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Creating Inclusive Differentiated Classrooms for English Language Learners

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Creating Inclusive Differentiated Classrooms for English Language Learners

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DEDICATION

To my amazing family; Mark, James, and Nicole.

To my students who inspire me every day to be the best that I can be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To my family, I cannot thank you enough for your encouragement and support through this journey. I am so grateful for the compassion of my husband, Mark, who has been at the forefront of this entire process with me. He has shown great patience and understanding in the work that needed to be done, and he never once complained about my absenteeism within our home. My children, James and Nicole, were always there to offer support and encouragement regarding tackling this huge challenge for their mother, a first-generation college student going back to college after twenty years to earn a master's degree in education. I cannot go without also acknowledging my mother, Marilyn, another of my biggest supporters who truly believes I can do anything I set my mind to. Their appreciation of my accomplishments is forever heartwarming. I understand that I am only able to do the things I can do with the support of my family, and I am eternally grateful for each of them.

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Abstract

There are many English language learner (ELL) students in United States schools. These students have varying needs and abilities, yet they legally and ethically have the right to an equal education. The purpose of this research was to find ways to best meet the needs of ELL students in inclusive classrooms. Research of fifteen studies related to this important topic have been analyzed and synthesized in order to better understand what schools and educators could do to meet the needs of ELL students. These studies included information on ELL family systems and mental health. The research continued with studies related to school reformation of ELL programs, explanations of the benefits of co-teaching, and methods of differentiating to best meet the needs of ELL students. It was found that schools need to implement more teacher education or professional development. This education included things like understanding demographics, cultures, mental health, co-teaching, and differentiation in language arts and math to best meet the needs of ELL students.

Keywords: differentiated/differentiation, English language learner (ELL), inclusive classrooms, mental health

Creating Inclusive Differentiated Classrooms for English Language Learners

Chapter One: Introduction

America was once called a melting pot because people from all over the world wanted to come to the United States in hopes of a better life. Immigrants left their homeland for reasons like economic issues, political issues, oppression, natural disaster, and war. Whatever the reason, America is now home to people from all over the world. Of the 50 million students in public schools in the United States, approximately 52% of them are from diverse backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Five million (10.2%) are English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). English language learners (ELL) are made up of immigrants, refugees, ethnocultural, and racialized groups (Hasson et al., 2012). With this number projected to increase in the coming years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), schools must prepare educators on how to best meet the needs of these students.

Understanding the diverse family systems of ELL students is the first step in creating inclusive classrooms. Educators need to know where students are coming from and the life experiences that they and their families have lived through. Generational trauma can be handed down through generations and affect learning experiences of any student, but especially ELL students. Having a good understanding of students' cultures and backgrounds is essential. It is also vital that educators understand the possible mental health needs of ELL students. Understanding the difficulties of living in a new country with limited language proficiency is crucial. Only when educators get a good understanding of cultures, backgrounds, and possible mental health needs, will implementing best teaching strategies for ELL students be effective.

There are many studies to help schools and educators to best support the learning of ELL students. Educating schools and educators on the how to inclusively teach ELL students is

necessary. Studies include general classroom teaching practices as well as specific strategies to use in language arts and math. Differentiating to meet the needs of these students must happen in today's classrooms to create inclusive settings in which all students can thrive.

Importance of the Topic

The U.S. Department of Education (2020) reported that the Office for Civil Rights found in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that there can be no discrimination in schools based on race, color, or national origin. The U.S. Department of Education (2020) report went on to explain that the Supreme Court reviewed this law in 1970 and added a memorandum called the "Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin," which clarifies that ELL students must receive equal educational opportunities. In 1985, there was a guidance document entitled, "The Office for Civil Rights' Title VI Language Minority Compliance Procedures" that gives schools the procedures to use to meet ELL students' needs. Then in 1991, more clarity was given to schools in a memorandum titled, "Policy Update on Schools' Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students with Limited-English Proficiency" (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). It is the law that schools provide ELLs an equal education, regardless of student's knowledge of the English language.

Not only is properly educating ELL students the law, but it is also the right thing to do ethically. Schools and educators must realize that the nation's five million ELL students will one day be adults. In order to be productive adults, they need to be treated with dignity and respect, and they deserve a proper education. Like all children, ELL students need to be nurtured in an inclusive environment that allows them to feel safe and grow socially and academically. It is the job of schools to educate educators on best practices to meet the needs of all students, including ELL students. The responsibility put on schools and educators is tremendous, but the work must

be done. Building background knowledge and differentiating instruction is just how this important work will be accomplished.

Differentiated instruction is the process educators in today's classrooms must use in order to meet the needs of all learners. Today's classrooms are inclusive, and that means that they include students with special needs at all ability levels. It is common for classrooms to include special education students, average students, ELL students, and even gifted students. Students in the same classroom come from all socioeconomic levels and have diverse life experiences. To properly meet the needs of these differing students, educators must differentiate their instruction.

Scope of Research

The research from this study includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies related to best meeting the needs of ELL students. Four themes emerged from this research. First, it is important that schools and educators understand the family systems of ELL students. In order to meet the needs of ELL students, educators must understand the culture and life experiences of these students. Second, educators should be familiar with potential mental health needs of ELL students in order to provide them with the needed supports. The third theme that emerged from the literature was reformation of ELL programs with an emphasis on implementing co-teaching, a proven method of effectively teaching ELL students. Finally, the last theme was methods of differentiation educators may use in language arts and math to best meet the need of ELL students. This research can help schools and educators understand the importance of educating the whole child and offer insights on methods of differentiation.

Research Question

In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, what are best practices elementary schools can use to create inclusive environments that best meet the needs of ELL

students? Elementary students come to school with varying needs and abilities. Educators are expected to effectively teach every student in today's diverse classrooms, and differentiated instruction is the method to meet the varying needs of all students. The proposed research question above directly connects to Concordia St. Paul's Differentiated Instruction Essential Question, "In light of what is known about differentiated instruction, how shall professional educators effectively teach every student?"

Definition of Terms

English language learners (ELLs) are students whose first language is not English. It is important to note that English proficiency within this group of students is at varying levels (Klvacek et al., 2018).

Immigrants/Refugees are people who have moved to a new country, adopting a new way of life (Osman et al., 2019). Refugees are specific in that they had to leave their country due to injustice and violence (Ellis et al., 2013).

Inclusion is a philosophy related to social justice where "all students should be valued for their unique abilities (i.e., language, etc.) and included as an essential part of a school community that is purposefully designed to accept and embrace diversity as a strength, not a weakness" (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011, p. 649).

Mental health refers to a person's psychological and emotional state of mind. People can suffer from mental health illnesses due to life experiences and chemical imbalances (Ellis et al., 2013).

Summary

It has been said that the United States is a melting pot, but that isn't entirely true today. Yes, America is very diverse, but this analogy has changed because America is now considered

more of a tossed salad in that there are a lot of ingredients with all our races/ethnic groups, but each of these groups should not be expected to melt and blend into the “normal American family.” Instead, our differences should be celebrated, and cultures should be able to be preserved and cherished like each ingredient in the salad. Learning about the background and needs of different cultures can make educators more intentional in their classrooms, creating inclusive environments where all students are understood, comfortable, and confident in their learning.

The literature review in chapter two will analyze studies on ELL family systems and common mental health illnesses found in ELL students. Chapter two will also explore studies related to inclusion and co-teaching and it will examine studies directly related to language arts and math to identify best practices to meet ELL students’ needs. Chapter three will include insights gained from the research, application of the research, and future recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

As mentioned in chapter one, there are five million ELL students in the United States and that number is projected to continue to increase. In order to appropriately educate these students in today’s inclusive classrooms, schools and educators need to first understand the family systems of these learners. Schools and educators also need to be aware of possible mental health issues these students may face due to their life experiences and the life experiences of their families. At that point, schools and educators can determine best practices to educate these students in inclusive settings. Differentiating instruction is necessary due to the varying needs and abilities of students, and co-teaching is a proven effective method of teaching in inclusive classrooms with ELL students (as well as students with other varying special needs).

