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Implementation of ELL Professional Development and Teaching Strategies: A School Improvement Plan

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Implementation of ELL Professional Development and Teaching Strategies: A School

Improvement Plan

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Capstone Project: A School Improvement Plan

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Abstract

Research findings show that educators who have learned more about ELL instructional strategies provide better instruction to ELL students and will improve their testing scores. Data has shown that many districts are seeing an influx in ELL students. Past studies have also documented that vocabulary development and literacy strategies are key components to guide ELL students to a better education. With research findings in mind, a school improvement plan was created to add professional development opportunities to benefit ELL student achievement. This plan implements a professional development opportunity focused on ELL instructional strategies to assist educators in providing improved instruction to ELL students.

Keywords: instructional strategies, ELL, ELL students, professional development, teaching strategies

Table of Contents

Abstract.....2

Implementation of ELL Professional Development and Teaching Strategies: A School Improvement Plan.....4

Literature Review.....6

School Profile.....13

 Student Performance.....13

 Student and Community Characteristics.....14

 School Characteristics.....14

 Parent Involvement.....15

 School Mission, Goals, Motto.....15

 Current Student Learning Goals.....15

 Reflect on Teacher Work, Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, Assessment Practices, and Professional Development.....16

Needs Assessment.....17

Data Analysis.....18

Action Plan.....20

 Purposed Improvement Plan.....20

 Impact on Teaching and/or Learning.....21

 Alignment to Research.....21

 Summary.....22

Implementation of School Improvement Plan.....22

 Intro.....22

 Timeline.....23

 Role Clarifications and Assignments.....23

 Progress Monitoring.....24

 Limitations.....24

Conclusion.....25

References.....27

Implementation of ELL Professional Development and Teaching Strategies: A School Improvement Plan

The number of students that are continually developing English language skills across America are a growing subpopulation (Brouillette et al., 2015). Nationwide, ELL populations in public schools have raised by 51% in the years 1997 to 1998 and 2008 to 2009 (Brouillette et al., 2015). Because many new languages are spoken across America, teachers and school districts are seeing a need to change their way of educating in order to meet the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs). Many educators have little to no training in teaching ELL students (Brouillette et al., 2015, p. 287). 1 in 9 students across the United States are an English Language Learner (Brouillette et al., 2015). The issue is that many teachers across America are ill-equipped to educate ELL students appropriately.

To raise the success of ELL student achievement, teacher quality needs to be improved through the use of professional development and teacher strategies. Teacher quality is a large determinant of student success (Brouillette et al., 2015). The purpose of this school improvement plan is to expand teacher knowledge on how to teach ELL students. Increasing teacher expertise will guide students to higher achievement scores and an overall growth in ELL student participation. Through the school improvement plan, educators will discuss and practice teaching strategies to increase ELL student achievement and partake in professional development focused on instructing ELL students.

Resources for this school improvement plan were collected from the DeWitt Library online through Northwestern College. To be considered for inclusion, the majority of studies were current within the last 10 years and published in a peer-reviewed journal. Articles that were

encompassed in the plan include topics on ELL strategies in action, innovative professional development opportunities for educators pertaining to English learners, and creating an inclusive environment for ELL students. 20 sources were collected through the database that aligned with the study. The articles were used to help understand the rising statistics in the ELL population along with ways that educators and school districts can improve instruction to meet the needs of English learners.

The influx of ELL students has caused a shift in the way educators need to teach, influencing educators to participate in professional development opportunities and implementing instructional strategies that meet the needs of students. The major research findings prove that educators need tools to effectively teach ELL students. Educators should avoid teaching strategies that are implemented just because that is how they were taught (Lumbrears et al., 2019). Instead, educators should allow ELL students to express themselves through conversations in their first language so they, in turn, feel confident to build their second language (Islam & Park, 2015). To allow English learners a voice, educators often integrate instructional strategies like classroom meetings, think-pair-share, a randomized calling system, and prompts to initiate conversation (William, 2013). Open ended questions are asked to provoke answers from all students. English learners need extra time to process questions as translating each question and formulating an answer in a different language is hard (Guler, 2013). In addition to allowing students extra time, educators should also ensure that they are providing students with ample opportunities to display their knowledge. One data point or test does not justify an ELL student's grade, especially if the student had to translate majority of the test (Guler, 2013). Because translation is a large part in learning the English language, emphasis must be put on vocabulary

development. Word walls and notes should be used instead of simple word definitions (Roberts & Truxaw, 2013).

