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HOW DO ADD-ON K-12 CERTIFIED ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ELD) URBAN TEACHERS DESCRIBE THE RELEVANCE OF THEIR TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION? A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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HOW DO ADD-ON K-12 CERTIFIED ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT (ELD) URBAN TEACHERS DESCRIBE THE RELEVANCE OF THEIR TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION? A QUALITATIVE STUDY

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to all educators, educational leaders, policymakers, and especially ELD teachers and leaders who help those who need the most: to learn English in English.

May this work help to advance knowledge in the field of ELD, so that every child may learn to the best of their ability.

Thank you.

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First of all, I thank all my teachers throughout my life for the privilege to be able to read and instill in my heart a love for reading. I want to thank and honor all the people who contributed to the process with their support, gifts, love, care, teaching, and participation.

Thank you to all who participated in the research, which enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the training and certification process for ELD and advance our knowledge to support English Language Learner (ELL) students in achieving better outcomes.

I want to thank my amazing OU Committee, Dr. Timothy Ford, Dr. Curt Adams, Dr. Jody Worley, and Dr. Elizabeth Zumpe. Thank you for your great teaching, guidance, support, and shared knowledge. Dr. Tim Ford, you are admirable, a great servant leader, and a positive presence in all areas of the university. Thank you.

Abstract

The English Language Learner (ELL) population has increased by 10.6% in the past 15 years, while the number of ESL/ELD instructors has decreased by 10.4% during the same period. Prior studies have found that 61% of ESL/ELD teachers have not received sufficient training in the teaching of ELL students. States that require training and certification have higher educational outcomes for ELL students, but there are concerns about the variation in requirements among states and whether or not certification alone is sufficient to meet the challenges of ELD teaching. Furthermore, there is a need to better understand what training and preparation is missing and what ELD teachers see as the most relevant preparation experiences for success in the ELD classroom. To do this, this study was framed as a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews with a convenience sample of ELD, add-on certified teachers (n = 17) and their school leaders (n = 7) as the primary data collection approach. Like other studies, this study found that most teachers feel that the certification process is insufficient for ELD classroom preparation. The need for in-service professional development was key, as many add-on certified teachers did not attend ELD classes in universities. It should be focused on the following areas: theories of language acquisition, literacy instruction for students and families, parental involvement for ELL parents, dropout prevention, and paperwork completion.

Keywords: ELD, ESL, training, certification, urban schools, triangulation, ELD teachers, ELD leaders, professional development, urban schools, recommendations, educational leaders, policymakers, Self-determination, Self-efficacy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the cost to taxpayers for the education of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the K-12 public system is estimated at $80 billion per year (Raley, 2022). Despite this substantial investment, ELLs often perform below their peers when socioeconomic status and ethnicity are taken into account (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], n.d.). ELLs require special teaching for language acquisition. Typically, English language acquisition teaching is delivered by teachers outside the classroom or in collaboration with mainstream teachers. Language acquisition teachers are typically referred to as ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELD (English Language Development) teachers, with preference nowadays given to ELD. This study will use both terms, ELD and ESL, to accommodate the historical use of the terms in the literature.

According to the latest available federal data, the number of ESL teachers who are certified decreased by about 10.4 percent between the school year of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, and studies suggested that there is a need for more training and certification credentials. Still, ELD teachers reported they did not receive sufficient training in ESL instruction. In contrast, the ELL population grew by 10.6 percent in the same period (Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024). In a poll by Education Week (2023), ESL teachers were asked if they felt they had enough training to teach ELL students, but 61% of the respondents answered “no.” Only 4% of new teachers earned credentials in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and the percentage of teachers who majored in bilingual and multilingual education is only 2% (Jacobs, 2018). There are concerns about the variations in requirements among states, and research has demonstrated that the majority of ELD teachers have insufficient preparation (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Gándara et

al., 2005; Herrera & Murray, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Turkan et al., 2014). ELD certification varies based on state laws (Education Commission of States, 2020). For instance, at the time of this research, 45 states allowed teachers to become ELD certified through what is called the add-on certification, which is a certification in ELD added to a previous teacher certification in any other subject area. Other states require ELD university training and passing a test to earn a certification in ESL, which is called a standalone certification.

The wide variation in ELD teachers' certification requirements is particularly problematic. The growing ELL population requires special attention from language acquisition professionals, and research suggests that ELLs can be effectively supported through access to quality ELD instruction (Hass et al., 2016). However, the outcomes of ELD education have not improved through the years (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Jacobs, 2018; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Whiting et al., 2005) and some of this is likely due to such wide variation in teacher training and development in ELD.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2024) reports that the proportion of United States public school ELLs is 10.6 percent, or 5.3 million, higher in the fall of 2021 than it was in the fall of 2011, with 9.4 percent, or 4.6 million students. ELLs are found across the fifty states and the District of Columbia. The percentage varies from 0.8% in West Virginia to 20.2% in Texas. As reported in Table 1, the highest percentage of enrollment for ELL students is in urban schools (9.8% or 1.5 million students) and suburban schools (7.9%, or 1.6 million students), followed by towns (7.5% or 386,000 students), and rural schools (4.8%, or 356,000 students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024). Geographic areas influence resources, instruction, and support for ELLs, but all schools must meet the challenges of

providing ESL teachers who must be highly qualified (Brownell et al., 2005). Urban public schools tend to experience a higher rate of student mobility, a phenomenon that may negatively impact the performance of ELL students (Ortiz, 2020).

Table 1

Total Enrollment of ELLs by Geographic Area, based on NCES (2024)

9.8 percent (1.5 million students) of total public school enrollment in urban areas
7.9 percent (1.6 million students) in suburban areas
7.5 percent (386,000 students) in towns
4.8 percent (356,000 students) in rural areas

Statement of the Problem

Data indicate that there is a continuously increasing number of ELL students who experience unique challenges—challenges related to mobility, language, illiteracy, dropouts, and other factors—and who have lower achievement than their peers (Banse et al., 2019; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020). The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) states that ELLs represented 14 percent of all homeless children enrolled in public school, 15 percent of students served by Public Title I Schoolwide Programs. The percentage of ELLs in public schools is higher in more urbanized cities, with 9.8% of the ELL population. The ELL population faces unique challenges, but their full potential can be unlocked and harnessed to develop human dignity with language acquisition, literacy, and higher reading levels. At the same time, ELLs represent a tremendous asset to the USA (Barbara Bush Foundation, n.d.; USDE, n.d.).

In recent years, trends indicate that schools are struggling to recruit and retain ELD teachers. There is a higher need for ELD teachers in urban schools due to the great influx of ELLs. ELD teachers need specific knowledge, training, and certification credentials to teach

ELLs (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Whiting et al., 2005). Specific knowledge that ELD teachers need to know are in the following areas: sociocultural, motivational, language learning, parents' limited literacy (reading and writing) or spoken English language, immigration, migration, mobility, special testing, dropout, and paperwork (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; Banse et al., 2019; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al.; Whiting et al., 2005).

ELD certification varies according to each state, and there are two basic types of certification: "add-on" or "standalone" certification. Some states require teachers to acquire specific ELD training at a university and then take the state test for ELD to obtain ELD certification. This process is called the "standalone" certification process. Standalone certification usually requires college training, depending on the state, and participants take a test according to their school level. Other states allow teachers who are already certified in any area to receive ELD training and take the state certification test. This can happen as the teacher studies privately for the state test and/or the teacher takes some state professional development courses. This is called the "add-on" certification process (Colorin Colorado, n.d.).

However, these differences in process highlight some concerns about variation in requirements, and research has demonstrated that the majority of ELD teachers have insufficient preparation (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Education Commission of States, 2020; Gándara et al., 2005; Herrera & Murray, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; OSDE, 2023-2024; Turkan et al., 2014). Studies suggest that states that require ESL or bilingual certification have higher ELL achievement; states with more challenges tend to be those that lack specialist certification requirements. However, these studies did not investigate what ELD teachers see as being

relevant or not in the process of training and certification that could improve their knowledge in the subject (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Jacobs, 2018; López et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2011; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Whiting et al., 2005). Thus, there is a need for a more in-depth qualitative study on the perceptions of preparedness of teachers who are add-on certified about both their training and certification process as a whole, and on what they see as relevant or not in being prepared to teach ELL students.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to understand how ELD teachers in K-12 urban schools describe the relevance of their training and certification. The ELD teacher is defined as a teacher who teaches English language acquisition separate from the mainstream classroom, which is specifically for students who are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The definition of the term "relevance" of training for this study refers to the mismatch between the training the teachers may have received through their certification process and what they feel they need to teach ELLs once they enter the classroom. This study focuses specifically on the add-on certified ELD teachers from K to 12 grade, as this certification level constitutes the majority of state certifications in ELD.

To address this study purpose, I conducted 17 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with urban ELD-certified school teachers who received their ELD certification through additional ELD certification through ESL state testing (i.e., add-on certification). This study also included interviews of 7 ELD supervisors, primarily for triangulation purposes, about the ELD training and certification that the teachers they supervise received. These interviews took place in a Midwestern state of the USA in urban schools with the highest proportions of ELL students and ELD teachers. The research question that framed the study was: "How do add-on K-12 English

Language Development (ELD) certified urban teachers describe the relevance of their training and certification?"

Importance of Study and Contributions to Literature

This study contributes to the limited literature on the perceptions of ELD-certified teachers of the relevance of their training and certification and its applicability to their classrooms. This study offers suggestions based on this in-depth qualitative study on the perspective of the add-on certified ESL training and certification process as a whole, providing suggestions for policymakers, universities, and educational leaders. Leaders' viewpoints may point to particular areas of training and support for ELL students and ELD teachers. As urban schools have the highest percentage of ELD teacher and ELL student populations, findings from this study stand to build on existing contributions in the literature with respect to how best to support ELD teachers and students in these contexts.

Definition of Terms

Due to the extensive use of acronyms and specialized terminology in the field of English Language Development (ELD), below is a table of definitions to facilitate a better understanding of the study. Webster and Lu (2012) affirm that commonly used terminology within any field must be identified and understood. The goal is to clarify terminology and definitions, providing an understanding of other studies related to the aspects of training and certification of ESL-ELD. A list of terminology used in this study is reported in Appendix D.

English (2009) states that when referring to English Language Development (ELD), it is related to a category outside the mainstream of the classroom. Colorin Colorado (n.d.) states that ELD refers to instruction specifically designed for English Language Learners to develop their

listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. This type of instruction is also known as English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching (Colorin Colorado, n.d.).

Other studies reinforce that there is a difference between teaching English for native speakers and speakers of other languages—a boundary that is rarely interpreted as neutral (English, 2009; Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). For instance, Razfar (2011), when analyzing the socio-critical perspective of English learning in an urban school, noted that the term LEP (Limited English Proficiency) is archaic and prefers the term EL (English Learners), which reflects less of a deficit view. As there are discrepancies in the literature related to terminology, this study used the most commonly used terms in policy and schools in the United States, as well as new terms that have emerged in recent studies. For instance, newer terms replacing ESL (English as a Second Language) are ELD (English Language Development) and EAL (English as an Additional Language). Similarly, the newest terminology for students is: ELs (English Learners), ELLs (English Language Learners), MLs (Multilingual Learners), MLLs (Multi-Language Learners), MLE (Multilingual Learners of English), and Newcomers, among others (Colorin Colorado, n.d.; Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). In this study, these terms were used interchangeably. Table 2 presents the most popular terminology used to refer to students who are studying English language acquisition. Terms have evolved through the years and have changed to reflect cultural and educational changes. For more terminology, please visit Appendix D.

Table 2
Common ELD Acronyms

Student Acronyms	*Meaning*
ELs	English Learners
ELLs	English Language Learners
MLs	Multilingual Learners
MLLs	Multilingual Language Learners
Newcomers	Recently arrived in the USA & new to learning English

Definition of ELD Instruction

English Language Development (ELD) refers to instruction designed specifically for English Language Learners to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. This type of instruction is also known as ESL: English as a Second Language (Colorin Colorado, n.d.). Mainstream teachers and specific ESL/ELD teachers differ on how they deliver English language instruction. Mainstream teachers primarily instruct students in a general education classroom. They teach the standard curriculum for their grade level, also called a regular classroom. A mainstream teacher serves the general student population, and they may have help from other professionals. For example, special needs students or ELL students would have extra help from specialized teachers to meet their needs separately. An ELD teacher must also know how to prepare, test, and fill out special paperwork uniquely related to ELLs. Still, due to timing and the general needs of all students, the mainstream teacher would not be able to give special attention to the language acquisition needs of individual students (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; Christian, 2019; De Jong & Harper, 2005; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Whiting, 2017).

Definition of ELD Teacher

In this study, ELD teachers are defined as specific ELD-certified teachers who are serving ELL students learning English as a Second or English as an Additional Language.

Definition of Urban Schools

According to NCES (n.d.), urban schools are located in a territory inside an urbanized area and a principal city. For more details about urban schools and other classifications, please see Appendix C.

Definition of ELD Training and Certification

The process of acquiring the teacher certification to teach ELD varies according to each state. Some teachers receive training at the university for ELD and then take the ESL State Test to be certified. This is called the standalone certification. Other teachers receive the training by studying for an additional certification through additional ELD testing to acquire ELD certification (Education Commission of States, 2020; OSDE, 2023-2024). For instance, in Oklahoma, ELD certification is acquired after a previous certification, so the ELD certification would be an additional one, and there is no need for specific training in college for ELD (OSDE, 2023-2024). For additional information on each state law, please visit Appendix A. In Texas, the process for tests and certification varies based on the grade levels, in what is called a Supplemental ESL test. For example, ESL for Early Childhood (EC), ESL for grades 4 through 8, and ESL for grades 9 through 12, or an added ESL certification for teachers already certified (Education Commission of States, 2020).

The Education Commission of States (2020) provides a comprehensive list of the requirements by federal law and state requirements for ELD certification. For a complete list of the requirements by state, please see Appendix A.

Table 3

Process for Teachers to Acquire ELD Certification (Based on Education Commission of States, 2020 & OSDE, 2023-2024).

Standalone certification	ELD university training The teacher acquires ELD certification through a state test
Add-on certification	Optional ELD university training Preparation: individually, online, district, State Department Certification in any subject + add ELD state test certification

Definitions of ELL Students

According to Federal Law, ELLs (English Language Learners) are defined as students whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the challenging state academic standards, the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or the opportunity to participate fully in society (Education Commission of States, 2020; 20 U.S.C.A. § 7801). The Arizona definition of ELL says, "a child" (Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-751; Education Commission of States, 2020), but this researcher questions this definition. How about an ELL student in high school? Is the student ELL in high school still a child? Table 4 lists the federal definition of an ELL student. Please see Appendix A for more information on the definitions from certain states that do follow or do not follow Federal Law.

Table 4
*Definition of an ELL Student Based on Federal Law (*Education Commission of States, 2020; 20 U.S.C.A20 U.S.C.A. § 7801)

An English Language Learner is a student who is:

- 3 to 21 years, enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school
- or whose difficulty in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the challenging state academic standards
- can be born outside the USA or whose native language is other than English
- can be a Native American or an Alaska Native or
- can be a native resident of the outlying areas who could have come from an environment where a language other than English is dominant, and the environment had an impact on the English language proficiency of the individual

There is a general idea that the ELL student is an immigrant or a student who was born outside of the USA, but this is not always the case. It is important to understand the U.S. Federal Law definition and all that it entails, to make sure of an understanding of who is an ELL student, and its broad and rich definition. U.S. Federal Law states that the English learner is an individual

from 3 to 21 years of age, enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school. An ELL can be born outside of the USA or whose native language is a language other than English. An ELL can be a Native American or an Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas, and who could have come from an environment where a language other than English is dominant, and this has impacted the English language proficiency of the individual (Education Commission of States, 2020; 20 U.S.C.A20 U.S.C.A. § 7801).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Essential Background Knowledge for ELD Teachers

Several language acquisition theories are important for ELD teachers to know so that they can provide efficient teaching for ELLs. For instance, Krashen (1982) explains, in his theory of the *affective filter*, that the teacher needs to understand the student's interest, self-esteem, attitude, motivation, and communicative activities in order to enhance their confidence and subsequent language acquisition. Elements of the affective filter can promote or hinder language acquisition. It is important to be aware that the silent period is defined as when the student focuses on listening and understanding a new language before actively speaking it. This silent period is not due to disability, but rather is a natural stage of language development that may happen at varying ages and for up to a year or more, when learning a new language (Krashen, 1981). Jong and Harper (2025) state that training for teachers needs to include instructions about the silent period as they are, absent any other information, likely to interpret this refusal to speak as a language delay.

Cummins (1981a, b), another influential figure in the field of language acquisition, posited that language in the environment of social relationships and language of a more academic nature differ greatly. Cummins (2000, 2007) distinguished between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to provide an understanding of what ELL students need to successfully navigate schooling. Academic language and everyday language are different. Findings from Cummins (1981a, b) express how the relationship between language in the environment of social relationships and the

academic areas can differ, and how the knowledge of these factors can help teachers' strategies. The differences between BICS and CALP are:

- BICS is everyday language used in social and routine classroom interactions. It is informal.
- CALP is the language needed to think critically and understand concepts, cognitive processes and academic context. It is more formal in nature.

Cummins uses the illustration of an iceberg model to explain both language domains. BICS is the part of the iceberg above the water. BICS is easy to acquire and to observe. It is a conversational, social, and everyday language. It takes about 1-3 years to achieve fluency and often includes a silent period. CALP is the more in-depth part of the iceberg, under the water, but linked to BICS. CALP takes longer to acquire, up to five years to develop, even to intermediate fluency. CALP may take a whole lifetime to develop fully (Cummins 1979, 1981a).

Table 5

BICS and CALP Iceberg based on Cummins' Theory (Cummins 1979, 1981a)

BICS	CALP
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
Conversational, social, everyday language	School, textbook, academic language
Fluency: 1-3 years to develop	Minimum 5 years, even an intermediate fluency
Often includes a "silent period"	It takes a whole lifetime to fully develop

Moreover, Cummins' Quadrant, as it is known, explains the variation from Cognitively Undemanding (easy) to Cognitively Demanding (difficult) levels of language learning by those activities students engage in that are Content Embedded versus Content Reduced (Cummins, 2000) whereby Cognitively Demanding, Context Reduced situations are the most challenging. Cummins uses a figure of a quadrant, which is divided into four parts, modeling the progression of language acquisition along these dimensions. Content embedded language

learning offers many clues about the language being used. For instance, role plays, demonstrations, experiments, and audio-visual assisted lessons are all content-embedded interactions. Context Reduced language learning situations offer few clues to meaning and can include things like drills, exercises, reading, writing, lectures, discussions, and high-level questioning.

Cummins argues that BICS and CALP are linked to one another in Cummins's idea of a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) for languages (Cummins, 1978, 1984, 2000). The Common Underlying Proficiency is a hypothesis created by Cummins in 1978, also known as the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis. Cummins' theory of English language acquisition can prove to be a good visual for teachers in understanding language development and planning instruction. The Cummins Quadrant model is a very good gradual progression to teach academic concepts, or CALP, the more demanding tasks (Conteh, 2019; Peters, 2020).

Table 6

Knowledge Teachers Need to Know about Cummins Language Acquisition
(Based on Conteh, 2019; Cummins, 1978, 1984, 2000; Peters, 2020)

BICS	Everyday language, daily social and routine classroom interactions, informal.
CALP	Academic language. The teacher needs to help the student think critically, understand concepts, cognitive processes, and formal reasoning.
BICS	The visible part of an iceberg. The teacher can observe it more easily.
CALP	More in-depth or underwater parts of the iceberg. It takes longer for the student to acquire the academic language, and the teacher may need to observe, evaluate, and provide probing for the students for the academic content. BICS does not always precede CALP, but they can be simultaneous.
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) for languages. The teacher needs to know that the use of native languages (L1) may support the students' learning and developing either skill in L1 or L2, the additional language.

There are some similarities between Cummins and Vygotsky on how students learn a language depending on their environment. For example, Vygotsky's Interactionist and

Sociocultural Theory (1962) states that the cognitive development and learning ability of a child are not just individual processes; rather, language is part of the interaction and social process connected to the proximity of the speakers. Vygotsky is widely known for other theories such as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024; Gowrie, n.d.; Rublik, 2017; Vygotsky, 1962). A simplified definition of ZPD, according to Vygotsky (1962), is the gap between what the student knows and what they do not know. This gap is the middle point between what is not too hard, nor too easy for the student, but is a comfortable zone, or the ZPD, Zone of Proximal Development. The relevance of Vygotsky's (1962) Zone of Proximal Development's application in the classroom, like "scaffolding" and/or "apprenticeship," is used to teach students according to their ability level. The teacher structures the learning, and their role is gradually reduced over time, as the student adjusts to doing the work by themselves or tackling something of greater difficulty (Gowrie, n.d.). Techniques for teaching ELD using ZPD include collaborative learning, pairing students with lower and higher learning capabilities, discussions, and grouping (Gowrie, n.d.).

