
- Possible follow up interview 20 – 30 minutes
- 30 minutes Classroom Observation
- Access to lesson plans and students' work

The interview will be conducted via zoom, and it takes around 60 minutes. I am trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives of the education provided to our CLDL. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to greater public understanding of causes of academic gaps in education of Hispanic students, at the same time we may find systems in place that are well suited to address linguistic and academic needs of our CLDLs. Your participation is completely voluntary and If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact the researcher, Alberto Carrero, Doctorate Candidate, via email if you have any questions about the study or procedures:

**Consent Form (Teachers)**

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If you have any questions about the research or any portion of this form, please ask me.

The person in charge of this study is Alberto Carrero, a doctoral candidate at Boston University. Participation in this research is voluntary, which means that it is something for which you volunteer. It is your choice to participate in the study, or not to participate. If you choose to participate now, you may change your mind and stop participating later.

The purpose of this study is to explore potential best practice and/or possible gaps in the education of English learners from Hispanic background in the school. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are responsible for the education of students who identify as English learners (ELs) in any classroom setting including, but not limited to SEI, ESL, General Education, and/or Inclusion classrooms in grade PK – 5<sup>th</sup>, and you have one or more students identified as an English Learner (EL) in your class. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group via zoom for 60 minutes. In the focus group, you and nineteen colleagues will be asked for your thoughts about the education provided to English learners (ELs) from Hispanic backgrounds in the school. All questions will be provided in advance (72 hours) and you will be in a break out room with another teacher discussing your answers with no interaction with the PI. Your class will also be observed once for 45 minutes, during which I will take notes on your interactions with students both during class and during transition periods (between classes, during arrival and dismissal). I will ask you to provide a copy of the lesson plan and students' work for the lesson observed. The purpose of these observations is to collect information about instruction for ELs, including teaching supports targeting language acquisition and access to core content academic subjects. There will be an optional 20 minutes debrief to discuss the observations.

The main risk of allowing us to use and store your information for research is a potential loss of confidentiality. To protect your privacy, the observational notes taken by the researcher during the class will not contain any identifiable information. Your decision whether or not to take part in the research will not impact your employment status at the school in any way.

Please be aware that the audio-video of your focus group interview on Zoom will be recorded. While we will do all that we can to keep your recordings secure, Zoom recordings cannot be made and stored 100% securely. Zoom requires the use of a web browser but does not require any software download. For more information about Zoom security and privacy, please see the Boston University webpage on Zoom Meetings, or ask the research team. The Zoom recording will be stored and analyzed in a secure Boston University DropBox database.

Additionally, we will ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, the researchers cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussions private.

Only I and certain BU offices in charge of monitoring human subjects research for safety and quality assessment purposes will have access to identifiable information. These offices include BU Central Offices and the BU Institutional Review Board (BU IRB). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the BU IRB at [irb@bu.edu](mailto:irb@bu.edu). The IRB Office webpage has information where you can learn more about being a participant in research, and you can also complete a Participant Feedback Survey.

There are no costs to participation, and you will not receive payment for your participation.

Although you will not benefit directly by participating in this study, the results of this study may contribute to greater public understanding of causes of academic gaps in education of Hispanic students, at the same time we may find systems in place that are well suited to address linguistic and academic needs of our students.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my faculty advisor at the contact information listed below:

- **Alberto Carrero - Principal Investigator (PI).** [albertcr@bu.edu](mailto:albertcr@bu.edu)
- Pipier Smith-Mumford - Faculty Advisor [smumford@bu.edu](mailto:smumford@bu.edu)

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

## Parents Focus Group Questionnaire

Welcome, this focus group will help our research by collecting information from the parents perspective regarding the education of their children. Please answer every question based on your personal experiences, please remember there is not a wrong answer.

Let's start by asking everyone about your level of engagement in the school at different levels,

- 1- Can you tell me how many times have you visited the school during the school year?
- 2- During your visit, can you describe your experience accessing the school?
- 3- What channels of communication are available to you when you need to connect with teachers, administrators, or any staff from the school?
- 4- When you want to participate in school activities, is there information about opportunities to support the school? What level of involvement have you had in the school in the past school year?
- 5- What systems have the school created to engage your participation in school activities, at classroom level, school level, and distinct level?

The second part focuses on your opinion regarding education of English learners and the school success doing this job

- 6- Are you confident that your student is receiving the best possible education and he/she is acquiring English proficiency skills to be successful?

Why or why not?

- 7- Do you know which programs are available to educate English learners? If so, can you describe your son/daughter learning experiences acquiring English language and learning core content academic subjects. Do you feel the school is doing a good job supporting their learning? Why? Why not?

8- What is your experience with the school supports after school? For homework? With supporting activities at home to develop academic and language acquisition skills?

9- What barriers have prevented your participation/involvement in the school activities?

10- What else do you want to see happening at the school to support you and your student' education?

Parents Flyer

**Attention  
Blackstone  
Elementary School  
Parents  
(Grades 3 - 5)**

**You Are Invited  
To Participate in a  
Research Study**

**Alberto Carrero**  
Boston University  
EdD Candidate

**You can help us to understand  
how are we educating our  
Hispanic English Learners**

**PLEASE COME PARTICIPATE IN  
OUR PARENTS FOCUS GROUP**

The purpose of this study is to explore potential best practice and/or possible gaps in the education of English learners from Hispanic background in the school.