Professional development is influential for educators to learn these new strategies. Academically, ELLs will show improvement on learning outcomes if the nation puts an emphasis on preparation of K-12 teachers through professional development (Li & Peters, 2020). Multiple studies that required students to take a pretest and posttest after educators took professional development showed increased student scores on the posttest. According to Li and Peters' (2020) study, students who had teachers that participated in a professional development program increased their scores on the LEARNS assessment; "On the LEARNS assessment, students showed a 29.6% increase in language skills, 37.2% increase in listening skills, 28.3% increase in reading skills, and their writing skills increased by 23.5%" (Li & Peters, 2020, p. 1503). Reflection after professional development is a key component to making a transformation in educating ELL students. Educators must reflect on their practice to make improvements in the future.

The literature review is structured by topic and will focus on the need for improvements in ELL education, instructional strategies to educate ELLs, and professional development opportunities for educators to improve their practice.

Review of the Literature

Need for Improvement in ELL Education

Districts have seen a recurring rise in the amount of English Language Learners, demonstrating the need to provide better programs to support these students (August & Shanahan, 2006 as cited in Islam et al., 2015). In the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, the Desert

Rose Middle School (DRMS) has also seen an incredible rise in ELL numbers, causing teachers to believe that the influx is creating unqualified students for sixth grade (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2019). DRMS has failed to meet their Annual Reporting Progress for the last two years, 2012 and 2013, placing them on a grant failure list for failure to achieve passing scores (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2019). Educators are left wondering how they are possibly going to provide enough assistance for these students when the district has 48.3% of students learning English and their scores are dropping (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2019). Several studies address the problem of needing to improve ELL programs in schools. Islam et al. (2015) agrees that educators are continually facing difficult challenges because their undergraduate degrees do not teach them about strategies for English learners. To change this outcome, undergraduate programs need to allow students the opportunity to work with diverse learners to prepare them for their future occupation (Islam et al., 2015). A participant in Islam et al.'s (2015) study explained that as an educator she could not figure out why she was unable reach a student to improve their learning, even after providing accommodations and modifications. The specific student was not only an ELL, but they were also in special education. After long hours of trying to meet the needs of the student, the educator found that language was the barrier, not the student's learning disability. Although the participant used tools and strategies she had learned in the past, they were not the correct accommodations to aid an ELL student. If teachers are going to help diverse students succeed, more knowledge must be acquired about educating ELL students.

Similar findings were noted by McGee et al. (2015) as she references the increasing number of ELL students in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The article included a projection by the U.S. Department of Education from 2002 that noted by 2022, one third of all public-school students would be ELLs (McGee et al., 2015).

In addition to the rising numbers, the majority of ELL students go to school in lower socioeconomic areas, which leads to issues with teaching and learning (McGee et al., 2015). Due to the rising numbers, districts are seeing test scores lower because they are not able to provide the appropriate instruction. Schools are overwhelmed by the differing profiles of their students, causing teachers to feel uneasy about how to meet the needs of the ethnic and language barriers (McGee et al., 2015). According to McGee's (2015) article, improvement in ELL supports is necessary in many parts of the world. Furthermore, advancement in ELL education must take place for districts to meet the needs of all students.