According to WestEd (2022), in the space of ZPD, the teacher's role is to recognize and integrate the exact needs for pedagogical scaffolds to support the linguistic, conceptual, and academic potential of ELs. The ELD teacher needs to know how to access content and to have regular and consistent opportunities to engage ELLs with their peers in a heterogeneous classroom setting. The implications are that it frees teachers from the instructional restraints that ELs or MLs can only learn content that is within or below tier language levels. When ELD teachers are able to use deliberate, heterogeneous, thoughtfully planned, and scaffolded tasks, the ELL student is well-matched with their linguistic and academic ZPD, and thus able to maximize grade-level learning and language development (WestEd, 2022). In this process, an ELD teacher

is best matched with More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) individual(s) to assist in their learning (Cherry, 2023; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). Table 7 below provides a visual illustration of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory terms and meanings.

Table 7

Knowledge Teachers Need to Know about Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Based on Cherry, 2023; Gowrie, n.d.; Rublik, 2017; Vygotsky, 1962; WestED, 2022)

ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
Gap in ZPD	What the students do not know
ZPD teacher's role	Recognize and integrate the exact pedagogical scaffolds for linguistic, conceptual, and academic potential to support ELs. Use activities and techniques that can be collaborative in learning, pairing students of lower and higher learning capabilities, discussions, and grouping. Teach with deliberate, heterogeneous, thoughtful planning and scaffolded tasks. ELL students are guided through their linguistic and academic ZPD.
MKO	Most Knowledge Other
Missing information	Students need help from MKO
ELL needs	Access to content Regular and consistent engagement with peers Learn content within or below the tier language levels

Even though ZPD is received well in the field of ELD, there are some challenges to the application of Vygotsky's theory. For instance, critics argue it is difficult to use this approach successfully in classrooms, given that there is finite time and/or resources to address individual students' needs, large class sizes, and different ability levels. Furthermore, if the teacher is not aware of the student's ZPD, misjudging a student's ZPD can cause frustration and there is also difficulty with scaffolding beforehand if the lesson plan has not been previously scaffolded (Gowrie, n.d.). Beyond that, Vygotsky's theory (1962) has been criticized for being too general,

not allowing for a specific hypothesis to be tested. It also does not address the impact of biology or genetics on cognitive development, nor a child's emotional development, or why some students cannot perform some tasks even with ZPD-related help (Gowrie, n.d.).

Geographic Locations and ELD

Sociocultural theorist Vygotsky (1962) points out that learning dynamics are largely determined by the environment and social tools that people, geographic areas, or the Zone of Proximal Development provide. For instance, a quantitative comparative study from rural and urban settings (Jošic et al., 2022) suggested that factors such as school size, location, and learning resources, among others, affect the efficiency of the geographic system in delivering the required support to students. The authors present international large-scale data assessments that indicate the resources of rural schools may differ from those of urban schools in large cities; urban schools are often located in more developed environments and frequently demonstrate higher achievement. Firstly, resources related to policy and urbanization included increased awareness of the differences in achievement among students from different locations. Secondly, rural areas often lack resources for learning at home, putting students from these areas at a disadvantage. Thirdly, rural schools often lack all the requisite technologies and equipment to support students, with the caveat that technology demands may differ by location (Jošic et al., 2022).

There are other challenges in geographic areas. Differentiation according to geographic area influences the teaching and delivery of knowledge, and while all schools legally need to provide quality instruction, some schools and districts lack the resources to provide ESL teachers with the support they need (Brownell et al., 2005). For instance, special needs ELL students require special teaching in language and other areas to reach their goals for education, with

appropriate service delivery for their area of special education. While providing these services might not be a problem in some urban areas, it often means special training for rural or remote areas (Conroy et al., 2006). Many large urban and suburban schools may have more resources, but they face a challenge with an influx of transient migrant students, who have moved to the urban locales to seek financial stability and better educational opportunities. This study chose ELD teachers from large city schools because they have the highest influx of transient migrant students and also the highest percentage of ELL population on average, with 9.8% (1.5 million students; NCES 2024).

ELD and Mainstream Teacher Training and Preparation

This influx can present a challenge for ELD, bilingual, and mainstream teachers who might not be equipped to work with large numbers of ELLs. Some ELLs have a highly transient background and some come with spoken languages for which few instructional resources exist (Nevárez-La Torre, 2012). Geographic and social environments influence the culture and the environment for learning and can therefore serve as mediators of the learning process (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Vygotsky, 1934, 2012). This is also true of available resources, including adequate teacher training, which can drastically affect the learning process (Kozulin, 2003). Howard (2002) notes that one of the reasons for the lack of sufficient instruction and the level of preparation needed for ELD teachers is that the trainers themselves also did not receive the needed preparation. In addition to training on how to teach, ELD teachers need to know how to prepare, test, and fill out special paperwork uniquely related to ELLs (Christian, 2019).

Research focused on ELD training has also highlighted the inadequate preparation of general education teachers for teaching ELL students (Curran, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005). There

are studies focused on both rural schools and urban schools. For example, O'Neal et al.'s (2008) qualitative study about teachers' perceptions of their preparation for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse learners in rural schools in North Carolina pointed to teachers' strong desire to learn more about how to better teach ELLs in their classrooms and emphasized their lack of prior training. The authors pointed to the responsibility of teacher training programs to better prepare teachers to teach the ELD student population, including training in the need for diverse learners.

However, mainstream teachers need more training not just teaching ELD, but also in related areas. As ELLs face many challenges that hinder their academic success (Abdullah et al., 2021), educators must have the skills to work with students from different cultural backgrounds to better meet ELL learning needs and avoid dropouts (Rodriguez et al., 2022). Maxwell (2021) states that dropout rates for ELL students are 25 percent, compared to 15 percent for non-English learners. Dropouts are sometimes due to underperformance related to the need to acquire English as the assessment language and to understand academic content (Banse et al., 2019; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020).

In 2024, the National Literacy Institute (NLI) defined literacy as the capacity to read and write, which stands out as a pivotal determinant in shaping an individual's career trajectory (Haynes, 2024). Dropouts are harmful for ELLs because they can lead to dysfunctional literacy, where students are not able to use reading, writing, and calculation effectively. This can eventually lead to illiteracy in adulthood. Rodriguez (2008) states that it is not just the number of ELLs that is increasing in U.S. schools, but also the literacy gap between ELLs and the students who speak English as a first language. There is a subpopulation of ELLs known as SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) or SLIFE (Students with Little or Interrupted Formal Education) who struggle with literacy due to reasons such as unavailability of schools,

war, immigration, and migration. It is quite possible that SIFE and SLIFE students may not have a strong grasp of native language literacy, and they face a triple threat in school (Munger et al., 2016). The NLI notes that the low levels of literacy cost the U.S. a deficit of up to 2.2 trillion dollars per year, and 34% of the adults who lack literacy proficiency were born outside of the U.S. (NLI, 2024).

According to Grace et al. (2012), the academic success of a child is based less on income or social status than on the level of adult participation and encouragement of learning in the home and at school. Indeed, parents and guardians who are involved in their children's education bring increase children's confidence and academic performance (Eliason & Jenkins, 2003). Consequently, there is a need for professional development and training of teachers in the area of parental involvement (Barr et al., 2012; Pineiro, 2022; Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015; Vera et al., 2020; Wassell et al., 2017). Teachers must have the training and knowledge to help all students, but ELLs need additional support inside and outside the classroom to be able to process the language, and the reading strategies to improve basic literacy skills like spelling and writing. Parental involvement of ELL families could be increased through communication strategies with parents who may have limited literacy and limited fluency in English. In many cases, the parents of ELL students are also learning English themselves. Some parents may have comparatively low levels of literacy in their native languages.

López et al. (2013) argue that every aspect of student assessment in schools is pervasively weak, but even more so and more harmful for ELLs. When a specialist teacher lacks foundational knowledge in assessing student understanding, it limits their ability to scaffold instruction appropriately. Studies have found that states that require ESL or bilingual certification have markedly higher achievement for Hispanic ELLs (Lopez et al., 2013). The authors

expressed that the challenge of teaching ELLs is more salient in the states that lack specialist certification requirements, such as Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Tennessee, yet these states have some of the highest ELL population growth, ranging from 300 to 700% over the previous decade. Lopez et al. (2013) compared states that required certification and the states that did not. Their results demonstrate that states that do not require specialist certification for teachers are not setting standards high enough to help improve the disparities in achievement for ELLs. Findings suggest that states that have both requirements of training and certification have markedly higher student achievement. However, this research also points to the importance of requiring all teachers to have some level of ELD training, as it helps ELLs in particular when they make the transition from their ESL classes to a mainstream classroom.

Lucas et al. (2018) reiterate that all teachers should have training about working with ELLs and that this training should be at least one course on essential knowledge related to the teaching of ELLs, as all teachers are likely to have ELLs in their classrooms at some point in their teaching career. The authors assert that state policies must be more stringent about what they mean by the term "highly qualified" to teach ELLs, and that just one course is not enough to meet this standard. The authors comment that *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) had a focus on compliance, which created a discrepancy between the dual goals of improving teacher quality and teachers' appraisal. Caldiero-Kaplan and Rodriguez (2008) state that there is a discrepancy between teacher quality and appraisals of teachers, as the policy for compliance makes sure that teachers have a certificate, a demonstration of content knowledge, instead of possessing the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities to teach ELLs and meet their English language needs.

It is well known that most teachers enter classrooms with limited knowledge of how to teach English acquisition and literacy to ELL students (Adesope et al, 2011; Larota, 2011;

McDonald & Merino, 1999, 2005; O'Hara et al., 2020). ELL students take different lengths to develop English language acquisition, and proficiency can be affected by the adequacy of the instructional program (Calderón, 2007; Calderón et al., 2011; Cummins, 2000). Roy and Roxas (2011) express that teachers' inadequate understanding of language and literacy progression, and content-based literacy tasks for ELL students can impact students' attitudes and motivation. Smith and Robinson (2020) stated that novice teachers need to expand their knowledge of literacy and home language, which can influence additional language acquisition. This preparation and interest can also differ by schooling level. Their findings suggest that there has been a shift in the way that content is delivered to students in elementary and middle school. Middle school teachers are traditionally trained and certified in one or two content areas. Even though middle school teachers see literacy as important, there is often a reluctance to incorporate it in the classroom (Smith & Robinson, 2020). While teachers often value literacy and generally feel that literacy is important in their specific content area, their self-efficacy in teaching literacy to ELLs remains low (Boswood & Marriott, 1994; Watson-Gegeo, 1988).

In educational research, there has been a long-standing focus on how teachers formulate their beliefs about students and their instruction based on their personal and professional experiences (Bailey et al., 1996; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Woods, 1996). Teachers' native language and background shapes these beliefs in significant ways (Schon, 1983). Literature on how teachers become prepared to teach ESL suggests the importance of teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as their core motivations in entering the teaching profession (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993; Freeman, 1989). When students and teachers share a common second language, beyond English, studies suggest teachers have richer pedagogical strategies,

particularly when teachers have an understanding of how languages work (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Freeman, 1994; García & Wei, 2014; Shavelson & Stern, 1981; Velasco & García, 2014).

ESL/ELD Certification: Content, Process, and Relevance

As is evident in the prior sections of the literature review, prior research has addressed ESL and ELD teachers' training, including the specialized training that ELD teachers should have to serve heterogenous ELL populations, as well as the evolution of the field of ELD, including changes from concepts in terminology to changes in the demographics of the population that the ELD teachers need to serve through the demographic areas. Most empirical studies are old, many with concepts and terminology that are not in use or accepted anymore. One particular area where research is sparse concerns what teachers think about their preparedness to teach ELLs and just what training and certification elements ELD teachers feel would be most meaningful and relevant to them as a whole. One case in point is Lemberger and Reyes-Carrasquillo (2011), which aimed to understand why some teachers had problems passing the teacher certification examination and completing their degrees. The researchers interviewed sixty-three ESL teachers and bilingual educators about their perceived experiences with the process of ESL certification. Among the 63 participants, Latino/a teachers in particular struggled to pass the test and had the lowest passing rate overall. Many of the ESL teachers interviewed often felt stressed and nervous throughout their teaching journey, were not good at taking tests, (some repeating the test up to eight times), and some lost their provisional licenses. Yet where the study stopped short was in the investigation of what these teachers found relevant about their training and certification process that could be applied in their classroom.

This study focuses on the add-on certification for ELD teachers for grades K-12. Policies for add-on certification vary by state, and this adds to the challenge of understanding the

relevance of training and certification for ELD teachers. For example, the states of Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, and Louisiana have extremely brief ESL-specific guidelines that consist of a few bullet points. Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, and North Carolina have no written policy (Grass & Kitson, 2021). A review from Reeves (2010) noted that add-on certification has become the primary and most popular form of certification in many states: Hawaii, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York offered add-on certification, and Tennessee dropped this option. The total number of policies that have an add-on certification pathway was 49, with Tennessee and Massachusetts the last remaining initial certification-only states. Reeves notes that, in the central USA, almost all states require an add-on certification.

The original purpose of add-on certification was twofold. First, allowing the add-on route provided an opportunity for experienced in-service teachers to obtain certification in ESL and switch to an ESL classroom if they wished, thus opening up a pipeline for more ESL teachers which were needed due to rapidly increasing numbers of ELLs in mainstream settings. Add-on certification is also available to pre-service teachers in 27 out of 51 states and territories (Grass & Kitson, 2021). This makes it possible for a new teacher to start their careers in ELD with as little as three TESOL (Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses and virtually no ESL-specific field experience.

Additionally, there is an option called the “Test-Out” option for add-on certification. It is an opportunity for ESL teacher candidates to acquire a certification by passing a content knowledge test. It is mostly based on the ESL Praxis test to determine the candidate’s level of expertise. In most cases, the add-on certification does not require specific university training as a prerequisite to acquire the ELD certification. Grass and Kitson (2021) explain that 16 states had a test out option with highly variable cut lines for passage. For example, the cut line is Hawaii

was 140 (Hawaii) while it was 172 (Alaska), with the most common cut line being 155 (Kentucky, North Carolina, and North Dakota). There are some exceptions to the test-out policy, where states only offer test-out options to experienced teachers or those who have taken additional ESL teacher education coursework. For instance, Alabama requires at least 2 years of full-time teaching experience; however, in North Dakota, up to 50% of recent add-on certifications have been issued to candidates who test out of traditional add-on teacher education programs. The concern here surrounds the constructs involved in the assessments being utilized to determine expertise, because the Praxis exam often emphasizes linguistic constructs, using solely test-based formats. The positive side is that research has suggested that classroom experience can help bridge the gap for teachers who switch between subject areas (Reeves, 2010). However, more studies need to be conducted on the effectiveness and impact of teachers who bypass ESL coursework through this pathway.

Findings from Grass and Kitson (2021) strongly suggest that policymakers re-examine their ESL teacher certification policies. Policy changes must be made to ensure the expertise, quality, and efficacy of future ESL educators is secured through attention to and adherence to decades of evidence-based practice as well as policy guidance and guidelines via TESOL and other professional organizations (Grass & Kitson, 2021).

Research Gap

From 2018 to 2020, the number of ESL teachers has dropped by 10.4%. During this same period, there was a 10.6% in the number of ELL students with unique challenges, especially in urban schools (Banse et al., 2019; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Nevárez-La Torre, 2012; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020). Studies suggested that there is a need for more training and certification credentials for teachers of ELL students, as 61 percent of

ELD teachers reported they did not receive enough training for ESL teaching (Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024). Literature suggests that learning dynamics are significantly shaped by the geographic location, size, and social and academic environment of schools (Brownell et al., 2005; Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Cummins, 1979, 1981; NCES, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2012; Vygotsky, 1934, 2012). Urban schools have the highest influx of transient migrant students and ELL students. These facts compound the challenges for ESL (ELD) and mainstream teachers who already struggle to effectively teach ELLs (Haynes, 2024; Maxwell, 2011; McDonald & Merino, 1999, 2005; NCES, 2024; Nevárez-La Torre, 2012).

In recent years, trends indicate that schools are struggling to recruit, train, and retain ELD teachers and provide specific training and certification credentials to teach ELD. Teachers still report not receiving enough training, and ELLs are still performing well below their native-speaking, mainstream peers (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; Curran, 2003; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Howard, 2002; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Roseberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005; Whiting et al., 2005).

Some ELD-certified teachers receive training at a university and then obtain ELD add-on state K-12 certification. Other ELD teachers receive state certification by studying on their own for the ELD standalone certification (OSDE, 2023-2024; Education Commission of States, 2020). In contrast, other ELD teachers acquire their certification with an add-on certification and split their time between school levels to obtain a supplemental certification. In many cases, however, ELD teachers bypass university coursework and they are certified by studying and passing the ESL test certification (Grass & Kitson, 2021; Reeves, 2010).

Studies suggest that states that require both training and certification have markedly higher achievement than those that do not (Lemberger & Reyes-Carrasquillo, 2011; López et al., 2013; O'Neal et al., 2008). There are studies about several areas of ESL training or certification, but few studies have been undertaken to better understand what current ESL teachers perceive to have been the most relevant aspects of their training and certification process, including the match and mismatch of their training with the challenges they face in the urban classroom.

This study focused on the add-on certification for K-12, using semi-structured interviews with urban add-on ELD-certified teachers in K-12 and their administrators. The research question that framed the study was: "How do add-on K-12 English Language Development (ELD) certified urban teachers describe the relevance of their training and certification?"

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical lenses applied to the perceptions of the ELD teacher related to their training and certification process were Self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012) and Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). Self-determination theory is an empirically based theory of human motivation, development, and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Self-determination theory is a useful framework for understanding ELD teachers and what they see as relevant knowledge, skills, and training, as these supports will have an effect on teachers' motivation to learn new skills and apply them to practice. Self-efficacy theory refers to the belief that the learner has in their ability to learn successfully. The more the learner feels confident in their skills in teaching, for example, the more the learner will progress in the area of study (Bandura, 1997; Eastman & Marxillier, 1984).

Self-determination Theory

Edward Deci (1942-) and Richard Ryan (1953-) are psychologists well-known for their development of Self-determination theory (SDT). Deci and Ryan are prolific scholars on motivation, with particular attention to autonomous motivation and controlled motivation as predictors of performance as well as relational and well-being outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2012).

Deci and Ryan (2008) assert that social conditions can enhance or diminish these types of motivation when the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported or thwarted. Autonomy is related to people’s need to master their destiny and to have control over their lives, and to be in control of their behavior. Competence is related to our achievements, knowledge, and skills, and building competence and developing mastery over

tasks that are important to people. Relatedness concerns a sense of belonging and connectedness with others' needs (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

SDT is a largely accepted theory, with few limitations and criticisms. The development focus can counter theories like Bandura's (1977) social learning theory (explicated below), as the latter is mainly a behaviorist theory, focused on external outcomes and cognitive behaviors. For instance, if someone does not feel driven to alter an event, they are less likely to exert effort toward producing a particular outcome, particularly in the face of obstacles. To do so would be perceived as a waste of energy (Bandura, 1994).

The Importance of Self-determination Theory Related to ELD

To understand which part of the Self-determination Theory can be applied to the training and certification of ELD teachers is the central target of this research (see Table 8). This theory can also help us understand what led the teachers who were already certified in one previous area to seek ELD add-on certification, but the theory remains to be built for understanding how ELD teachers need to be supported in their work and what of these supports can be built into their training and certification. Much more is known about what well-trained and prepared ELD teachers can do to affect the success of ELLs in their classroom through supporting their basic psychological needs. For example, it is known that competence is critical for EL students in learning and can be used to support students through ELD activities in the four domains of language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Autonomy support is critical as students practice using language and work towards mastery. Relatedness support of ELLs can be found in concepts such as the affective filter and the fact that language is the most central medium in which to connect and relate to other people in the classroom, family, and different

environments. These principles can apply to students or learners, but in this study they will be applied to how the ELD teacher perceives their learning to acquire the ESL certification.

Table 8

Knowledge based on SDT - Self-determination Theory (Based on Deci & Ryan, 2008, 2012) and Previous Literature in this Study.

