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**Benefits of Instructional Models for Teaching Elementary**

**English Language Learners**

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### Abstract

English language learners are the fastest growing population in education and make up nearly one out of every four students in California classrooms. They are in need of successful classroom models in the mainstream elementary classroom to benefit their education. The purpose of this study is to examine the benefits of instructional models for teaching mainstream elementary English language learners, which is done through the review of literature and mainstream teacher surveys. Of the surveys conducted, 84% of the teachers believe that their current classroom models in place are beneficial; however, there is little evidence to support this in Monterey County. There are genuine benefits to implementing a successful classroom model for English language learners such as growth in reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy level, and linguistic growth. The findings of my senior capstone indicate that there is a need for explicit beneficial evidence based programs to be in place for ELLs in the mainstream classrooms.

### **Introduction and Background**

English language learners (ELLs) are a population that I hold close to my heart, due to witnessing their struggles inside and outside of the classroom. As a future teacher, I plan to do everything in my power to ensure the academic and overall success of not only the English language learners in my class but for all ELLs. I was first interested in how outside resources, after school programs, etc. can benefit ELLs. Then, I realized my interest is on what happens in the mainstream classroom, where students spend most of their time. It all begins with how the instructional models ran by the mainstream teachers operate in the classroom. Professor Kerry Enright said, “We need to stop talking about ‘adapting for special populations’ like English learners and realize that these populations are the mainstream now” (Abedi et al., 2016, p.10). English language learners are the fastest growing population in education and make up nearly one out of every four students in California classrooms and are in need of beneficial classroom models in the mainstream elementary classroom (Ed Source, 2008).

I am interested in looking at the benefits of instructional models for teaching elementary English language learners. This topic sparked my interest because of my service learning and substitute teaching experiences in various schools within 3 districts in Monterey County, I have seen significant differences in the classroom models implemented during English language development (ELD). I noticed that elementary schools, even within the same school district have drastically different methods of instructing English language development within their classrooms. One school in particular that I substitute taught in was implementing a school wide “ELD block” or “Blended classrooms” model. I was interested in the reason why this was not a district

wide implementation across all of the elementary school sites. It seemed so beneficial to me for the students to be grouped together with peers at their same ELD learning levels. I then thought of how there should be a uniform instructional model from the school level to the district level and perhaps even the county level (Monterey County Office of Education, 2015).

The primary research question I will seek to answer through this project is: How do successful instructional models benefit elementary English language learners? The secondary research questions I will be answering are: What does research say about instructional models that benefit elementary English language learners? Are there effective instructional models available to support elementary English language learners? If there are, what are they? Are there effective instructional models being implemented in Monterey County? Is there evidence to show either the success or failure of the models? If so, what is it? How do these instructional models close the achievement gap between elementary English language learners and their native English-speaking peers? Lastly, what can be done for school districts in Monterey County to include successful and beneficial instructional models into their curricula? The purpose of my project is to examine the current mainstream classroom instructional models and how they benefit elementary English language learners.

### **Literature Review**

English language learners are such a crucial part of America's public educational system and they are in need of successful instructional models that benefit them in the mainstream elementary school classroom. In order to examine the research questions proposed in this research project, an overview of literature is necessary. This section will

include some syntheses on the classroom models, laws and legislations, history and development of instructional models and the theories on language development.

### **Defining an English Language Learner**

An English Language Learner (ELL) is classified as someone who, based on objective assessment, has not developed listening, speaking, reading and writing proficiencies in English. ELLs are commonly from non-English speaking homes and nearly one out of every four students in California classrooms is an ELL. In California alone, this state represents one third of the English Language Learners' population in the nation. Seventy-three percent of ELLs are enrolled in elementary school (California Department of Education, 2015). There is an alarming amount of ELLs who enroll in elementary school without proficiency in English. These students often have a teacher without the proper knowledge to best meet the specific needs of their education in the mainstream classroom.

English language learners have a lot in common, Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi (2008) said, "Most live in urban areas (91%), most ELLs are Spanish-speaking Latinos (75-79%), most are poor (75%), most live in households in which no one over the age of 14 is a speaker of English (80%), half live with parents who have not completed eight years of schooling, half were born in the United States, although approximately half are in elementary schools, the greatest increase of the ELL population is in high-school-aged students, there is a dearth of early childhood programs for ELLs, and few are enrolled in school prior to kindergarten" (p.17).

English Language learners progress through the stages of second language acquisition at their own pace. Each ELL will pass through all of the stages in their journey of

becoming fluent. Krashen and Terrell (1993) explored the 5 stages of language acquisition. The first stage is Preproduction, which typically lasts 0-6 months and during this time the student is typically nonverbal or will simply nod, draw or point. Early Production stage is next when students begin to use single word or two word responses, such as yes/no, names or repetitive language patterns such as “How are you?” Students typically spend 6 months to a year in this stage. The third stage is the Speech Emergence stage, which lasts anywhere from 1 to 3 years. Students in this stage are able to say simple sentences, phrases and have fairly good comprehension. The Intermediate Stage takes 3 to 5 years to go through and this is when students make few grammatical errors and use complex sentences. The Advanced Fluency stage takes 5-7 years to achieve and the student is a near-native level of speech.