**WHERE : ZOOM MEETING**

Email or call to receive your invitation via Zoom

Principal Investigator: Alberto Carrero  
albertcr@bu.edu  
[Redacted]

## **Parents' Consent**

### **Consent Form**

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If you have any questions about the research or any portion of this form, please ask me.

The person in charge of this study is Alberto Carrero, a doctoral candidate at Boston University. Participation in this research is voluntary, which means that it is something for which you volunteer. It is your choice to participate in the study, or not to participate. If you choose to participate now, you may change your mind and stop participating later.

The purpose of this study is to explore potential best practices and/or possible gaps in the education of English learners from Hispanic backgrounds in the school. We are asking you to take part in this study because you have one or more children identified as an English Learner (EL). If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group via zoom. A focus group is a small group of people who take part in a discussion about a selected topic. The focus group will be led by a member of the research staff. During the focus group interview, you and about ten other parents will take part in a discussion about the education of Hispanic English learners at the school. This focus group interview will take approximately one hour.

The main risk of allowing us to use and store your information for research is a potential loss of confidentiality. Please be aware that the audio-video of your focus group interview on Zoom will be recorded. While we will do all that we can to keep your recordings secure, Zoom recordings cannot be made and stored 100% securely. Zoom requires the use of a web browser but does not require any software download. For more information about Zoom security and privacy, please see the Boston University webpage on Zoom Meetings, or ask the research team. The Zoom recording will be stored and analyzed in a The zoom meeting would be recorded and coded using NVivo, and data would be stored following the secure Boston University DropBox security database.

Additionally, we will ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, the researchers cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussions private.

Only I and certain BU offices in charge of monitoring human subjects research for safety and internal auditing purposes will have access to identifiable information. These offices include BU Central Offices and the BU Institutional Review Board (BU IRB). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the BU IRB at [irb@bu.edu](mailto:irb@bu.edu). The IRB Office webpage has information where you can learn

more about being a participant in research, and you can also complete a Participant Feedback Survey.

Although you will not benefit directly by participating in this study, the results of this study may contribute to greater public understanding of causes of academic gaps in education of Hispanic students, at the same time we may find systems in place that are well suited to address linguistic and academic needs of our students.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me or my faculty advisor at the contact information listed below:

- **Alberto Carrero - Principal Investigator (PI). albertc@bu.edu**
- Pipier Smith-Mumford - Faculty Advisor smumford@bu.edu

### **Statement of Consent**

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

### **Parental Consent Form (Student Observations)**

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If you have any questions about the research or any portion of this form, please ask me.

The person in charge of this study is Alberto Carrero, a doctoral student at Boston University. Participation in this research is voluntary, which means that it is something for which you volunteer. It is you and your child's choice to participate in the study, or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore potential best practice and/or possible gaps in the education of English learners from Hispanic backgrounds in the school. We are asking you to take part in this study because you **have a student in a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program, English as Second Language (ESL) program, or receiving instruction as an English Learner (EL)**. I will be conducting this research and your student will be in the classroom during one of my observations. This research does not interfere with regular instruction and I will be just observing at the back of the class and will take observational notes only in the classroom for 45 minutes, without direct interaction with the students.

The main risk of allowing us to use and store your child's information for research is a potential loss of confidentiality. To protect your child's privacy, I will limit the amount of information I record about your child during my observations. **All information is collected anonymously, which means that names or any personally identifiable information will not be recorded in my notes.** All the notes will be kept in a secure database hosted by Boston University. Only I, my faculty advisor and certain BU offices in charge of monitoring human subjects research for safety and quality control purposes will have access to this information. These offices include BU Central Offices and the BU Institutional Review Board (BU IRB). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the BU IRB at [irb@bu.edu](mailto:irb@bu.edu). The IRB Office webpage has information where you can learn more about being a participant in research, and you can also complete a Participant Feedback Survey.

Although your child will not benefit directly by participating in this study, the results of this study may contribute to greater public understanding of causes of academic gaps in education of Hispanic students, at the same time we may find systems in place that are well suited to address linguistic and academic needs of our students.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you and your child may choose to stop participating at any time. If you do not wish for your child to be observed for this study, I will not take notes on your child's interactions during my class observation. At no time will your child be excluded from class if you or your child choose not to participate in the study.

There are no costs to participation, and neither you nor your child will receive payment for taking part in the study. You and your child's decision to take part in the research will not affect your child's class standing or grades.

**If either you and/or your child do not want to participate, please contact me at albertcr@bu.edu, and I will not take notes on your child during the research study.**

If you have any questions please contact me or my faculty advisor at the contact information listed below:

- **Alberto Carrero - Principal Investigator (PI). Email address, albertcr@bu.edu**
- Pipier Smith-Mumford - Faculty Advisor smumford@bu.edu

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. I have discussed the study with my child. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study. No further action is needed if you and your child agree to being observed by the researcher.

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**CURRICULUM VITAE**