Differentiation in core subjects like language arts and math is a must. This literature review holds information from studies related to each of these themes.

The first section of the literature review focuses on research associated to family systems of ELL students. It examines mixed-methods and qualitative research by Berge et al. (2018), Berge et al. (2020), Bowie et al. (2017), and Osman et al. (2019). The common theme found by this research is that most ELL student's and/or their families are struggling with their new life in the United States. They have been uprooted from their homelands and are trying to assimilate into a new country where they do not necessarily understand the language, customs, and laws. These families are doing all of this while holding onto their own culture, and the transition can cause a tremendous amount of strain on one's mental health.

The second section of the literature review examines the mental health of ELL students and how it affects their learning at school. Research by Ellis et al. (2013), Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) and Lambert et al. (2018) explores how schools can best identify and support students with mental health issues. Finally, it ends with focusing on the importance of schools and educators being culturally aware when seeking interventions and/or treatment services.

The third section of the literature review focuses on inclusion and co-teaching. A clear understanding of inclusion will be provided as well as a proper explanation of co-teaching and its benefits. Studies by Hang and Rabren (2009), Chitiyo and Brinda (2018), and Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) explore these topics. This research will be analyzed and synthesized to find how it relates to the learning of ELL students.

Lastly, the final section of the literature review explores tested practices that educators can use in the classroom to differentiate and meet the needs of ELL students in language arts and math. Studies by Xu (2015), Klvacek et al. (2018), Silverman et al. (2017), Saxe and Sussman

(2019), and Banse et al. (2017) will be reviewed and examined. The focus of this section is to identify methods teachers can use to better meet the needs of ELL students in math and reading.

ELL Family Systems

Why is it important for schools and educators to understand the demographics and family systems of their student population? Students come from many different types of families, homes, and cultures. ELL students' cultures and family systems differ from a traditional American nuclear family home. As stated in chapter one, ELL students are immigrants, refugees, ethnocultural, and racialized groups (Hansson et al., 2012). There is a reason that these families have come to America, and when schools and educators understand these reasons, they are better equipped to create inclusive classrooms and truly educate ELL students.

To begin, it is important to understand the sources behind ELL family systems. The family systems research includes two different papers written on the same mixed-method study and two qualitative studies. Each of these studies is peer reviewed and has happened within the last five years. This allows the research to be trustworthy and relevant. This section breaks down each piece of literature to aid in understanding the full research behind the findings before putting it all together with an analysis and synthesis of research. Then, the focus will move onto how this research affects schools and educators.

The first piece of literature was by Berge et al. (2020) and spoke of how stressful life events (SLEs) relate to children's well-being. SLEs are things like death, financial problems, divorce, health problems, trauma related to violence or sex, discrimination/racism, and legal problems. When one family member experiences an SLE, it influences other family members. It is important to note that SLEs are also cumulative, so these experiences have immediate and long-term influences. Research results showed that all racial/ethnic and immigrant/refugee

families were experiencing SLEs, which led to emotional and behavioral problems in children at home and at school. Some of those problems included things like depression, anxiety, eating disorders, low self-esteem, substance abuse, hyperactivity, and emotional issues. Research shows that these problems in childhood are likely to carry into adolescence and adulthood and may cause health issues. Examples of health issues are diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

Researchers found that all participants reported experiencing one to two SLEs within the last six months. African American and Native American families reported the highest number of SLEs overall. Somali children reported more emotional and behavioral issues, like conduct problems, emotional problems, hyperactivity, and peer problems. Somali children were at the highest risk for SLEs, and even though most groups did not show lower family functioning during these times, Somali families did experience lower family functioning. African American, Native American, and Somali families were highly impacted by SLEs.

The limitations of this mixed-methods study regarding SLEs was that there were confounding variables like citizenship and immigration status for some groups. The sample size was relatively small with only 150 participants (children aged 5-7 and their parents aged approximately 35 years old) with 25 being from each racial/ethnic group (African American, Hispanic, Hmong, Native American, Somali, and White families) from the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota area. Also, even though participants were paired with bilingual and bicultural staff, survey questions can be hard to translate. Methods used to collect data were observations, interviews, and surveys. Finally, the time frame for SLEs was within the last six months, but maybe going longer (12 months) would change the results.

The second source of this research was also by Berge et al. (2018) and speaks of the exact same study; however, the purpose of this research was to identify health concerns for racial/ethnic and immigrant/refugee groups to help the United States Department of Health and Human Services better serve these groups. The focus was to find the disparities among low-income African American, Native American, Hispanic, Hmong, Somali, and Whites in order to provide the needed resources. The study researched nutrition, weight status, sleep health, physical activity, health-related quality of life, social relationships, and education. Information was gathered through video recorded tasks, interviews, and surveys. Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020) had 1,200 objectives, but the ones mentioned above were the primary focus.

There were many findings from this research. Children from all groups were falling far below in the vegetable intake target and the calcium target. Approximately 32% of children were not meeting the sleep objectives, with African American, Hmong, and Hispanic at the lowest. They found that 14-33% of all children were not meeting the physical activity objectives. With the adult portion of the study, they found that 20-32% of homes were in the food insecure category. About 35% of adults were not meeting sleep objectives, and 22% of adults were not meeting the mental health target. Somali, Hmong, and African American parents fell far below the indicated targets in mental health. Hmong, Hispanic, and Somali parents were far below the target for education (graduating from high school). The overall findings were that most HP 2020 objectives were not being met in diverse groups. African American participants met only 5 of the 24 targets, and immigrants met less than two-thirds of the targets.

This research helped the United States Department of Health and Human Services identify needs in diverse populations, and interventions or programs could be designed for support and assistance. “These gaps are important to address, given past research showing that

unhealthy dietary and physical activity patterns developed in childhood contribute to obesity, unhealthy weight control behaviors and eating disorders, and increased risk of multiple chronic diseases in adulthood” (Berge et al., 2018, p. 465). Limitations of this mixed-methods research were that the statistics were unadjusted for some factors that may have played a part in the results. The sample size of 150 participants (children aged 5-7 and their parents aged approximately 35 years old) was also small and from one geographic location.

The first qualitative study was from Bowie et al. (2017), and its purpose was to understand the parenting experiences and challenges of first-generation Somali families. These immigrant/refugee participants included 20 Somali families in the Seattle, Washington, area. Interviews were conducted in family homes and a trusted member of the Somali community did the interviews in their native language so that families could understand and would feel comfortable with what was being asked of them.

Important background information from this study was that Somali refugees are the largest group of refugees in the world due to their lack of government since 1991. Somalia is a place of war and famine. There are somewhere between 80,000-150,000 Somalis who have resettled in the United States. They came to the United States for opportunities and the hope of a better life. However, there are many challenges that come along with them such as low economic status, language barrier, unemployment, etc. Somali families are also large (each family in this study had 6-12 children) and multigenerational. Traditionally, in Africa, Somali families and the community all help raise children, which is very different from the Western nuclear family structure. Parenting in the United States is very different than what they grew up with, so Somali parents find parenting in the United States, with the lack of community support, very difficult.

There are several issues that make parenting in the United States so difficult for Somali families. The first is different social structure and cultural norms. Women being able to work outside of the home is new to them, and this can cause a shift in power, which can cause stress and family conflict. Children in the United States also have more freedom, and this freedom can cause a loss of respect for parents when children talk back and challenge parents. In school, children are taught that their parents cannot hit them and that they may call Child Protective Services if they do. To Somali families, this takes away parental authority and promotes disrespect. Also, children tend to acculturate faster than their parents (through school and media), so children are stuck between their old ways and their new ways of life. Children also tend pick up the new language more quickly, which can create a role reversal in the family structure. The concern comes from children having too much power and not being able to understand the consequences of their actions.