### **Instructional Models**

According to Colorin Colorado (2015), “ESL programs can accommodate students from different language backgrounds in the same class, and teachers do not need to be proficient in the home language(s) of their students” (p.1). Title VI (a federal law) requires programs that educate children with limited English proficiency to be:

- Based on a sound educational theory;
- Adequately supported, with adequate and effective staff and resources, so that the program has a realistic chance of success; and
- Periodically evaluated and, if necessary, revised.

“A strong English Language Development program is absolutely essential to each school’s effort to close the achievement gap.” (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2009, p.1). It is true that closing the achievement gap between ELLs and their peers will

take a resilient ELD program in order to successfully target and address the students' language acquisitions needs properly. Some popular models that are implemented in the mainstream elementary classroom are described below.

Direct Instruction is a model where the teacher provides English language development (ELD) instruction to the entire class first, and then the teacher assigns differentiated tasks to students grouped by language proficiency. During this model the teacher can pull out groups as needed for specific ELD work (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2008).

Centers or sheltered instruction are a model where students are grouped by proficiency and rotate for differentiated activities and ELD instruction by their teacher. Depending on the resources of the school district, this model may also have a specialist or para-educator facilitating one of the centers. Other groups that are not facilitated by their teacher are engaged in independent work (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2008)

The Integrated Services approach is an instructional model which specialists provide "push in" support. "Push in" support means the support of an ESL teacher/specialist is happening in the mainstream classroom. This model allows for students identified as English Language Learners to remain in the mainstream classroom and learn with their native English-speaking peers in comparison to being in a self-contained ESL class (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2008).

Another model that can be considered an integrated services approach is the Co-teaching or Team Teaching model. This is a model where teachers are simultaneously teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom with another teacher, such as an ESL teacher. The ESL teacher or specialist may spend several hours a day in an elementary



mainstream classroom when this model is implemented, however, the frequency largely varies throughout school districts. This team teaching model is when both the ESL teacher and mainstream teacher work as a team to both plan and deliver instruction to all students in the class, the classroom teacher as the content expert, and the ESL specialist as the expert on effective strategies for ELLs. The class can also break up the class into two flexible groups; in this model all students receive the same high quality instruction. Due the large time involvement of this model, it is most often used in schools with large populations of ELLs (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010).

The ELD "Block" or "Blended Classrooms" is a model where students are grouped by proficiency levels and may move to neighboring classrooms for explicit ELD instruction. Each of the groups/classrooms are led by a teacher or specialist. (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2008). For example, if there are 3 first grade classes at a school then the students would be grouped into 3 different ELD groups and move to their neighboring classes with teachers that are teaching specific lessons to their groups' academic needs.

The Sonoma County Office of Education (2008) asserted, "While it's true that learning English and mastering content are interrelated, it is critically important that schools implement an appropriate, effective program to support student acquisition of English. Teaching second-language learners to understand, speak, read, and write in English has become a key aspect of instruction for today's classroom teachers" (p.1).

### **Opposing View: Pull Out Program/ESL Class**

A popular program that is found throughout school districts in the state is the "Pull Out Program" where ELLs are pulled out of their mainstream classroom for either one on one or small group support for their English development (Colorin Colorado, 2015). The

ELLs leave their mainstream classrooms to work in a small group setting in a separate classroom with a specialized ESL teacher. During the ELL daily pull out, students work on intensive vocabulary, reiterate lessons or concepts from the classroom, and much more academic content (Washoe County School District, 2016). While the ESL teachers are helpful in facilitating their learning, the students have to be pulled out of their mainstream classrooms making them miss instructional time. However, since this model happens outside of the mainstream classroom, it will not be examined throughout this research project.

Additionally, a self contained ESL classroom is an opposing view to mainstreaming English Language Learners. Through these types of classes, newcomers or students who are not yet fluent in Spanish receive their entire education in a self contained ESL class (California Department of Education). Therefore, these students are rarely exposed to their native English-speaking peers.

### **Laws and Legislation**

Case laws have had significant impacts on federal and state policy for English language learners. While the court system and states have not mandated a specific instructional model for the mainstream elementary classrooms, many cases have given rights related to the use of students' native languages. It is clear through the courts that schools cannot ignore the unique needs of English language learners. Programs and models for English language learners, regardless of the language or specific model must teach both English and academic content. Colorin Colorado, (2018) said, "Schools must provide instruction in English for ELLs because they are not yet proficient in English,

and because they need fluency in English to succeed in mainstream classrooms and to be successful in life in general in the United States” (p.1).

Lau vs. Nichols was a ruling on behalf of English Language Learners. It was an important ruling that gave equal educational opportunities for ELLs. This ruling was on the behalf of ELLs in San Francisco Public Schools in 1974. The U.S. Supreme Court “Lau Vs. Nichols” case ruled that school districts have a duty to see that students are not discriminated against because they do not speak English. The district believed that they had done nothing wrong and that Chinese American student’s received treatment equal to that of other students even though we know that due to the language barrier their educational opportunities were not equal. “...there is no equality of treatment merely by providing [ELL] students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (U.S. Supreme Court, 414 U.S. 563). (p.1).