Self-determination Theory	Humans' Three Basic Needs
Competence	Teachers need to know how to help ELLs - Need to be effective in dealing with the environment (ELD: listening, speaking, reading, writing) Teachers - deliver ELD instruction with competence
Autonomy	Teachers need to know how to help ELLs. Need to practice using their language and experience mastery (ELD ex: ability to communicate content or social events) Teachers - Autonomy to use realia and scaffolding techniques so that EL students will learn
Relatedness	Teachers need to know how to help ELLs - Need to have a close relationship with others (ELD ex: communicate with teachers, classmates, friends in different environments) Teachers - Need to understand culture and how to relate to students with linguistic and cultural differences

What teachers perceive to be training and preparation most relevant to meeting their instructional needs in teaching ELLs is likely to be strongly related to their needs as learners in the areas of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Teacher competence can be most basically defined as the knowledge and skills a teacher possesses and brings to his or her daily instructional practice as acquired from education and/or teaching experience. Competence-supportive training and/or certification would need to provide teachers with ongoing, rich professional development experiences characterized by opportunities to set goals, learn

vicariously, experience mastery, and receive positive and constructive feedback on their practice (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Autonomy-supportive certification and training experience would be part and parcel of a tailored approach to teachers' ongoing learning needs related to ELD teaching. It would provide choice and acknowledge the perspectives and feelings of teachers (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). A relationally supportive school environment would facilitate learning experiences built around interaction, attachment, belonging, and security among working professionals. It would allow teachers the opportunity to take risks, be vulnerable, and build trust.

Self-efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy Theory was developed by Albert Bandura, a Canadian-American psychologist. He was a leading scholar in the area of social cognitive psychology and social learning theory. He is most well-known for his work focusing on how people learn through observation and modeling. His main fields of study are education, communication, and psychology (Nolen & Jeannette, 2025). Bandura defined Self-efficacy Theory (SET) as an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors that are necessary to achieve an outcome that is desired (Bandura, 1997, 1982).

Critics of Self-efficacy Theory argue that the theory overemphasizes the role of self-beliefs while neglecting factors such as environmental influences, situational context, and emotional states.

Some scholars argued that Self-efficacy can overly focus on the cognitive aspect of behavior change, potentially neglecting the role of unconscious processes, oversimplification of motivation, inaccurate assessment of a person's true belief in the individual's capabilities, and how emotions can be complex (Araújo et al., 2019; Williams, 2015).

The Importance of Self-efficacy Theory Related to ELD Teachers' Training

This study used Self-efficacy Theory as it applies to ELD teachers' learning and development and application of acquired skills and knowledge to a teaching task. Self-efficacy theory posits that success with particular tasks can be an accurate predictor of subsequent behavior performance (Bandura, 1997; Eastman & Marxillier, 1984). In this study, the learners are ELD teachers who acquired their training and certification through the add-on certification process. ELD teachers with high efficacy, for example, might be more likely to set challenging goals, persist in difficult situations, exhibit higher intrinsic motivation, and employ effective teaching and learning strategies. Several mechanisms serve to enhance positive self-efficacy experiences, such as positive past experiences, mastery and vicarious experience, positive praise and encouragement, and verbal persuasion (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). Yet, these have not been fully explored in the context of ELD teacher training; thus, there is a gap in our knowledge of how ELD teachers perceive the adequacy of their training. These theories, in particular, serve as a lens for understanding what is needed for ELD teachers to be successful in their classroom and why.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

The rising population of ELL students needing to learn English as a Second Language needs to be addressed, but the ELD-certified teacher population has decreased. ELD teachers' certification can be obtained through two paths, depending on the state. They can acquire their certification: 1) through university training and state tests; or 2) through adding the ELD state test to a previous certification (Education Commission of States, 2020; OSDE, 2023-2024). There is a greater need for understanding the perceptions of add-on ELD-certified teachers (and their leaders) concerning the relevance of their training and certification. There is a need to understand the gaps in ELD teachers' preparation for the role so that they are better prepared to help ELL students in their literacy development, avoid dropouts, and other challenges, particularly in urban schools, which have among the highest percentages of ELL students (Haynes, 2024; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2022). The findings can thus also provide better guidance for educational leaders and policymakers about how to address preparation (Banse et al., 2019; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020).

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand how add-on ELD-certified teachers in K-12 urban schools described their perspectives on the relevance of their training and certification. The definition of the term "relevance" for this study refers to the mismatch between the training the teachers received in their training and certification, and their perceived needs and experiences once they enter the classroom to teach the ELL students. These perspectives on relevance and needs were interpreted through the theoretical lenses of both Self-determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and Self-efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977). The ELD teachers in this study are

defined as teachers who deliver English language acquisition instruction separately from the mainstream classroom. The ELD teacher is a teacher who specifically teaches students who are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The research question that framed the study was: *How do add-on K-12 English Language Development (ELD) certified urban teachers describe the relevance of their training and certification?*

Research Design

According to Lim (2025), qualitative research delves into human experiences and perspectives, aiming to capture contexts and nuances that are usually lost in numerical translation. Lim explains that qualitative research engagement is not merely a methodological choice but a commitment to exploring the depths of social phenomena. Qualitative research enables researchers to connect with their subjects' subjective experiences. The rationale for this study, taking a qualitative orientation to the study topic, is to obtain a deeper understanding of the lived and academic perspectives of the ELD professionals. This study aims to seek in-depth, "why" and "how" information about the perspectives of the add-on certified teachers' ELD training and certification program and its applicability to the delivery of language acquisition in urban schools to serve the ELL population. Furthermore, responses to this study's research question would be difficult to quantify, as the study aims are to explore and capture the complexity and nuances of ELD teachers' training and their perceptions of it.

Study Setting and Participants

The participants were chosen from urban schools, ranging from K-12 grades. ELD add-on certified teachers and supervisors were selected through snowball referrals, conversations, phone calls, and online communication. In this study, I aimed to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with 10 to 20 ELD-certified urban school teachers, focusing on those who

received their ELD certification through the ESL State Test. This study also had the goal of interviewing 5 to 7 ELD supervisors, primarily for triangulation, about the ELD training and certification of the teachers they supervise. This study reached its goals related to the number of interviews. The number of interviews was 17 for ELD teachers and 7 for ELD leaders. All participants, including both categories of add-on ELD-certified teachers and ELD leaders, met the study criteria and were from urban schools in an area of the Midwestern U.S.

To select these participants, the researcher contacted the 10 largest urban districts in a region of the Midwest USA, asking to interview the ELD teachers and ELD leaders. Out of 10 districts contacted, this research has the representation of 6 large districts in the Midwest USA. The EL population in each district is 16%, 18%, 35%, 38%, and two districts have an ELL population of 52%. Decimals are not used to avoid over-identification. One of the districts is a large virtual charter school, which has seen a large influx of ELL students. This virtual charter school offers classes online and also has two in-person learning centers. This study had the representation of ELD leaders from the in-person and online versions of ELD for this particular charter school. All the other districts held their classes in a physical, traditional setting, sometimes referred to as a “brick-and-mortar” school.

Table 9 displays the demographics of the final study participants. This study included 17 ELD Teachers and 7 ELD Leaders (for triangulation). The 17 Teachers were from urban schools. The participants were 3 Males and 14 Females. There was 1 Native American teacher and 16 White teachers. Including English, 10 of the 17 participants spoke a language other than English in some capacity. One teacher was born overseas, 3 participants had lived overseas, where they learned another language. The participants' years of service in the ELD field varied from 3 to 20 years of experience. The 17 ELD teachers had been working with ELLs for 3 to 20 years.

There were 7 ELD leaders from urban schools interviewed. There were 3 Males and 4 Females. The race/ethnicities represented were 1 African American, 1 White and American Indian, and 5 White leaders. Including English, 6 of the leaders spoke a language other than English, such as French, French Creole, Iberian Languages, Portuguese, and Spanish. Some of the leaders had worked as ELD teachers for varying periods from 5 to 15 years beyond the years they had worked as ELD or mainstream teachers. The sample of ELD leaders had worked in the leadership for 5 to 11 years, with 3 participants for 20 years.

Table 9

Teachers and Leaders' Demographics

Teachers	3 Males	14 Females		
Leaders	3 Males	4 Females		
Teachers	1 Native American	16 Whites		
Leaders	1 African American	1 Biracial, White & American Indian	5 Whites	
Language beyond English				
Teachers	10 (Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian)			
Leaders	6 (French, French Creole, Iberian Language, Portuguese, Spanish)			
Teachers' Years of Work:				
3 years:	1 participant	8 years:	2 participants	
4 years:	3 participants	12 years:	2 participants	
5 years:	2 participants	19 years:	1 participant	
6 years:	2 participants	20 years:	3 participants	
7 years:	1 participant			
Average years leaders worked as teachers		9.6 years		
Years leaders worked in ELD leadership		5, 6, 10, 11 & 3 participants with 20 years		
District asked to participate in the study		10		
Districts' representation		6		

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

The semi-structured interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview method was chosen to understand the teachers' perceptions of their training and certification process. Teachers and leaders were interviewed over a period of two weeks. Both groups, ELD teachers and ELD leaders, were asked about their suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers on how to advance knowledge in the field of ELD training. The goal was to provide a broader array of the add-on ELD-certified K-12 teachers' perceptions to recommend advancement of knowledge and literature in the field of this study. The study used probes to further information about the training and certification process, the relevance of their training and certification that was useful in the classroom, and recommendations to educational leaders and policymakers. The participants were offered a $10.00 gift card for their participation.

The interviews began with the researcher thanking the participants for their willingness to participate in the research and a brief explanation of the research. General information was given about the interviews, assuring the participants of confidentiality and the ethical issues related to the research. The participants were informed that their participation in the interview could stop at any moment. The interviews followed the basic outline of the questionnaire and the prompts that are reported in this paper. Participants were offered the opportunity to review their interviews. The interviews followed the basic process for all participants. The sampling strategy was not modified through the process. Interview clarifications, revisions, and follow-up were offered to participants, who had the option to accept or decline them. Participants were reminded of confidentiality and that they could stop the interview at any moment. The interviews were conducted through Zoom and phone calls, recorded and transcribed into a document, according to the participants' consent. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher watched the

interviews several times, read each interview's transcription, cleaned the data, compared the transcription, and edited the parts that needed correction.

These documents were then analyzed through comparative charts, analytical memos, other annotations on printed pages, hand notes on paper, and Dedoose Software (2021). Data from the interviews was captured in field notes, transcribed into a document, and analyzed for each participant, reviewed, summarized, and printed for further analysis of findings and themes. Each participant had a file for the interviews, which were transferred to a final Findings Document. The participants' quotes were placed into groups of findings with similar answers, and they were counted for similarities or opposite ideas, when applicable, for example, how many times the platform *Talking Points* was used. The findings were analyzed and printed about 15 times for editing (partially or in total), the matrices were changed to better accommodate new findings, and the formats were changed as the researcher re-read and edited the findings.

Researcher Positionality

I have been an ELD and Portuguese teacher in a public school overseas and an assistant principal, but I have never taught ELD in public schools in the U.S. As I am trilingual, I have volunteered and worked as an interpreter in public schools for administrators, parent-teacher conferences, and related interpretation services to ELLs. The participants of this research are not from the school where this researcher serves as an interpreter part-time, as a measure to avoid the Hawthorne effect. I have worked as an international consultant in several countries with ELD and literacy, helping displaced populations. I have a Bachelor of Language and Arts and ELD, and a specialization in Supervision Pedagogy from Latin America, as well as a Master of Education in ELD in the USA. However, this prior experience also poses the potential for biases, as my training and experience mean I have strong opinions as to what best practices are for ELD

and literacy. Those experiences are limited more to an outside environment than to the public school, and they are different from training ELD teachers for the public school.

Thus, to guard against bias, I took steps toward triangulation, asking for the participants' review of the interviews. A second step in the triangulation was to ask ELD supervisors to answer a questionnaire about their perception of the training for ELD teachers and the applicability to their schools, and their recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers. I used neutrality and consistency through my analytical approach through the use of coding and matrix construction for each subject/theme in the study. The output of the analysis came straight from the participants' data interpretation and not from this researcher.

Trustworthiness

This researcher followed the rules for trustworthiness for qualitative research (Lim, 2025), with guidelines and checklists for accuracy, extended involvement, and analysis for 11 months under the supervision of the dissertation committee. The researcher rigorously documented her procedures and debriefed her subjects and with the committee chair. Ultimately, however, the researcher followed the basic steps of qualitative research to establish trust in the findings, including a) *a priori* codes; b) an interview protocol reviewed by IRB and the committee; c) cleaning and conversion of the data; d) familiarization: read transcripts multiple times, plus a deep understanding of the content. Participants' data were copied and pasted together according to the questionnaire to be analyzed. Watched the recordings several times for triangulation and editing purposes; e) initial coding, identifying and labeling key phrases and concepts, analytical memos were used; f) code refinement, reviewed and consolidated the coded to eliminate redundancies and ensure clarity, developed charts and annotations; g) Theme development, grouped related codes into broader themes that capture the essence of the data; h) Revisited

themes and codes to ensure they accurately represent the data; i) committee review of the findings and process.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Summary of Findings

This first section provides a summary of the themes/concepts that emerged after detailed analysis of the participant interviews. Again, the question of the relevance of ELD urban teachers' training and certification in ESL was of central importance in this analysis. The categories that follow represent, to each their own degree, aspects of this idea of relevance, and in the case of high or low relevance, the strengths and weaknesses of their training that correspond.

ELD Certification Process

The ESL State Test. The overall conclusion from interviewed teachers is the ESL State Test does not fully prepare teachers to teach ELD, as teachers learn more on the job. The district's ELD leaders motivated teachers to get certified and provided professional development before, during, and after the test to address gaps in knowledge.

Relevance of Certification in Testing Levels. Opinions of teachers were mixed. Some participants preferred the test to be divided into levels for certification (elementary/secondary), their distinctions and nuances, so that teachers could understand and be prepared at each level. Other participants preferred certification for all of K-12, as it gave them flexibility to teach all grades. Some leaders expressed that the level did not matter, but that professional development and training should be provided to be level-specific to address any gaps. There is a need for more training in universities and ELD coursework for ELD teachers, as well as for mainstream teachers to learn more about ELD.

Overall Relevance of Testing and Certification. The consensus of interviews suggested that testing can provide a general or initial knowledge for teachers, but they learned more about ELD when they started to teach, through on-the-job experience, and through professional development. The teachers who did not go to ELD university classes said they did not know how or what to change for the process of certification to make it relevant, but that classroom experience and good practices are helpful and transferable from previous experiences to teach ELD.

Teachers suggested that the testing preparation needs to have more online practice questions and be more financially accessible. Further, they suggested that testing fees be paid by the districts if the participants passed the test. A stipend offered by the district should be another desired incentive. The districts can do the training, but they need stricter guidelines to improve the quality of training. The certification process should have more training for ELD for the classroom, techniques of language acquisition, phonetics, and more relevant strategies to work with ELD families. There is a need for more uniformity and what is expected of the ELD trainings around the state.

Professional Development

To address the issue of relevancy, one of the main findings pertained to ELD leaders providing more training for their ELD teachers in five main areas: Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA), Literacy Instruction, Connecting with Parents, Paperwork Completion, and Dropout Prevention. The add-on certified teacher usually moves from a mainstream teaching position to teaching ELD without attending any ELD university classes, even though ELD teachers need special training to work with ELLs. Usually, this specific ELD training is provided by the district for the training and certification process. ELD Partners or ELD Coaches are

typically “ELD leaders,” depending on the district. Professional Development is offered at the district and state levels, online, or by the app vendors to offer training on how to use the ELD content on the job. ELD teachers interviewed, who took ESL college courses, described that they felt more prepared to teach because they had their college degree. They did not need much district assistance via professional development. The findings suggest that professional development and mentorship of the ELD leaders are vital to the ELD teachers’ work, and this preparation is ongoing: before, during, and after the certification process.

Relevance of ELD in Urban Schools

In urban schools, there is often a large percentage of ELL students and a greater need for training, retraining, and the retention of teachers. Some leaders said the high ELL population can be a challenge, but others said it can be an advantage, as these schools garner more resources to help with their needs. Leaders also expressed concerns about the needed resources in rural schools.

Challenges and Joys

The challenges of ELD for teachers were more related to classroom management, administration, reluctant or unsupportive mainstream classroom teachers, teaching (especially scaffolding), engagement, and language barriers. Leaders' challenges were more related to state policies, teaching, and support for ELLs and ELD needs. Some leaders requested improvement for specific apps used for data input, management, and reporting of data to the state and among schools. The joys for teachers were related to the teacher-student relationship, ELLs’ progress in language acquisition—both in school and in life—and their eventual graduation. The joys for the leaders were to see their relationships develop, the progress of their students, and the teachers' successes in teaching ELLs.

Study Findings

ELD Certification Process: The ESL State Test

Teachers' Perspectives. Findings indicated that most teachers acquired their certification through the ESL State Test. Sixteen out of 17 teachers obtained their certification through the state test. Only Teacher 17 reported acquiring his certification through TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) when he worked at a university overseas, and "it was the main qualification coming into this ELD position." Some ELD teachers reported that some other teachers who had not taken the ESL state test even had an alternative option to take some online training provided by the State Department of Education instead. Sometimes the certification for ELD is motivated but not required. Teacher 12 explained, "certification does not help," as in some classes there are "24 students and 18 of them are EL students," suggesting that it takes more than a certification to experience success in the ELD classroom. Teacher 16 said that ELD training, "… it is not necessarily related to a certification process, it is just… good teaching practice… I don't know that it necessarily helps you pass the certification test, but it is a part of good teaching practices."

Findings on how ELD teachers studied for the ESL State Test suggest that most participants studied from printed and online study guides, Study.com, district handouts, guides from school ELD leaders, and Quizlet. For example, Teacher 10 said, "Quizlet… study guides online … a supervisor gave me a binder of worksheets and study material." Two participants reported they took online courses and tests. Teacher 7 said, "I went to a website … study.com," and Teacher 8 said that he studied, "online… workbooks … books that the state provided," but suggested that this approach was due to already having a Master's in TESOL, "so I felt like I was prepared already… just to recap on what I did for my Master's."

Three participants suggested that the district should pay the testing fees if participants pass the ESL test and obtain certification. Mentorship, through professional development and leader support, was very important for many of the participants in achieving their certification and many worked hard to learn the skills needed to do so. Teacher 1 said, "I studied all summer before the course… It was the hardest certification test that I took." She studied the SIOP Method, plus the study guide that was on the state website. Beyond all this, she said that the help from her district leaders was important. She explained that there is a need for relevant coursework to be added to the certification.

Additionally, many teachers suggested that more training and classroom experience are needed to prepare ELD teachers for the certification process, so that teachers can better understand the reality of teaching in a day-to-day ELD classroom environment. For example, Teacher 1 remarked that there is a "…need to have more time in the classroom for training because I don't think school just trains you to be a teacher; people cannot understand what it is to be a day-to-day classroom teacher. We need more time in the classroom." Teacher 13 agreed:

> The benefit of the assessment or certifying through the ESL tests was just … that cultural awareness … how you develop language, but the challenge of teaching is a lot bigger than that. … It really has to be connected to time in the classroom, working with teachers who are teaching language. Understanding emergent stages … conversational language and not just the academic side of it … the academic vocabulary.

Several teachers remarked that the certification is not helpful on its own. Teacher 11 remarked, "The certification process was not super helpful… It is boots-on-the-ground training… [there is a need for] on-the-job training and continued development on your own." This applied especially to the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) testing. Teacher 12 agreed:

> I'm constantly reading the WIDA website … doing their professional development. The challenge is still in the classroom, because they could pass a test, and they could get certified, but when it comes to 18 out of 24 EL students in the classroom, with newcomers to the country, that certification doesn't always help.

Leaders' Perspectives. The percentage of ELL students in the 6 districts was 16%, 18%, 35%, 38%, and 2 districts had 52% ELL students. All the leaders interviewed believed it was important that ELD teachers take the ESL Test and acquire ELD certification, but remarked that this test was not enough. They advised that university classes and coursework should be required for ELD. Leader 7 expressed that ELL students deserve certified teachers for ELD, as there are certified teachers for other subjects. All the districts interviewed require training through the state online training and/or through their districts, and also require that teachers attend professional development on the subject.

Leaders all remarked on working hard to provide training for new and veteran teachers so that they can acquire certification. The districts helped with preparation for the teachers' ESL State Test with handouts and study guides. Leader 7 expressed that "Our multilingual learner population has grown exponentially and faster than anyone has ever expected." Leader 1 expressed that "teachers work hard to pass the test." He gave some examples of the successes and challenges of the teachers' experiences: "A lot of them work really hard on studying for the test, and they do end up passing … if they don't pass the first time, they will have another year." He supplements the district's professional development for his team with other training materials, study sessions, and provides different ELD testing scenarios to prepare for the exam: "The questions that are on the test [are those] that the people are most likely to struggle with, if they are a new teacher and trying to take and pass this test in that first year."

Leader 2 asserted that “the districts are taking a lot of teachers who are not yet trained to meet the shortage of ELD teachers needed to match the ELL population. He said, “The district provides the training... There is a need to train and retrain teachers due to the high turnover.” As a solution, Leader 1 suggested the state should offer: “Micro-credentialing in ESL... much like we do for emergency-certified teachers… to transition from an emergency certificate to either a standard or alternative certificate.”