Somali families value their children's education (teachers are revered more than judges and policemen in their culture), but Somali parents are not equipped to meet Western expectations that parents help children with homework. Many of these parents do not speak English, and they have very little education themselves. These parents can have a feeling of being inadequate and misunderstood by teachers. They are grateful for the good education in the United States but struggle to find ways to support their children in school.

One of the biggest fears presented by all participants in this study was the fear of losing a child in the United States. Somali families fear that their children will be taken by the government or that their children will fall victim to drugs and gangs in the United States. They hope that by focusing on their Muslim religion they can help guide their children away from negative temptations in the United States.

Limitations of this study were that data was taken from a single geographic area. Also, the participants were only in the United States for five years or less. Finally, there is now an antirefugee sentiment in Western countries which adds more challenges to this demographic.

The final study in this portion of research was a qualitative study by Osman et al. (2019). The purpose of this study was to see if parenting programs for immigrant parents were beneficial and allowed parents to feel more competent parenting in America. The study included 50 immigrant participants in Sweden, and the majority were from Somalia. Twelve parenting programs were offered. Participants were encouraged but not required to attend all the programs. Each of the programs was delivered by two Somali instructors who were well-trained in the content. After the programs, participants were interviewed to find how beneficial the tailored program was.

Results were favorable. “A light has been shed was a metaphor used by the parents to describe the knowledge they acquired on their legal rights and those of their children in the new country, on the work of child welfare services and on the parent-child relationship” (Osman et al., 2019, p. 1485). Participants felt they had a clearer understanding of how things work in the United States, and they had reduced concerns and found clarity in rumored misconceptions. They found that their change in parenting changed the behavior of their children for the better, and everyone involved felt less stress. Children had far less behavior issues at home and at school.

Limitations of this study were that the participants may have unconsciously answered to please the researchers. Also, the author who conducted the interviews had the same background as the participants and this could have caused some biases. They do not know if the positive experiences the participants had were also felt by the children.

There is a clear message that can be found within this literature on ELL family systems. Many diverse families in the United States are struggling (Berge et al., 2018; Berge et al., 2020; Bowie et al., 2017; Osman et al., 2019). This is especially true in refugee families, like those found from the Somali population (Berge et al., 2018; Berge et al., 2020; Bowie et al., 2017; Osman et al., 2019). Berge et al. (2018) spoke of the Healthy People 2020 objectives and found that the immigrant population met less than two thirds of the objectives. This unhealthy lifestyle can lead to physical and mental instability in adults and children (Berge et al., 2018). Berge et al. (2020) also found that diverse families were struggling due to stressful life events as well. Children from this group experienced emotional and behavioral problems stemming from these stressful life events (Berge et al., 2020).

The research from this literature organically flows into Bowie et al. (2017) where it is explained how difficult parenting in a new and different country can be. Somali families come to the United States for its opportunities, but family systems in America are very different from their homeland (Bowie et al., 2017). Family systems, parenting styles and roles, and laws surrounding these systems are very different from what first-generation Somali immigrants grew up with in their homeland (Bowie et al., 2017). This experience warrants several different stressful life events on its own (Berge et al., 2020). Added to it, this population is also trying to hold on to its religion and culture to ensure their children are safe and families stay together (Bowie et al., 2017).

All literature in this section was aimed at finding interventions to help diverse groups (Berge et al., 2018; Berge et al., 2020; Bowie et al., 2017; Osman et al., 2019). Osman et al. (2019) tested the impact of offering parenting programs to immigrant families. This programming allowed participants to learn about family systems in the United States. The

programming also allowed parents to realize their children's social and emotional needs. With the programming, Somali parents felt more confident and prepared to parent in the United States. Supporting the needs of diverse family systems with interventions like this one will help them to live happier, healthier lives, both physically and mentally, which in turn effects student involvement in school.

Mental Health of ELL Students

As stated in chapter one, there are five million ELL students in the United States and these students are made up of immigrants, refugees, ethnocultural, and racialized groups (Hansson et al., 2012). Mental health is particularly important for immigrant and refugee students. These students are coming from areas filled with violence, injustice, persecution, and war (Ellis et al., 2013; Hansson et al., 2012). They were separated from their families and their culture, and their mental health is directly affected by this trauma (Ellis et al., 2013; Hansson et al., 2012). Chapter two went on to inform that these groups are prone to SLEs, which can lead to emotional and behavioral problems in children at home and at school. Some of those problems included things like depression, anxiety, eating disorders, low self-esteem, substance abuse, hyperactivity, and emotional issues (Berge et al. 2020). These emotional and behavioral issues are sure to impede student learning in school if not identified and proper supports put in place.

Research by Ellis et al. (2013), Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) and Lambert et al. (2018) was examined to explore the research behind ELL students' mental health and ways that schools can support the mental health of these students. Most importantly, teachers are not trained mental health experts. They are not expected to conduct counseling sessions or therapy. However, they should work with a mental health professional within the school to research and understand the

student and their triggers in order to find the best interventions. Priority of this important information starts with first understanding the research.

The first qualitative study that relates to ELL students' mental health comes from Ellis et al. (2013). This research focused on 30 Somali and Somali Bantu refugee youth in middle school with an average age of 13 years old. The average amount of time these students had been in the United States was five years, meaning that most arrived at approximately age eight. Data was gained through surveys and interviews. This study tested the effects of a multi-tiered prevention and intervention program to support the mental health of ELL students. They used a program called Project SHIFA (Supporting the Health of Immigrant Families and Adolescents). Interestingly, the word SHIFA means health in Somali. SHIFA was created to develop a trusting community relationship and offer non-stigmatized skills groups in schools.

The base and broadest level of the four-tier pyramid program was Tier 1 which provided community support through engagement, education, and outreach. Tier 2 focused on child resilience building through school-based skills groups and was open to all Somali ELL students in the school. The third and fourth levels included direct mental health interventions for students showing need. Tier 3 was for trauma systems therapy and included students who were identified by leaders as needing individualized mental health services due to dysregulation of emotions. The top tier, Tier 4, was for trauma systems therapy and included students from Tier 3 that were identified by clinicians as needing a higher level of care due to severe dysregulation of emotions. Students in Tiers 3 and 4 received trauma systems therapy which integrated culture into their treatment. Cultural brokers, professionals knowledgeable in both cultures, were used to create an understanding of both cultural perspectives.

The key findings of this study were that Project SHIFA showed promising results. Students were able to receive differentiated treatment depending on their specific mental health needs. Researchers found that many of these students were suffering from different levels of depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They also found that “resources may play a critical role in the trajectory of mental health and that once material and social resources stabilize, but not until then, treatment of depression and PTSD can progress” (Ellis et al., 2013, p. 137). Students who lack resources have a more difficult time dealing with mental health.

Limitations of the study were the small sample size. The program was considered “rolling” because students came into the program at different times depending on when they moved into the area. Of the 30 students initially enrolled in the program, 23 were able to complete the full twelve-month evaluation. Those that did not finish graduated or had moved out of the area. Further limitations were that students were in different tiers, and that made the sample size at each level even smaller.

The next qualitative study came from Isik-Ercan et al. (2017). This was a case study that focused on Burmese refugee parents that had children in grades kindergarten through third grade. Twenty-eight refugee parents from 25 families were interviewed in this qualitative study. Key findings of the study were that many of these families endured financial struggles. Many of the fathers in these families were not often present because of having to work out of town or odd hours. Also, parents lacked educational opportunities themselves, so they struggled to support their children’s academic work at home. Even with these hardships, interviews revealed that these families did want to be more involved in their children’s education.

Families indicated that they wanted to be more involved in schools and have stronger relationships with teachers. Families also spoke of wanting an orientation in the first weeks of

school to explain how curriculum and the school in general works. Another concern was that there was a lack of school resources that prevented their participation in schools. Translators were not readily available, and they were not personally invited to the school besides their 15-minute teacher conference once or twice a year. Even then, at conferences, translators were not always available because they were being used in other classrooms. Families struggled to reach out to teachers with their limited English.