Although the ethnic background of students is changing in the classroom, the ethnicity of educators has remained constant. Li and Peters (2020) recall that the National Center for Educational Statistics Data proves that in 1999 to 2000 and 2007 to 2008, the ethnic background of teachers did not change (Li & Peters, 2020; NCES, 2012). With the growing population of ELL students and the lack of diversity in educators, districts continue to prove that change needs to take place in the preparedness of teachers. If more teachers were from the same ethnic backgrounds as the students, language barriers could be broken using a second language. Because using a second language is impossible if ethnicities of teachers are not changing, Li and Peters (2020) had teachers fill out a survey to identify if they were able to sufficiently meet the needs of the students. According to the survey taken in 3 schools, over 91.7% of teachers did not receive explicit second language instruction from their institution, and over 92.1% of teachers said they would participate in professional development regarding ELL training (Li & Peters, 2020). In this example, teachers notice that they are unprepared for the students they are trying to teach. Gomez and Madda (2005) mention a similar scenario that happened to an educator. The educator, Darlene, was a native English speaker and used the vocabulary word 'shaft' in a

sentence. When the students used the word 'shaft', they thought it meant to be cheated out of something. Darlene was not prepared to think like the minds of her ELL students. They were accustomed to the slang term. Darlene was aware that her lesson was now going to take much longer because she felt ill-equipped to teach her current students. She had even mentioned that she felt she was "winging it" (Gomez & Madda, 2005, p. 42). Teachers are willing to do the work to supply their students with the tools to succeed, but they need to be provided with the appropriate resources and knowledge.

Instructional Strategies for ELLs

Specific instructional strategies used by teachers can enhance curriculum effectiveness and increase the performance outcome of ELL student achievement. ELL students should be provided with strategies tailored to their needs. According to Banse et al. (2016), *Everyday Counts* math curriculum is a beneficial math instruction for ELL students, due to the strategies encompassed in the program. The researchers tested if the teachers using the program incorporated five ELL instructional strategies including: Ask open-ended questions, follow open-ended questions with close ended questions, scaffold students' responses by repeating, extending, and rephrasing, model mathematical vocabulary in context, and strive to include ELLs in mathematical discourse each day. Two classrooms were observed in Banse et al.'s study to identify ELL strategies, and both teachers in different grades were delivering ELL students with appropriate discussion opportunities, open ended questions, multiple option questions, and educators were able to elaborate on student answers (Banse et al., 2016). Each of these strategies constructs an environment to support ELL students. Goldsmith (2013) also believes that class discussions and open-ended questions enhance ELL students' learning opportunities through communication. Many curriculums can be used in educational classrooms if the instructional

strategies used are appropriate. The researchers claimed that although the curriculum is not perfect due to the repetition in questioning, the instructional strategies used by the teachers ensure that the ELL students are receiving suitable instruction.

Implementing exclusive instructional strategies will make students feel comfortable and boost their confidence. Learning about students' literacy background and giving additional wait time are beneficial instructional strategies, according to Guler (2013). Identifying the literacy background of students is very influential as it can share preferences about each student. In the article, the researcher found that an eighth-grade student preferred graphic novels because she was more comfortable with the amount of English in them (Guler, 2013). Graphic novels motivated the student to read, compared to that of a traditional book. Likewise, Guler (2013) shares that ELL students will naturally need more time to break down and identify the given directions or questions. Providing extra time will help ELL students succeed and feel confident in their education. Similarly, Goldsmith (2013) recommends that educators call on students in a randomized fashion to allow all students the opportunity to speak, while also knowing that they do not need to answer. Furthermore, educators must remember that ELL children spend more time interpreting the question prior to answering (Guler, 2013). Students must be provided with the space needed to both feel confident when speaking, yet allotted time if they are not ready to share their thoughts.

Vocabulary development for ELL students is best formed when educators use tools to assist their language development. Roberts and Truxsaw (2013) advocate for teachers to use word walls and graphic organizers to support the language development of students. Word walls display the necessary vocabulary terms for students to view for a particular unit (Roberts & Truxsaw, 2013). Word walls assist ELL students by providing visual aids while also guiding the

students to recall vocabulary. Vocabulary graphic organizers arrange students' thoughts, access their prior knowledge, and provide students the opportunity to learn how to express their ideas about vocabulary in different ways (Roberts & Truxsaw, 2013). Graphic organizers are influential because they aid students in participating in different learning styles to meet their needs. Graphic organizers guide students to draw pictures, sentences, and find additional words that relate to vocabulary terms. ELL students require supplementary instructional strategies to develop their language and process new terms.