Due to the court’s decision on the Lau Vs. Nichols case, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights created the Law Remedies. The Lau Remedies applied to all school districts and functioned as the factor compliance standards. Lyons (1995), former president of the National Association for Bilingual Education, explains further that The Lau Remedies specified proper approaches, methods and procedures for (1) identifying and evaluating national-origin-minority students' English-language skills; (2) determining appropriate instructional treatments; (3) deciding when LEP students were ready for mainstream classes; and (4) determining the professional standards to be met by teachers of language-minority children. Under the Lau Remedies, elementary schools were generally required to provide LEP students special English-as-a-second-language

instruction as well as academic subject-matter instruction through the students' strongest language until the student achieved proficiency in English sufficient to learn effectively in a monolingual English classroom.

The Educational Opportunities Act (1974) states “No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by... (f) the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate steps to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs” (p.1). Additionally, Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), public schools must ensure that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs.

Colorin Colorado (2017) explains that the U.S. Department of Education and Justice (2015) has set many guidelines, and a few are listed below:

- “EL students are entitled to EL programs with sufficient resources to ensure the programs are effectively implemented, including highly qualified teachers, support staff, and appropriate instructional materials.
- School districts must have qualified EL teachers, staff, and administrators to effectively implement their EL program, and must provide supplemental training when necessary.
- EL students are entitled to appropriate language assistance services to become proficient in English and to participate equally in the standard instructional program within a reasonable period of time.

- School districts can choose among programs designed for instructing EL students provided the program is educationally sound in theory and effective in practice.
- EL students must have access to their grade-level curricula so that they can meet promotion and graduation requirements” (p.1).

### **History and Development**

The Immigration Act of 1965, new legislation passed to help public schools in dealing with the influx of non-English speaking students. Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 assisted schools in setting up programs to prepare non-English speaking students for education in American schools. The underachievement of ELLs is strongly related to the low quality of programs provided for ELLs. Genesee (1994) asserted that, “Looking back over past practices, it becomes clear that many students learning English were denied access to an appropriate education; in terms of grade-level content, non-English language aspects of learning, and academic and social integration in to mainstream classes, as well as into the larger school community.” Often, the difficult situations ELLs face are due to the inappropriate modes of instruction (Wiley, 1996). This is exactly the driving force behind this capstone research project.

### **Theory**

Peregoy et al (2005) (as cited in Harr, 2008) discussed how the Interactionist Theory says that the more use of language in communicative ways, on the functions of language and the more its use in varying situations. This theory suggests that through interaction and communication learners gain proficiency. This theory supports this capstone research topic because it revolves around English language learners in the mainstream classroom, rather than being pulled out for an ESL only class. With the

interactions and communications of their mainstream peers, then ELLs' language proficiency will improve, according to this theory.

The Acquisition-Learning Hypotheses distinguishes between second languages acquired through natural communication and when it is learned formally with a strong focus on grammar and other linguistic factors. Language learning for students means students are consciously thinking about language rules and what they already know about the language. In a classroom where students must drill the target language then they are conjugating verbs, memorizing dialogues, etc., such as a pull out ESL class/program. While a language acquisition driven classroom allows for students to be given opportunities to hear the new language without consciously becoming aware of the rules. The students are learning correct rules and usage of the language through modeling and practicing, such as in a mainstream classroom. The mainstream classroom teacher made the language intelligible through various tasks such as simplified speech, gestures and context (Echevarria & Graves, 1998).

### **Methods and Procedures**

Throughout the semester, I have taken several steps to successfully solicit the data to answer my research questions. In the beginning of the semester, I developed my primary and secondary research questions with Dr. Thao then wrote my research prospectus paper. After my research questions were developed, I gathered and analyzed peer-reviewed scholarly articles and other reviewed literature from CSUMB's library that were related to my topic. In my own field-research I surveyed teachers from the Monterey County.

**Participants**

The participants in the survey for this capstone research project were 13 mainstream elementary school teachers (See Appendix A for anonymous teacher survey). These are college graduate, credentialed teachers working in the Monterey County as mainstream elementary teachers with English Language Learners in their classrooms. The participants were recruited through various school districts and school websites' access to teachers' email addresses. If the school's website provided an email address for the teacher, then they received an email with the survey. This survey used a random recruitment. 30.8% of the responding teachers have 16 or more ELLs, 30% have 6-10 ELLs, 23% have 1-5 ELLS, 15% have 11-15 ELLs.

When asked which instructional models are currently being used in their mainstream classroom, the responses varied. Twenty-seven percent (27%) responses indicated ELD Block or "Blended Classrooms" where students are grouped by proficiency levels and may move to neighboring classrooms for explicit ELD instruction. Thirty-three percent (33%) use direct instruction where the teacher provides ELD instruction to entire class then gives differentiated tasks and 5.5% had no current support systems in place.

**Measures**

This online survey was created through Google forms and it consisted of seven required questions. The survey was created and sent through a link that gave teachers the ability to access it via email. All of the answers were anonymously recorded and available for me to see directly after a survey was completed. Of the seven required questions on the online survey three of the questions were short answer, two were multiple choice and two were select all that apply questions. For example, a select all that

can apply question asked the participants to select which models are currently being implemented in their mainstream classroom, a few of the options were a pull out program, co-teaching, centers, and a few other options. You can see the survey in Appendix A.