After the test, they provide guidance, mentorship, and professional development, and the essential supports for teachers' learning and development. These professional development trainings are key parts of what leaders saw as their role in preparing ELD teachers for the classroom. Leader 3 provides training for groups or individual needs of teachers on a weekly and monthly basis, and every year they study a book related to ELD. Leader 1 expressed that he had put in efforts and applied himself to study hard to take the test when he was a teacher, and now he does the same to train his teachers. His district paid for him to take a preparation course, the “ELD Study Cram,” at the Capitol several years ago. He passed the state test with a very high score, and he desires his teachers to be well-trained and to have a strong ethic of excellence. After a while, he became an ESL Partner, and he has been training other ELD teachers. His perception is that his teachers have “a very strong desire to do well, whether it was … studying for the test, preparing for the test, or just even being a better teacher.” He is the most veteran in his district ELD team, and coaches everybody up in his team as a leader. As a result, he was proud to support the fact that most of the teachers he has trained have gone on to pass the exam.

All the leaders provide training for their teachers through professional development, but more needs to be done to prepare ELD teachers beyond the state test. Since many ELD-certified teachers are not just exclusively ELD teachers, but teach in mainstream classrooms that have

ELLs, Leader 5 shared that "more general education teachers need to have exposure to EL or ELD training … teaching strategies, because we are going to teach all children." Leader 5 expressed that "in [this state] … perception of the preparedness of the ELD teachers is pretty low." In her previous state, "the teachers were more prepared with more training and understanding of ELD." She believes that it is beneficial to include some ELD university classes and to view ELD training like special needs education, and to require special training and certification for all teachers because "It is very likely that you're going to end up with an EL student in your classroom. Even if they have … tested out of being an English language learner, but they are coming in with a different language foundation." Leader 5 expressed that every ELD teacher "should have ELD training, techniques, realia, motions, mnemonic devices, and visuals, and use them to better help ELLs." Realia refers to authentic real-world objects or digital pictures, virtual realia versions of online menus and images, and strategies to work with ELs and their families. Authentic real-world objects, pictures, or realia help the students to understand what the words mean.

Leader 4 expressed that "One problem with the lack of training is that no one agrees on what ELD teachers should learn and be able to do before entering the classroom." She noted that there should be a consensus about the training of ELD teachers. Absent this consensus, "teachers are not prepared to serve the students, and the students are not being served as they deserve." She stated that "this is a problem that needs to be dealt with across the state." One solution is to require coursework associated with certification. As Leader 4 asserts:

> …graduate coursework associated with that certification. In my [native state], it was 30 hours. …Your most helpful courses that will prepare teachers to go into the classroom, and you make those a required part of the certification… There are very few states that

> don't require it… even if it is required under certain conditions that it is now… There is no training involved in that certification.

Leader 6 has worked in education for about 20 years. She has seen changes in ELD through the years. For instance, "teachers are coming more prepared now than they were in the 2000s," but there is still a need for more training, especially for emergency certified teachers. She expressed that "the teachers have a heart to help but lack on-the-job experience and need an ELD Coach to provide training, which the teachers appreciate." The improvement is due to "more internship programs." She expressed that for solving this challenge, there is a need to include more Coaching-type training and mentorship to support teachers.

Leader 7 asserted that teacher preparation programs should provide pre-service teachers with a strong foundation in teaching the MLs, not just for ELD teachers, but for all teachers. Beyond that, training should include adapting the "Science of Reading … through a Multilingual Learner lens" because it "isn't going to apply to Multilingual Learners the same way it is going to apply to native English speakers." She suggested that the Science of Reading should not be isolated, "in siloed forms, like the focus on phonics and phonemic awareness," as it "simply creates word callers because you're not tying in the comprehension piece" and it can lead to "ineffective practice … when we're developing literacy of Multilingual Learners." Her district has its monthly "own Canvas course so that teachers can do an async [asynchronous] preparation."

Perseverance in Becoming Certified: Relations to Career Entry. Several teachers did not pass the test the first time and remarked that it did push them to try harder. Teachers often found perseverance to pass the exam in their reasons for being in the ELD classroom. In particular, overall ELD teachers remarked that their drive to obtain certification was shaped

through a few different key motivators: they had a special connection with ELL students, they felt a calling to serve ELLs and their needs, and to do that well. For instance, Teacher 2 said she was inspired to get into ELD because of the ELs in her classroom. She explained, “I had a full class of Spanish speakers in my previous job in New York.” She explained that in NY, “you have to have a master’s degree after you teach for 5 years.” Teacher 1 said her degree was in elementary education, and then she started in a general education class. She had some EL students and decided to take the test, “I had several EL students… it was a lot of fun… I decided to take the ELD test.” Teacher 1 talked about her connection and love for her students, “I just kind of fell into it and then fell in love with it.” Other teachers said they wanted to teach ELD better, and they liked the multilingual aspect of working with ELs, as Teacher 6 explained, “I love teaching ELD students ... anyone multilingual.” Teacher 2 wanted to “understand the culture… how to teach English a little bit better, plus, there was a stipend…a one-time stipend.”

In contrast, two teachers (14 and 15) said that they wanted to teach ESL even before college. For instance, Teacher 15 said, “I always knew, since I was in middle school, that I wanted to teach multilingual learners … I only taught ELD… In my own training, a lot of it was cobbled together.” However, she thinks she had quite an advantage in passing the exam, because “I knew literally since age 14 that this was the path I wanted.” That purpose and motivation that she saw in her life really drove her to learn and engage, and to give herself every opportunity to learn. She expressed, “I went to any and every professional training… on teaching multilingual learners …I went to overnight workshops … I've always chased it with strong determination…”

Teacher 14 shared her perspective on her university setting, “I went to ____ University for my bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching in a Global Classroom. All my classes were focused on teaching ESL.” Only three participants mentioned that they needed a job, and

then they chose to teach ELD. Teacher 7 explained that she worked with insurance her whole life, taught adult ESL students for 3 years, but she "needed something permanent with a regular paycheck. Teacher 17, inspired by Dave Ramsey, the financial expert and celebrity, applied Mr. Ramsey's principles about excellence to expand on his expertise in other areas of his life, and in ESL. He attributed his success to these principles, as he watched "one particular podcast … you create and expand a business when you can do it with excellence … I wanted to be able to demonstrate my teaching abilities with excellence." As a result, he was named one of the top ESL teachers in the program where he taught ESL overseas: "I did have a recognition from one of the newspapers … on Teacher's Day, one of three teachers that were recognized."

Relevance of Certification in Test Levels

Teachers' Perspectives. The perceptions of the ELD teachers about the testing levels of ELD K-12 certification were analyzed in a tally count and grouped into categories. Teachers were asked if the range K-12 for the certification should be maintained or changed into 3 levels for Elementary School (ES), Middle School (MS), and High School (HS). Some participants took some time to think about the different levels, and even to decide on one option or the other, as they could see both perspectives. ELD teacher 14, who took her ELD university classes at a local university, expressed that her ESL course "was more focused on early childhood and elementary school." Her advisor allowed her to focus more on secondary and high school. She believed that her "training was suitable for all levels," and she was "well-trained." She said she was "…trained for all levels, all grades, and all ages." The range of K-12 offers at least some training for the whole range from elementary to high school and teachers concluded that, if the range for certification is kept at elementary through secondary, professional development should be provided on how to teach diverse content within the full range.

Table 10 below presents an overview of votes for keeping the range K-12 or changing. Ten participants preferred that testing for the levels K-12 should be maintained, 3 participants preferred that the levels K-12 should be separated, and 4 participants said that the levels K-12 testing depends on the subject studied in the classroom and how the training for the teachers should be given. Some participants were reluctant to answer one way or the other, or they could see the benefits of both options. To fill in the gap for training for the whole K-12 range and the lack of training in the universities, educational leaders must focus on all levels through mentorship and professional development for the teachers who take a wide range of K-12 certifications.

Table 10

Relevance of Test Levels - Teachers' Responses

Keep the range K-12 for the ESL State Test	10 participants.
Separate the ESL State Test range into ES, MS, and HS	3 participants.
It depends on the subject studied, and there is a gap in some levels	4 participants.

ES: Elementary School. MS: Middle School. HS: High School.

Relevance of Test Levels: Keep the range for the ESL State Test. Findings indicated that the training can be adapted for each level, using good practices that can be transferable. Keeping the K-12 range can give more flexibility to teach in any grade level, and there is still a need for mentorship by ELD Leaders. Teacher 1 said that she has "only taught elementary EL, but we always have meetings with all other levels, from elementary to high school … it makes sense to make the certification from K-12." She explained that the hard part of moving to secondary is "knowing and understanding the standards… modifying the things for them." She explained that in elementary school, she had a general idea, as she taught 4th and 5^{th,} but her "preparation, book-wise, was much lower than having a mentor." Teacher 1 asserted the need for having a

mentorship program for ELD teachers: “The mentor is helpful.” Teacher 2 expressed that, “Good practices are good practices. They span all grade levels…. You just need to do great things with different content … adapt.” Teacher 5 thought it was relevant to get the test and certification for K-12 because she could “go in as a certified teacher anywhere” and teach different grades as a certified K-12 teacher. If one school level was not available, she had other options. Teacher 6’s perspective was the relevance of one level, as “you change your mind, or …the jobs available … so at least you have minimal training…” Teacher 7 said that he spent “probably 40 hours of study time,” and the K-12 levels were relevant because “it was all that I needed for K-12.”

Relevance of Test Levels: Separate the ESL State Test range into ES, MS, and HS.

Some teachers believed that the test levels should be separated due to the students’ psychological development and due to working with the students’ ages, language, and general development. Teacher 8 spoke about the “child’s development” and the content that the teachers need to know. Teacher 10 said she appreciated the test. She expressed, “…since I teach high school …it was well done, but it may have been better if it were specifically for my type of classroom.” If the test were separated, it would be more relevant to understand the “differences … what an elementary school classroom would require.” Teacher 11 said, “I would like to see that separated.” The relevance is described as, “it is really just been on-the-job training … seeing what works, doing professional development.” Teacher 12 expressed, “I have done the whole K to 5th grade; everything is highly relevant to that, but if I were to go over to the middle school … it would be a bit of a gap, and definitely [for] high school.” If she could analyze the preparation and relevance of the testing, she said, “I could probably get on average, relevancy in middle school … I'd be… not well prepared for high school.” Teacher 13 preferred “… separated… have additional required classes for all education students about serving ELs … in the content area

and helping them develop language." She explained, "You can take a test. It does not… really make you prepared."

Relevance of Test Levels: It depends on the subject studied. Findings suggest that the content can bring challenges, depending on what the teacher needs to teach. Some teachers were undecided about how the levels should be for the ESL test, whether all from K-12 or separated into different testing levels. Teacher 4 said that "…The principles of teaching language are the same all through, but Math is different. It is different to teach English as a native language than to teach English as a second language." As she went to ESL at the university, she affirmed her course was relevant, and she was well prepared to teach ELD for all levels, all grades, and all ages because of her university training. Teacher 14 said, "They [her university] trained me amazingly… I learned everything that I ever could learn from them," but the districts need to provide relevant training for teachers to get certified.

Leaders' Perspectives on Testing Level. As a whole, leaders were not as concerned with whether the certification test should be broken up or just one range for the whole of K-12. The concern was instead with what teachers learn and how they can use that to adapt to the levels. They highlighted that there is a need for preparation in the university classes to provide coursework on working with ELs for all teachers, including mainstream and special education teachers.

With the exponential growth of the ML population, there is a need for ELD Coaches to provide training to ELD teachers. For example, the district for Leaders 1 and 5 provided both asynchronous and in-person ELD training, and they see the need for all teachers, not just ELD teachers, to be trained in ELD. The certification process involves the "ELD Coaches or Partners" and ensures that they have trained their teachers well. Leader 1 expressed that "our teachers are

well-trained." Leader 7 expressed that "we take a lot of teachers who just have a great mindset and a desire to try, and I am fortunate that I have built an incredible team." The teachers may not necessarily come already prepared, as Leader 7 stated, "as the state does not require coursework, neither college training to teach ELD … then there is training at the district level through professional development." Leader 2 said that new teachers are coming to ELD and that they need to "train new teachers…" due to turnover. He explained the need for breaking the ESL state test out into levels, "which would be beneficial because teaching at the different grade bands is very different. Understanding language acquisition and the demands of proficiency… at the different grade bands is very different … but it depends…" Leader 2 suggested that "it should be required coursework on working with multilingual learners for all teachers." He asserted that the ELD training is also important for the general education teacher, because they will have multilingual learners in their classrooms. He compared ELD with special needs, "Multilingual Learners should get the same attention and support in teacher prep for all teachers … Probably okay to have it K-12 … It is the same material, but it is going to be applied within those bands differently."

Overall Relevance of Testing and Certification

Teachers' Perspectives. The findings suggest that testing can provide a general or initial understanding for participants, but they gain more in-depth knowledge of ELD when they become teachers through on-the-job experience and professional development provided by districts or the State Department of Education. The training and certification may need to be dependent on the district. Teachers who attended ELD classes at the universities did not need so much help from PD. Teacher 1 said, "I did not understand EL testing until I became an ELD teacher." Some teachers replied that they did not attend college for ELD and, therefore, they did

not have suggestions for changes to make the ELD training relevant. Teacher 9 said that her master's degree was great and "it was more applicable. The state training, I feel like … it is just … to get you certified. I don't feel like it is really training for teaching." Teacher 7 expressed that, "I can't directly connect anything I learned about that test … it just could test me to see if I had the knowledge, but I don't want to say it trained me to do anything."

Teacher 4 noted that to solve this challenge, ELD teachers should have an introductory course on teaching MLs and a mandatory ELD course on how to manage behaviors, "on how to deal with students to acquire more compassion and understanding" towards MLs. Teacher 4 believed that the ELD teachers and mainstream urban teachers should take at least two introductory courses to teach multilingual learners. Teacher 7 said that the teachers should have more training in the university, for instance, a master's degree, to teach ELD, and to be more prepared. It should have relevant training for the use of WIDA in the classroom.

Furthermore, Teacher 6 expressed that the ESL Test should be updated, and the test could be more relevant to classroom use. Teacher 2 said the ESL test does not have the same level of seriousness as the test that students take. She suggested that policymakers and educational leaders consider the quality of the ESL test. Teacher 2 believed that the ESL test needs to have a higher standard, "The ESL test does not have the same level of seriousness as the test, as the same test of students when they take the state test."

Teachers 6 and 9 also suggested that there should be a stipend for teachers who pass the ESL state test and that the districts could refund the test fees and pay a stipend if the participant passes it. Most of the teachers took their training for free through the district or the State Department of Education. Teacher 9 said the test used an "online training, and you can go to get tested at our school … the stipend is not available anymore. It was like $5,000.00 to get ELD

certified, but they did away with it … and the districts should pay for the ESL Test fees." One challenge is that the test is a financial hardship for the teachers, and the district should pay for the test if the participants pass it. Teacher 6 said "testing preparation needs to be monetarily accessible," as this participant paid almost 2 thousand dollars to take specific preparation courses to pass the test. She was the only one who expressed this particular perspective.

Leaders' Perspectives. Leader 3 expressed his perspective that it can be a situation where the ELD teachers are not prepared to serve the students in the classroom, and that the ELD training needs to be relevant to the classroom. This is a major problem, and there is a need for specific training for ELD teachers to use in the classroom. He sees the need for this problem to be "dealt with across the state. The main cause of this problem is that this state does not dictate a specific training for specific-sized ELL districts. The districts can conduct the training, but it needs stricter guidelines on the quality of the training."

Leader 5 talked about the "need for more training for ELD, techniques, and strategies to work with ELD families." Relevant training needs to involve ELD teachers learning available skills, and then to "have a constant update with new findings and better teaching strategies." There is a need to update and review the relevant strategies for teaching. Leader 2 expressed that for language acquisition to be relevant, it is necessary to understand that "ELLs do not need just phonics." Due to the situation of learning English in English, the ELLs also need to know "the meaning of the words, the context, and an understanding of what the words mean." Leader 7 expressed that "there is a difference in teaching MLs and native speakers." It is relevant that teachers know this difference between teaching MLs and native speakers. Leader 7 affirmed that there is a need to teach ML correctly and that there is a need to "expand the preparation in general ed undergrad courses to include a strong foundation in teaching Multilingual Learners for

all teachers. … Make certification for ELD teachers required. … There is a need for specific training for teaching reading for ML students."

Professional Development (PD)

As for what should constitute professional development, my participants had perspectives on this, too. The themes they discussed were in these broad categories, which will be discussed in greater detail below: Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA), Literacy Instruction, Connecting with Parents, Paperwork Completion, and Dropout Prevention. Table 11 below is a condensed sample of responses on the relevance of professional development. When the teachers were asked about their perceptions of the PD, 10 teachers answered that they were satisfied with the PD, and 2 participants who had ELD at the university level said they were unsatisfied. Even though 10 teachers said they were satisfied with the PD, there were some comments about how the PD could improve and to change to be more relevant to the classroom, especially for the different school levels (EC, MS, HS). One of the teachers said, "Ugh, seriously? Terrible. Terrible..." The teacher commented that the leaders do not get input on what they need to learn. She said, "Again, there is no teacher input… so… they are giving training that they think is relevant for us, but in actuality, there's … no practicality in the training that we receive." She expressed that the leaders, her leaders, are serving the PD well, "Although they think they're… they think they are, but it is not" due to the relevance of the training. The PD needs to be relevant to the teachers and to the classroom. This teacher has been working with ELD for a very long time, and she has attended college for ELD. She expressed some frustration serving the ELD and intended to move to another area of teaching. Teacher 9, who had a master's degree in ESL, expressed that PD, "It is a waste of time." All the other teachers who had college training expressed that they were already well-trained in their university classes, and they did not need

much of the PD for TLA from their district. In fact, one teacher who attended university even helped the leaders to train new teachers for a period of time. There was no input on what the teachers needed, but the district set up the training. Multiple school levels were held together for some training, from Elementary to High School, at the same time and they learned good practices, but not specific training for individual levels, at least at that training. Teacher 9 believed that her "master's class was great. Yeah, I felt like it was more applicable [to the classroom than the PD.]" Professional development should happen more frequently, as Teacher 10 questioned, "At least 3 times a year? 4, 3, 2 times a year?" Two teachers did not have any comments about PD. The other 3 participants mentioned that training was not offered. The findings may suggest that professional development seems to be more like the heart of the ELD training, and 7 out of the 17 participants expressed that it needed to be more frequent, to be improved, to be more relevant to the classroom, and that there is a need to have input from the teachers on what to teach during Professional Development. It should not be just presented to the teachers. Teacher 15 explained that she did not work in the current district where she is now. The previous, a long time ago, at the "district didn't have any professional learning… So, I relied on workshops… at --- University, and any State Department event." She described the effort and self-determination that she would put into learning more about ESL on her own: "I would travel and go to all of those [courses] to continue to build upon my undergraduate study, and then my master's to continue that knowledge..." Teacher 15 said that she was chasing that very focused area of ELD, then she "got more exposure to that than most teachers … I would do lots of independent readings and books, and research to help build on that knowledge." She thinks her present district is doing an adequate amount of training for TLA for their professional development. Teachers need to seek Self-determination and Self-efficacy to fill in the gap in their

training. Leaders offer professional development, but they are also limited in time, with other responsibilities, for example, doing paperwork so that the funds are not cut down, as expressed on the Paperwork Theme also, but leaders invest heavily in preparation for the teachers, offering platforms and asynchronous courses for teachers. This is a solution that the participants have to do so they can fill in the gap for training and use of time. Teaching 15 said that her district uses its own course through "Canvas… asynchronous [training]… and the vendors" from the curriculum companies that are also doing a good job to help provide some training for the teachers. Some districts offered two trainings a year and monthly meetings. The virtual district offered two big trainings a year, a book study and review for the summer, and a weekly follow-up every Friday.

The virtual school population has grown to 52% of ELLs, and they have to invest in training more than 150 mainstream teachers who have ELLs in their classroom, plus the specific ELD teacher. They have invested heavily in ELD training. For example, the leaders of the virtual district brought a special guest to speak about newcomers when, about three years ago, they received a high influx of students who spoke a language that was not very familiar to the district. Beyond the PD training for the teachers, they hired special bilingual personnel to help with these students, extending support to the families with ESL classes, how to help their children at home, the use of technology, and to help with parental involvement.