Professional Development Opportunities

Due to the unique needs of ELL students, professional development in art integration can provide sufficient instructional techniques to boost ELL students socially, emotionally, and academically. In a survey of 3 million public school teachers, less than 13% of teachers reported participating in 8 or more hours of professional development to teach ELLs (Brouillette et al., 2013). However, 41% of these teachers recorded that they were teaching ELLs in their classroom (Brouillette et al., 2013). In order to change these statistics, Brouillette et al. (2013) refers educators to try to enrich their ELL instruction through arts integration at the K-2 level. The program was designed for 15 schools to incorporate 27 weekly lessons taught in the educator's classroom by a teaching artist (Brouillette et al., 2013). The goal of the professional development was to use arts-based teaching techniques to engage ELLs to build up their academic and social-emotional skills. Students were given the opportunity to practice performing arts, boost their English language development, and encourage interpersonal interactions. Teachers stated that they saw an improvement in the language development of ELL students. Along with increased ELL student achievement, deeper appreciation was found for art in the classroom, due to the professional development opportunity for educators.

The impact of professional development on ELL students' academic performance is proven beneficial by researchers. According to Babinski et al. (2018), educators used more instructional strategies and increased student literacy outcomes with professional development focused on ELL education. Two subtests showed student academic improvement in the categories of story recall and verbal analogies after educators participated in professional development (Babinski et al., 2018). The professional development topics studied by educators aligned with the subtests that showed student improvement (Babinski et al., 2018). Capitelli et al. (2016) similarly agrees with the previous findings. Professional development is most beneficial when educators apply their knowledge and reflect upon what they have learned (Capitelli et al., 2016). Capitelli et al. (2016) highlights the new NGSS science standards and their correspondence to literacy, since the standards consist of many language development skills that evidence shows affects ELL students tremendously. As noted by the case study, educators must participate in professional development to maintain improved academic performance in ELL students with the changing standards and curriculum. Professional development will continue to increase student achievement if educators apply their expertise and reflect upon their newly learned knowledge.

Another way professional development can boost ELLs' achievement is through educators learning a second language. Jiménez et al. (2015) established that educators should be taking additional courses in a second language to help eliminate the language barrier between the teacher and ELL students. Educators who take courses in a second language can assist students in translating texts, which in turn will boost the reading comprehension of ELLs. The article reviewed how a middle school teacher translated a poem with an ELL student in Spanish (Jiménez et al., 2015). The instructional skill of translation taught students to make meaning of

what they were reading instead of simply translating each word. Teachers who can speak in a second language understand the learning style of an ELL more and can assist students' reading achievement, due to their professional development knowledge.

School Profile

Student Performance

In 2019, grades 5-8 at Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted averaged 59% percent proficient on the MCA test. To compare, our SPED students in grades 5-8 were on average 21% proficient in 2019 (K. Westling, personal communication, January 15, 2022). This data was retrieved from the district data specialist, and the information is given to the board of educators.

In reading, HLWW low SES students were on average scoring about ten percent lower than students who were not receiving financial assistance. In 2019, 42% of HLWW students were proficient in math; however, students of low SES were 30.1% proficient (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Likewise, in 2019, 52.1% of HLWW students were proficient in reading, yet only 42.6% of students of low SES were proficient in reading (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The *Minnesota Report Card* states in 2019 that 47.7% of students with two or more races were proficient in math. When comparing two or more races to the whole population, data shows the whole population of students scored 54.9% proficiency in math (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Reading proficiency scores were closer when comparing the two groups. In 2019, 55.2% percent of students of two or more races were proficient in reading, and 54.9% of students were proficient in reading for the whole population. Thus, students of two races ranked a bit higher than the whole population. In 2019, Hispanics were 37.8% proficient in reading and 31.3% proficient in math. Hispanics scored significantly below students of two races and the whole population at HLWW. According to *English Learners*

in Minnesota 2020-21 report, English learners who move into a high school in the state of Minnesota are more likely to drop out in comparison to all students. The data shows 5.8% of English learners will drop out before graduation, while the average population has a dropout rate of 3.5% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2021, p. 20).