### **Procedures**

In an email sent out to participants, there was a video attached where the purpose of the study was described, as well as the need for local data. In the video and on the survey it was made clear that all responses and data would be anonymous. Once the participants watched the video in their email, they then made the choice to click the link to the survey via Google forms and whether they consent to the survey or not. The participants filled out the online survey at their own pace, on their own devices and once submitted; the data was recorded via Google survey anonymously.

### **Results and Discussion**

In this section, the secondary research questions will be answered individually through the research acquired from books, peer reviewed journals, the survey that was conducted and other sources. The results of my 7-question survey are discussed below in relation to answering the secondary research questions. The results of the anonymous survey were analyzed by looking at the answers of the multiple-choice questions and finding the percentages of each of the answers.

#### ***What does research say about instructional models that benefit elementary English language learners?***

Mainstream teachers have struggled with the large presence of English-language learners (ELL) in the American public schools and it has been an important diversity



challenge. Flores and Verdugo (2007) indicated that, “Early efforts were not so much focused on teaching language skills as with Americanizing children. Much debate and controversy followed. Debate and controversy continue to this day but has become more sophisticated, focusing on such issues as immersion, educating students in their native language, or educating them through a bilingual framework. It does not appear that these debates will reside soon” (p. 167). Ultimately districts, school administration and the mainstream teachers determine the nature of instruction and the programs implemented for ELLs. Harr (2008) states, “One of the greatest challenges that face educators in the U.S. is how to best instruct English learners who have been mainstreamed into classrooms with students whose first language is English.” Federal law has attempted to address the growing population of ELLs by creating bans on discrimination of students whose native language is not English, but the problem goes far beyond the discrimination. An ELL not receiving an equitable education with a classroom program that is benefiting them is unjust and discriminatory. Quality of instruction for ELLs is often based on their lack of success, but mainstream teachers with ELLs have not been appropriately trained to best facilitate and implement beneficial instructional models for ELLs (Harr, 2008). Harr (2008) then goes on to say, “Although most teacher education programs include the topics of multiculturalism or multilingualism in their curriculums, these issues are often covered as isolated topics rather than as issues that must be taken into consideration when planning daily instruction” (p. 8). So while teachers may be aware of ELLs, or learned about multiculturalism in their credential program, there is a need for explicit beneficial evidence based programs to be in place for ELLs.

**Are there effective instructional models available to support elementary English language learners? If so, what are they? And how does each program benefit students?**

According to Rennie (1993), there have been 10 attributes that make up an effective program for language minority students. Rennie (1993) believes they are,

- “1. Supportive whole-school contexts (Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Tikunoff et al., 1991).
2. High expectations for language minority students, as evidenced by active learning environments that are academically challenging (Collier, 1992; Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Pease-Alvarez, Garcia & Espinosa, 1991).
3. Intensive staff development programs designed to assist ALL teachers (not just ESL or bilingual education teachers) in providing effective instruction to language minority students (Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Tikunoff et al., 1991).
4. Expert instructional leaders and teachers (Lucas, Henze, and Donato, 1990; Pease-Alvarez, Garcia, & Espinosa, 1991; Tikunoff et al., 1991).
5. Emphasis on functional communication between teacher and students and among fellow students (Garcia, 1991).
6. Organization of the instruction of basic skills and academic content around thematic units (Garcia, 1991).
7. Frequent student interaction through the use of collaborative learning techniques (Garcia, 1991).
8. Teachers with a high commitment to the educational success of all their students (Garcia, 1991).

9. Principals supportive of their instructional staff and of teacher autonomy while maintaining an awareness of district policies on curriculum and academic accountability (Garcia, 1991).

10. Involvement of majority and minority parents in formal parent support activities (Garcia, 1991)” (Rennie, 1993, p. 5).

### **Integrated Services Approach**

Through this model, there has been a significant amount of achievement due to the increased contact with native English speakers in the mainstream class, rather than an ESL class (Gui, 2007). With this approach, the ESL teacher collaborated in lesson planning and delivery inside the mainstream classrooms. Viktorova (2016) said, “... it is evident that the Integrated Services Approach is an effective approach for teaching language to ELLs. It was determined that one of the most effective strategies in educating English Language Learners is the Integrated Services Approach. This instructional model resulted in student academic and linguistic growth in all ten ELL students within the mainstream classrooms” (p.44). This program benefits students in many academic ways, of the ten ELL students in Viktorova’s study all of them grew within their reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy level, linguistic growth and a massive amount of progress in language acquisition. The mainstream classroom teacher focused on content learning, the ESL teacher or English language specialist focused on language acquisition, giving ELLs a more complete educational experience. The data showed the ELLs making progress in their reading levels and two of the students even advanced ten reading levels. In terms of the data from site words, four of the students moved beyond the target goal. Four of the ten students were reading second and third grade sight words (Viktorova,

2016). Viktorova (2016) noted “It was surprising to me that ELL students made more progress in reading compared to their native language speaking peers” (p.62). Hill and Flynn (2006) argue that cooperative learning enhances academic learning and language acquisition (Sonoma County Office of Education, 2008). This classroom model/program uses cooperative learning strategies in maximizing language acquisition and therefore benefiting ELLs. Viktorova (2016) stated, “More specifically, the Integrated Services Approach allows for the mainstream classroom to include English Language Learners and support them with appropriate teaching methods that will increase language acquisition as well as yield success in academic learning” (p. 9).