Table 11

Teachers' Perspectives on PD

"Satisfied" with their PD	(10 participants)
"Unsatisfied" with their PD	(2 participants)
PD was not offered	(3 participants)
No comments	(2 participants)

Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA)

Teachers' Perspectives. Participants seem to agree that receiving some training in the Theories of Language Acquisition for their certification process was beneficial, but there was consensus among the interviewed teachers that they learned more about the Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA) after they started working with ELL students in their classrooms. Teachers 2, 9, 14, and 15 learned about TLA at the university. Teachers 1 and 12 said they learned about TLA after their certification training. Teacher 1 said she learned about TLA "after being an ELD teacher." Teacher 12 affirmed, "I would say all my training has been after certification." Teacher 8 learned Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA) from "previous teaching in another state." Teacher 8 said that "TLA is highly relevant" to use in the classroom, and he had used it when teaching in Texas. He asserted that there is a need for "Resources should be … provided to all the school districts for ELL students, such as books, or any type of flashcards, just basic things that would enhance … their knowledge and their vocabulary." Teacher 9 affirmed that "Theories of language acquisition are relevant." Teacher 13 said his district was doing their own TLA through Canvas. "The [state] has put some study guides … on the [state] website … they do offer some trainings … we're not relying on it for our language acquisition training … We're doing kind of more of our own… internal."

Teachers indicated that TLA training and usage were relevant in the classroom, not just for ELD teachers, but for all teachers. For example, Teacher 14 has helped her district with training, and they "have really pushed a focus on language acquisition, even for teachers who are Science, Math, and History teachers that aren't specifically ELD teachers." Her district put significant emphasis on ELD professional development for ELD and mainstream teachers. Teachers 10 and 16 reported the same need for practical training for both ELD teachers and

mainstream teachers. For example, Teacher 10 teaches ELD for the Social Studies ELLs. She uses TLA in her ELD Social Study classes, as she teaches "how to say their vocabulary words, practice reading together, writing, and completing sentences together." Teachers agreed that the Theories of Language Acquisition are relevant to the classroom and there is a need for training for TLA for all teachers, not just ELD teachers. There is training for TLA, but there is a need for training that is more relevant to the classroom. One common finding was that the PD was not just taught by the teachers. Some parts of the TLA training had to be done on Canvas, on the State Department of Education, and on the WIDA website. The teachers were supposed to do the training on their own time. Even though 10 teachers were satisfied with the professional development, some of the comments indicated that there is a need for improvement, input from teachers, and relevance of the training for TLA. The teachers who had attended university said that TLA could use some improvement, and the training was not the best way to use their time. The other teachers, who did not attend university, sought to learn on their own about ELD beyond what was asked of them, as they felt the need for more training. They demonstrated Self-determination and Self-efficacy to obtain the training to fill in the gaps on how to teach their students. One example is a teacher who said she seeks to learn for herself and also to help other teachers,

> I feel like we've really got to dig deep and really got to do our own, um. Research, and like, I'm constantly reading the WIDA website, and you know, doing their professional development that they put out. Uh, just to kind of deepen my understanding, because… it's… It's a lot, but it's really helpful.

Some teachers expressed that ESL Test preparation did not prepare the participant for the relevance of TLA in the classroom, and they learned about the relevant ELD knowledge from

another source, or after being in the classroom. Teacher 7 expressed, “I don't know that the tests really got me ready for anything… It is nice to know all those theories, but they didn't have any really practical hands-on.” Teacher 11 mentioned that “with the BICS and CALP… scratching the surface on the test that we took … we've been able to dig more into it” after certification.

Findings also suggested that ELD teachers might benefit from TLA through online training via apps. Teacher 5 learned online about the “academic language, those Tier 2 words,” and the “social and conversational language, specifically for newcomers who kind of need that first.” Teacher 6 said, “*Off2Class* [website] holds some awesome trainings, and they have awesome lessons that translate to social language and academic language.” There is a need for computer training as well, as Teacher 17 said, “… [to] focus on initial computer training in the home language. We absolutely have to have that computer literacy.”

Leaders’ Perspectives. Findings from all the leaders suggest that professional development is a key to providing teachers with the training they need to meet the demands of their day-to-day work. Leader 1 says his “teachers are well-trained” through the PD’s district. All the leaders shared that PD is done through ELD partners, leaders, or coaching. For instance, Leader 5 works along with her teachers to “create lessons and adapt content to the children’s needs, to help parents with their children.” Similar to teachers, leaders indicated that testing for the certification can provide basic knowledge to be used in the classroom, but professional development and classroom experience provide much of the training and experience for the teachers.

This applied to both virtual and mortar-and-brick schools. For instance, virtual school Leaders 3 and 5 have a general yearly and weekly PD for the teachers they supervise. They share the best practices, tips, tricks with technology, ways to translate and integrate translations into

their lessons, and scaffold assignments using the phonics platform that is great for older students, called *Off2Class.* They tried to find ways to equip ELLs and answer teachers' questions. They had meetings every Friday. Leader 3 said that teachers had "a constant collaboration and a constant desire to be able to do better and serve our kids better… Self-determination and desire to do more, and get better constantly." Leader 3 cites an example from his previous experiences, of students from the brick-and-mortar school who were not progressing, "If they have been on the ELD program for 7 years… 5 years… Something is up with that … Then we have to have an intervention on that." There is a need for relevant training for teachers to address the challenges when "students can listen but still cannot speak English, even when they come to the virtual school after several years of ELD in the mortar-and-brick public school." Leader 5 commented about coaching, deep planning cycles together, and continuing to "learn more about WIDA book studies…and a book study as a team every summer" for the teachers. They used "TPRS … Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling … is a method of teaching language that is highly effective and very fast, especially for newcomers … it is immediately immersive, but it is totally based on comprehensible input."

Leader 3 said there is a "need to be patient and understanding about learning a language… with 25 different languages… It can be tough to accommodate everybody… scaffold instruction to handle the high diversity of students." If the students are not well taught, "they can fall into a position of disadvantage." Leader 3 pointed out that identification of the "True ELs" who need help with literacy is important. If the True ELs are not identified, the process can bring frustration for students and teachers, and it can influence a lack of engagement, which can have lasting consequences. Leader 3 said that "some ELs are identified as EL in this state, but not in other states." The reason is that the students in this state have low literacy levels, and "True ELs"

have some specific needs for intervention, so that the student can acquire English, the teachers need a solid understanding of language acquisition. The lack of literacy can bring problems with engagement, and policymakers need to invest their time in defining a "true EL," as well as addressing the low levels of illiteracy in this region.

Leaders 5 and 7 explained that, as there is a need for specialized Special Ed teachers, so too is there a need for ELD teachers because ELD teachers need to modify instruction to make language accessible, just as special education teachers need to modify instruction. Leader 5 reinforced the need for more training, more courses in universities for pre-service teachers. "There is a need for ESL certification, the same as there is for Special Needs Education." These changes in the training of ELD teachers would make the teaching of ELD more beneficial, relevant, and efficient in the classrooms.

Leaders from brick-and-mortar schools expressed that they invest heavily in professional development. For instance, Leader 2 expressed that they provide training for teachers, "PD in reading, writing, and content areas," but they "have a high turnover and lose those prepared teachers and have to start over; preparation is a constant process…" Leader 2 expressed that for solving this problem, policy-makers and educational leaders would seek solutions to "limit turnover… [provide] additional funds, maybe a stipend for each step they [ELD Teachers] complete."

Leader 4 asserted that teachers need to have a good foundation in several areas of the English language, especially phonetics and phonology. Teachers also need to know how to use the ELD online platforms, like ACCESS and ELLEVATION, to support ELLs. She recommends the use of ELLEVATION, "That's kind of like our data warehouse; it has their ACCESS scores, for when they tested here … and it has their scores. If they come from out of state, [it has] all

their English language proficiency scores since they first got identified as English Language Learners." Leader 1 also suggested that the teachers need training on how to use the same ELD platforms. Leader 4 expressed her perception that for PD, the State Department's website offers training and summer conferences. There are "monthly newsletters, articles, and resources" to help the educators who take WIDA courses, and training can be "self-paced… in person … virtual… hybrid."

Literacy Instruction

Teachers' Perspectives. Findings suggest that it would be helpful to have a class on literacy for ELL students with special knowledge of reading, phonics, and writing. For instance, Teacher 3 expressed that "Some sounds are represented differently between the ELLs' native language and English. There is a need for more training that would be relevant to teaching the ELLs." Teacher 6 commented about "the importance of ELD teachers knowing about the practice of reading and writing that they do for ELL students, and it would [even]be helpful for all students." Teacher 15 said that "it is relevant that the ELD teachers include the meaning of the words so that it makes sense to the students, as ML may not know the meaning of the words."

Teacher 14 shared her perspective that the district "is trying hard to raise literacy awareness and provide training for the teachers." The downside is that "a lot of teachers don't see the relevance and how it applies to their content area at the secondary level." Some students belong to the SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) or SLIFE (Students with Little or Interrupted Formal Education), who may not be literate in their first language. It is relevant for teachers to have training about SIFE and SLIFE and their relevance to the classroom. Further, Teacher 8 spoke about academic reading, and that "It is important for teachers to learn how hard it is to learn a language themselves; then they can understand the process of learning a new

language." Phonics was mentioned 4 times, as the school received Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE), and teachers need relevant training for SIFE. Teacher 9 expressed his perceptions that there is no training for literacy, phonics, and writing, as "for middle school, or for high school kids that have interrupted schooling… teachers aren't trained on it."

Four teachers mentioned writing (Teachers numbers 4, 6, 7, and 8). Teacher 4 said, "It is important to teach and practice writing skills as well." She mentioned the importance of numeracy as much as literacy, "It is important to not just teach literacy but also numeracy. It is important for work, and some students cannot do basic numeracy in high school." Teacher 4 asserted the need for the right placement for the ELLs, to make sure the students will learn what they need. She suggested, "It will be hard to manage with the SIFE students, but maybe to extend education for ELLs, like what is offered on Pathways from the virtual school." She expressed the need for adding years of instruction as offered in the virtual program, so that the SIFE students can learn basic Math knowledge. For instance, ELs need to learn multiplication as a basic skill, then progress to higher levels, so they to be able to take high school math classes after mastering basic math concepts. She noted that it is very important that ELs have a diagnosis where the students stand in their academic life, and then they should be placed in the correct grade level for math and language acquisition.

Teacher 8 thought teachers could have more literacy training, as some teachers do not see the relevance of it, and how to apply it to their content at the secondary level. There is a need to train ELD teachers so that they will make sure to "know whether or not the kids are literate in their first language and teach them phonics." Teacher 16 expressed the need for ELD certification and that the ESL State Test would embed questions on how to teach "reading, phonics, and writing," especially for ELLs.

Leaders' Perspectives. Leaders also agreed that skills like daily phonics, reading, and writing help with second language acquisition for ELLs. Leaders 2 and 7 expressed their perspectives that, beyond phonics and reading, teachers need training to help ELL students understand the meaning of the words, semantics, and the context.

Leader 2 said that, in terms of special knowledge, one can have a good understanding of phonics awareness and know that phonemic awareness is not sufficient: "Teachers need to support students with images, use even Google images to provide the picture, and incorporate the sounds to make something meaningful for students to use in sentences." Leader 2 gave an example, as there are 24 sounds in Spanish, and English has 44 sounds. Some sounds are not familiar to ELLs, so the teachers need to know how to "identify the gaps." Leader 4 asserted that ELD teachers need to know how to teach "cognates, and even the false cognates." ELD teachers need to know how to draw that connection for the students to learn well. "EL literacy is drawing connections between the native language and English. You don't necessarily need to know everything about their native language, just need to be able to draw that connection." She shared her perceptions that there is a need for "a big focus on literacy. Literacy is not getting the attention that it should."

Leaders 3 and 5 use the Science of Reading. Leader 5 said, *Off2Class* is recommended for older students, "… It is not babyish …[it] has been wonderful." She expressed that, "There is a need to have individual literacy classes for ELD and the difficulties in teaching literacy for Middle and High Schoolers. There is a need to have a reading specialist and literacy teachers for ELLs."

Leader 7 explained that ELD teachers need to be trained about the need for daily practices and consistent teaching of literacy. "Phonics and writing … writing in a journal every

day... It needs to be taught daily, with consistency, to be relevant and effective." Science of Reading is a popular method among the leaders to teach literacy.

Connection with ELL Parents

Teachers' Perspectives. While findings suggest that a significant part of connections with parents are done through apps, sometimes with interpreters to communicate with parents, there is not much training for parental involvement. Teacher 3 expressed that "parent involvement is what it is, can't change that." The districts are working to promote parental involvement. The *Talking Points* platform was cited 5 times by teachers. Teacher 1 explained *Talking Points* as a very helpful tool for education, as it "is an app that can translate the message to parents when they send mass communication." Two teachers believed *Talking Points* is a helpful platform. Teacher 9 said, "Talking Points for parent-teacher conferences, or for whatever kind of literacy… the parents are more involved." Teacher 14 believed that this platform did not help completely, "as there is still not enough parental involvement." Teachers 10 and 13 mentioned that they did not have much training but learned through daily on-the-job experience. There is a need to do some training to use the platform, as Teacher 7 expressed, "I didn't get any training … my co-teacher showed me what to do [on] *Talking Points*… getting a hold of the parents that way, so I think they [leadership] do a good job of trying to get them [parents] involved."

There was some variation in these perspectives by schooling level. Parental involvement was cited as being more active in elementary school, but it stops in high school. As Teacher 4 said, "It seems that parental involvement stops when the children grow, it kind of stops." Teachers expressed the need to hold more community events, and there is a need for more training on how to get EL parents more involved. Teacher 8 cited community events, like

"…math night, reading night." Teacher 16 mentioned that her district works with "the engagement department that works closely with families… to ensure that we're including parents to meet the legal requirements." Her district does the engagement for Title III "…in a number of different ways." Teacher 6 said, "I don't think we get a lot of training on how to do that, and I don't know if it is different in virtual education."

The virtual district taught the parents how to help the students. Teacher 17 said believed that engagement is easier if "families that have a mother… a stay-at-home mother, or maybe a grandparent that is a stay-at-home." He said that there is a need to work together: "student, teacher, and parent, in unity like a triangle… if one of those does not function well, the whole triangle breaks down… three people in that pyramid." He expressed his ideas about the importance of the initial meeting and paperwork to know the students and families, plus understanding the technological barriers that can influence parental involvement related to technology. His virtual school has "a family engagement department … that does a great job of managing and organizing events."

Leaders' Perspectives. Findings indicate that there is a need to provide literacy classes in English for parents to help with better parental involvement and to use apps for translation. Communication is done in the native language of the family, and it can be done through *Talking Points* (the translation communication app) or interpreters. Leader 1 expressed that, "*Talking Points* allow teachers to send messages to students… translated into the language of the parents." Leader 5 shared that the virtual ESL leaders help parents to help their children with newsletters about homework and opportunities for parents on how to teach their students. The parents "can feel more confident helping their students with their homework, using a puppet show "where we read stories with a bilingual puppet … we send those out to families… [we] give them

conversation starters and questions to go along with the stories." This enables the parents to "kind of act as a teacher … they can watch the story together, and then engage with those questions, and have those conversations with their students at home."

Leader 2 shared that literacy for parents can spur parental involvement: "Teach the parents how to read and write as well," otherwise, "they cannot be involved… I have tried to provide literacy for the parents to read and write in English; those parents have been involved in their students' lives." Leader 7 shared that there has been a lot of effort over the last few years to "improve interpretation and translation for parents, which is the first step in increasing parental involvement … so that everyone has access, so that everyone can understand. …When you do that, you get more engagement back from our parents … when parents are reached with a language that they can understand, there is more engagement." The parents can still find ways they can contribute, "You can come into our dual language classes and read in Spanish… cut laminations or create a billboard… There are things you can do that don't require that language proficiency in English."

Paperwork Completion

Teachers' Perspectives. Overall findings indicated that paperwork was an important area of improved professional development for teachers. Their attitudes were divided into the following topics, presented in Table 12: Paperwork has a lot of frequent changes; it is easy; administration does the paperwork; paperwork has changed over time; and paperwork for ELLs' testing causes frustration or judgment. Each of these themes is discussed below.

***Teachers learn how to do paperwork on the job*.** Findings indicated that teachers learn how to do their paperwork along the way. The paperwork changes every year, according to the

teachers. It is not part of the process of training and certification, and what training does exist on the job varies by district.

Table 12

Findings from Teachers' Perspectives of Paperwork

Paperwork is learned on the job	5
Paperwork is easy	6
Administration does most of the paperwork	6
Paperwork has increased/changed over time	3
Paperwork brought frustration & judgment due to ELLs' test results	2

Teacher 1 said she did not have any suggestions on how to find solutions for the training related to paperwork, then she explained that "because it varies so much by district. We just learned along the way. They also change it a million times. We have to learn something new every year." Teacher 13 expressed that Paperwork is "on-the-job training, because they're constantly changing things." Teacher 15 said that Paperwork is changing so fast that "the State sometimes, they change things before they actually tell us they've changed it … Or post it." She said because they are receiving Title III funding, "there is a lot of time and effort that goes into compliance paperwork … we're constantly… refreshing our knowledge on that." Teacher 11 related to Paperwork and the relevance of the certification process, "that had nothing to do with my certification. We learn it… learn it again, and then we have cool new updates, and then we learn it again."

Paperwork is easy. While some training might be needed, teachers also expressed that paperwork is easier now than it used to be. Teacher 3 said, "Easy enough." Teacher 7 expressed, "Yeah, that was no big deal. …not a problem at all." This is due to the evolution of paperwork, from paper and pencil modality to online platforms. Teachers quoted the ELLEVATION platform and how it can keep all the data. Teacher 4 said, "In other districts, I had to do it all by hand, but

now with this district, we use ELLEVATION." Teacher 9 said it was the "easy part… use ELLEVATION, all online. So, there is plenty of training in that. It is relevant." Teacher 10 said that "ELLEVATION keeps all of our data together." They do not need to do much paperwork, "unless requested for an IEP [Individualized Education Program]." There are new technology apps to help with paperwork, and it is a relevant part of ELD for teachers and leaders to be trained on how to use them.

Administration does most of the paperwork. Not only is the paperwork easier, but several teachers pointed out that administration does most of the paperwork, which is an on-the-job task. Teacher 10 expressed, "There are people in your school that do the paperwork." Teacher 5 said, "ELD administration does a lot of the kind of higher-up paperwork." There is a need to know how to do the WIDA protocol, and it is relevant to learn about WIDA in university preparation. Teacher 14 learned about WIDA in the university, but not how to fill out the forms. Teacher 14 was trained by her district on how to do WIDA, "I was EL coordinator at my building for 3 years, and so I had to do all the compliance for 3 years... my district trained me really well on that … I'm able to train the new people that they hire for that…" Teacher 6 explained that the leaders are "giving grace and figuring out how to do that together, but I don't know if there's been, like, a specific training that was great."

Paperwork has increased and changed over time. Findings indicate that paperwork has evolved through the years. Teacher 4 explained the change, "The paperwork was done on paper. Now the paperwork is done online." Teacher 15 remembered when teachers needed to start doing paperwork. Teacher 15 said, "There was no paperwork about twenty years ago. When I started teaching, there was no paperwork. … [when] No Child Left Behind was what kicked off …was the beginning of paperwork in ELD." Paperwork evolved from no paperwork to doing it by

hand, the Title III Compliance document, the ELL data, to the new Apps being used, like ELLEVATION. Teacher 16 expressed that Paperwork training is relevant. Her district provides the training for the "… paperwork required by the state and federal government for Title III… Any and all paperwork required, parent notifications letters, ELAPs, home language surveys…" Findings indicated that most of the leaders and administration do the paperwork, but some teachers may still be trained to do some of the paperwork. Training is provided basically by the district with knowledge about WIDA and ELLEVATION paperwork that are more commonly used at this time.

Paperwork brought frustration and judgment due to ELLs' test results. Two teachers responded that paperwork can bring some challenges to test results and administration. Teacher 14 expressed that the outcomes of the WIDA testing can be frustrating with the administration. She can do her part, but she is not responsible when a student does not want to learn, because "if students' WIDA outcomes are frustrating… the teacher is not ultimately responsible for a student who does not want to learn."

Teacher 8 said she felt judged about the results of the paperwork "because of the student's WIDA score." The teacher said it was challenging, and the students' grades are not dependent only on her. She did all she could do, and she did a good job. She said, "You know, I did what I could, and I did a great job. But I can't… I can't make someone… do well on a test, even if they know the answers, I can't make them do well on a test." She expressed "…because I do not feel like I can make a kid care about a test that they've been taking for 10 years that they've never passed. No matter how hard I try, that's really hard." She expressed that policy-makers and educational leaders need to understand that teachers should not be judged by the students' scores, when the teachers do a good job, but students do not care about the tests.

Leaders' Perspectives. Table 13 summarizes the main findings around paperwork for leaders, which were condensed into four groups and were very similar to those of teachers, with some added themes.