Student & Community Characteristics

In the HLWW district, our students are 89.6% white, 5.9% Hispanic or Latino, 3.2% two or more races, .9% Black or African American, .2% Asian, and .2% American Indian (Minnesota Department of Education, 2022). In total, the district enrolls 1,264 students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2022). 1.3% of our students are English Learners, 15.5% participate in special education, and 19.6% of students receive free/reduced-price meals (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The district does not have any homeless students. 96.6% of students graduated last year (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

The community is made up of 3 towns including approximately 8,600 students and is about 107 square miles (Census Reporter, 2020). 96.1% of the community is white and about 2.02% of the population is Hispanic or Latino (Cedar Lake Ventures, Inc., 2018). The average income is around 33,416 dollars, and the median household income is 69,631 dollars (Census Reporter, 2020).

School Characteristics

The district employs approximately 80 teachers; the student to teacher ratio is 16 to 1 (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020e). The district has two elementary buildings, one in Winsted and one in Waverly, encompassing students in grades K-4 (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020e). In addition, the middle school and high school are combined in Howard Lake,

including students in grades 5-12 (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020e). Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted is found within a farming, rural community.

Parent Involvement

Parents at HLWW can be involved through volunteer opportunities at the school, chaperoning field trips, or partaking in the Parent-Teacher Association (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020c). Depending on the building, parent involvement varies. At Winsted Elementary, each section has about three or four parent volunteers. However, at Waverly Elementary, parents are known to be more involved with the larger class sizes.

School Mission, Goals, Motto

Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted's mission statement is to prepare students for life by engaging them in meaningful learning experiences (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020b). The goal areas of the district include literacy, 21st century technology, social emotional learning, choice readiness, and service to the school and community (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020b). The district believes that the students are learners, accountable, kind, empowered, and resilient (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020b). HLWW's motto is excellence through education (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020b).

Current Student Learning Goals

The school wide goal for HLWW is to increase overall reading MCA scores from 52% to 60% proficient on the 2023 Reading MCA by May 30, 2023 (K. Westling, personal communication, January 15, 2022). The elementary building goals are to have 72% of students in grades 2-4 score in the 40th percentile or higher on the STAR reading test by May of 2023 (K. Westling, personal communication, January 15, 2022).

Reflect on Teacher Work, Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, Assessment Practices, and Professional Development

All teachers in the district participate in schoolwide professional development that takes place onsite for state licensure requirements (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020f). In addition, educators are a part of many committees including a standards based grading committee, curriculum committees, PLC team, and district wide team meetings. Teachers can choose to be a part of the district leadership team, the school building leadership team, or become a committee leader. Educators can participate in any professional development opportunities that they choose, in addition to the required onsite course trainings (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020f).

The HLWW district provides one, two-hour late start a month for students, where educators receive time to focus on identifying the priority standards for each subject. Teachers meet with their grade level teams to highlight and discuss the standards and how to cover them. The elementary reading curriculum is Benchmark Advance (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020a). HLWW uses Savvas for both math and social studies (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020a). Mystery Science follows the NGSS science standards and is taught within the district (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020a).

The educators in the district are observed and assessed based on the Marzano Framework (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020f). The Marzano Framework poses requirements for educators to use within their teaching each day. Because of the framework, it is pertinent that teachers have their learning targets and schedule posted, provide wait time for questioning, group students in numerous ways, incorporate practice strategies, integrate new topics, and call on all students to participate. Supplementary instructional strategies that are commonly used by

HLWW teachers include providing feedback for students, celebrating student progress, class discussions, modeling, and graphic organizers. Visual aids are often used to remind students the focus of instructional topics.