### **Sheltered Instruction**

Peregoy and Boyle (2013) said, “The Sheltered Instruction model has been found to be effective and beneficial to English Language Learners because it allows for the instructional talk to become more understandable for English Language Learners.” In this model, the class is divided into flexible groupings, which are cooperative and collaborative as well as heterogeneous and homogeneous based on reading levels. This model is beneficial to ELLs and effective because receptive and productive language learning opportunities arise (Jackson, 2008). In Gui’s study, ELLs were mainstreamed because it was found to benefit their language acquisition. Gui (2007) explains that placing ELLs in mainstream classes encourages mutual learning and decreases the change of the ELLs being isolated socially and/or academically. This model allows the class to be split into flexible groups and ELLs benefit from both heterogeneous and homogenous groupings based on reading levels.

Students who work in cooperative groups make sense of their own new knowledge through their interactions with others. From the research on cooperative learning and groupings, three generalizations have been made. The first is that organizing groups by ability should be done sparingly, research says that students of lower ability perform worse in homogenous groups while high ability performing students perform only slightly better. Secondly, there should be only three to four students per group ideally. Lastly, cooperative groupings are most effective when they are consistent and systematic. Research recommends these groups should be at least weekly to ensure success (Hill & Flynn 2006).

### **Blended Services Model**

In this model, students from multiple classrooms are formed into groups, often based on reading levels or other tasks. The mainstream teachers and sometimes the school's English learner specialist would each be assigned to a group. Some groups could focus on English Language Development while the other groups might focus on other language and literacy skills (Sonoma Office of Education, 2015). A school in Santa Rosa has consistently increased English language acquisition and raised academic achievement among its students using this model. There is an "assessment wall" to keep track of progress, where the staff has created a system for monitoring student progress. Each student has a "data card" on the wall, summarizing the results of state and local assessments. Grade-level teams meet with the principal and student results are discussed and the data cards are sorted into clusters. From here, learning groups are formed and individualized group support occurs daily during their ELD blocks led by mainstream teachers.

**Are there effective instructional models being implemented in Monterey County? Is there evidence to show either the success or failure of the models? If so, what is it?**

Currently, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) has failed to provide the support, knowledge or development of successful program models to benefit English language learners. MCOE (2015) said, “It was not evident to the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury (MCCGJ) that the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) has done all it can in the ELL area” (p.3). This is unfortunate that they have yet to give a full effort for ELLs’ education. While 84.6% of the teachers surveyed feel that the models that are implemented in your classrooms and/or schools are successful and benefit ELLs, there is an alarming amount of evidence proving how unsuccessful the current models in place truly are. The results of Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) published annually by the California Department of Education have continuously shown that typically Monterey County students are not reaching the minimum academic levels set the State of California, and the ELLs are by far the lowest performing students (MCOE, 2015). Only 7.7% of the teachers feel that the models that are implemented in their classroom and/or school are NOT successful and benefit ELLs and another 7.7% of the teachers feel it is difficult to know if the models that are implemented in their classrooms and/or schools are successful and benefit ELLs. Out of all of the school districts within Monterey County with an ELL population of over 30%, none of them have met the state’s minimum Academic Performance Index (API) standard. These school districts are usually lacking the participation by the local school boards in realizing the importance of prioritizing the ELLs.

MCOE (2015) asserted that, “Because our students’ ability to learn English impacts not only their own academic and work place futures but also the economic and social well-being of Monterey County, the MCCGJ focused its investigation on how MCOE can strengthen its role in helping school districts bring the County’s 30,000 ELL students to a level of English proficiency that will give them the chance to be successful. Monterey County’s English Language Learners will be among our future leaders, and we need to see that they get the education they deserve” (p.3).

Though it is not clear if there are specific successful program models that are being implemented in the school districts in the Monterey County, there are signs of progress from some school districts. Throughout Monterey County selected school districts are making “good progress” in ELL education, while other school districts that have high percentages of students who never achieve English proficiency throughout their entire schooling (MCOE, 2015). MCOE (2015) further indicated that, “These disparate results are a product of the strategies, resources, and determination of local districts working on their own. There seems to be very little collaboration and sharing of ideas, resources, and strategies among Monterey County school districts. The one common factor for all, however, is the Monterey County Office of Education, which is in a unique position to foster relationships that can benefit all English Language Learners and not just those who are lucky enough to be enrolled in the right districts” (p. 7). While there are several local districts that may have sections of educational excellence, a top-down commitment happens that is initiated from the school district superintendent. They normally lead innovative classroom program models and assist in setting the goal of bettering English language learners’ education. School districts with this type of

dedication to their ELLs have school boards that support their superintendent in prioritizing the ELL professional development for mainstream teachers and just for ESL/ELL teachers.