Table 13

Findings from Leaders' Perspectives of Paperwork

No need for training for the paperwork, as it depends on the district
Paperwork is related to funds from Title III
Paperwork should have changes for the Home Language Survey (HLS)
There is a need to acquire a platform to have uniform paperwork at the state level

No need for training for the paperwork, as it depends on the district. Findings on Paperwork are that there is no need for training about paperwork, because it depends more on the districts. Leader 2 said that Paperwork "is a different animal… This is hands-on training; the university cannot prepare you. It is hands-on." The ELD teacher needs to be familiar with the assessment, screening, ELL identification, and progress monitoring." The leaders do most of the paperwork, and teachers are more involved in teaching. Professional development provides relevant training for the ELLEVATION app, assessment, and progress monitoring.

Paperwork is related to funds from Title III. A common finding from the triangulation of ELD teachers and leaders is about the changes related to paperwork for compliance. Leader 4 said, "There is a ton of compliance with English learners, with the Title III… the downside … a ton of paperwork … it is a very big struggle; we are short-staffed … teachers doing multiple jobs." The leaders reported that it is relevant to do the paperwork well, so the district can keep the Title III Funds, but having the time to do it is a challenge. Leader 4 said, "We can give you all the training that we can, but if you don't have the time … If you fall out of compliance, you can lose your Title III funding, and nobody wants that." Leader 4 said that it is relevant for ELD

teachers to learn how to do Paperwork, but it can be "overwhelming, especially in those larger urban districts."

Paperwork should have changes for the Home Language Survey (HLS). Only Leader 5 commented on the Home Language Survey (HLS) paperwork. The HLS is a form that is used to identify the primary language spoken at home and whether the students are eligible for language support services. It is a mandatory first step to ask students who will enroll in a public school to see if they need ELD. If the students need ELD, they will be given an English proficiency assessment to see their level and be provided with appropriate educational services. The leaders go over HLS with the ELD teachers. Even with this training, teachers struggle with it, and "sometimes they can set up students for failure," according to Leader 5. There is more need for training for ELD teachers about paperwork and HLS. The Home Language Survey is filled out by the parents at the time of enrollment. This is a way to identify students whose families may speak a language other than English and identify possible ELLs who may need ELD instruction, and it is relevant for teachers to have the training they need. Leader 5 suggested changing the HLS, as it "identifies many ELs who may not need to be in the program." She suggested that the students would have an English Language Academic Plan (ELAP), similar to an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for Special Education. She stated that the level of academic success in the state is not as high as in other states, so those students "get stuck in an EL status forever, and they can't get out." Leader 5 said it is relevant that the teachers understand the paperwork well to help the students, because if "the teacher is trying to be overly… compassionate in their minds, but it is doing them a disservice in the end …. We need to re-look at that Home Language Survey and make sure that…it is more accurate."

Leader 5 said that her higher ELD leader advocated for changes, but the changes did not happen. She said, "… and he worked in the EL section of the State Department [of Education] before he came to be with us, so he has talked about it with them many times." She questioned the reasons why changes are not made, "I don't know sometimes if it has to do with funding, because the more EL kids, the more money you get. So, I don't know if there is … a desire to not change things just for that purpose." She believed that having an explanation for the parents about what the Home Language Survey would help the work with accuracy, for the ELD teachers to know how to serve ELs better.

There is a need to acquire a platform to have uniform paperwork at the state level.

Leader 7 said, "There is a lot of paperwork as a leader." The State needs to acquire a platform "to help make that paperwork organized and more efficient for completion, and to standardize it across schools, teachers, and students." The state pays for the Special Ed platform, but needs to pay for the ELD platform, as it would standardize data across the state, providing better support to the schools and districts. Leader 7 gave an example of small schools not having a platform, "so that leads to inconsistencies across the state due to the lack of platforms." She offers recommendations for solving this problem that the state would acquire for the entire region, which should have an ELD platform that would bring a unified and positive outcome for small and large districts, "and it would make ELD data uniform in the whole state." She asserted that the fillable PDFs on the State Department [of Education] website are not a "strong, systematic process for any of that…", but "… If the State Department had access to a single platform that we all used, then the State Department would have a better line of sight to the accountability if they are doing things correctly."

Dropout Prevention

Teachers' Perspectives. Findings suggest that teachers did not receive relevant training on dropout prevention, but they can find possible causes for it based on their experience. For example, dropout may depend on a student's background and culture, absenteeism, the need for connection with the school, and the need to work as students get older. Students' culture can influence the decision to drop out. Teacher 10 asserted that school counselors should make sure EL students understand the consequences of dropping out of school, as Teacher 3 explained that dropout was not perceived as a negative thing for some students and families: "…students who are 16 or older have more opportunities outside of school than people think." For example, if the students are going to be mechanics and learn an occupation with their family. Teacher 10 explained, "They do not need to read very much. Reading Shakespeare is irrelevant to them as mechanics." There is a need for educational leaders to find relevant teaching for the students and paths for work training, independent of college.

Mobility inside the country, or migration, and dropout rates may obscure the facts about why students are not in school. Policymakers and educational leaders need to find a way to track the transferability of ELLs' data throughout the nation, as it is not uniform from district to district. Unless transferability of ELLs around the nation is reported on the ELLEVATION platform, it is not possible for the schools to know if the student has dropped out or transferred schools to another district.

Teacher 1 said the teachers do not talk much about dropping out in elementary school, and there is little training and little-to-no communication about these issues among the people that he works with. Several teachers expressed that they did not have any training, nor did they know about dropouts, nor did they hear about dropouts for the ELLs. For instance, Teacher 7

asked, “Drop out? No, I've never even heard those events.” Teacher 10 said, “I did not know those statistics, but… I can understand how they would happen.” Teacher 11 had a similar response, “There was nothing in our training to do with that. No training for that.” Teacher 13 reinforced the lack of training as, “people don't really receive specific training about helping ELs to avoid dropout.” He spoke about finding solutions for preventing dropout, like, for instance, activities for ELLs to be involved in to help avoid dropout, “like some type of club … that keeps them engaged.” Teacher 15 noted that the lack of discussion throughout the years about MLs’ dropouts, and she has worked with ELD for about two decades. She expressed, “…We never discussed the dropout rate of multilingual learners. And again, that was … literally 2000 to 2005.”

The districts need to understand that dropout could be related to age, appropriate grade level placement, and absenteeism. Teacher 4 expressed her concern about grade placement, and that “teaching them for 1 hour a day to learn English is not enough. We need to have a place for the children without a knowledge of English, that they can learn … the numbers, they do not know multiplication.” Teacher 14 said, “If you come in as a newcomer, and at a high school age, you start at 9th grade, even if you have credits from your country. They are 16, 17, 18, and 19-year-olds starting at 9th grade.” She believed this is “not a great placement for them… you're putting these older kids into 9th grade with significantly younger [peers].” She suggested that the students’ credits from their home country should be considered and counted at her school, so that the students would not need to take similar High School credits, as it “caused some disadvantages for my ELs at my district at the high school level.” These disadvantages may lead to dropout. Teacher 16 spoke about absenteeism leading to dropout. She asserted, “across the board, school districts are struggling with chronic absenteeism … I think that contributes to that

dropout rate." She expressed that to solve this problem, policymakers should offer post-secondary educational opportunities for students to stay in school and not drop out.

Teacher 17 said that he is not aware of any students who have dropped out of his virtual school, as it is more like a community. There is a sense of belonging. He mentioned that dropout rates have been improved through their *Pathways Program*, which is geared towards older students aged 18 to 25 years old, and has now been updated to include students up to 30 years old. There is emphasis on communication with families, sheltered education where students "can work, to do their jobs, to make their money." He said he would "be curious to see if the dropout for ELLs would drop to something like 5%, if more students would take courses like Pathways. He cited an example of an ELL student who is taking concurrent classes at a Community College, and "She is getting her associate's degree."

Leaders' Perspectives. Leaders from brick-and-mortar schools expressed that there is a need for relevant training for teachers in the areas of parental connectivity, involvement, and how to improve graduation rates to avoid dropouts. For instance, Leader 1 explained that there is a need for more awareness of how education in the USA works and the level of literacy for parents and students. "There should be more support for students and families who may not understand education in this state. Verify literacy… Students may not be literate in their first language." Leader 7 said that they were looking for different models and resources throughout the nation, and then they created a "specific position on my team called a Multilingual Learner (ML) Graduation Coach… tasked specifically with working with multilingual learners in high school to help them see their pathway to graduation." The results are positive, as "there is an outstanding increase in the graduation rates of our multilingual learners… and graduation rates have improved." Leader 6 shared that her district "have a harder time finding that engagement

for English learners when they're still English learners in high school," because "they're kind of also living a side life as an adult … working full-time." She explained that there is a need for helping the "EL students to exit ELD before they go to high school." Leader 2 asserted about the need for having "instructional coaches" to work closely with ELD teachers and to "reach out to absent students, find where they are, and to provide additional support to the students."

Findings suggest that virtual schools might provide more flexibility for students staying in school and not dropping out. For instance, Leader 5 explained that they try to "counteract dropout" because they are "in a virtual setting." The timing for the classes is flexible, allowing students to work and make an effort to get a high school diploma. The flexibility and attention to individual students, engagement, and relationships are the positive points of the virtual school that can be beneficial in avoiding dropout, as "it helps them [students] feel comfortable and confident to continue, and… there is less dropout because of that."

Relevance of ELD in Urban Schools

Findings indicated that urban public schools provide more teacher training than rural schools due to the higher percentage of ELL population, greater need, and the availability of targeted funds for ELD. Beyond training specific ELD teachers, there is a need to train mainstream teachers due to the highest percentage of ELL students in every class. Five participants expressed that more training should be provided not just for ELD teachers, but for all teachers, due to the high percentage of ELLs in the urban schools. Teacher 1 said that "there are a lot of EL students. There should be more education for general education teachers to work with EL students, on language, on poverty…" Teacher 8 said that it would be important for the ELLs to "have more immersion in the classrooms with non-ELLs and more combined activities for ELLs and non-ELLs."

Two teachers reported problems with discipline and the administration. They said that even when students do not behave according to the rules, the administration takes the side of the students. As one of the teachers expressed, “these [students] are not students who are trying. If you come to my class, you will know how to get a good grade. You just have to participate. Coming in late, never show up. When they do, they interrupt… and they [Administration] really take the student's side on that.” The teacher explained that the discipline issues that were not addressed were going “… to ruin it for the good students.” She said, “Those kids act like that for… an unbelievable amount of time,” and the administration, “They really take the student's side on that.”

Teacher 15 believed that urban schools can have an advantage over rural schools, as urban schools need to serve ELLs effectively, and it is “more understood and shared across district leadership and across teachers, than if I were in a low-incidence school.” She explained details of her training when she was in her undergrad studies in a rural school, “two families, two newcomer families, moved into a small, very small [town], there were 6 children in grades K-12 in the schools.” Teacher 15 explained that “this was the late 90s, but none of the teachers had any training or knowledge of what to do.” She started volunteering, teaching two days a week, “because being a low-incidence, there weren't enough students to create that sense of urgency.” Teacher 12 said that just certification is not relevant to teaching ELD, “Just in our school alone, we are… 52% EL students, so a lot of our classrooms are going to have more EL students in them … so … certification can be helpful, but it is not going to… prepare you for when the kids show up.” Teacher 4 asserted that the situation with students with interrupted education that are coming to the urban public school “is very serious.” She affirmed that EL students need to have a

special accommodation for students with interrupted education to learn the basics of education before going to higher grades.

Virtual schools had a great increase in the number of ELLs who came from the brick-and-mortar schools. Students were leaving brick-and-mortar schools to find a safe place in the online space. Teacher 5 believed there is not much difference between rural and urban schools, but it is more related to teaching using good practices. "…ELD certification does not have anything to do with urban versus rural schools, whether that's rural or urban, you kind of have to shift what you're doing, but it doesn't change the ELD teaching principles." There are more opportunities in urban schools to meet people and practice more ELD, as reported by teachers 8 and 10. Teacher 8 believed there were "more challenges outside of urban schools, because when students are able to live in an area that has a lot of activities going on, they can go to churches … clubs, and be exposed to more English… to practice English." Teacher 10 said that "In urban schools, find people to relate to … a church, or other community centers … students have places where English is spoken … which are not available in rural areas."

Leaders' Perspectives. Leaders in urban districts have a need to provide professional development for teachers, as there is an urgency to retain and train more ELD teachers due to turnover and a high percentage of ELLs. All leaders agreed on the difference between urban and rural schools, as there are more students and a need to train more teachers, due to the high influx of ELL students, with a high diversity of students and languages. Leader 2 explained, "In an urban school, you … have more ELL students. ELD teachers should expect to have more ELL students in their class."

Differences in high proportions of ELLs lead to disparities between big and small districts. Leader 7 expressed that the high percentage of students and the specific needs of urban

students make a difference in how schools deliver education. “In our urban school … we have about… 13,000 multilingual learners… that growth has been exponential … just skyrocketed.” There were different needs to be addressed, like “students with interrupted education … no literacy in their first language... and… multilingual learners aren't a monolithic group.” Leader 6 said that private schools can limit the number of students they receive, but public schools “cannot put a cap on it.” There is a “need for a unified form of instruction, not to say that you wouldn't provide some native language support,” and scaffold instruction.

Leaders 3, 4, 5, and 7 said they are less concerned with urban schools, but more concerned with rural schools. Leader 4 said that “our urban schools are probably those are the ones that I am least concerned about… because they have a high population, and they take it seriously. They provide training to their districts.” Leaders 3, 4, and 7 said that due to the size and need, urban schools staff better (with teachers) and urban districts take it more seriously. Leader 4 said, “Rural schools, where those populations aren't so high… They don't have the advocates for them as they would in urban schools …Those are the students that I feel for the most.” Leader 4 said that due to the size and need, urban schools staff better (with teachers) and urban districts take it more seriously.

The diversity and high volume of ELLs and different languages require teachers who are well-trained and know how to scaffold instruction and differentiate teaching due to the differences in languages. Leader 5 explained, “We've seen a lot of students that have come from public school to [this charter school], that they were just kind of pushed off … they've been here at a school in the United States for 3 or 4 years, and they can't read yet.” She expressed that some students were put in mainstream classrooms without the support they needed: “They can barely communicate in English at all because they were just put into a classroom with a bunch of other

English language learners who had no foundation in English." She emphasized that the kids would just go to their special classes and physical education classes, or to get a credit for going to art, but they needed more instruction. The virtual school is offering a special program for high school students that is different than just getting a GED to get a high school diploma. They offer a normal high school, but adapted for EL students with flexibility of timing and online classes with a special ELD teacher to support the students.

Challenges and Joys

Teachers' Perspectives on Challenges. Findings suggest that teachers see that the biggest challenges are related to a need for more training and curriculum support, scaffolding, literacy, SIFE, SLIFE, and administrative issues of teachers' lack of involvement in school decisions. For example, Teacher 3 requested educational leaders to, "Please, provide an online learning platform that is fun and engaging, that focuses on speaking and listening first, and in a way that is incremental in learning by focusing on the Lexile Level of 100 to 3000 first." Teacher 8 requested policy-makers and educational leaders to provide more "Resources, specific newcomer curriculum, daily ideas and lesson plans, all written out for you… a lot easier…" Teacher 5 commented that, "… district issues… really hard," and Teacher 2 expressed that, "Classroom teachers are not on board." Teacher 9 explained about interrupted education (SIFE and SLIFE), " getting the kids in the right classes… kids who have interrupted schooling," and obtaining the "support from our higher-ups." Teacher 9 expressed more supervision from leaders, "Our policymakers or our admin, they don't know what goes on in the classroom … if they would visit our classrooms more, they would see what kind of population we're dealing with… and getting the kids in the right classes…"

The lack of literacy for reading communications, lack of technology, understanding of schools and culture, engagement, and discipline in the USA school system can bring challenges to ELD. Teacher 17 spoke about the challenges of technology, for example, "understand their computers, a presentation program…email account … use Google Translate, Zoom … they need that literacy startup." According to Teacher 10, there are challenges like "language barriers … behaviors… students who skipped a couple of grades …they don't know how to … act in high school, or what regular behavior is like." Teacher 10's ELL students need to understand "what the schedule is … how they're supposed to act, and… learning as well. They're just very behind." Teacher 10 believed that ESL certification should be a requirement, as the teachers "would be more qualified … more prepared." Teacher 7 spoke about the challenges of "getting students motivated, about half of them are motivated… and engaged. No matter how engaging a lesson, you still have some students who don't want to participate."

Teachers' Perspectives on Joys. Building relationships with parents and students was the most quoted response. The greatest joys were the relationships with students and their progress, graduations, community involvement, and the EL families. Findings indicated that seeing students' progress is very rewarding. A great joy is when parents get engaged in their children's education. For instance, Teacher 1 expressed joy when teachers "get excited about having EL students … doing what is best for the students … the community, and the families." Examples of the progress of students were expressed by Teacher 2, "Learning about the students, watching them grow. For example, when students pass the WIDA and ACCESS tests and advance to the next levels." Teacher 3 explained that a great joy is seeing determination and self-efficacy, "Seeing the aha moment of the children learning English." Teacher 7 expressed that when the "students … surpass the expectations on the WIDA … it is a big deal to the school."

Teacher 16 commented about the value parents give to education and how she is friends with ELD families for more than one generation, “working with students from different cultures… languages … my students had such a joy for learning… they really valued that. Their parents valued that … I'm still friends with them and their families.”

Teacher 12 expressed how grateful some students were and how emotional it was “watching their growth when they come in as newcomers… they come back as seniors, and they… say thank you… It is very rewarding.” Teacher 13, who works in an urban elementary school, expressed, “It is so rewarding … get to see their growth, unlike at secondary.” Teacher 17 commented about ELLs attending concurrent community college and high school, “… seeing students advance in life …students that graduated 2 years ago got a full ride and two years of college already… seeing students’ ACCESS scores up … that's the joy!”

Leaders' Perspectives on Challenges. Leaders expressed challenges related to policies at the state level, literacy for parents and students, and a better ELD training and certification process for all teachers. For instance, Leader 1 expressed that “The challenges have to be the policies from the state level.” A high number of ELL students, learning academic vocabulary, literacy, and the lack of education in ELLs’ first language are some of the challenges. ELLs need more time to learn and cannot be dropped out of the program until the ELL is proficient. Leader 2 said that it is necessary to give 5 to 7 years for ELs to learn the academic vocabulary, especially if they are in the SIFE or SLIFE category, and “If the students did not have any education in their home language, it takes longer.” Beyond that, it is not just about looking at the present challenges of ELLs. There is also a need to envision what the students will be. “Do not see the student's inner struggle, but the ability of what they can become as a citizen of this country. If they see it this way, they will overcome some of the challenges.” He offered his

perspective for solving this challenge, as it is not easy to support ELL students, as it requires "a lot of patience and hard work, not only to learn subject matter but also to understand the needs of the students and what they can bring to the class, the assets, and if they can envision what the students will be." Leader 2 offers the advice, "Do not see the student's inner struggle, but the ability of what they can become to become a citizen of this country." Literacy is a challenge for ELLs and sometimes for their parents as well. Leader 5 said, there are SIFE and SLIFE to be considered. "It can be a great challenge, so there is a need to invest in literacy and better training of teachers."

Leader 7 said that there is a "fast growth of the student population… a need for training of all teachers… including the general teacher… those coming from teacher prep programs." There is a need for relevant training for teachers and emergency certified teachers, who may not have any preparation for ELD. The training for the emergency certified teachers has worked well, and the district has acquired some of its "greatest ELD teachers, or gen ed" teachers to work with the MLs. Even though the training has brought beneficial results, there is "definitely a challenge due to the limited resources" for ELD. Leader 4 asserted that more politicians and leaders need to come into the classrooms to "get on a personal level so that they can truly understand why this is important, and why." Leader 4 asked the policy-makers not to cut funding to EL programs, "because if we don't teach every student we're gonna have … a future population that only half can read and they will not be able to actively participate in society."

Leaders' Perspectives on Joys. The greatest joys for leaders were related to relationships, the teachers' training, and the students' progress. For instance, Leader 4 mentioned, "I love when I can help teachers … advocate for them … If they tell me there is something they need, I will try to work to see if I can make that happen." Leader 5 remembered when her

teachers said, “The student who was struggling now has grown two levels in their testing.” On other occasions, the students had a whole conversation with the teachers, and even “that the students read this story … when at the beginning of the year the students did not know any letters...” Leader 5 said it was “huge, and those are the things that make… this job even better.” Leader 5 mentioned, “When my teachers come to me and say, this student at the beginning of the year was struggling to even come to class.” Leader 5 expressed that after some time, the students “grew two levels in their testing, or they had a whole conversation with me … they read this story to me, and they didn't even know their letters at the beginning of the year.” Leader 2 mentioned, “EL students receiving high school diplomas, when I see them in the workplace, are fully integrated into the community.” Leader 7 can see that in the last 20 years, her “students have changed from being students to being teachers… The district has exited more students this year than they did last year. The growth in the teachers and their engagement, and the commitment they have to their students.” She expressed that as a leader, it is “an absolute joy to be able to get to watch that over the last 20 years. It is incredible. I'm really proud of the work they've done.” There has been progress in the field of ELD, as she says, “It is an absolute joy to be able to get to watch that over the last 20 years … It is incredible.”