Assessment in the district includes fluency progress monitoring three times a year. Students take a reading and math curriculum pretest and posttest at the beginning and end of the year. Grades 2-4 are assessed using the STAR assessment three times a year (Westling, 2022). Grades 3-12 participate in the statewide MCA test in the spring each year (Westling, 2022).

Needs Assessment

Based on the school profile, school improvement is needed in the area of professional development due to the Hispanic population's success rate on the MCA (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). In 2019, students in grades 5-8 averaged about 59% proficiency on the MCA test whereas the Hispanic population was 37.8% proficient in reading and 31.3% proficient in math (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Although the district provides professional development opportunities, they are tailored to the required topics listed on the license renewal form. Educators may take additional professional development, but there is no guarantee that it will be paid for by the district. Thus, educators must put their own time and money into educational opportunities that pertain to their specific class and school. Because of this, educators in the district need to be provided with professional development to support ELL students.

The school profile shares that the second highest racial ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino, and the population has been on the rise (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Hispanic/Latino is also the second highest racial ethnicity in the three towns that make up Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted (Cedar Lake Ventures, Inc., 2018). Though the population is

rising, the district teachers are not equipped with the proper training to support these students.

The district currently has a part-time ELL teacher that is shared between the three schools. The district financially cannot provide more staff licensed in English as a second language.

Professional development in English as a second language would equip teachers with the proper knowledge and also provide students with the necessary instruction to meet their needs.

Professional development would allow educators to learn more about different instructional strategies and tools to teach ELLs.

Data Analysis

The current data that supports the area of need is the district's ACCESS testing scores.

ACCESS testing is language assessment for ELL students. The assessment covers four subject areas including comprehension, literacy, oral, and listening. There is an overall composite score that combines all test scores and weighs them as follows: reading has a weight of 35%, writing is 35%, listening is 15%, and speaking is 15% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The test is broken into six levels. The sixth level is the highest scoring level, and one is the lowest. In the Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted School District, 54.5% percent of ELL students are in level three for the overall score (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). 27.3% of students are scoring at level four, and 18.2% of students are scoring at level two for their overall score (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). No students at HLWW scored in level one, five, or six for their overall score (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). According to *Minnesota Report Card*, a "student is considered proficient if their composite proficiency level is 4.5 and their proficiency levels for at least three of the four domains are 3.5 or higher" (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

The ACCESS comprehension scores show that 9.1% of students are level one, 18.2% of students are level two, 9.1% of students are level three, 27.3% of students are level four, 9.1% of students are level five, and 27.3% of students are level six (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Literacy scores have 18.2% of students at level two, 63.6% of students at level three, and 18.2% of students at level four (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Orally, 18.2% of students are at level two, 9.1% of students are at level three, 54.5% of students are at level four, and 18.2% of students are at level five (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Scores are not released for the speaking category.

The data displays that the district's ELL students are most proficient in comprehension. Comprehension is composed of reading and listening scores. It is the only category listed that has students ranked at a level six. The second highest category ranking would be oral because there are no students ranked at a level one, however there are no students at a level six (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). All students are found between levels two through five, and the majority are ranked at a level four, which is above the proficiency standard for that category (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The oral test is composed of speaking and listening topics. The largest weakness is in literacy. The literacy test is composed of both reading and writing scores, which tells the district that students are needing more guidance and instruction in both areas. The ACCESS data is used to demonstrate ELL students' ability to produce and understand the English language.

In addition to the ACCESS test, the recorded academic accountability tests show that 0% of our English learning students were proficient in math. 20% of English learners partially met the math standard and 80% did not meet the math standard (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). This tells HLWW that the students are not only low in literacy, but math is also showing

low achievement levels. Not all Hispanic/Latino students are English learners; however, when looking at their achievement levels, only 15.3% of Hispanic students are meeting the math standard while 3% are exceeding the standard (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Thus, the remainder of the population is below the math proficiency score. Although they may not all be ELL students, some of these learners may need more guidance in the classroom and visual cues to assist their education. In reading, 10% of ELL students exceeded on the recorded academic accountability tests, 20% partially met the reading standard, and 70% did not meet the reading standard (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Likewise, the reading scores from all recorded state or national tests show that ELL students are not making the necessary progress.