Specifically, when looking at the evidence from the teacher surveys, several respondents said their ELLs strongly benefited from small group settings, such as centers. One respondent said, “Centers/reading groups helps with fluency and other specific skills such as writing. Direct instruction gives the correct modeling by the teacher and student then practice within differentiated groups and sometimes heterogeneous grouping instead of just homogeneous grouping” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Another respondent said, “I believe direct explicit ELD instruction in small groups is the most beneficial for my ELLs. They have opportunities for speaking in a safe group, where they can take their time and speak without being made fun of or EO's speaking first. We have language rich conversations and with direct instruction. We have seen the growth our ELL's make each year and we record their progress” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). A common theme was the respondents noticed that the ELLs felt safer asking for help in a small group setting during centers. This was shown by this respondent's response, “The small group setting helps me to address needs more quickly and allows them to feel more comfortable to ask questions if they need to. It also allows me to reiterate what I have taught in whole group instruction” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Respondents where the districts/school sites implemented an ELD block gave specific examples of evidence showing the success of their program model for ELLs. One respondent said, “High level of re-designation of ELL's has occurred after our district implemented leveled ELD groups during a



designated ELD block. Higher levels of achievement on district benchmark assessments such as SBAC, ICA's and IAB's have occurred since implementing integrated ELD strategies where whole group instruction takes place with differentiated tasks” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Another respondent said, “ELLs have been leveled into two groups. One teacher takes one level, the other takes the second level. They are pulled out for 40 minutes each day and given an ELL lesson that pertains to the direct teaching lesson that we do at a different time in the day. Students participating in ELL are participating more and able to write better responses. They are showing a higher level of comprehension” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

On the other hand, for the respondents who believed that the models being implemented in their classroom and/or school are not successful or benefiting ELLs, were asked for evidence to support this reasoning. One teacher said, “My school site does not utilize an ELD program. Students of mixed EL levels are in every classroom, and do not receive any specialized ELD support. Teachers just utilize their own strategies and supports in classrooms” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Another teacher said, “[It is] hard to know because we have a new curriculum this year tat all teachers are getting used to.” Another response was, “Not having newcomer classes at all sites” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

**How do these instructional models close the achievement gap between elementary English language learners and their native English-speaking peers?**

With such a rapid growth of English language learners, school districts face an immense amount of pressure to ensure that the classroom models/instructional practices for English learners are effective and that these students will hopefully make significant

academic progress to meet their native English speaking peers (Moughamian, Rivera & Francis, 2009). However, whether the current models in place truly close the achievement gap is an enormous task. Zehler et al (2003) said, “Approximately 85% of ELLs are able to communicate orally in English; however, they have difficulty using English for academic functions in classrooms” (p.16).

One of teachers that were surveyed said, “Reading groups targets their reading fluency, comprehension and writing skills. Direct and then differentiation gives correct modeling and practice for the demonstrated skill at a level that meets their needs” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Another one of the teachers said, “Our ELL's are taught ELD using our LA curriculum so they get front loading as well as intervention and review, which helps them to learn English while learning grade level curriculum to help close the achievement gap” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Several teachers said that they consistently develop proficient students.

Another teacher said their program model closes the achievement gap but they still do having struggling ELLs, “As stated above, we have had a high level of re-designation of ELL's in our district who then have been able to score on par with their peers on state testing. However, we also have a large amount of students who are re-designated as proficient English learners who then struggle on state testing and do not continue to show the same growth as their peers” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). A respondent who uses the Pull Out Program said, “I wouldn't say that it's enough to change the achievement gap because it's too short of a time because it only mandates only 45 min a day” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). I focused on in

class models because I believe in order to close the achievement gap and have these programs/model benefit ELLs it must happen inside the mainstream classroom.

**What can be done for school districts in Monterey County to include successful and beneficial instructional models into their curricula?**

There are many suggestions for what school districts in Monterey County can do to include successful program models into their curricula. Through my analysis of Monterey County Office of Education's article on their "No Excuses" approach, an essential task that must be done by MCOE is to immediately fill the English Language Learning specialist position that has been recently vacated. Aside from MCOE, other county offices of education that were interviewed in the MCOE "No Excuses" article found that ELL specialists work very closely to ensure that school districts develop a successful internal ELL plans. The ELL specialists in other counties share ELL best practices, programs, resources, etc. Yet, MCOE's position is currently vacant. This position would develop and facilitate communication and partnerships between the 24 school districts. MCOE (2015) said, "In Monterey County, individual schools and districts can request ELL consulting services that are provided by an MCOE specialist for a fee" (p.10). If a school district or school needs assistance or guidance in their program/classroom models through the ELL consulting services, it is only possible if they have the funds for it. There is a clear difference between successful and unsuccessful school districts. In order for school districts to best meet the needs of English language learners in the mainstream classroom, they need to equip their teachers with knowledge and support of the best ELL practice and classroom models. Of the teachers I surveyed in the Monterey County, 28.5% felt that they need more resources and another 28.5% feel

that they need professional development specific to ELLs. In Monterey County, very few school districts are able to afford costly evidence-based ELL programs and curricula that have demonstrated success for ELLs. It all comes down to funding unfortunately. An idea based on the “No Excuses” approach of MCOE was to identify opportunities to provide proven resources for districts in the county at affordable rates. This would give school districts the opportunities to benefit from these proven programs through their resources and progress in their mainstream classes’ program models for ELLs.