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Discussion

The purpose of this semi-structured qualitative study was to investigate how add-on ELD-certified teachers in K-12 urban schools described the relevance of their training and certification to teach ELLs. This study's research question was: How do add-on K-12 English Language Development (ELD) certified urban teachers describe the relevance of their training and certification? This study used qualitative semi-structured interviews with ELD-certified teachers (n=17) and ELD leaders (n=7) for triangulation. All the subjects of these interviews were from urban schools in the Midwest USA. The purpose of this chapter is to bring together and look across the findings, connect the prior literature, and provide recommendations and suggestions for future research.

In what follows, I discuss the main themes elicited by the study participants. These participants are long-term professionals who have experience in the ELD workforce, and they shared their perceptions of ELD training and certification. These are then situated in the context of the current literature, in order to frame a series of recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders aimed at improving the preparation and relevance of training for ELD teachers.

ELD Certification

According to the literature, Grass & Kitson (2021) recommended that policymakers should re-examine their ESL teacher certification policies. Policy changes must be made to ensure the expertise, quality, and efficacy of future ESL educators related to initial and add-on

certification pathways to be offered nationwide. In the literature, Reeves (2010) noted that add-on certification has become the primary and most popular form of certification in many states. This add-on certification usually goes from Kindergarten to 12th grade. Grass and Kitson (2021) analyzed EL teacher certification requirements and related impacts on student learning. States with both ELD training and certification requirements have higher student outcomes. López et al. (2013) argue that preparing teachers of ELLs who are high quality is critical for success. These researchers state that student assessment is pervasively weak in every part of student assessment across teacher education programs, but is more so and more harmful for ELLs because the ELD teacher specialist lacks foundational knowledge in assessing the students' understanding, limiting their ability to scaffold instruction appropriately.

All seven ELD leaders in this study expressed the need for the ELD teachers to acquire certification. One leader expressed that ELL students deserve ELD-certified teachers, as there are certified teachers for other subjects. All the districts interviewed require ELD training through the state online training and/or through the districts, plus that the teachers attend professional development. This training provided more knowledge and accountability for the ELD teachers. Leaders asserted that their teachers were well-trained.

In a poll by Education Week (2023), ESL teachers were asked if they felt that they had enough training to teach ELL students, 61% percent of the respondents answered “no.” Only 4% of new teachers earned credentials in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and the percentage of teachers who majored in bilingual and multilingual education is only 2% (Jacobs, 2018). The teachers in this study who held ESL bachelor's or master’s degrees comprised only four participants out of seventeen, or 24% of the teachers, which is a higher percentage than the 2% of teachers described in the literature. But while the participants of this study expressed

having a higher level of training through coursework, on-the-job training, and professional development, as compared to this Ed Week poll, they still indicated a need for more training. In the majority of cases, the districts offer training through the ELD leaders after teachers decide to take the add-on ELD certification. Leaders suggested that, beyond training, there is a need for coursework and classroom experiences. Teachers and leaders agreed that mainstream teachers also should acquire training to work with ELs, as they have a substantial number of ELs in their classrooms.

Findings from ELD Certification indicate that the ESL State Test does not fully prepare teachers to teach ELD, as teachers learn more on the job. The districts motivate teachers to obtain certification and provide professional development before, during, and after the certification process. Teachers who took ESL university classes in their undergraduate or master's courses acquired their knowledge mostly through the university classes, and they felt they did not need as much professional development as the other teachers, as they had already learned what they needed to teach ELLs.

Overall, the literature highlights a significant need for more training and preparation for ELD teachers. There are challenges with training, turnover, and retention of ELD teachers for the rising EL population, alongside the need for ELD certification in the states that do not require it (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Banse et al., 2019; Gándara et al., 2005; Herrera & Murray, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lopez et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2011; Najarro, 2023; NCES, 2024; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020; Turkan et al., 2014). The literature and this study's findings suggest similarities in this area of need for more training and retention for ESL/ELD certification. Reeves (2010) has suggested that classroom experience can help bridge the gap for teachers who switch between subject areas. Some of the ELD teachers in this inquiry,

who had previous classroom experiences with ELL, expressed that good teaching is universal and other good teaching experiences can transfer to ELD and be adapted to help ELLs.

Most of the teachers in this study had more time teaching in the mainstream than in ELD classrooms, and then they became add-on certified ELD teachers. Leaders mentioned that emergency certified teachers need more training. Sometimes, beyond the professional development provided by the leaders, the districts used the online training sessions from the State Department of Education or training through apps.

Some teachers push to become better as ELD teachers through additional training and effort that is driven by a desire to teach ELD from a young age. These teachers expressed that they had a call in their hearts to be ELD teachers and wanted to be better for their kids. These findings align with Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) and Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977). These teachers, who felt called to do ELD work from a young age, started seeking relevant training earlier than other teachers who were still discovering the field they wanted to teach. All these participants had dedicated their time and lives to learning and teaching ESL/ELD.

Relevance of Certification in Testing Levels

ESL testing is divided into three levels for the K-12 range (EC, MS, HS). There were diverse opinions about the levels. These findings match the literature about the need and the support for teachers. The literature review expressed that the wide variation in ELD teachers' certification requirements is particularly problematic. Research suggests that ELLs can be effectively supported through access to quality ELD instruction (Hass et al., 2016). However, the outcomes of ELD education have not improved through the years (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Jacobs, 2018; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin,

2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Whiting et al., 2005). This study's findings had a few divergent perspectives about the ESL State Test, but the districts are trying to effectively support ELD teachers through access to quality ELD instruction, so that ELLs can succeed in their language acquisition. The provision of professional development for all levels of ELD, from K-12 Training by the district leaders, was reported as one of the key elements for training to prepare the teachers for the ELD work. Some participants preferred the test to be divided into levels, so that teachers can understand each level in-depth. Other participants preferred the test and certification for the whole K-12, as it gave them flexibility to teach all grades. Some Leaders expressed that the level did not matter, but that professional development and training should be very good for all levels, so that all the school levels could be served well. The one-level K-12 test provides more flexibility for teachers to teach in different grades, as needed, and to meet the demand of ELD teachers. The findings in this study align with those of Grass and Kitson (2021), who argue that the K-12 level is a step in the right direction because it maximizes the potential teacher candidate pool and is inclusive to those solely interested in teaching ESL.

Relevance of Testing and Certification

The findings of this study and prior literature suggest the need for more training for ELD teachers. There are concerns about the variation in requirements among states, and research has demonstrated that the majority of ELD teachers have insufficient preparation (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Gándara et al., 2005; Jacobs, 2018; Herrera & Murray, 2006; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Turkan et al., 2014). ELD certification changes based on state policies, and ESL teacher certification varies by state law (Education Commission of States, 2020). For instance, at the time of this research, 45 states allowed teachers to become ELD certified through what is called the add-on certification, which is a certification in ELD added to a previous teacher certification

in any other subject area. Other states require ELD university training and a test to earn a certification in ESL, which is called a standalone certification.

The overall findings suggest that the testing can bring a general or initial knowledge for the participants, but they acquired more relevant knowledge about ELD when they became teachers, through on-the-job experience, and through professional development. The teachers who took ELD university classes did not need to study for the test, as they had previously learned about ELD. There are recommendations for ELD teachers to take at least two introductory classes on ELD and coursework related to ELD. The teachers who did not go to ELD university classes said they did not know how or what to change in the process of certification to make it relevant. However, they believed that classroom experience and good practices are helpful and transferable from previous experiences to teaching ELD. Teachers suggested that the testing preparation needs to have more online practice questions, be more accessible, and be more serious, like the students' state test. The participants expressed that the districts should pay for the testing fees, if the participants passed the test, plus continue to give the stipend that used to be offered for ESL certification. The state test needs stricter guidelines about the relevance and quality of training. The certification process should have more training for ELD for the classroom, techniques of language acquisition, phonetics, and more relevant strategies to work with ELD families. There is a need for more uniformity in what is expected of the ELD trainings around the state.

Professional Development

Study findings suggested that the outcomes of ELD education have not improved through the years and a important reason why is that ELD teachers need more professional development to improve ELD instruction (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Hass et al.,

2016; Jacobs, 2018; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Whiting et al., 2005). ELD teachers in this study discussed better training through professional development in these 5 areas: Theories of Language Acquisition, Literacy Instruction, Connecting with Parents, Paperwork Completion, and Dropout Prevention.

Theories of Language Acquisition (TLA)

Cummins (2000, 2007) expressed that ESL and content teachers need to understand second-language acquisition of the constructions of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to teach what ELL students need to successfully navigate schooling. ELD teachers must receive training on how to teach language in the social and academic contexts. Because they play a role in referring students to language acquisition services, the literature emphasizes that ESL and content (mainstream) teachers need to be well-prepared with adequate training in these areas, as well as better understand what it means to learn a new language (Yoon, 2008).

While Cummins (1979) emphasizes the iceberg model to explain both language domains and the years of instruction needed to develop both conversational and academic language skills, few teachers mentioned these domains or the time it takes to learn a language, suggesting gaps in knowledge and skills fundamental to ELD instruction. This study's findings on the Theories of Language Acquisition may suggest that the ESL State Test can assess the basic principles of TLA, but this certification training is not enough. Certification is not required in this area of the country, but it is appreciated, and teachers are motivated by the leaders and districts to acquire certification. ELD professional development came up as the main finding that would provide the training for TLA for the ELD teachers that was not provided in the certification process. TLA is a

relevant foundation for language acquisition and needs special training for ELD teachers and mainstream teachers.

Literacy Instruction

The National Literacy Institute (NLI, 2024) defined literacy as the capacity to read and write, which stands out as a pivotal determinant in shaping an individual's career trajectory (Haynes, 2024). The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) states that ELLs represented 14 percent of all homeless children enrolled in public school, 15 percent of ELL students are served by Public Title I Schoolwide Programs, and that ELLs present low reading levels. Low levels of literacy, according to the National Literacy Institute (NLI), cost the U.S. up to 2.2 trillion dollars per year, and 34% of the adults who lack literacy proficiency were born outside of the U.S. (NLI, 2024). Rodriguez (2008) states that it was not just the number of ELLs that is increasing in U.S. schools, but also the literacy gap between ELLs and the students who spoke English as a first language. This study's findings may suggest a greater need for relevant ELD teachers' training in specific knowledge in reading, phonics, and writing. As ELLs need special modifications, it is important to teach not just phonics, but the meaning of the word, as ELLs may not know them. There is a need to use special scaffolding to support the ELLs. Findings suggest that ELD teachers need to have specific training for teaching the ELL-specific population, just like Special Education teachers need special training for the special needs students.

Furthermore, due to the unavailability of schools, war, and migration, there is a subpopulation of ELLs known as SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) or SLIFE (Students with Little or Interrupted Formal Education) who have additional needs. SIFE and SLIFE students are those who do not have a strong grasp of native language literacy, and they face a triple threat when entering schools and in their pursuit of English language learning

(Munger et al., 2016). These were challenges and concerns for the study's teachers as well. Beyond the need for literacy for SIFE and SLIFE students, this study's findings suggest that there is a need for literacy and ESL for parents, which could help with parental involvement and more understanding of the educational process of their children.

Connecting with Parents

According to Grace et al. (2012), the academic success of a child is based less on income or social status, and it is based more on the level of adult participation and encouragement of learning in the home and at school. Research suggested that parents and guardians who are involved in their children's education bring successful results in the areas of confidence and academics (Eliason & Jenkins, 2003). The literature findings may suggest that there is a need for literacy and ESL for parents, not just for the students (Munger et al., 2016; NLI, 2024).

This study's findings are aligned with the literature emphasizing the need for connecting with parents. The findings match the literature about parents being involved in the children's education, as mentioned by Eliason and Jenkins (2003) and Grace et al. (2012), as communication with parents could prevent dropouts and bring successful results in the areas of confidence and academics. Findings from this study suggest that there is a need for efficient communication, and districts should use interpreters, translators, and apps. *Talking Points* is a great app, a short-term solution for communication, but it would not give autonomy to parents beyond the conversation with the teachers. This study's findings also suggest there are challenges with communication with parents, though apps might be a short-term fix for ELL parents' communication needs.

This study's findings suggest that the teaching of ESL and literacy for students and parents is needed and relevant. The virtual school in the study was offering ESL and literacy

classes for parents. If parents can read, they can help their students, and this may suggest an agreement with the literature cited by Munger et al. (2016) and NLI (2024) related to solving dropout, as students and parents are taught literacy and ESL.

Paperwork Completion

An ELD teacher must also know how to prepare, test, and fill out special paperwork uniquely related to ELLs (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; Christian, 2019; De Jong & Harper, 2005; Howard, 2002; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Whiting, 2017). This study's findings suggested that the process of certification does not include much preparation for paperwork. As a result, most paperwork is done mostly by the leaders, and training is sporadic and variable among districts, with constant changes to paperwork exacerbating the learning and development process. It was suggested to provide a single online application for all ELD paperwork at the state level. This type of change would make it possible to track the students' data for transferability as well as their levels and progress. This recommendation would necessarily be followed by additional training for teachers statewide on how to use this system.

Dropout Prevention

The high mobility and high number of ELL students bring particular challenges to large districts, as many urban and suburban schools are not prepared for such a high influx of ELLs (Ortiz, 2020). Maxwell (2021) states that dropout rates for ELL students are 25 percent, compared to 15 percent for non-English learners. Dropouts are sometimes due to underperformance related to the need to acquire English as the assessment language and to understand academic content (Banse et al., 2019; Obinna & Ohanian, 2020; Shideler et al., 2020). Dropout can lead to dysfunctional literacy for students and even illiteracy in adulthood, especially among adults who were born overseas (Munger et al., 2016; NLI, 2024). Educators

must have the skills to work with multicultural backgrounds to serve ELLs, provide rigorous demands, and avoid dropouts (Rodriguez et al., 2022). Findings from this study alluded to a widespread lack of knowledge among teachers about dropouts, those at risk, and what to do to prevent them.

Part of the solution for dropout could be related to connecting with parents. This is because some ELD parents need to understand more of the American educational system, technology, learn literacy, and ESL. The virtual charter school in the study had some innovative programs that might help with dropouts. Their programs emphasized communication with families and the flexibility that the high school and *Pathways Program* offered for older students. Holt (2022) reported that since the late 1990s, virtual education has been steadily growing due to its flexibility. This flexibility, according to the literature and study participants, is a positive factor to help students and families. Some students at the virtual school could even earn college credit by doing concurrent enrollment with the virtual school and the local community college. Findings from the brick-and-mortar school may suggest that the role of Graduation Coach might help ELLs work towards graduation.

Relevance of ELD in Urban Schools

The literature review presented the suggested findings that the geographic areas influence resources, instruction, and support for ELLs, but all schools must meet the challenges of providing ESL teachers who must be highly qualified (Brownell et al., 2005). Urban public schools tend to experience a higher rate of student mobility, a phenomenon that may negatively impact the performance of ELL students (Ortiz, 2020). The study findings support these claims about geographic areas influencing resources, instruction, and support for ELLs and suggest that there is more need for training in rural schools, so that they can provide highly qualified teachers

in ELD. The teachers' perceptions were that there were a lot of students in public schools, that good practices are important and transferable from other previous experiences to teaching ELD. This study did not have many comparative findings about ELD in urban brick-and-mortar and virtual schools in the literature review, and this suggests a gap in the literature for further research. Findings may suggest a need to explore if there is a student and teacher migration from brick-and-mortar to virtual or hybrid charter schools, as suggested in this study by Leaders 3 and 5 and some virtual ELD teachers interviewed in this study.

Challenges and Joys

Challenges for ELD, based on the literature review, indicate that in recent years, there has been a struggle with training, recruiting, and retaining ELD teachers. ELD teachers need specific knowledge and training to teach ELLs. Specific knowledge that ELD teachers need are sociocultural, motivation, language, parents' limited literacy (reading and writing) or spoken English language, immigration, migration, mobility, special testing, and paperwork (Ariza & Zainuddin, 2002; English, 2019; Haynes, 2024; Maxwell, 2011; NCES, 2024; Northcote & Gosselin, 2017; Rodriguez et al.; Whiting et al., 2005). Geographic areas influence resources, instruction, and support for ELLs, but all schools must meet the challenges of providing ESL teachers who must be highly qualified (Brownell et al., 2005). Urban public schools face challenges as they experience a higher rate of student mobility, a phenomenon that may negatively impact the performance of ELL students (Ortiz, 2020).

This study's main findings indicated that the teachers' greatest challenges were classroom (mainstream) teachers not on board with the ELLs, some administrative issues, teaching (scaffolding), engagement, and language barriers, and the higher percentage of ELL students in the classrooms. The teachers' greatest joys were related to the relationship with students and their

families, as well as observing the students' progress in their educational paths. Leaders' greatest challenges were state policies, the need to train and retrain teachers, support for ELLs, funding for the ELD, improvement for specific apps to register data, track it, make it uniform, and transfer it to the state level and among schools. The joys for leaders were to see their relationships with students develop, the ELD progress of their students, and the teachers.

Overall, the findings indicated that the teachers and leaders who come into the profession with self-determination and self-efficacy aimed to bring positive changes in education, seeking more education and training for themselves and others. The findings of this study indicated that the theory of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2008) in the field of psychological well-being, motivation, and human personality, matched the teachers' and leaders' aspirations and actions. The literature explained that extrinsic motivation can be tangible rewards like gamification, badges, and points. The literature asserted that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are highly influential determinants of human behavior. Autonomy is related to people's need to master their destiny and to have control over their lives, and to be in control of their behavior. Competence is related to our achievements, knowledge, and skills, and building competence and developing mastery over tasks that are important to people. Relatedness (or Connection) is related to a sense of belonging and connectedness with others' needs (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The two main aspects on which individuals differ include orientations and aspirations (life goals). Deci and Ryan assert that social conditions enhance, versus diminish, these types of motivation when the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported instead of thwarted. This study's findings indicated that the social and educational conditions of the participants sought autonomy to learn and study more for the testing and certification, to attend workshops, and college classes. The participants sought competence in their work, as a

characteristic of Self-determination and Self-efficacy theories. The teachers demonstrated the value of relatedness when serving the students, the families, and the district. The leaders demonstrated the value of relatedness when serving the teachers, students, and their families.

Limitations

The study employs a convenience sample of teachers and leaders from just one region of the USA Midwest, and this necessarily limits the claims that can be made about the study phenomenon. Additionally, there are challenges as the researcher is involved in interpretations of the ELD areas and making assessments on a need-based basis of her perspectives versus those of the participants in this study. The researcher may have strong feelings about the issues in this research, and maybe some bias may exist in what the researcher chose to focus on and report as findings for the study.

Suggestions for Future Research

For future research, this researcher suggests following up with ELD teachers for a few years about their training, certification, and on-the-job perspectives on their training and certification. This inquiry could not be longitudinal during this PhD course due to the course's timing and the need for permission to work in a school setting. This researcher recommends more inquiry using a longitudinal observation of the classroom environment for the ELD teachers for at least three to five years to verify the relevance of ELD teachers' training and the daily delivery of ELD instruction. One additional option for future research is to interview teachers and students about the ELD training process, analyze some of the students' work, tests, and writing. For future studies, it is recommended to study the ELD training virtual school setting, including training of teachers and the student mobility from brick-and-mortar students to the virtual school in states and nationwide. For future studies, it is suggested that novice ELD

teachers who have been teaching for a maximum of 2 or 3 years can be interviewed, so that more data can be collected and analyzed on the needs of training for ELD novice teachers. This study had more experienced teachers with great support from their leaders and district, with professional development in several areas to train the teachers. Interviewing the novice ELD teachers could bring a fresh perspective on their initial work with ELD and teaching to provide what they need to deliver ELD to ELLs in the earlier teaching stages.

Strengths and Contributions

This study offers recommendations to educational leaders and policymakers on the training of ELD teachers and the certification process. The research reached saturation with 24 ELD participants, 17 teachers, and 7 leaders, in 6 districts. The triangulation with ELD supervisors provided different suggestions for advancing the literature than if interviewing teachers only, as done in previous studies. The years of ELD experience for the participants are from 3 to 20 years, and up to 25 years including the years of teaching and leadership in other positions. The experience of highly qualified and long-term teachers and leaders provided strength for this study, with in-depth knowledge and classroom experience. Most of the leaders were ELD teachers before, except one ELD leader who had been in school administration. He worked in the State Department of Education and helped to create materials for teachers to prepare to take the state test and learn more about ELD. He also had supervised all the ELD programs in his state. The strengths of the diversity of teachers' and leaders' backgrounds, training, and experiences brought a richness of experiences in language, culture, and ELD knowledge for the inquiry. This study has representation from 6 districts, with the levels of Elementary, Middle, and High School, from brick-and-mortar schools and two modalities of virtual school, online and in-building instruction as well. These teachers and leaders, sharing

their in-depth perspectives and recommendations to educational leaders and policymakers, contributed to the strength of this research. The ELD perceptions shared by the teachers and leaders, and their deep knowledge, dedication, and evidence-based efforts, helped to answer the research question. Self-efficacy and Self-determination theories are seen by all the participants, as they did not answer in just one sentence or two; they were so willing to share in-depth about their perspectives and experiences in the field of ELD. These experiences should be analyzed and considered for Educational Leadership and Policymakers, so that ELD can bring the advancement of knowledge in the ELD field.