Limitations of this study were the small sample size of the case study and the focus on only one ethnic group. Low-income Burmese refugees were the only group included in this case study. Increasing the sample size and opening the study to differing low-income refugee groups may better support findings.

A quantitative study related to ELL students' mental health comes from Lambert et al. (2018). This study included 1,985 first grade (aged six to seven years old) ELL Latino students in a school district in the southeastern United States. The purpose of this study was to test the screening process being used to identify mental health concerns to see if scores were invariant for ELL and non-ELL students. Researchers interpreted data from all first graders in the district to assess student's emotional and behavioral functioning in order to better support their mental health needs. The study used a screener called the Emotional and Behavioral Screener (EBS) and teachers completed the screening on each of their first-grade students. Key findings from this research were that the EBS was an unbiased and fair measure of students' emotional and behavioral well-being. Using the EBS, schools could identify students who were at risk of emotional disturbances. Researchers in this study compared their findings to other research related to using this screening process and found similar outcomes in that this screening process is effective in identifying mental health needs.

Limitations of the study were that all participants were from one school district and no other grades were involved. Another limitation was that EBS collected data on race and gender, but other demographics like socioeconomic status should have been included because mental health issues have been directly linked to emotional and behavioral functioning as well. Finally, the screening was completed by classroom teachers. Future studies may have multiple teachers screening the same students to get more accurate, well-rounded data.

A common thread in this mental health research is that ELL families are often low-income (Ellis et al., 2013, Isik-Ercan et al., 2017, and Lambert et al., 2018). These families live with many high-risk factors like poverty, violent neighborhoods, and inadequate schools. Isik-Ercan et al., (2017) found that one in four low-income children come from an immigrant background. Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) and Ellis et al. (2013) both found that immigrant families had limited access to health care, even though there is a high level of need. Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) reported that 16.4% of immigrant families do not have access to health care compared to 8.3% of native-born children. Ellis et al. (2013) went on to add that resources directly affect mental health. “Income status is an influential factor in educational and developmental outcomes for young immigrant children” (Isik-Ercan et al., 2017, p. 1427).

This economic strain directly and indirectly influences children. Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) found that children may experience food insecurity and unclean water. They may live in unsafe neighborhoods and worry about housing. This study went on to say that parents’ stress has the potential to create negative parent-child relationships. Low-income status indicated that there is lower parental psychological well-being (Isik-Ercan et al., 2017). These issues put ELL students at an elevated risk of social and emotional problems (Lambert et al., 2018).

Ellis et al. (2013), Isik-Ercan et al. (2017), and Lambert et al. (2018) all found that many ELL immigrants and refugees suffered from emotional and behavioral issues. Lambert et al. (2018) found that these issues may affect linguistic growth, and Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) stated that the language barrier was one of the biggest factors contributing to ELL students' belonging and academic achievement. Lambert et al. (2018) went on to say that these students are more likely to underperform and drop out of school. Ellis et al. (2013) and Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) found that many refugee students struggled with depression, anxiety, and PTSD.

Cultural awareness and possible mental health issues of ELL students is essential for schools and educators (Isik-Ercan et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2018). Schools need to look at social, cultural, and linguistic differences in order to properly plan for interventions (Isik-Ercan et al., 2017). Ellis et al. (2013) used a cultural broker or someone bilingual and familiar with both cultures to aid in meeting ELL student's needs. Interventions should be culturally relevant and responsive (Lambert et al., 2018).

With five million EL students in the United States, it is important to understand their unique needs. Key insights of this research are that immigrants and refugees are part of this group of ELL students, and with the trauma that they have often experienced it is vital that educators understand their background to understand their needs. ELL students have limited mental health resources, and schools are the most probable place where they may receive these services. With school and family support, students suffering with PTSD can get the help that they need inside and outside of school. Vandergrift (2012) reminds us that there are laws in the United States that children have the right to an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. It is expected that educators and schools work to find the support that students need to be successful. Students can't learn properly if they are struggling with mental illness. Schools

need to recognize and support students with these needs in order to provide an inclusive educational experience.

Inclusive Classrooms and Co-Teaching

Not only is it crucial that schools provide educators with the professional development to understand ELL students' background, culture, and mental health, but schools also need to shift their focus to properly training educators on how to teach ELL students. As stated in chapter one, by law all students must receive an equal education. This means that students with diverse needs are mainstreamed into general education classrooms which are called inclusive classrooms. Keep in mind that these students also require specific services as noted by their Individual Education Plan or English Language (EL) status. Those services are provided by educators specialized in those fields, special education teachers and English language teachers.

With this knowledge, schools are required to provide equal services to all students in an inclusive setting. Co-teaching is a researched based, proven method that should be considered. Research by Hang and Rabren (2009), Chitiyo and Brinda (2018), and Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) will be examined to understand the components of creating inclusive environments and the benefits of co-teaching.

The first study, which was a mixed-methods study by Hang and Rabren (2009), identified co-teaching as "two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (p. 259). This study included seven schools (four elementary, one middle school, one junior high school, and one high school) in southeastern United States. The study included 45 teachers and 58 students. The purpose of the study was to understand student and teacher's perspectives on co-teaching. Data was collected through observations, surveys, and record analysis.

Key findings of this study were that students and teachers felt positive about co-teaching. Students were more satisfied with their learning because they felt that they received more academic assistance. Students also reported that they felt an increase in self-confidence. Educators stressed the importance of communication being of utmost importance. Clear roles needed to be defined and co-planning time was essential. Peers in the classroom became behavior models and there were less behavior issues. Students had significantly higher scores in math and reading than in the previous year.

Limitations of this study were that there was not a control group to use for comparison purposes. The data collected in this study was also from multiple grade levels and generalizations were made. This study only lasted for one year, so it was impossible to see the long-term effects of co-teaching.

The second study to better understand co-teaching was a qualitative study by Chitiyo and Brinda (2018). This study was designed to understand how teachers felt about their readiness to use co-teaching. Seventy-seven teachers (35 elementary school teachers, 17 middle school teachers, and 23 high school teachers) from northeastern United States took part in the study. Data was collected by using a questionnaire.

Key findings were that co-teaching promoted inclusion of students and reduced stigmas. Other key findings were that educators needed to be properly equipped to implement co-teaching. Only half of the participants in the study felt confident in co-teaching. Most of the teachers knew what co-teaching was, but 58% felt that they needed more training. The study found that it is urgent that schools educate teachers in this process with the growing needs of students in our inclusive classrooms in the United States. "Since most classrooms are now

inclusive classrooms, it would seem imperative that teacher education programs should develop and offer courses focused on co-teaching in their curriculum” (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018, p. 47).

Limitations of this study were that the participants were a convenience sample, so they were not representative of all teachers. Most of the teachers in the study were general education teachers, so there was not an equal representation of specialized teachers. Finally, the teachers in this study were from varying grade levels which may have influenced the outcomes.

The final study of co-teaching practices is another qualitative study, but this study was by Theoharis and O’Toole (2011). This study reported on two elementary schools and how they reformed their schools to better serve their growing population of ELL students in urban midwestern schools located in the same district. Data was collected by interviews, classroom observations, a field log, review of documents, and focus group interviews. Even though both schools went through reform of their ELL program, both principals went about the process in their own way over the three-year implementation process.

The first school included 380 students in grades kindergarten through second grade. The principal at this school used the first year to assess the needed changes, the second year to restructure, and the third year to implement the new plans. One of the biggest changes at this school were that they eliminated all pull out services. They had Title 1, English as a second language, targeted assistance for students of color, and a gifted and talented program. All of those positions were eliminated to add four more general education teachers which allowed the school to bring class sizes of 21-24 down to 16 students per class. All staff, including the secretaries, custodians, and paras attended ongoing professional development about the language, culture, and race of their student body. Parents were also very involved in this process.

Meetings were held in different languages and a Parent Empowerment Group was formed. A final bonus was that student test scores rose dramatically.