Data from ELL student attendance would be a helpful indicator to determine if the testing data is reflective of students who are in school often and taught by educators on a daily basis.

Action Plan

Proposed Improvement Plan

To change the outcome of ELL student scores on testing, educators will need to be provided the appropriate professional development opportunities and integrate new instructional strategies. All educators should participate in a professional development course based on ELL instructional strategies. Following the professional development, educators will discuss their learned practices in PLC meetings. Discussions will include what they learned from the professional development, how teachers integrated the learned material, outcomes of the newly included strategies, and how to continue to improve instruction. In addition, educators will converse about data and the impact that the professional development had on both the teaching process and students' learning processes.

Impact on Teaching and/or Learning

The proposed plan will impact teachers because they will all receive new knowledge through the process. The knowledge will be not only discussed but also implemented into the classroom. There will be continual follow-ups on teaching practices and changes will take place as educators see fit. Educators will grow in their teaching practice and meet the needs of more students through the professional development opportunity.

Likewise, students will be provided with new instructional strategies that will supply them with a different perspective. When students do not understand material the first time it is taught or in a specific manner, these instructional strategies may be what they were missing during the previous instruction. These instructional strategies are specifically tailored to the students' learning needs.

Alignment to Research

Professional development can profoundly increase student academic performance as long as educators apply their knowledge and reflect upon learned topics (Capitelli et al., 2016). Similarly, Babinski et al. (2018) completed a study that found ELL students' literacy increased due to educators using more instructional strategies and participating in professional development that focused on ELL education. ELL student improvement was shown on tests in multiple categories that pertained to the instruction that educators received through professional development (Babinski et al., 2018).

Researchers also support improved ELL student outcomes using new instructional strategies. As teachers learn more about their students, they will find the preferred ways that students learn (Guler, 2013). By finding students' preferred ways of learning, educators can meet

the needs of their students and boost student confidence (Guler, 2013). Confidence in learning motivates students to further their knowledge, thus increasing their scores (Guler, 2013).

Goldsmith (2013) and Guler (2013) both believe that an applicable ELL instructional strategy that needs implementation is providing ELL students with more wait time. Time provides ELL students with more confidence in their answer, while also giving them the necessary time to translate any information they did not understand immediately (Goldsmith, 2013; Guler, 2013).

Language development is a large part in ELL student achievement. Instructional strategies that focus on ELL language development include utilizing word walls, graphic organizers, and visual aids (Roberts & Truxsaw, 2013). These strategies allow students to recall vocabulary easier by reminding students of past words and pushing them to use vocabulary in different ways (Roberts & Truxsaw, 2013).

Summary

Professional development will provide educators with the necessary tools to build knowledge for teaching ELLs. Most importantly, educators need to be examining their updated instruction and its impact on student learning. Instructional change must take place to further the education of ELL students.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan

Intro

Implementing professional development opportunities that focus on instructional strategies tailored to ELL students for all staff is feasible and necessary for student improvement on state testing (Babinski et al., 2018). The district has a team in place to initiate new professional development opportunities required by staff. The outcome of this project is very

dependent upon the district's budget and opinion on the topic. Overall, the achievement of this project could take a year or less.

Timeline

The implementation of this project will take approximately six months to determine the appropriate courses and instructional strategies that the educators in the district will learn. The professional development team will add ELL course implementation to their agenda and budget to determine the feasible dates for the staff during this six-month period. The staff involved in this project are provided six months because they have other ongoing duties during this time. In addition, the staff will need to research the best methods to provide the appropriate staff with the necessary instruction. The goal is to have educators take an ELL instructional strategies course within one year of beginning the improvement plan. Not all staff will be required to take the same course, due to their differing grades and needs.