Final Thoughts and Implications

This study aimed to add to the limited literature on the perspectives of ELD-certified teachers and the relevance of their training and certification. While there are limitations, as with any research study, it nevertheless provides some key recommendations for addressing ELD training and certification moving forward. In particular, future preparation of ELD teachers would include training in TLA that is more specific, practical, and relevant, which would be determined by leadership assessment of what teachers already know and what they need to know. However, input from the teachers on what they need on this point is critical. Additionally, ELD teachers who had university training or more experience in ELD could potentially help guide, plan, and lead this training.

A second focus would be on literacy, because if the students learn how to read and write well, then literacy would help their learning in all the other subject areas. Furthermore, principals need to understand more about ELD to provide more effective support to ELD teachers, students, and their families. This includes more understanding of the specialized training needs and support for ELD teachers and this relates to their recruitment and retention. Finally, principals

need more training in meeting the needs of SIFE (students with Limited Formal Education) and SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) students.

Suggestions for policymakers are also critical, as the study findings implicate changes to state policy, in particular related to certification and other training requirements. Policymakers need to take ELD seriously and invest in our ELL students, as there is a high percentage of ELL students in our schools and their success will also influence the success of other non-ELL students and the grading of schools. It is also important to invest in literacy, ESL, and ELD, including in higher education training programs for students. There is an urgent need for improving ELD and literacy in this country so that each life will be held with dignity (Barbara Bush Foundation, n.d.). It is quite possible that SIFE and SLIFE students may not have a strong grasp of native language literacy, and they face a triple threat in school (Munger et al., 2016). Moreover, studies suggest that grade retention of ELL students is ultimately harmful to their overall language development (Buckmaster et al., 2024). The NLI notes that the low levels of literacy cost the US a deficit of up to 2.2 trillion dollars per year, and 34% of the adults who lack literacy proficiency were born outside of the U.S. (NLI, 2024). The so-called Literacy Effect can influence the whole country's economy and all aspects of daily life for individuals and communities. Finally, policymakers need to visit and listen more to the school administrators and teachers, students, and their parents to understand the school's challenges and seek solutions.

The findings of this study, based on the participants' perspectives, may suggest that substantial work and progress have been accomplished in the field of ELD through the years, but still more training and changes are needed for training in the ELD field. Professional development is a key part of the training and certification process, as leaders provide training before, during, and after certification. Professional Development must be for all levels, relevant,

and have input and feedback from teachers. The teachers who held ELD university degrees stated that they did not need much professional development, as they had acquired all the necessary knowledge to teach ELD through the university, but teachers who did not pursue ELD university training need more effective PD that is relevant to the classroom.

Summarizing, there is still a need for more relevant ELD training, on-the-job training, and university classes for ELD teachers. It is relevant that mainstream teachers also acquire relevant training to work with ELLs. All leaders recommended that teachers acquire the ELD certification and training through Professional Development, and PD needs to be relevant for each school level (EC, MS, HS). Participants shared many recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers based on their work experiences and perspectives to improve the work with ELLs and the training and certification of ELD. This researcher would like to thank all who contributed to this study and who contributed to making education better in all areas, one day at a time. May all our challenges be fewer, and our joy and great educational outcomes increase.

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APPENDIX A:

State Requirements for ESL/ELD Teacher Certification

The Education Commission of States (2020) has a complete list of the requirements by the Federal Law and the requirements by the state for ELD certification. For a complete list of the requirements by state, please visit the reference list: https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/50-state-comparison-english-learner-policies-11. In this study, a small sample was summarized for comparison.

Washington State requires an EL or Bilingual Education endorsement. Oregon requires an ESOL endorsement. North Dakota requires an ESL or Bilingual endorsement. North Carolina's state law says that an ESL license is available, but it is unclear if it is required. Both New Jersey and New Mexico state laws say an ESOL or Bilingual Education endorsement is required. https://texestest.org/texas-teacher-certification/texas-esl-teachers/.

Amantha (n.d.) explains that to become a certified ESL teacher in Texas, teachers go through the official test examination, Texestest.org. The process differs from the regular teacher certification, as it involves studying for several exams and taking special training. The certification is in addition to, and not instead of, regular teacher certification. The author explains that some aspiring teachers choose to take the certification during their post-secondary education, but other teachers become non-ESL teachers first and later upgrade their qualifications. In Texas, the ESL certification also varies based on the grade levels, which is called a Supplemental ESL test. For instance, ESL for EC education up to grade 6, ESL for grades 4 through 8, and ESL for grades 9 through 12, or add ESL certification for teachers already certified. The exam will depend on where the teacher is teaching and the specific goals. The test will examine knowledge of language acquisition, language learning in an ESL

environment, ESL assessment, instruction strategies, and understanding of cultural awareness in ESL education, including family and community involvement.

In the state of Oklahoma, the Education State Department states that an ESL/ELD teacher must obtain a teacher certification in any specific area and then seek the EDL certification as an additional certification from states that subject areas may be added to a certificate by passing the appropriate subject area test(s). This should be according to the competency-based licensure and certification system mandated in 70 O.S. § 6-187 (OSDE, 2023-2024). Other states may vary, as Alabama's law says, No endorsement or certificate requirement, but there are standards for ESOL teachers in grades P-12. Alaska's state law says that there are no endorsement or certificate requirements, but there are pre-service training requirements for bilingual program teachers (Education Commission of States, 2020).

APPENDIX B:

EL Definitions according to Federal Law and States

Some EL Definitions according to Federal Law and States, adapted and condensed from the Education Commission of States (2020).

Examples of some EL definitions by states from *How is English Learner defined in state policy*

(Taken from Education Commission of States, 2020)

Federal Law/ States	EL Definition	Source
Federal Law	English Learner": An individual (1) who is aged 3 through 21 (2) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school (3) (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English (ii) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant and (4) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.	20 U.S.C.A. § 7801
Alabama	Governed by the Department of Education's EL guidebook or federal law rather than state policy.	
Arizona	English Learner or Limited English Proficient Student: A child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English.	Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 15-751

Arkansas	English-Language Learners: Students identified by the state board as not proficient in the English language based upon approved English proficiency assessment instruments administered annually in the fall of the current school year, which assessments measure oral, reading, and writing proficiency.	Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-2303
California	State policy uses the federal definition.	Cal. Educ. Code § 306
Colorado	English Language Learner: A student who is linguistically diverse and who is identified as having a level of English language proficiency that requires language support to achieve standards in grade-level content in English.	Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 22-24-103
Idaho	English language learner: A student who does not score proficient on the English language development assessment established by the rule of the state board of education.	Idaho Code Ann. § 33-1001
Illinois	English Learners: (1) all children in grades pre-K through 12 who were not born in the United States, whose native tongue is a language other than English, and who are incapable of performing ordinary classwork in English, and (2) all children in grades pre-K through 12 who were born in the United States of parents possessing no or limited English-speaking ability and who are incapable of performing ordinary classwork in English.	105 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/14C-2
Louisiana	English Language Learners: Children working to learn a second language (English) while continuing to develop their first (or home) language.	28 La. Admin. Code Pt CLIX, 409
Maine	English Learner: A student who has a primary or home language other than English, as determined by a language use survey developed by the department; who is not yet proficient in English, as determined by a state-approved English language proficiency assessment; and who satisfies the federal definition.	Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 20-A, § 15672
New Mexico	English Language Learner: A student whose first or heritage language is not English and who is unable to read, write,	N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-23-2

	speak or understand English at a level comparable to grade-level English proficient peers and native English speakers.	
Oklahoma	State policy uses the federal definition.	Okla. Admin. Code 210:10-13-2
Pennsylvania	Governed by the Department of Education's EL guidebook or federal law rather than state policy.	
Rhode Island	English Language Learner: A student (1) whose first language is not English or who speaks a variety of English, as used in a foreign country or U.S. possession, that is so distinct that ELL instruction is necessary, (2) who is now learning English, but (3) who has not yet attained enough proficiency in English to allow him or her to fully profit from content area instruction conducted only in English.	R.I. Code R. 20-30-3.2
Washington	Eligible Student: A student whose primary language is other than English and whose English skills are sufficiently deficient or absent to impair learning, for purposes of eligibility for the transitional bilingual program.	Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 28A.180.030
Wisconsin	Limited-English Proficient Pupil: A pupil whose ability to use the English language is limited because of the use of a non-English language in his or her family or in his or her daily, non-school surroundings, and who has difficulty, as defined by rule by the state superintendent, in performing ordinary classwork in English as a result of such limited English language proficiency.	Wis. Stat. Ann. § 115.955

APPENDIX C: Classification of Urban ELD teachers for this Study

This questionnaire is for ELD teachers specifically with add-on certification, from elementary, middle, and high school, urban schools in the Midwest USA. The reason for the levels K-12 is that most of the states that certify ELD teachers with add-on certification do it for the K-12 level.

Definition of Terms for Geographic/Locale Classification Criteria of Schools, according to NCES (n.d.). Locale Classifications and Criteria- The NCES locale framework is composed of four basic types. City, Suburban, Town, and Rural. Each classification contains three subtypes, and it relies on standard urban and rural definitions developed by the U.S. Census Bureau, and each type of locale is either urban or rural in its entirety. The NCES states that its definition can be fully collapsed into a basic urban-rural dichotomy or expanded into a more detailed collection of 12 distinct categories. The differentiation can be based on size and proximity.

APPENDIX D: Terminology related to ELD

ELD Terms Acronyms for students (Based on current literature)

ELLs	English Language Learners
ELs	English Learners
ER	Emergent Reader
ENL	English as a New Language
DLL	Dual Language Learner
HS	Heritage Speaker
MLL	Multi-Language Learner
ML	Multilingual Learner
MLE	Multilingual Learners of English
NLS	Native Language Speaker
Newcomer	Recently arrived in the USA & new to learning English.

General ELD Terms Acronyms (Based on current literature)

ALA	Academic Language Acquisition
LCD	Linguistically and Culturally Diverse
L1	Language 1 – Native Language
L2	Language 2 – Additional Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ELD	English Language Development
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (Cummins - social language)
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins - school language)
LIEPs	Language Instruction Educational Programs
SIFE	Students with Interrupted Formal Education
SLIFE	Students with Little or Interrupted Formal Education

Terminology used by teachers during interviews:

- EL instead of ELD - For example, teacher 2 said, “I had to do my master's in EL [ELD].”
- EL (English Learners), ELL (English Language Learners), or ML (Multilingual Learners).
- ML - Some participants use the terminology MLs instead of ELLs. The reason is that the native students’ language should be validated, and some students speak multiple languages.
- ELD Coaches or ELD Partners (instead of ELD leaders) - This terminology was used only by the Leaders. The ELD Leaders in the school sites are referred to as ELD Coaches or Partners. The teachers did not refer to this terminology, but instead they expressed the idea using terms such as “mentorship” and “professional development.”
- ESL State Test - Name for the test to become certified to teach the ELD (new term for ESL).
- TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- TEFL - Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

APPENDIX E: Interview Protocol

The questionnaires were used for the add-on ELD-certified teachers and the ELD supervisors, respectively. The ELD supervisor questionnaire was used for triangulation. The themes for the questions were in parentheses. The demographics collected before and after, as needed, and all the findings will have tables to present the data.

ELD teacher:

This researcher started the interview by thanking the participants for their time and participation in this study, then read the IRB and all other guidelines needed. The researcher gathered demographics and explained the research.

More subthemes appeared when the interviews were held. For each question, if applicable, the teachers were asked to make recommendations for educational leaders and policymakers.

Questionnaire for the ELD-certified teacher

1- Please tell me, why and how did you get the ELD add-on certification? How did you study for the ELD state test, and how many times did you take the test? How are your perceptions of Self-determination and Self-efficacy related to your training and certification process? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Involvement and certification process. SDT and Self-efficacy influence the decision to acquire certification.)

2- Some states have distinct test certification levels for elementary (ES), middle (MS), and/or high school (HS). As you are add-on certified to teach ELD from K-12, what are your perceptions of the training and teaching the range from K to 12? What are the challenges and advantages of having one training and certification for all K-12 instead of the 3 school levels (EC, MS, HS)? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Relevance and applicability for levels K-12)

3- What are your perceptions of the relevance, challenges, and advantages of the training and certification process for ELD teachers working specifically in urban schools? How is your professional development for ELD in urban schools? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Teaching in urban schools and ELD professional development)

4- What are your perceptions on the training and certification for the following items in the chart below? Did you get the knowledge to teach those items related to ELD through your training or from a previous certification? Please, feel free to answer all of them or some of them.

(Specific literature studies related to ELD teaching)

Perception of ELD teachers' list - specific literature studies related to ELD teaching

4.1 - Theories of Language Acquisition
4.2 - ELD paperwork
4. 3 - ELD testing and certification
4. 4 - ELD in urban schools
4. 5 - Specific knowledge for EL reading, phonics, and writing

4. 6 - ELL parental involvement

4. 7 - Avoid ELLs' dropout (25% for ELLs v. 15% non-ELLs)

5- Please, tell me about the greatest challenges and joys of teaching ELD as a content and for you as an add-on certified ELD teacher? Props - Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Challenges and joys of ELD teachers)

Questionnaire for ELD supervisors/leaders

1- What are your perceptions about the levels of preparedness (skills, knowledge, limitations, or strengths) for the training and certification of your add-on ELD teachers and the applicability in the classroom? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Leaders' perceptions of training and certification, and applicability/relevance)

2- How do you perceive the use of or absence of the Self-determination and Self-efficacy theories applied to training and certification of add-on certification for your ELD teachers? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Theoretical framework)

3- What are the main skills, knowledge, limitations, or strengths needed for urban ELD teachers to apply to the classrooms in urban schools? How does your school provide more professional development to help the add-on ELD teachers in urban areas? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers?

(Urban schools and professional development)

4- What are your perceptions on the training and certification for the following items in the chart below? (Share screen with chart).

(Specific literature studies related to ELD teaching)

Supervisors - *Perception of ELD teachers' list* - specific literature studies related to ELD teaching

4.1 - Theories of Language Acquisition
4.2 - ELD paperwork
4. 3 - ELD testing and certification
4. 4 - ELD in urban schools
4. 5 - Specific knowledge for EL reading, phonics, and writing
4. 6 - ELL parental involvement
4. 7 - Avoid ELLs' dropout (25% for ELLs v. 15% non-ELLs)

5- What are the greatest challenges and joys of the ELD, and for you as an ELD leader? Anything else? Suggestions for educational leaders and policymakers? Collect more demographics as needed.

(Leaders - Challenges and joys of ELD & for leaders)

APPENDIX F: A Priori Codes, Categories, and Themes

A Priori Codes, Categories, and Themes

A Priori Codes (102)	**Categories**	**Themes for Matrices from the prospectus**
(3) ELD Definition Seminal definition Contemporary definition	ELD Definition ELD certification process	ELD Definition ELD certification process
(6) Federal Law State Laws State Policies District Policies ELL Guidebook ELL state guidebook	Law & Policies	Recommendations Law Policies
(11) ELD certification process Certification School level Certification (ES, MS, HS) State tests University training Self-paced training State training Certification training Process of certification Additional certification Alternative certification	Certification Process & Levels	Certification Process Certification Levels
(1) ELD terminology	ELD Terminology	ELD Terminology
(11) ELD Factors ELD challenges Literacy SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) SLIFE (Students with Little or Interrupted Formal Education) Reading Low Proficiency Dropout Graduation ELLs		

Language Challenges (11) (Theoretical Framework) Deci-Ryan Self-determination Theory Motivation to acquire other language Autonomous motivation Wellness Basic Psychological Needs Intrinsic Extrinsic Intrinsic motivation to learn a language Extrinsic motivation to learn a language Goals Aspirations	Framework SDT	Framework SDT
(11) (Theoretical Framework) Bandura Self-efficacy Theory Student's own ability to learn Past experiences Praise from teachers Positive feedbacks Positive influence Predict performance Cooperative learning Accept challenges Goal setting	Framework Self-Efficacy School setting Geographic area	Framework Self-Efficacy School setting Geographic area
(6) School setting Geographic area Urban Suburban Rural	 Community Socio-linguistic	Urban Schools specifically Data and findings Community Socio-linguistic Mobility
(11) Community & ELD Immigration Mobility Family language Native Language L1 (related to the community & immigration) L2 (related to the community & immigration) Background of students & parents		Background 1- Student 2- Parent 3- Community 4- school

Parental involvement		
Background community	Language	Language acquisition
Background school	acquisition	BICS
(12)		CALP
Language Acquisition Theory		Transferable skills
BICS		
CALP		
Iceberg		Embedded content
CUP		
Transferable skills		
L1 (related to BICS & CALPS)		
L2 (related to BICS & CALPS)		
Language acquisition		
Academic Language		
Social Language		
Embedded content		Affective filter
(2)	Affective Filter	Challenges /Motivation
Krashen		
Affective filter theory		Sociocultural
(6)	Vygotsky	
Vygotsky	Sociocultural	Challenges in large
Sociocultural Theory		city schools
Interactions		
Social Interactions		Environment
Environment		
MKO (Most		Motivation
Knowledgeable Other)	Training	Training to teach
(4)	motivation	
ELD Training for Teachers		Motivation to learn
Teaching ELD		another language
-Motivation to teach		
Another language		
-Motivation to learn		
Another language		
(6)		Training
Challenges & joy	Training	Challenges
Knowledge to teach ELD	Challenges	Knowledge
Stress	Joy	Stress
Challenges of Teaching ELD	Recommendations	Joy to teach ELD
Joy of Teaching ELD		Recommendations
(3) Recommendations		Policymakers
Policymakers /Educational		Educational Leaders
Leaders		

APPENDIX G: Oral Consent and IRB

Consent to Participate in Research

University of Oklahoma

You are invited to participate in research about the experiences of add-on K-12 ELD-certified urban teachers and ELD supervisors.

If you agree to participate, you will take part in a 45-minute interview that was audio and video-recorded.

You may experience these risks by participating in this research:

Audio or video recorded data collection: There is a risk of accidental data release if we collect your data using audio and video recordings. If this occurred, your identity and the statements you made could become known to people who are not on the research team. To minimize this risk, the researchers will transfer data to, and store your data on, a secure platform approved by the University's Information Technology Office.

Data collected online or by a device and transmitted electronically: You may be asked to participate in an individual interview over Zoom as part of this research. The organization hosting the data collection platform has its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential. There is a risk that the external organization, which is not part of the research team, may gain access to, or retain your data or your IP address which could be used to re-identify you. No assurance can be made as to their use of the data you provide for purposes other than this research.

Recordings were transcribed using an online service not hosted by OU with its own privacy and security policies for keeping your information confidential.

There are no benefits for participating in this research.

If you participate, you will receive this compensation: $10 gift card.

Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be confidential.

Can we include your name with any quotes? ___ Yes ___ No

We will not share your data or use it in future research.

I will be asking some questions to find out how you want me to report your ideas. You can refuse any that you do not like without any penalty.

Do you agree to being quoted directly, without the use of your name? ___ Yes ___ No

Do you agree to have your name reported with quoted material? ___Yes ___ No

Do you consent to audio recording? ___ Yes___ No

Do you consent to video recording? ___ Yes___ No

Your audio or video records may be used in University research reports unless you tell me not to do this.

May I contact you to gather additional data or recruit you for new research? __Yes _ No

Even if you choose to participate now, you may stop participating at any time and for any reason.

If you have questions about this research, please contact:

anabiederman@ou.edu, and my faculty advisor, Dr. Tim Ford, can be reached at tgford@ou.edu.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu with questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant, or if you don't want to talk to the researcher.

Do you agree to participate in this research? ___Yes ___ No

Finally, would you like a printed or electronic copy of the information we have just reviewed?

_____ (note response)

Date of interview: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Mailing or Email address for electronic consent copy: _____

Name of Researcher and Date of the Consent Process: _____

Signature of the Researcher: _____

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: May 27, 2025 **IRB#:** 18643

Principal Investigator: Ana C Biederman

Approval Date: 05/27/2025

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: How do add-on K-12 ELD-certified urban teachers describe the relevance of their training and certification? A qualitative study

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Aimee Franklin, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board