The reform in the second school in the study happened in a different way but yielded similar results. The school was kindergarten through fifth grade. The principal at this school also put into place that inclusion was nonnegotiable. With his reform model, English language teachers worked with classroom teachers in planning and instruction. Co-teachers were given half day planning meetings each week. They also had a great deal of professional development time devoted to understanding how to best serve their ELL students. Communication with parents, whether it be notes or recorded messages, was translated into their home language. They held conferences each marking period and included interpreters to discuss student progress. The results of this reform showed that before restructuring, 18% of Latinos and 47% of Asians met grade level expectations on state reading tests. After the reform, 100% of both groups met those expectations (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Limitations of this study were that only two case studies were included, and they were both from one school district. Researchers noted that this study was not meant to be a blueprint, but rather an important piece for discussion and reflection by school leadership. The purpose of the research was primarily to offer insight on how to effectively create inclusive classrooms.

When understanding the research based around inclusion and co-teaching, the first and most important component was that teachers need proper training on how to teach in inclusive classrooms. Teaching how to meet the needs of diverse learners all in one classroom is not necessarily part of the pedagogy taught in college. Schools are in unique situations with their demographics, and they must prepare properly for their specific students. There is no one-size-fits-all model to follow. Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) and Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) both

spoke of the importance of schools providing teacher education that is ongoing to create socially just schools for ELL students. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) went on to say that all staff need to be educated on the culture, language, and race of their student body, which relates back to previous studies in chapter two. If educators are not equipped with proper training, chances are limited that they will meet the needs of all learners. Educators need to be confident in their understanding of co-teaching in order to properly implement it.

Many educators have heard of co-teaching, but their true understanding of co-teaching may not be clear. Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) and Hang and Rabren (2009) explained that co-teaching is two certified teachers, one general education and the other a specialty teacher (English language or special education) teaching in one classroom. Together, this team needs to design and deliver lessons to heterogeneous groups of students. Collaboration and common planning time are essential to the success of co-teaching (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Hang & Rabren, 2009). There needs to be clear expectations of roles and responsibilities within this team. It is important to note that these teachers are equal partners, and it should seem evident in the classroom. The benefit of this co-teaching partnership is that the general education teacher provides content, classroom management, knowledge of typical students, and a steady pace of instruction (Chitiyo and Brinda, 2018). Specialized teachers provide accommodations, understanding of specific student needs/individualization, focus on mastery of learning, and documentation (Chitiyo and Brinda, 2018). Together, in parity, they can meet the needs of all learners in their inclusive classroom.

There are many research-based benefits to co-teaching. Students receive more academic assistance and increased self-confidence (Hang & Rabren, 2009). All students in the classroom have increased opportunities for participation. Students have better behavior because they have

peers as “behavior models” (Hang & Rabren, 2009). Test scores are higher (Hang & Rabren, 2009; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Students with special needs (including ELL students) and disabilities feel included, and there is a reduction in stigma associated with special services (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Fragmentation in student learning due to pull-out classes is reduced and the support system for students is stronger. Students who need specialized instruction can receive those services while receiving the same curriculum and content as their peers. Teachers grow professionally by sharing methods and instructional strategies and a positive school climate emerges (Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018; Hang & Rabren, 2009).

Academic learning will not happen in schools if students’ social and emotional learning is not secure. Understanding the importance of inclusivity is vital to the success of student learning. Research on how schools are successfully meeting the needs of ELL students is crucial because there is no one-size-fits-all method. Co-teaching is a proven method that is effective in meeting the expectations of the laws protecting and supporting ELL students. Focus or research will naturally follow into different strategies educators may directly use and implement in their inclusive classrooms to support ELL students’ learning in language arts and math.

In the Classroom

What can educators do in the classroom to best meet the needs of ELL students in language arts and math? The research in this chapter thus far reveals that there is a lot to consider for educators before even getting to work with ELL students in the classroom. This section finally focuses on researched strategies and programs to test their effectiveness in supporting ELL students. Research by Xu (2015), Klvacek et al. (2018), Silverman et al. (2017), Saxe and Sussman (2019), and Banse et al. (2017) will be examined, analyzed, and synthesized.

The first study analyzed was quantitative research by Xu (2015). The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of adapted peer tutoring (APT) on social interactions and early language and literacy skills of pre-school aged children who were ELL students. There were 75 total participants. The average age was 58 months. All participants were from low-income families and had been in pre-school for at least six months. Researchers used observations and assessments to test for social interactions and literacy/language skills.

The study found that ELL students in the experimental groups had significantly higher social skills than the participants in the comparison classrooms. They also had higher receptive language skills and improved print knowledge and vocabulary. ELL's alphabet knowledge was significantly improved. ELLs showed significant growth in early language and literacy skills. There was no significant difference between the groups in phonological awareness. Participants in the study enjoyed the study and said that they would consider using it in the future.

Xu (2015) did not necessarily critique his own study offering limitations, but he did have some thoughts on how to further or modify his studies. He wondered what the long-term effects of APT would be. He also noted that the children in his study were primarily Hispanic and wondered if the data would have been different with more diverse backgrounds. His final thought on a future study would be children's social interaction and inappropriate behavior of ELLs and the relationship of this to their academics. An outsider may question the reliability of converting qualitative data like social interactions into statistical measurements, but Xu seemed to take adequate measures to do so.

Qualitative research completed by Klvacek et al. (2016) was the next study examined. This study explored dyad reading with two second grade ELL students. The two students selected for the study, one boy and one girl, were chosen because they were both reading below

grade level and considered emergent in their language skills, and they both spoke Spanish as their first language. The researcher in this study used video observations, student interviews, weekly dyad observations, and anecdotal notes. The study found that the participants reading fluency and comprehension increased, as well as the student's confidence, motivation, and self-perception as a reader. There were no limitations noted in this study, however a bigger sample group may be beneficial.

The next study was a quantitative study by Silverman et al. (2017). Silverman et al. (2017) conducted a study to find the effects of cross-age peer learning on vocabulary and comprehension for ELLs. This study included 24 classrooms from four different schools (twelve kindergarten and twelve fourth grade). Half of each of those classrooms were the experimental group and the other half were the comparison group. To measure growth in kindergarteners, assessments were completed individually, and fourth graders were tested as a large group. The study found that vocabulary in kindergarteners increased dramatically, and that the program worked equally well for ELLs as well as their English counterparts. Limitations included few classrooms in the study, length of the study, lack of measurement of kindergarteners on comprehension, and the types of assessments used as the ones included in this study were primarily multiple-choice.

The next study is quantitative and comes from Saxe and Sussman (2019). They wanted to test the effects of Learning Mathematics Through Representations (LMR) on ELLs. This study included 571 fourth and fifth grade students. The study focused specifically on integers and fractions. To test the effectiveness of LMR, they used multilevel analysis of longitudinal data and standardized assessments at four different periods. They found that ELLs who were in LMR classrooms scored higher than ELLs in the comparison classrooms, and ELLs were able to

bridge the gap in these areas of mathematics as compared to the English proficient students in the comparison classrooms. A limitation of this study was that researchers were not able to identify which specific aspect of LMR benefited ELL students the most.

The final study in this section of the research was a qualitative study by Banse et al. (2017). In this comparative case study, researchers were examining math discussions in two different fourth grade math classrooms that had ELL populations of greater than 50%. Both classrooms used Every Day Counts Calendar Math by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The purpose of the study was to identify the type of questions used and how they were scaffolded in order to support ELL students. Questions were broken down into two different categories, referential (open-ended) and display questions (close-ended). Researchers reviewed videos of lessons and coded the questions asked. To identify scaffolding, they further broke down the questions and coded them into revoicing where the teacher repeated and expanded on student responses and reformulation where the teacher repeated the students' exact words and then added to the response or asked the student to elaborate more. Researchers were also looking for think-alouds where teachers modeled problem solving and self-talk where teachers repeated themselves to ensure a simpler rate of speech and chance for ELL students to comprehend. Even though Calendar Math was designed to provide rich math discussions with students to increase student confidence in mathematical understanding, it was not specifically designed for ELL students. Calendar Math did not provide ELL support on its own, but the type of questioning used by the teachers made the difference. Limitations of this study were that the high number of ELL students in these classrooms may not be the norm. Classrooms with fewer ELL students may find that the ELL students are more isolated and hesitant to speak up in classroom discussions.