MCOE (2015) believes that they play an important role in sharing ELL best practices, program models and successful ELL strategies throughout the Monterey County school districts. They believe that county wide professional development conducted by ELL experts, where they focus on proven evidence-based methods and program models will benefit all school districts in the county. Nineteen (19%) of the teachers in Monterey County that I surveyed felt that more research and studies need to be conducted for them to know which programs/classroom models will benefit their English language learners. Essentially the districts would do their research to determine what programs and models are beneficial for English language learners and make a commitment to bring high achieving evidence-based state and national programs for ELLs to their county wide professional development (MCOE, 2015). 9.5% of the teachers surveyed felt that new models being implemented could be done to best teach ELLs.

Another idea is for teachers, principals, etc. to observe schools that have successful program models in place for English language learners. Through observation they will hopefully be able to learn how to adapt their successful program for their own

school. MCOE (2015) said, “Some have looked outside Monterey County to find and emulate proven English language programs, and some bring experts from throughout California to work with their teachers. One administrator took carloads of the district’s board members, administrators and teachers to sit in classrooms of a school in another county known for notable English learning success” (p.9). Virtually all Monterey district school administrators interviewed noted that the most critical component to the success of the English Language Learner is a passionate and well-trained teacher who sets high expectations for all students (MCOE, 2015). Essentially, the county office of education and districts need to give the teachers the knowledge of successful program models or at least the facilitation of communication within the school districts in Monterey County. For example, with the knowledge of the benefits of the “Co-teaching” or “Team teaching” model, districts can attempt to implement such model if they have sufficient funding and resources.

MCOE (2015) stated, “Because a new state funding model that has expanded the autonomy of school districts prevents MCOE from being able to mandate specific ELL programs in school districts, it is even more important that the local school district leadership and the local community jointly desire positive outcomes. Competent local school boards must be elected and trained” (p.5). The MCCGJ noted that current local school boards are not necessarily aware of the importance of ELL programs or the resources needed to overcome the barriers. It is clear that communication is essential and there were several strategies noted in fostering two-way communication between the various counties in the state, which are listed below:

MCOE (2015) believes these strategies are, “(1) using a bottom-up approach for frequent meetings with the school districts where the districts set the agenda, and lead and conduct the meetings; (2) offering a robust website that highlights best practices, grant opportunities, and professional development activities; (3) working closely with each school district in developing Local Control Accountability Plans that incorporate sound, evidence-based strategies for ELL success; and (4) providing opportunities for all stakeholders (i.e. teachers, administrators, parents, staff members, students, board and community members) throughout the county to gather and share their ELL experiences” (p.9).

There are clear benefits for implementing classroom programs for ELLs, including efficient language acquisition, Direct and then differentiation gives correct modeling and practice for the demonstrated skill at a level that meets their needs. Most of teachers I surveyed (84.6%) felt that the program models currently in place in their classrooms benefitted the ELLs, however, the results of Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) published annually by the California Department of Education have continuously shown that typically Monterey County students are not reaching the minimum academic levels set the State of California, and the ELLs are by far the lowest performing students. There is a strong need for more resources and a dialogue between districts within Monterey County. MCOE plays an important role in sharing ELL best practices, program models and successful ELL strategies throughout the Monterey County school district, however they are currently not doing fulfilling this role to the best of the ability to benefit the education of ELLs.

A few breaches I found while researching this topic was the lack of an overarching answer on a specific “best” or “ideal” mainstream instructional model. There were pockets of information regarding benefits but no conclusion seemed to be drawn from all of the research as a whole. Overall, it is clear that there are benefits to the current instructional models in place but so much more needs to be done to truly give English language learners an inclusive and equitable education. The benefits are inconsistent and there is not a universal program that is proven successful, which I feel, is necessary.

An extension of this capstone research project could be comparing either school districts or schools that implement either a school wide or district wide instructional model and schools or districts that do not. It would be beneficial to see the difference of distinct instructional models and how each is benefiting the students, to hopefully determine an evidence based best practice or instructional model for English language learners. English Language Learners benefit from several mainstream classroom models as discussed above, but much more needs to be done to best meet the needs of the nation’s fastest growing population of ELL students.

### **Recommendation**

Through my capstone research project, I recommend that educators advocate for successful classroom models to be implemented in the mainstream classrooms. I urge educators to hold high expectations for all students and to continuously grow as educators to better the education of the fastest growing student population. Ultimately, I recommend that County Offices of Education take the leadership to provide resources to school districts in the county at affordable rates for evidence based ELL programs that have proven to be successful to their local school districts.