Once staff have participated in the professional development opportunity, educators will be provided two months to document ways that they have implemented new strategies from the training course. After the provided two months, the staff will be expected to share their experiences of applying the ELL instructional strategies (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2017).

Role Clarifications and Assignments

The district leadership team (DLT) oversees professional development opportunities. The team is led by the middle school principal who meets with other administration to determine budgets and state funding. This team includes teachers from elementary, middle school, and high school. The DLT will oversee deciding the possible ELL instructional strategy professional development for the school. The data specialist will help collect data to prove the need for

professional development in addition to updating the staff and admin about improvements after implementation has occurred. Staff must participate in the professional development fully and commit to using their knowledge in the classroom according to their job description requirements (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2017).

Progress Monitoring

The progress monitoring of this action research plan will take place during PLC meetings. PLC teams meet twice a month where many topics are discussed, including data. Because data is a key component of a PLC, it is a great time for educators to review the improvements made in their practice and share the impact on student achievement (HLWW Q-Comp, n.d.). During these meetings, educators will be asked to share how they implemented new practices. Teachers will learn about new ways to incorporate ELL instructional strategies from their peers. Not only will educators share about their successes, but their failures will also be discussed. After sharing their failures, educators will create a plan to move forward and make changes to their instruction based on peer advice and the learned material.

At each meeting, one of the team members takes notes on the agenda topics. The principal is notified of PLC discussions that take place to hold each team accountable (HLWW Q-Comp, n.d.). For all staff to share ideas together, part of an in-service session will be used to follow up on the topic. Each PLC team can share out what they have learned through conversations, data, training, and their peers. The data specialist in our district will aid in monitoring the data on ELL improvements and share out the findings via email for PLC leaders to share.

Limitations

The limitations to this improvement plan include the budget and justification for taking the course (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020d). Within school districts, budgets always play a role. If the district does not feel that the implementation of ELL instructional strategies is important, the district will not use funds for this plan. The district is continually having educators take courses for professional development based on the need for renewal credits. However, the board may respond differently if they feel the supplementary professional development is not necessary, as it does not pertain to the required renewal credits for licensure. The project will need to be presented to the board of educators effectively with data to support the plan (Howard Lake Waverly-Winsted, 2020d). In addition, the professional development opportunities must be applicable to the circumstances to change the outcome of ELL students' scores in the future.

Another limitation could be participation of staff. Staff may feel as if taking the professional development course is a burden. If educators are not willing to take the course and use the material, the opportunity will not be beneficial or purposeful.

Conclusion

Because of the rise in students learning English in school districts, the research completed shared the importance of educators receiving more instruction on the topic of teaching these students. The improvement plan is necessary for the district to seek improvement in ELL testing scores and assist educators in helping their students succeed.

Literature about the topic presented three distinct themes including the need for better ELL instruction, ELL instructional strategies, and professional development opportunities for educators to improve their practice. Educators have faced many challenges in the past several years and the influx in ELLs is one of them. Near the United States-Mexico border in Texas,

educators have found that many students are unprepared for the next grade level with the rise in English language learners (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2019). Research-based instructional strategies have been proven to aid ELLs. ELLs must be provided with extra time, open ended questions, discussion opportunities, repetitive questioning, vocabulary support, and choice. Lastly, professional development can provide teachers with the tools necessary to succeed with the changing populations in schools. Surveys have shown that many educators have received minimal training on ELL instructional techniques (Brouillette et al., 2013).

The findings in the research prove that changes need to be made to meet the needs of ELL students. Providing educators with the proper tools, strategies, and techniques through professional development will assist teachers in meeting student needs. If educators in the district are given training on ELL techniques, conversations between colleagues will occur, innovative teaching practice will be used, and students are more likely to succeed. Educators will feel more supported through the ever-changing profession of teaching with the addition of professional development on ELL instructional strategies.

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