After reviewing the presented research on language arts and math practices for ELL students, it is easy to see that communication and collaboration are key to better meeting the needs of ELL students in the classroom. Studies by Xu (2015), Klvacek et al. (2018), and Silverman et al. (2017) all dealt directly with students' language skills, and each study focused on how partner work can benefit ELL students, both socially and academically. It seems simple, but many teachers overlook the fact that the more ELL students use the English language, the more confident and proficient they will become. Partner work offers differentiation and direct usage and feedback of the English language. The way that each of these studies was set up and the age of the subjects was different, but they all had similar findings that communication and collaboration are key.

Xu's (2015) class wide peer tutoring included a mix of ELL and English proficient preschool students who would take turns being the tutor and tutee and give each other directions to complete a task. As the tutor, they would speak giving directions for the tutee to complete. Then the two partners would change roles and complete another similar task. This is something that teachers could implement into their classrooms. Setting up tasks to be completed and have partners tutor each other could boost English proficiency, confidence, and academics.

Dyad reading was the focus of Klvacek's (2018) study. Dyad reading is where partners at different reading levels read together. In this study second grade ELL students were placed with English proficient readers in this study. Materials selected for reading were selected by the partners, and the books were at the higher partner's level. The books were read in unison to help promote fluency. Partners discussed the reading as they went and were required to keep a reading log. There was also a class wide sharing time after the reading to talk about the books that they were reading as a large group. This model is different from Xu's (2015) study in that one student

is more of the leader or tutor, but still students were communicating and collaborating. Partner reading is a proven practice that could be implemented into any elementary classroom and hold immense benefits to ELL students.

Silverman et al.'s (2017) study was on cross age peer tutoring that included kindergarteners paired up with fourth graders. It was a type of "reading buddies" program. ELL students were strategically placed with a buddy. With this study, each classroom at both levels had a teacher led lesson to present the targeted materials that the partners would work on together at their meeting. Then the next day partners from kindergarten and fourth grade would meet and complete their required tasks. This study was a blend of Xu (2015) and Silverman et al.'s (2017) studies in that students were both the tutor and tutee. Teachers presented lessons and the students were the tutees, and then they turned around and students became the tutors with their buddies. Setting up a buddy room for reading is a proven best practice that classroom teachers could implement to better serve the needs of their ELL students.

With each of these studies, partners met and used the English language to speak and listen to one another. Many students in these studies also used reading and writing skills. A bonus was that they all used social skills with their partners. This increased their social abilities, which boosted confidence and gains in learning. Two of the greatest benefits of these models was that ELL students received direct feedback from their partner to help gain understanding—both socially and academically, and all methods allowed for differentiation.

There are specific tested strategies teachers can use to promote learning for ELL students in math class as well. Research by Banse et al. (2017) focused on rich discussions. This research looked at how teachers lead discussions in Calendar Math. They used a scaffolding approach to math discussions that included three steps. First, teachers needed to engage all students in the

discussion. Next, when students responded, teachers scaffolded ideas by revoicing or reformulating student responses. Finally, teachers took steps to ensure that their own speech was comprehensible for ELL students. This could happen by think-alouds or self-talk. This research recognized the fact that ELL students have a “twofold challenge, as they concurrently learn both English and academic content” (Banse et al., 2017, p. 199).

Learning Mathematics Through Representation (LMR) has been studied and tested by Saxe and Sussman (2019) on ELL students. With this type of learning, there was a five-phase structure to each lesson. First off, students were given an opening problem to solve. Next, there was an opening discussion where students discussed how to solve the problem. Then the teacher introduced any new definitions students need to know. The fourth step was the closing discussion, and then finally came the closing problems. Like the studies by Xu (2015), Klvacek et al. (2018), and Silverman et al. (2017), and Banse et al. (2017) this practice is interactive with discussions. Saxe and Sussman (2019) found that arguments in discussions can lead to deeper understanding by students. “Classroom norms that value participation and argumentation are regarded by many educators as a key figure of high-quality mathematics in instruction” (Saxe & Sussman, 2019, p. 456). LMR also encourages physical representations for students to understand concepts (Saxe & Sussman, 2019). Vocabulary should be posted for students to use during discussions. Students could also benefit from things like number lines and Cuisenaire rods (Saxe & Sussman, 2019). Hands on materials help ELL students to understand concepts better.

All five of these studies show how discussions (communication) and collaboration benefit ELL students in the classroom. The more they are directly engaged, the more they will grow. It is the direct feedback from partner work that allows ELL students to grow their English vocabulary and enhance their confidence. Silverman et al. (2017) states, “Learning occurs within

a social context. Novices learn through interactions with “more knowledgeable others” who can provide modeling and support for accomplishing challenging tasks” (p. 487).

Review of the Proposed Problem

With ten percent or five million ELL students in schools in the United States, it is imperative that schools and educators take notice. Lambert et al. (2018) reported that by the year 2030, approximately forty percent of children in the United States will be ELL students. Changes in our educational system need to take place.

Review of the Importance of the Topic

It is the law that schools provide ELL students an equal education, regardless of student’s knowledge of the English language. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) alongside the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that students with disabilities and other special needs receive an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (Friend, 2019). That environment is in a general education classroom, and this creates a tremendous challenge to classroom teachers. Educators must meet the needs of all learners in their inclusive classrooms. With so many different needs and abilities all in one classroom, differentiated instruction is the only method that can achieve such a result.

The importance of mental health has also been a growing concern in the United States. One of the most common mental health illnesses found in immigrant and refugee ELL students is PTSD, and it is a serious concern that should not be overlooked. With certainty, PTSD is affecting the learning of some ELL students. Behaviors that may be looked at unfavorably in a classroom may be related to PTSD. Educators need to understand this disorder and be able to recognize symptoms. This section identifies symptoms educators can look for to help identify students with PTSD in order to get the proper support for students.

What is PTSD?

Refugees face differing mental illnesses due to their life experiences. Some of them are depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, and PTSD (Ellis et al., 2013; Hansson et al., 2012; Isik-Ercan et al., 2017). PTSD is where a person experiences extreme anxiety that stems from a traumatic event (Dikel, 2020). A person can experience the trauma personally or be a witness to the trauma. There is also the chance that a person could suffer from PTSD by knowing the details of the traumatic experience because it happened to someone close to them (Dikel, 2020). This is related to the Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) study where it was stated that parental mental health affects children's physical and mental health. Children being affected by parental PTSD would be an example of generational trauma.

There are many signs and symptoms associated with PTSD. Dikel (2020) and Hasan (2021) report that a person suffering from PTSD may experience recurrent memories or flashbacks. Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) stated that if a person is suffering from PTSD, they are also probably suffering from depression and anxiety. With this, people feel a loss of interest or pleasure. They feel empty and helpless (Isik-Ercan et al., 2017). They may have nightmares or trouble with sleeping (Dikel, 2020). They can have difficulty with sleeping too little or too much. People with PTSD can lose their appetite, and they may detach from others. They can feel distress when exposed to something or someone related to the trauma, and avoid memories or things related to the traumatic experience. Dikel (2020) continues to say that people with PTSD may also have negative emotions and feel bad about themselves. They may experience depersonalization where they feel like they are living outside their own body. They may even feel derealization where they feel like their surroundings are unreal. To be diagnosed with PTSD,

symptoms need to be present for more than one month (Dikel, 2020). There are many different signs and symptoms related to PTSD.

Warning Signs in the Classroom

Students who are living with PTSD may have any of the symptoms noted above. With immigrant and refugee children often being ELL students, it can be more difficult to identify and diagnose mental illnesses like PTSD because of the language barrier (Vandergrift, 2012). They may not have the ability to talk about their experiences. However, there are some common classroom behaviors that students with PTSD may display, and teachers can watch for.