### **Problems and Limitations**

While I was obtaining the data to answer my research questions, I ran into a few minor problems, which may have caused some limitations within my research. The first limitation was not receiving a response in regards to interviewing the principal that implements the “ELD blocks” or “Blended classrooms.” Additionally, another principal that I reached out to for an interview had just recently changed positions and was no longer the principle; therefore we did not move forward with the interview. I felt that these interviews might have provided a different perspective than the teacher interviews.

Another problem that I faced was that there was not much data on the effectiveness of classroom models on how they benefit English language learners. There were a lot of teacher’s opinions and a few studies showing improvements of English language learners in terms of test scores, sight words, etc. but I felt that more qualitative data are needed and would better support the effectiveness of the various models.

After working on my capstone all semester long, I realize if I had more time, there would be a lot more that I would want to do and further research. I feel that reaching out to the County Offices of Education to find out whether more school districts need a district wide ELD instructional model could have been beneficial. However, upon completion of this project, and as a future elementary school teacher, I feel that I have done sufficient research to determine the benefits of classroom instructional models for English language learners.

### **Conclusion**

My capstone examines, “How do successful program models benefit elementary English language learners?” Then, I further seek the answer to find out what research



says, if there are effective program models and how they benefit ELLs. If there are effective models in Monterey County, how do they close the achievement gap and what more could be done for school districts in Monterey County to include successful program models?

Based on the research, I have found that there are genuine benefits to implementing a successful classroom model for English language learners. However, it is clear that there needs to be a more universal successful classroom instructional model to be implemented district wide or countywide with help from the County Office of Education. The quality of instruction from mainstream teachers is still lacking. In addition, they have not been properly trained to best facilitate and implement beneficial program models for ELLs and therefore, more resources, support, etc. are necessary to truly create a successful classroom model that truly benefits the ELLs.

Teachers may be aware of ELLs, or learned about multiculturalism in their credential program. While the challenges posed by ELL students are significant, it is obvious that there are strategies and specific classroom models to improve the educational experiences of this population. A lot of the uncertainty behind educating this group of students is due to the lack of research, inappropriate educational policies and inability of educators to understand ELLs and their backgrounds. There is a need for explicit beneficial evidence based programs to be in place for ELLs. The integrated service approach benefits students in many academic ways. Of the ten ELL students in Viktorova's study, all of them grew within their reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy level, linguistic growth and a massive amount of progress in language acquisition. Receptive and productive language learning opportunities arise from the

Sheltered Instruction model. One participant believed that ELD instruction in centers is most beneficial for ELLs because they have opportunities for speaking in a safe group, where they can take their time and speak without being made fun of or native English students speaking first. They have language rich conversations with direct instruction and make significant growth. The Blended Services model consistently increased English language acquisition and raised the academic achievement among its students when using this model at a school in Santa Rosa. A participant noted that, “Reading groups targets their reading fluency, comprehension and writing skills. Direct and then differentiation gives correct modeling and practice for the demonstrated skill at a level that meets their needs” (Teacher Survey Respondent, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018). However, Out of all of the school districts within Monterey County with an ELL population of over 30%, none of them have met the state’s minimum Academic Performance Index (API) standard. While 84.6% of the teachers surveyed feel that the models that are implemented in your classrooms and/or schools are successful and benefit ELLs, there is an alarming amount of evidence proving how unsuccessful the current models in place truly are. They are not genuinely benefiting ELLs like they should be.

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**Appendix A**  
**Anonymous Teacher Survey**  
 \* Represents a required question

1. How many ELLs are in your classroom? (Please check 1 answer) \*
  - None
  - 1-5
  - 6-10
  - 11-15
  - 16 or more
  
2. Which instructional models are currently used in your mainstream classroom? (Select all that apply) \*
  - ELD "Block" or "Blended Classrooms" Students are grouped by proficiency levels and may move to neighboring classrooms for explicit ELD instruction
  - Direct instruction - Teacher provides ELD instruction to entire class then gives differentiated tasks
  - Centers - Students are grouped by proficiency levels and rotate for differentiated activities and ELD instruction by the teacher
  - "Pull Out Program" - ELLs are pulled out from the mainstream classroom for either one on one or small group support for their English development
  - Co-Teaching - Simultaneously teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom with another teacher, such as an ESL teacher
  - ELLs are not in the mainstream classroom but are in a self-contained ELL classroom
  - No current support systems or instructional models for ELLs in my classroom or school
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Do you feel the models that are implemented in your classroom and/or school are successful and benefit ELLs? \*
  - Yes
  - No
  - Difficult to know
  
4. If yes, what evidence indicates that the models implemented in your classroom and/or school are successful and benefiting ELLs? Please be specific when referring to which models you believe are benefiting ELLs. \*
  
5. If no, what evidence indicates that the models implemented in your classroom and/or school are NOT successful or benefiting ELLs? Please be specific when referring to which models you believe are NOT benefiting ELLs. \*



6. How do the program models in your class and/or school close the achievement gap between elementary English language learners and their peers? \*
7. What more could be done to best teach English Language Learners in the mainstream elementary classroom? (Select all that apply) \*
- New models being implemented, the current models implemented in my class and/or school are outdated
  - More resources for teachers
  - Professional development
  - More research and studies need to be done
  - Other
- 

~ Are you interested in being interviewed for follow up questions? If so, please leave your email address below.

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