Some students with PTSD may try escape behaviors when it comes to school. They can be quiet and withdrawn (Dikel, 2020). They seem depressed and disengaged in class activities, lacking motivation and interest in learning. Teachers may assume ELL students just are not understanding the lesson, when in fact they could be depressed due to PTSD.

On the contrary, some students with PTSD may seek attention. Dikel (2020) reported that students experiencing PTSD may become irritable, angry, and have verbal and physical outbursts. These things can happen when a student feels anxious from class discussions that relate to their trauma or if someone in the classroom may look like someone related to their trauma. Students experiencing PTSD can become irrational and uncontrollable at times. Teachers might see students with PTSD startle easily (Hasan, 2021). They may be overly sensitive to noises, sights, and smells and these things may trigger a memory of their trauma and startle them.

Finally, Dikel (2020) explained that students experiencing PTSD could possibly reenact their trauma in the classroom. This could be through play, drawings, or conversations. During play time, the student may play pretend and reenact their traumatic experience. Students may

also draw pictures showing their experiences or talk about them freely. In these situations, the memories may not appear distressing. These behaviors may be related to the functions of attention or sensory needs.

Students with PTSD can have many needs. Dikel (2020) and Hasan (2021) both report that these students may need to take medication to help with their anxiety. They may also need to miss class to talk with counselors or mental health specialists. They need therapy to gain the skills necessary to cope with PTSD. Hasan (2021) goes on to say that, in the classroom, students may need extra time to complete their assignments due to some of the deficits they may be facing from their PTSD.

One deficit of students with PTSD is cognitive impairment (Dikel, 2020; Hasan, 2021). These students may struggle to remember words, facts, and events from their past. They can become easily confused and have difficulty staying on task. They may have trouble with work completion. Besides struggling cognitively, students with PTSD may also lack the ability to connect with others (Dikel, 2020; Hasan, 2021). They may struggle to connect with peers or even family members. They do not find joy in relationships, and they may pull away and not play with others on the playground. These students struggle with trust and communication. A final deficit of students with PTSD is that they can suffer from delayed development (Dikel, 2020). Hasan (2021) reports that these students can have difficulty with toilet training, motor skills, and language. The language component is especially concerning for ELL students who are already managing two different languages and cultures.

Summary of Findings

Throughout this research, it is easy to see that ELL students often come into United States schools with varying needs. They are trying to assimilate into a new culture as they are

learning the language and the norms of American society. With all this happening, they are also expected to learn academic, grade-level content in schools. One can also not forget the familial struggles and challenges that are in the back of these student's minds. That is a lot to handle as a child, and it is easy to understand why these students may have some specific needs.

Schools and educators need to know the background and culture of their student population. They also need to be aware of potential mental health needs of this population. Schools should be aware of community resources to help families in need. Teachers are not expected to be mental health professionals, but they should notice warning signs of mental health issues and seek proper assistance for students. Schools are the most common place where mental health issues are identified. Students cannot learn academics if their social and emotional needs are not being met.

When schools and educators understand the background and needs of students, then the academic work can take place. It is the school's responsibility to provide educators with the necessary professional development and tools to effectively meet the needs of all learners. Co-teaching is a researched based teaching model that can meet the needs of all learners allowing a general education teacher to work in parity with a specialized teacher (English language teacher or special education teacher) to differentiate instruction and meet the specific needs of learners.

The best method for ELL students to learn English and content is to speak English. Through methods like dyad reading, adapted peer tutoring, multi-grade level reading buddies, specific teacher questioning techniques, and visual tools, ELL students can succeed academically. Purposeful discussions are vital to the incredible task of learning English and content at the same time. Through these methods of differentiating instruction, students had increased social skills and inclusivity, increased English vocabulary, increased academic

understanding, and increased achievement which is, of course, the goal for schools and educators.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research shows that there is a lot of work to do to properly educate the five million (and growing) ELL students in the United States. Reformation of schools and teacher education on how to meet the needs of all diverse learners is essential. Differentiated instruction isn't just an option, it is a necessity. Chapter three will shift focus from the research to the insights gained from the research. Then it will concentrate on the application and what schools and educators can do to better educate ELL students. Finally, chapter three will conclude with possible future studies that may create more applicable learning for ELL students.

Chapter Three: Discussion, Application, and Future Studies

There are several messages that can be taken from the literature review in chapter two. Discussion of those insights will be reviewed as well as ways that schools and educators can take action and apply best practices to properly educate ELL learners. Finally, a review of potential future studies will be presented in hopes of further understanding ways that schools and educators can best meet the needs of ELL students.

Discussion of Insights Gained

The first message found in this literature that pertains to educators is to know and understand students. It is important to know about student's cultures in addition to their past life experiences to best serve them, especially students from diverse backgrounds. Many of these students are experiencing or have experienced stressful life events (SLEs). Not only are these students dealing with their own SLEs, but they are also affected by their family's SLEs. Knowing that SLEs of parents can transfer to students' lives is also very important (Bowie et al.,

2017). Chances are good that students from diverse cultures may bring emotional and behavior problems with them, and that is only natural with the SLEs that they have lived through. Many ELL students have true emotional and psychological needs. They may even have mental health illnesses that must be addressed. Students can't learn in school if they are struggling with emotional issues and mental illness. Understanding students' culture and background can aid in finding needed interventions to regulate behaviors and stabilize mental well-being.

The second insight relates to the first message from the literature, but it needs to be said on its own to give it the true recognition that it deserves. All research presented repeatedly stated that teachers need to be educated on how to best serve the diverse needs of learners in inclusive classrooms. They need education on their students' cultures, background, and possible behaviors related to mental illnesses. They also need training on methods of teaching that can benefit all learners, like co-teaching. Specific professional development is needed to help teachers differentiate in language arts and math to meet the needs of all learners. This education is not part of the pedagogy in college but needs to be addressed. In the state of Minnesota, it is required that in a five-year licensure period, educators need at least one hour of professional development related to ELL students, one hour of professional development in mental health illnesses, and one hour of professional development in suicide prevention (Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2022). That is simply not enough professional development when considering the diversity of inclusive classrooms. More purposeful education must be available to educators. Classrooms are changing, and educators need proper training to meet the high demands that inclusive classrooms require. This education cannot be a one- or two-hour training within a five-year period. This professional development needs to be purposeful and ongoing. Classrooms are always changing, and the education of educators must keep up with it.

The final insight gained from this research is that in order to be effective and meet the needs of all learners, teachers must differentiate their instruction. Differentiation is the only way to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom setting. Teachers need to educate general education, ELL students, special education students, and gifted students all in the same classroom. These students have a huge spectrum of needs and ability levels. It is an enormous undertaking to effectively teach all of these students in a single classroom, but that is the expectation. Specific attention needs to be given to this issue. Relating back to the previous insight, proper training needs to be provided for educators. Teachers need to be trained in differentiation. It cannot be expected that educators just know how to do this without proper training.

Application of Research

ELL programs in most schools need to be reformed. This population of students continues to grow, but little is being done in many schools to meet the needs of these students. It is legally required that schools offer ELL students English language teachers and special services to meet their needs, but it is not specified how that work should be done, so many schools are doing the bare minimum. Schools with strong ELL programs are aware of community services that may benefit these families. They also support and involve ELL families in their children's education by offering interpreters and invitations to actively take part in school activities. Vandergrift (2020) noted that parents of EL students typically have had negative experiences with the educational system and are reluctant to engage on their own. When the school reaches out with proper support, parental involvement increases and creates stronger relationships with families and in turn students do better in school.

With this reform, all students in primary grades should be screened for mental health concerns. Mental health is truly a growing problem in the United States, and all children, regardless of if they are ELL or not, should be screened at an early age. If schools could catch these issues at an early age, interventions and treatments could be put in place to save the student and the school years of fighting behavior issues. Students with behavior issues typically have needs that are not being met. If a student's mental and emotional needs are not being met, they will not prosper in school. They will not meet their full academic potential if they are suffering with a mental illness.

On another note, which relates to the first insight gained from this literature review in understanding family systems, educators should not look down on families if they do not fit the norm for Western society with parental support with their children's schooling and homework. It is important for educators to realize that many of the immigrant parents did not have any formal school. For example, many Somali parents grew up in a country that has no government and is basically a warzone (Bowie et al., 2017). How could they possibly be expected to do homework with their children in English, a language they are probably just learning themselves? Immigrant/refugee families often have the highest respect for teachers and teachers are looked at like second parents from these parents' point of view (Bowie et al., 2017), but they are not proficient in English and cannot offer that support. Schoolwork for ELL students should be primarily completed in school. It is up to educators to understand diverse students' family systems in order to best educate these learners. Learning about the background and needs of different cultures can make educators more intentional in their classrooms, creating inclusive environments where all students are understood, comfortable, and confident in their learning.

The next application that can be found from the research in this literature review also relates back to the third insight gained. Teachers need to differentiate their instruction. Educators can use any of the research tested programs presented in this literature. Adapted Peer Tutoring, dyad reading, and cross-age peer partners were all effective differentiated language arts strategies, and Learning Math Through Representation was a tested math strategy presented. With each of these strategies, students worked with partners or groups to get instant feedback and support. ELL students showed significant social, linguistic, and academic growth by using these forms of differentiation.

The study by Banse et al. (2017) tested Calendar Math, but the results showed that the true differentiation came in the questioning technique used by the teacher. Using proper questioning techniques like revoicing and reformulation can help ELL students (all students) refine their thinking and develop their answers and understanding. Teachers can also use think-alouds and self-talk when explaining things to help students to better understand. The way questions and answers are presented can make a huge difference in student understanding.

There are several strategies teachers can use to help EL students who are struggling with PTSD in the classroom. It is very important to remember the culture that the child comes from in order to find the best practices to help that child. Sensitivity is key. Dikel (2020) and Hasan (2021) both speak of the importance of the teacher using positive and encouraging words with the student. Teachers must make accommodations tailored to the student's needs (Hasan, 2021). The student may also need extra help with schoolwork, so these accommodations may lead into more teacher assistance, modifying content or assignments, or extending due dates. Giving the child options with their schoolwork is ideal. It may also be helpful to incorporate student interests when possible. Having a bilingual paraprofessional in the classroom may also help ease

the child's anxiety. Like all classroom expectations, these accommodations should be clear and consistent to ease the child's anxiety.

A second strategy teachers might try to accommodate students with PTSD is to use peer assisted learning strategies (Dikel, 2020). This method of differentiation is like the other forms of language arts differentiation that were mentioned above but has been proven to help students with PTSD as well. With peer assisted learning, students work in pairs or small groups. It is often used with reading but could be used in other curriculum areas if found beneficial. This strategy has the potential to greatly benefit an EL student suffering with PTSD in many ways. The student would have language support as well as academic support. This strategy may also assist in remedying the child with detachment issues. The strategy may build a relationship of trust between peers. Dikel (2020) suggests doing peer assisted learning for a half hour three to four times per week.

A final intervention strategy may be to have a space in the room where the child can take a break when needed (Dikel, 2020). When feeling overwhelmed, the break area can be a place to calm down and refocus. The location can have tools to unwind and help with mindfulness. If possible, it is important to keep the child in the classroom so that they do not miss lessons. Even if they are not totally focused on the lesson, they are still present and potentially absorbing information. Taking the break in the classroom also eliminates wasted time traveling to a different location in the school. It is important to provide options to relieve stress. This is a quick and quiet way for students to self-regulate their stress.

Schools may not have the resources to fully support a child with PTSD. The school may refer the family to outside resources. Medical doctors and mental health professionals may be needed. Dikel (2020) explains that students may need cognitive-behavioral therapy, interpersonal

therapy, or relaxation training so that they can learn to cope with their memories and feel safe again. Medications may also need to be prescribed.

Interestingly, the research by Isik-Ercan et al. (2017) found that there were six key items needed to support ELL student's education and well-being. Many of these items were found in the cumulative themes of the literature review in chapter two. This study found that first, schools and educators need to realize and understand the child's cultural strengths. Second, it is important that educators create positive and inclusive classrooms where ELL students feel valued and part of the classroom community. Third, schools should view ELL student's bilingualism as a strength that should build confidence. Next, schools must provide opportunities for ELL families to take part in school functions by being aware of the lack of resources and making the needed supports for these parents a reality. Fifth, teachers need professional development on mental health and poverty to better understand their students. Finally, integrated supports for the family outside of school should be in place. Government policies should be more active and open to supporting these families in things like early childhood education. These key findings directly connect to and sum up the applications found in the full literature review in chapter two.

Future Research Recommendations

The study by Bowie et al. (2017) spoke about how children acculturate faster than their parents. This can create role rehearsals and an unwanted shift in power in the home. It can also cause children to be making decisions that they are not truly equipped for. A future study to identify approximate age when this shift happens and ways to prevent this from happening would be very interesting. How can ELL parents keep authority and the respect that goes along with it within their family when immigrating to a new country if their children typically learn the language and customs of the new culture at a faster rate?

Many of the studies implied that ELL students struggled in school both socially and academically. A second study that may be interesting and insightful to research would be to study gifted ELL students and their perceptions on ELL learning. What do they attribute their success to? What types of differentiation seems to work best for ELL students? What changes would they like to see in schools? What needs do they have both in and out of school? This information could help educators with proper differentiation in the future.

A third study that may further understanding of best practices for differentiating instruction for ELL students would be to take a large sample of teachers from the state of Minnesota or even the United States to find their understanding of co-teaching and its benefits. There seems to be a lack of knowledge out there, and something like this may spur questions about school's current ELL programs. This would hopefully bring curiosity that could possibly lead to some of the reformation of ELL programs.

Conclusion

“There are over two million English language learners in the primary grades in the United States, and there are over 460 different languages represented in that number” (Xu, 2015, p. 1587). America is no longer a melting pot, but rather a tossed salad full of diverse people from many different cultures that should be understood and celebrated. Schools and educators need to truly understand the demographics of their learners and their potential needs for students to grow both socially and academically. To do this tremendous work, schools must provide proper education for educators that builds background knowledge and instruction on how to differentiate instruction in inclusive classrooms. ELL students are expected to be future productive citizens in the United States, and that can only happen if they receive a proper education as children. Legally and ethically, ELL students deserve an equal and appropriate

education where they feel understood, comfortable, and confident. Differentiated instruction is the key that will allow schools and educators to create inclusive environments to best meet the needs of ELL students.

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Appendix

Article Tracking Matrix

| Articles: Author(s) name and year of publication | Method: Qualitative/ Quantitative/ Meta-Analysis/ Mixed-Methods | Theme 1 Family Systems | Theme 2 Mental Health | Theme 3 Co-Teaching | Theme 4 LA & Math |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Berge et al., 2018 | Mixed-Methods | X | | | |
| Berge et al., 2020 | Mixed-Methods | X | | | |
| Bowie et al., 2017 | Qualitative | X | | | |
| Osman et al., 2019 | Qualitative | X | | | |
| Ellis et al., 2013 | Qualitative | | X | | |
| Isik-Ercan et al., 2017 | Qualitative | | X | | |
| Lambert et al., 2018 | Quantitative | | X | | |
| Chitiyo & Brinda, 2018 | Qualitative | | | X | |
| Hang & Rabren, 2009 | Mixed-Methods | | | X | |
| Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011 | Qualitative | | | X | |
| Banse et al., 2017 | Qualitative | | | | X |
| Klvacek et al., 2018 | Qualitative | | | | X |
| Saxe & Sussman, 2019 | Quantitative | | | | X |
| Silverman et al., 2017 | Quantitative | | | | X |
| Xu, 2015 | Quantitative | | | | X |